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National Gold Medalists and Officers
See our annual salute to the winners of every SkillsUSA Championships contest. Then meet the 2010-11 national officer team elected by your delegates.
BY E. THOMAS HALL

Like Ducks to Water
Get to know a gold-medal-winning Community Service team who, living in an area threatened by the Gulf oil spill, made water conservation a top priority.
BY ANN P. SCHREIBER

It’s Pure Gold: More than Medals
Our new Advisor of the Year has seen more than her fair share of glittering medallions, but she’s focused on something greater.
BY TOM KERCHEVAL

Reaching His Full Potential
In a short time, Julian Plowden went from risking expulsion from school to receiving the key to his city. Find out who and what were behind his remarkable turnaround. Then, learn how you, like Plowden, can earn the President’s Volunteer Service Award.
BY CRAIG E. MOORE

On the Cover:
SkillsUSA Champion Ryan Kortz of Appleton, Wis. Photo by Lloyd Wolf.
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Visit SkillsUSA’s frequently updated Web site, with SkillsUSA champions on every page!
Executive Director Tim Lawrence has known SkillsUSA as a student member, instructor, industry partner and state director. Got a question? He can help.

Q: Is success only for those in the spotlight? How can I “rise up”?

Tim: First, you’ll have to step up. Last year, the most members ever — 313,180—stepped up to join SkillsUSA. Our state leaders stepped up to serve them. Our industry partners, who donated nearly $4 million in cash and more than $35 million of in-kind contributions, also stepped up at our largest SkillsUSA Championships, with 96 events and 5,600 competitors.

In this issue, you’ll read about others who’ve stepped up, like our new national officer team, as well as the St. Petersburg, Fla., members who work together to promote water conservation. In our annual list of gold medalists, you’ll find hundreds of individual successes. All pushed themselves to be the best.

But as 2010 Advisor of the Year Crystal Gutshall notes, SkillsUSA isn’t just about the spotlight. “Sometimes I think we dwell on winners too much,” she says. “There are possibilities for everyone to be successful in the organization, and that’s what I love about it. It’s not about the ‘best student’ becoming ‘No. 1.’ It’s about all students becoming the best they can be and finding a niche in the organization.”

Because SkillsUSA is inclusive, everyone can find a role: as an officer, contestant, delegate, observer, technical committee member, contest judge or volunteer.

My personal goal for this new school year is to provide each of our members the best programs and services. With a record-breaking pledge of $10 million over five years from Lowe’s, 90 percent of the money flows into local schools and programs. Air Products gave $100,000 in August, and many other industries have stepped up their donations. Because key people at these companies truly believe in SkillsUSA and pushed for this support, we can expand and enhance our local school grants, Work Force Ready System, Professional Development Program, free training modules for instructors, free chapter resources for students and more.

Yet an organization is only as strong as the individuals who make it up. So, take a leadership role in your school. Be active in your local civic organizations and mentoring programs. Network through your chapter and industry council to learn from those in your field. Tap into the many resources available to you.

Only then can we rise up to success this year as individuals, citizens and employees. Together, we can reach both a personal best and a professional best.

Got questions about SkillsUSA or other topics? E-mail anyinfo@skillsusa.org or send a letter to the address on the facing page. Put “Ask Tim” in the subject line or mail address.
New Award Honors Champion Partner’s CEO

SkillsUSA’s partners are often called the lifeblood of the organization, and that’s not hyperbole. After all, no them, no us. SkillsUSA has created the “CEO Champion of the Year” award to recognize the leaders of some of these great partners, and John McGlade — president, chairman and CEO of Air Products — has been chosen as the inaugural recipient.

Under McGlade’s leadership, Air Products has supported SkillsUSA in myriad ways, from sponsoring various SkillsUSA initiatives to encouraging employees to serve on technical committees and judge local competitions.

“We believe in keeping America’s workforce educated, trained and growing,” McGlade says. “That’s why our support of SkillsUSA is so important.” The award dinner is Oct. 18 at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. For more, visit: www.skillsusa.org/supporters/ceochampion.shtml.

Big Effort Earns Big Prizes

Being a 100-percent advisor means involving all students in a quality SkillsUSA program. It also means eligibility for prizes so cool, we call them “mega” prizes.

Advisor Rachel Montgomery found that out at this year’s national conference when, thanks to SkillsUSA partnership with Irwin Industrial Tool Co., she won an all-expense-paid trip to Bristol Motors Speedway in Tennessee to watch the Irwin Tools Night Race.

A 100-percent advisor from Dennis Technical Center in Boise, Idaho, Montgomery spent the evening in Irwin’s hospitality suite and watched her favorite driver, Kyle Busch, win the race. Look for more prizes soon!

