Inside the NLSC conference veterans share their stories

Living alone at a young age

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Gregory Miller of Easton, PA, competed for three years in the SkillsUSA Championships. He has two national silver medals in HVACR (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration).
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THE MOST IMPORTANT THING
YOU BUILD IS YOUR REPUTATION

Welcome to the professional craft trades
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Summer 2009
SkillsUSA Champions

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BY CRAIG E. MOORE & ANN P. SCHREIBER

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Through service projects, SkillsUSA chapters are a good fit for communities. Visit a school that helps prevent teen suicides, then see how members in other states build “greener” homes and raise autism awareness.
BY ANN P. SCHREIBER

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Without a stable home, Gary Stange was adrift, living in far-flung places from Mississippi to South Dakota. He’s proof that “you can do whatever you want, as long as you are willing to try.”
BY ANN P. SCHREIBER

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BY E. THOMAS HALL

On the Cover:
The Power of Giving

Executive Director Tim Lawrence has known SkillsUSA as a student member, instructor, industry partner and state director. Got a question? He can help.

Q: Last issue, you wrote about how SkillsUSA fits into national calls to service. What can I do locally?

Tim: Service comes in many forms, but it’s all about giving. The act can be as simple as helping a child learn to read or assisting an elderly person with a chore.

SkillsUSA offers a rich program of these opportunities. Almost every chapter I’ve visited has a distinct passion for serving its community. The powerful stories in this magazine reinforce this wonderful aspect of our chapters. I can’t recall any other issue that’s been so full of kindness and with so many examples of giving.

There’s the father-son team in Georgia who’ve dedicated a combined 48 years to lifting up their students. Students from Pennsylvania bring awareness to autism. A young bride in Texas conducts a stuffed-toy drive for military families. Georgia students build a wheelchair ramp for an injured classmate. A class in Delaware shares podcasting skills with elementary children. New Jersey students help prevent youth suicides. A team in Idaho constructs “green” homes for Habitat for Humanity. A class works to prevent child abuse in Texas. And, a young South Dakotan who once led a troubled life opens up to help others avoid his mistakes. Across the nation, SkillsUSA members are making their communities (and themselves) better.

SkillsUSA’s business partners believe so strongly in our mission, they’re giving to help students and schools accomplish their goals. Lowe’s and Timberland provide cash grants and tools for community improvement. Through the Kellogg Foundation’s investment, we’re reaching into vulnerable communities, and we’re building 21st-century skill assessments for our training programs. Even the NASCAR circuit is involved, with the SkillsUSA logo displayed in two major race venues to draw attention to the good things happening in our organization.

In May, our chapters will band together for SkillsUSA’s National Week of Service, when we can make a powerful statement. All 17,000 local programs have an opportunity to help others during this focused campaign. I hope you’ll organize a service project for this event and send us a report. See this issue’s “Toolbox” section and our Web site for resources and details.

Whether you have five members or 500, your local chapter can make a positive difference in the lives of others. I encourage you to reach out and experience the great fulfillment that giving can bring