At a press conference announcing the award, McGlade (second from left) joins SkillsUSA Executive Director Tim Lawrence and students Samantha Cancro and Brittany Kistler from Lehigh (Pa.) Career and Technical Center.
**Programs Growing Stronger**

As recently as November 2009, the SkillsUSA Alumni and Friends Association consisted of just under 8,000 members. As an organization that's served nearly 10 million members since 1965, that number seemed, well, unacceptable. A major initiative designed to dramatically raise those tallies was launched, and — in under a year — membership has more than doubled at just over 17,000.

Now, SkillsUSA is looking for new ways for those with a passion for the program to stay involved in future activities at the local, state and national levels. That’s where you come in. If you have success stories, suggestions or knowledge of effective alumni activities at local schools in your state, we want to hear from you! Please contact alumni coordinator Niki Clausen at nclausen@skillsusa.org for more information. To become an alumni member, visit: [www.skillsusa.org/supporters/alumni.shtml](http://www.skillsusa.org/supporters/alumni.shtml).

**Are You Ready?**

SkillsUSA’s Work Force Ready System has been growing, too. In case you didn’t know, the system provides online assessments for career and technical education. All are supported by industry, education and policy leaders. When its Web site launched in 2008, eight interactive assessments were offered. Now, there are 44.

The site was overhauled recently based on customer feedback. You can visit the more user-friendly version at: [www.workforcereadysystem.org](http://www.workforcereadysystem.org). There, you can experience the assessments for yourself with a fully interactive demonstration.

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**Swing for the Fences and SkillsUSA**

How does earning a trip for two to the 2010 Major League Baseball World Series while helping out your favorite nonprofit student organization sound? Team up with State Farm and MLB for the “Go to Bat” game online. First, go to the site and sign up. Choosing “education” in the category box and then “SkillsUSA” puts you on the team. Next, pound some home runs. The more you hit, the more entries you’ll get in the weekly drawing for the trip. If you win, SkillsUSA gets $100 for every home run hit that week by a MLB player. The organization with the most total entries receives $25,000. Visit: [www.skillsusa.org/students/statefarmbat.shtml](http://www.skillsusa.org/students/statefarmbat.shtml) for more.

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**Don’t simply remember NLSC — relive it**

If you attended SkillsUSA’s National Leadership and Skills Conference in Kansas City, Mo., chances are you had an amazing time. If you didn’t attend, chances are you missed an amazing time. (We can pretty much guarantee that.)

Well, depending on what side of the fence you’re on, SkillsUSA’s 2010 NLSC Souvenir DVD will help you relive the memories or see what you missed. The DVD covers each day of the conference, from the thrills of the Opening Ceremony to the tension of competition, from the satisfaction of service to the sheer joy of the gold-medal-raising Awards Ceremony.

The DVD features a slide show, too, and it’s a great way to spark interest in your program. Order it online at: [www.skillsusa.org/events/nlsdvd.shtml](http://www.skillsusa.org/events/nlsdvd.shtml).
Once again, SkillsUSA’s National Leadership and Skills Conference didn’t just live up to the hype; it exceeded it. Think that’s just more hype? Don’t worry, we can back it up.

The conference boasted the most paid registrants ever at nearly 10,000, and total attendance exceeded 15,000. The SkillsUSA Championships featured more than 5,600 contestants in 96 contests, the most ever on both counts.

For the first time ever, the Champions Festival was held in Kansas City’s popular Power and Light District, and attendance was phenomenal for the outdoor event.

The Opening Ceremony featured Mike Holmes from the popular “Holmes on Homes” television show, and his speech was a huge hit with the students.

School Video News streamed the opening and awards ceremonies live on the Web for the second straight year, and the hits kept coming, far exceeding last year’s totals. In fact, the streams were viewed in every state and 28 countries and territories, making our national conference an international event!

The Timberland-sponsored community service effort returned for a ninth inspiring year, as hundreds of students and advisors repaired homes and beautified outdoor areas.

Later that day, the Awards Ceremony saw the largest corporate donation in SkillsUSA history, as Lowe’s pledged $10 million over a five-year period. That set the stage beautifully for the largest presentation of medals ever conducted.

Tears (of joy) flowed, smiles grew, arms rose in triumph and, yep, lives changed.

Honorary Life Members: Moe Broom, SkillsUSA board member and Washington high-school division director; Sonny Cannon, SkillsUSA Georgia high-school division director; Cameron Ferguson, former SkillsUSA board president from Caterpillar Inc.; Wayne Kutzer, board liaison to the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium; James McKenney, board member from the American Association of Community Colleges; Larry Rabalais, SkillsUSA board member and Louisiana director; Deborah Reynolds, longtime public relations volunteer for NLSC; Jack Sukala, leader in SkillsUSAs Diesel Equipment Technology competition; Julie Yeater, SkillsUSA board president from Indiana.

Advisor of the Year: Crystal Gutshall, Sun Area Technical Center, New Berlin, Pa. (see story, Page 19)

Outstanding Educators: Neva Clausen, Lebanon High School, Salem, Ore.; Chad Maclin, Fairfax County (Va.) Public Schools

Professional Development Program International Degree: Kim Cioni, Karyn Hawthorne and Nicholas Hulva, Illinois Central College, Peoria

Student2Student Mentoring Grand Prize Chapter: Kendrick High School, Columbus, Ga.

President’s Volunteer Service Award: (lifetime award) Neva Clausen, Lebanon High School, Salem, Ore.; (gold level) Jasmine Alfred and Julian Plowden, Columbus, Ga. (see story, Page 21); Kevin Brouillette, Geneva, Ill.; Jessica Feder, Cranston, R.I.; Annie Fleming, Middletown, Mass.; Brandon Mullings, Belleview, Fla.; Bobby Roden, Hohenwald, Tenn.; Kaitlin Tenerella and Gianna Velino, Johnston, R.I.

Torch Carrier Award: Darrell Andrews, State Farm Insurance Companies; Laurie Gostley-Hackett, Air Products; Larry Teverbaugh, K2Share
2010 NATIONAL GOLD MEDALISTS SHINE BRIGHTLY

For a full list of gold, silver and bronze medalists at the SkillsUSA Championships, as well as winners’ names in teams with three or more members, visit: www.skillsusa-register.org/reports/medalists.aspx
College, Reno, Nev.; Cameron Talotta, St. Johnsbury (Vt.) Academy • COMMUNITY SERVICE: (teams) Pinellas Technical Education Center (PTEC) – St. Petersburg (Fla.) Campus, Blackstone Valley RV/THS, Upton, Mass. • COMPUTER MAINTENANCE TECHNOLOGY: Kobus Labuschagne, Naperville (Ill.) Central High School; Ian Maines, Tri-County Technical Center, Dexter, Maine • COMPUTER PROGRAMMING: C.J. Farrr, Ozarks Technical Community College, Springfield, Mo.; Alex St. Martin, Bay Path RVTHS, Charlton, Mass. • COSMETOLOGY: Chalyn Bassett, Francis Tuttle Technology Center Reno Campus, Oklahoma City; Brooke Robison, Meosta Osceola Career Center, Big Rapids, Mich. • CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION: (teams) Riverland Community College, Austin, Minn.; Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center, Leonardtown, Md. • CRITICAL JUSTICE: Todd Wennberg, Manatee Technical Institute, Bradenton, Fla.; Matthew Travis, Penta Career Center, Perrysburg, Ohio • CULINARY ARTS: Alyssa Campos, Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, N.Y.; Rachel Koppelman, Columbia (Mo.) Area Career Center • CUSTOMER SERVICE: Cindy Hunt, San Jacinto College South Campus, Houston; Chloe Timmons, David Douglas High School, Portland, Ore.

DENTAL ASSISTING: Meghan Elliott, Central Pennsylvania Institute for Science and Technology, Pleasant Gap; Sara Sheppard, Manatee Technical Institute, Bradenton, Fla.; Diego Trujillo, Penta Career Center, Perrysburg, Ohio • DIESEL EQUIPMENT TECHNOLOGY: Sam Wesp, Fox Valley Technical College, Appleton, Wis.; Robert Starosciak, Berks Career and Technology Center, Riverside Technical College, Waco; Joseph Kirt, Tulsa (Okla.) Community College, New York, N.Y.; Robert Morgan Educational Center, Miami • DIGITAL GAME DEVELOPMENT: Thomas Stewart, Texas State Technical College, Waco; Joseph Kirt, Tulsa (Okla.) Technology Center, Riverside

ELECTRONICS INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE TECHNOLOGY: Christopher Coffey, Texas State Technical College, Waco; Nathan James, John D. Rockefeller IV Career Center, New Cumberland, W. Va. • ELECTRONICS TECHNOLOGY: Bruce Hevelone, Salt Lake Community College, Salt Lake City; Tyler Moskov, Parkside High School, Salisbury, Md. • EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION PROCESS: Sonya Simmons, Heart of Georgia Technical College, Dublin; Alyssia Roberts, Charles H. Bohlen Technical Center, Watertown, N.Y. • ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY: (teams) Butler Community College, Andover, Kan.; Minuteman Regional High School (RHS), Lexington, Mass. • ENTREPRENEURSHIP: (teams) Salt Lake Community College, Salt Lake City; Chantilly (Va.) Academy • ESTHETICS: Holly Warren, Moore Norman Technology Center, Norman, Okla.; Brandi Stephens, First Coast Technical College, St. Augustine, Fla. • EXTemporaneous Speaking: Keesha Landon, Crowder College, Neosho, Mo.; Jacob Hogan, Canyons Technical Education Center, Sandy, Utah • FIREFIGHTING: Wayne Faulkner, Manatee Technical Institute, Bradenton, Fla.; Steven Hill, Austin High School, El Paso, Texas • FIRST AID/ CPR: Tyler Nadeau, Eastern Maine Community College, Bangor; Devin Lyonsh, United Technologies Center, Bangor, Maine • FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICE: Erin Cameron, Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge Campus, Farmington Hills, Mich.; Baron Fields, Clear Springs High School, League City, Texas • GEOGRAPHICAL TECHNOLOGY: Daniel LeVrier, Central New Mexico Community College, Albuquerque; Emily Guzman, Jack E. Singley Academy, Irving, Texas • GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS: Shane Covert, Ball State University, Muncie, Ind.; John Littinowicz, Royal Oak (Mich.) High School • HEALTH KNOWLEDGE BOWL: (teams) Manatee Technical Institute, Bradenton, Fla.; Southeast Career Technical Academy, Las Vegas • HEALTH OCCUPATIONS PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO: Lottie Rizzardi, Heart of Georgia Technical College, Dublin; Raven Woods, Eldon (Mo.) Career Center • HEATING, VENTILATION, AIR CONDITIONING AND REFRIGERATION: Ryan Gallagher, Ferris State University, Big Rapids, Mich.; Michael Flores, Shawnee High School, Billerica, Mass.

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MATH: Joshua Stooksberry, Tennessee Technology Center at Hohenwald; Christophe Farmer, Green-tree Health Science Academy, Monroe, Ohio  

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MOTORCYCLE SERVICE TECHNOLOGY: Thomas Rush, Fort Scott (Kan.) Community College; Nathan Staker, Riverton (Utah) High School  

MACHINING TECHNOLOGY: Maksim Golovko, Tennessee Technology Center at Hohenwald; Christopher Farmer, Green-tree Health Science Academy, Monroe, Ohio  

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OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY – SINGLE: Manatee Technical Institute, Bradenton, Fla.; Grand Prairie (Texas) High School  

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OUTSTANDING CHAPTER: (teams) Manatee Technical Institute, Bradenton, Fla.; Pike County JVS, Piketon, Ohio  


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TECHNICAL COMPUTER APPLICATIONS: Calvin Caron, Southern Maine Community College, South Portland; Keesel Leishman, Meridian (Idaho) Technical Charter High School  

TECHNICAL DRAFTING: Jeff Carroll, College of Lake County, Grayslake, Ill.; Isaac Wasielkski, Huntsville (Ala.) Center for Technology  

TECH PREP SHOWCASE: (teams) Bethlehem (Pa.) Vo-Tech School; Kiamia (Idaho) High School; Manatee Technical Institute, Bradenton, Fla. (four medals); Mayfield High School, Cleveland (two medals); PTEC – St. Petersburg (Fla.) Campus (two medals); San Benito (Texas) High School; San Elizario High School, El Paso, Texas  

TELECOMMUNICATION CABLING: Cagney Slusmeyer, East Central Technical College, Fitzgerald, Ga.; Austin Sutton, Fitzgerald (Ga.) High School  

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WEB DESIGN: Kevin Burke / Matthew Scachette, Illinois Central College, East Peoria; Victoria Chong / Neil Daniels, Advanced Technologies Academy, Las Vegas  

WELDING: Alex Paskowski, Washenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Brandon Edwards, Douglass (Wyo.) High School  

WELDING ART SCULPTURE: John Michael Holder, South Georgia Technical College, Americus; Morgan Hanson, Syracuse (Neb.) High School  

WELDING FABRICATION: (teams) Washenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, Mich.; College of Eastern Utah, Price
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Peoria High School, Arizona
BUILDING TRADES

SAM SOTO
Tennessee Technology Center at Knoxville
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VICTORIA CRESCO  
Blacksburg High School, Virginia  
**Cosmetology**

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National Officers Are **LOOKING UP**

Learn more about the team at: [www.skillsusa.org/students/officers.shtml](http://www.skillsusa.org/students/officers.shtml)

Photo: Lloyd Wolf
"Water is our most precious resource, and we really need to respect what water is about," says Barbi Pierson. With fellow coastal residents Leigh Clifton and Tony Wood, Pierson started spreading the word about conserving water in February, long before the nation began to associate Gulf shores with its worst oil spill ever.

The group met at Pinellas Technical Education Centers’ (PTEC) St. Petersburg, Fla., campus, after administrator Peter Berry applied for and received a water conservation grant. Berry asked Clifton, a commercial photography student, to work on the project. Pierson and Wood, both enrolled in a pharmacy technician program, then came on board.

Although the three didn’t know each other before they came together for the project, they’re so like-minded they finish each other’s sentences.

“We’ve become really good friends, and we’ve melded as a group,” Clifton says. “We didn’t have a long time together, but things gelled quickly.”

Pierson adds, “There’s nothing really that any of us have in common except for this great interest in conserving water.”

The $5,000 grant from the Southwest Florida Water Management District allowed them to buy 675 low-flow water conservation kits. The students scheduled presentations to give away the kits and educate residents.

Working with the St. Petersburg water department, the group also collected the water usage data of residents who agreed to install the kits. The city provided usage figures from the four months prior to the installations to compare with those from four months later. Only residents’ addresses were used in the study, which, according to Pierson, helped make them more willing to participate. The students then compared the usage figures and developed PowerPoint graphs, which they’ve used to present to more than 25 different audiences, including a televised city council meeting.
Even before the oil spill, Florida’s water supply was being threatened. Sharing a deep personal connection to the coast, three strangers unite behind conservation.

By Ann P. Schreiber

Each kit meets local plumbing codes and includes Teflon tape, washers and a shower head — everything needed for installation except the tools.

“The beautiful part about this is, it retails at about $25 to $30 in the store,” Pierson says. “The kits are fabulous. They’re free. My water bill went down $35 in the first billing cycle. My usage went down 4,000 gallons. That’s concrete evidence that we’re conserving water, as well as helping to save money within our community.”

A place that’s particularly in need

“We all have a lot of family and personal friends in the community,” Wood says, “and it’s grabbed our attention. I’ve lived in the community my whole life. My family’s been there for nearly 120 years. My father was a landscaper. His father was a landscaper. It all involves water. We’ve always been aware of how water’s used.”

Taking the project to Kansas City, Mo., the team won SkillsUSA’s Community Service competition. But the environmental crisis at home stayed on their minds.

“We live in Pinellas County, and the oil spill is going to affect us,” Clifton says. With the desalination plants, if this water is fouled by the oil that’s coming, we will not be able to use those facilities. That will have a direct impact on not only the amount of potable drinking water that’s been recycled and used by the public, but also the amount used for agriculture. We grow tomatoes, we grow blueberries, we grow strawberries.”

“The sad thing is,” Pierson adds, “it only takes one quart of oil to foul 250,000 gallons. That’s a huge amount.”

The area’s water supply was already stressed due to low temperatures earlier this year. “January and February were two of the most unusual weather months we’ve had as far as being cold,” Clifton says. “We were down to 22 degrees.”

“This past spring,” Wood explains, “the strawberry farmers used up a lot of water, and we ended up with a community ‘Swiss cheese’ of sinkholes, because the aquifers below were emptying.”

“We had highways sinking, houses falling into holes, to save the crops,” Clifton adds. “They had to pump a ton of water to freeze-coat them.”

“Those pumps could be more efficient,” Wood insists, “and the sprinklers could be more efficient. Ninety percent of that water they spray does not actually freeze on the plant. A misting version would work better, but they are more expensive. The pumps cost more to pump, but the mist would coat the fruit with less water.”

WEB RESOURCES

- For details on the effectiveness of the Pinellas County students’ project, see their 2010 Community Service contest PowerPoint at: www.skillsusa.org/downloads/PPT/FlaWater.ppt
- For more on Florida’s water conservation programs: www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/
- To learn more about water conservation, visit: www.epa.gov/epahome/learn.htm#water
Clearly, each member of this team has a personal investment in conserving water. “I’m a sailor, and I have a sailboat,” Clifton says. “And I will be directly affected by the oil spill. The sailing for me, the water, it’s like my church, and I feel like my church is being fouled. It’s very upsetting. It’s hard. We feel that even if we can’t do anything else, we can make people more aware.”

“Awareness, education,” Pierson adds in unison. “It’s so crucial. I have a 3-year-old son at home. Getting him on board to understand, to turn the water off, is really big. Daddy’s a fisherman. We are fully impacted by what’s going on in the Gulf. We need everybody to be aware of the importance of conserving water.

“People think, ‘Oh, I’m not going to have as much water pressure in the shower.’ Well, I have that water pressure in the shower with the shower head in this kit,” she emphasizes. Within a sampling of 25 residents who used their kit, 119,200 gallons of water were saved during the initial four months, Clifton says. “Once all 675 kits have been installed, we have the potential to save in the neighborhood of 3,218 million gallons of water over a four-month period.”

Or as Wood explains, “Each low-flow kit, over its seven-year life span, can save 70 million gallons.”

“Everyone needs to be more educated on the ways that we can conserve,” Pierson says. “It’s as simple as shutting off the water when you brush your teeth. That’s four gallons a minute right there.

“Replace faucet aerators with low-flow versions. You’ll use 50 percent less, two gallons a minute. It’s two gallons, so shut the water off, and make it a habit.”

Pierson, Wood and Clifton at a televised city council meeting
It’s Pure Gold
More than Medals

By Tom Kercheval

SkillsUSA’s top regional advisors, including the 2010 Advisor of the Year, are more than content to watch unnoticed while their students shine. Now, for a moment, the spotlight shines on them.

We all know the old saying, “All that glitters isn’t gold.” But Crystal Gutshall, SkillsUSA’s Advisor of the Year, prefers a triumphant rewording: “Gold isn’t all that glitters.”

Over 21 years as a cosmetology instructor and advisor at Sun Area Technical Center in Watsontown, Pa., Gutshall has trained eight national, 33 state and 52 district gold medalists. While proud of her students who own those 93 glittering medallions, she measures success by more than just the competitive standard.

“Sometimes I think we dwell on winners too much,” she explains. “There are possibilities for everyone to be successful in the organization, and that’s what I love about it. It’s not about the ‘best student’ becoming ‘No. 1.’ It’s about all students becoming the best they can be and finding a niche in the organization.”

Gutshall quickly found hers when she became schoolwide advisor 16 years ago.

“We had a good SkillsUSA program when I started,” she says, “but it was all about the contests. As much as I’ve had success in the skills areas, I just feel those leadership areas will carry on for students no matter what they do. We went from very bare-bones leadership involvement to every year having a student compete in Job Interview, Prepared Speech, Action Skills and Extemporaneous Speaking.”

WEB RESOURCES
- Find out more about the 2010 Advisor of the Year candidates. Visit: www.skillsusa.org/educators/aoy.shtml
- Know an outstanding SkillsUSA advisor? You can nominate that person for Advisor of the Year by contacting your state association director. Get the contact information for your state at: www.skillsusa.org/about/dir4.shtml
- If you’re a new SkillsUSA advisor, there are great resources for your developing program at: www.skillsusa.org/educators/newadvisors.shtml
Gutshall fondly recalls one of the many beneficiaries of the new direction. “I had a boy who started school wearing sunglasses every day, and everyone thought, ‘This kid is odd.’ It turned out he had a problem with eye contact. He came to my leadership meetings and was the only one who signed up for Extemporaneous Speaking. The first couple times I worked with him, he couldn’t look at me, but he went on to win district and placed fourth at states. More importantly, he joined the military, and he could look people in the eye.”

Driving Gutshall’s leadership initiatives has always been SkillsUSA’s Professional Development Program. She encourages her students to embrace one of its key components: community service. Over the years, she has orchestrated a variety of projects, but the one she’s most proud of blends her students’ technical skills with their desire to serve.

“We’ve been doing a project called ‘Hair for You,’” Gutshall says. “We raise money to provide free wigs to cancer patients, and what’s great is that it’s part of our trade area. The women come in, we measure them and help them get exactly the color, fit and style they want. It’s not just about giving them the wig, but it’s about their spirits being lifted, and the students have learned a lot from it.”

**New ways to approach old problems**

Gutshall’s strength as a teacher, role model and motivator is evident in the way she maneuvers the learning roadblocks all teachers face. “I think when you meet adversity, you have to take risks, you have to try new things,” she points out. “You look for new ways, new presentations.”

That philosophy led to an unexpected (and furry) guest accompanying Gutshall and a student on the competition circuit a few years back.

“I had a great, dynamic kid, but she would not get up and talk,” Gutshall remembers. “Well, she loved animals, so I said, ‘You could do something in the Job Skill Demonstration contest with an animal!’ So we did harvesting of rabbit wool on an angora rabbit, and we traveled first to states with a rabbit and then to nationals. It was so much fun, and she got to meet so many people because of her rabbit. And she won the gold medal!”

It’s fitting that when Gutshall tells this story, the gold-medal ending is almost an afterthought. After all, the achievements she’s most proud of, the ones that glitter enduringly in her memory, are the ones where her students have experienced their own “I can do this” epiphanies — with or without an accompanying medallion.

“When people say my ‘achievements,’” the advisor counters, “I feel like I’ve had SkillsUSA experiences and have been blessed to have students have these great achievements.

“I just do what I do because I like seeing the students succeed and grow, and that’s what it’s about for me. I’d much rather not be in the limelight, but be in the background and try to be there for them.”

---

Rose Blevins teaches employability skills to special needs students at Kecoughtan High School in Hampton, Va. A SkillsUSA advisor for the past six years, she was the first career and technical education instructor in the area to involve these students in SkillsUSA, raising their self-esteem and helping them integrate into mainstream society.

Linda Ward is a cosmetology instructor at Mecosta-Osceola Career Center in Big Rapids, Mich., and has spent the past 15 years as a SkillsUSA advisor. She’s led her students to national championships not only in Cosmetology, but Opening and Closing Ceremonies as well, indicative of the value she places on the leadership aspects of SkillsUSA training.

Jayson Floyd is a service careers instructor at Canadian Valley Technology Center in El Reno, Okla. Serving SkillsUSA as an advisor for the past 12 years, Floyd deals primarily with students who have special needs or troubled pasts. Getting those students involved in SkillsUSA has been Floyd’s first step in helping to turn their lives around.

Roy Angle teaches automotive technology at Pocatello (Idaho) High School. Angle has spent 33 years serving SkillsUSA as an advisor and has coached many students to victory in automotive and leadership contests. His dedication, passion and enthusiasm have inspired many other area instructors to start SkillsUSA chapters in their schools.
Julian Plowden was in trouble. He was in high school, about to end the first semester of his freshman year, and his teacher was almost ready to give up on him. His behavior was cause for concern. Plowden had enrolled as an engineering/architecture student at Jordan Vocational High School in Columbus, Ga. But as the teacher, Clayton Graham, puts it, “In the first week of first semester alone, I discovered that Mr. Plowden had a lot of uncontrollable energy.”

To him and others, the student was overly talkative and seemed to have a pretty big ego. Calling that first semester with him “turbulent,” Graham also says that from telephone calls home to parent-teacher conferences, from in-school to full-blown suspensions, nothing had managed to change Plowden’s choices.

Finally, at the end of the semester, the teacher asked Plowden why he was going down the road to self-destruction. “For the first time ever, he was speechless,” Graham remembers.

He encouraged the freshman to channel his energy into bettering himself and the common good of the school.

It was a pivotal moment for Plowden, who says Graham’s talk “persuaded me to be a better individual and to test the limits of my character.”

At the same time, Graham introduced him to SkillsUSA.

“He persuaded me to join a student organization that he was the advisor of at our school,” Plowden remembers. “He said it would help me express my full potential and to develop me into a strong, young leader.”

As Graham describes the moment, “His eyes opened wide with an ‘I want to sign up right now!’ excitement.”

“He told me how I could learn about career fields in depth,” Plowden says, “and how I could use SkillsUSA competitions as a means of experiencing how I would compete with others in the real world. After hearing him talk and seeing a few promotional videos that he showed the class, I was instantly hooked.”

Redirecting his energy, Julian Plowden quickly went from class cutup to the top of his class. He was even honored by the president of the United States. The best part is, you can be, too.

By Craig E. Moore
Unfortunately, Plowden was on probation for the rest of the semester. But Graham, as his advisor, was there as a guide as he started his journey as a SkillsUSA member.

Since then, Plowden has racked up an impressive record of achievements as a leader and competitor, as well as academically. To name just a few:

- Two-time state gold medalist in the SkillsUSA Promotional Bulletin Board competition …
- First place in SkillsUSA Georgia’s State T-shirt Design contest …
- Top honors in biology and architecture, and three separate medals in the honors division of the Academic Decathlon …
- The highest SAT score in his school …
- The key to the city of Columbus …
- Oh, and he was honored by the president of the United States of America. Plowden achieved the “gold” level for the President’s Volunteer Service Award program (see facing page). In June, he received recognition for this accomplishment at the 2010 National Leadership and Skills Conference in Kansas City, Mo.

“[SkillsUSA] shows others that you value your future and that you want to bring out your best qualities as a person, worker and leader.”

— Julian Plowden

“That felt amazing!” Plowden remembers. “After learning about [the program] at the 2009 conference, I knew I could do it. I already did community service with my SkillsUSA chapter and at my church, so it was only a matter of telling SkillsUSA about it the next year. I received a signed letter from President Barack Obama congratulating my accomplishment and a golden lapel pin.”

Placing a value on his future

Plowden’s advisor has seen huge changes in the young man. “Time and again, he has demonstrated his leadership ability by serving as a tutor for students in need of academic improvement,” Graham says. “He now has excellent leadership skills and a willing spirit to go the extra mile to assist students, teachers, counselors and administrators in whatever reasonable capacity he can do so.”

Asked about the value of SkillsUSA in his life, Plowden replies, “It can represent a myriad of good things to different individuals, but to me it shows others that you value your future and that you want to bring out your best qualities as a person, worker and leader.”

Now a freshman at Southern Polytechnic State University in Marietta, Ga., Plowden expects to tap into that SkillsUSA experience to help him face this new environment.

“Since I’ve competed in SkillsUSA competitions, I’m able to fully explain myself with confidence whenever I might be lost, or use my speaking skills to simply make new friends,” Plowden says.

No one could have expected such a big turnaround on the basis of one fateful talk. But Graham says he never doubted Plowden would succeed if he applied himself. “The rest is history!”
President’s Volunteer Service Award

For a third consecutive year, SkillsUSA is designated as an official certifying organization for the President’s Volunteer Service Award.

This national honor recognizes sustained service and was created by the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation. The council, established in 2003, recognizes the valuable contributions volunteers make in communities and encourages more people to serve.

Specifically, the award program honors Americans who, by their demonstrated commitment and example, inspire others to engage in volunteer service. Individuals, families and groups are eligible if they meet a certain standard, measured by the number of hours of service over a 12-month period or cumulative hours earned over the course of a lifetime.

SkillsUSA is one of only 80 leadership groups designated as a certifying organization for the program. In 2010, Lowe’s awarded travel scholarships to the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference to those who attained the award, allowing them to be recognized on stage during the Opening Ceremony.

For a complete explanation of the President’s Volunteer Service Award requirements and a listing of the 2010 honorees, visit: www.skillsusa.org/students/volsvc.shtml. (The names of recent recipients also appear on Page 9 of this issue.) All documentation of service hours must be submitted by April 1.

Julian Plowden takes the stage during the announcement of the 2010 PVSA honorees

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You’ve probably heard the big news: SkillsUSA membership is at an all-time high. But this is no time to rest on laurels — after all, a new year brings new membership opportunities.

As a group, plan a SkillsUSA recruitment activity. First, talk about the benefits of SkillsUSA that would be the most interesting to the students in your school. Competition? Travel opportunities? Social activities? Employability skills? All of the above?

Next, brainstorm ideas for promoting SkillsUSA while keeping things fun. Hosting a pizza party while screening a SkillsUSA video or inviting a past member to speak about what SkillsUSA meant to them are examples, but be as creative as possible, and outline a plan.

Finally, go to: www.skillsusa.org/educators/change2.shtml and click on the “Membership Drive” link to view an interactive presentation with more great tips. Finalize your plan and put it into action! Your chapter will be stronger than ever.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

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— Ralph Waldo Emerson
OLD GARDEN BECOMES LIVING LABORATORY

For their science and environmental technology courses, students are converting an old vegetable garden into a sustainable living laboratory at the C. Merlo Institute of Environmental Technology in Stockton, Calif.

Thanks to an Innovation in Sustainability grant from State Farm, they will incorporate a system to compost appropriate waste products from the school, such as shredded paper and cafeteria waste, and use the compost to improve the structure and fertility of the soil.

The redesigned garden will also feature a solar-powered water feature. This small pond will provide students in the biology class with a water-based ecosystem for analysis and study.

Makeovers help dogs find homes

At Edison Academy in Alexandria, Va., some local dogs are getting “makeovers” at the school’s Fresh Start Dog Wash.

One Saturday a month, animal science students give up five hours to groom dogs for rescue organizations and shelters.

Since grooming services can be costly, and well-groomed dogs have a better chance of being adopted, students decided to give of their time and skills rather than money or products. Besides helping the rescue organizations and shelters, the students groom the dogs of the people who foster and adopt pets from these groups.

Serving while learning

Collision repair and refinishing, truck and diesel technology and automotive service students at Northwest Iowa Community College in Sheldon are fixing up another vehicle for a needy family. This Charitable Chariots program allows students to learn as they perform safety inspections, rust repair, tune-ups and fluid changes, install new filters and belts, and replace damaged interior, exterior or mechanical parts. They gain management skills while contacting businesses for donated materials and setting up the delivery with local agencies. Recipients also receive a $100 gas card.

Tuition for African orphan

SkillsUSA students at Camden County Technical Schools’ Pennsauken, N.J., campus spend their lunch hours collecting money to help pay private-school tuition for an African orphan. Known to them as Aklele, the child lives in Katak, Guinea. Prior to these donations, Aklele had to walk 10 miles round trip to a free public school where the average class size is 200.

Rejuvenating a garden in Stockton, Calif.

Photo: Shamus Fatzinger, Fairfax County Times, Fairfax, Va.
SkillsUSA Champions features our members’ photography. We’re looking for images of SkillsUSA chapters in action, or ones that show individual members’ concentration or perseverance. For details, e-mail thall@skillsusa.org (put “Image Photo” in the subject header) or write SkillsUSA Champions, 14001 SkillsUSA Way, Leesburg, VA 20176. The photographer’s chapter is awarded $150.

I started off unsure of my abilities or what I wanted to do in high school. SkillsUSA pointed me in the right direction. Values I learned then set the groundwork for who I am today, a 30-year-old responsible for management of over 1,000 independent servicers across six states.

Daniel Henderson, Regional Service manager, NEW Customer Service Companies Inc.

SkillsUSA, you guys are the future.

Mike Holmes of HGTV’s “Holmes on Homes,” speaking at SkillsUSA’s national conference

The SkillsUSA chapter at San Benito (Texas) High School is responsible for cleaning up a stretch of highway for a minimum of two years. Since most of its members are pursuing the criminal justice field, the chapter uses the name “blue knights” — an old term for police officers. Advisor Beto Peña took this photo.
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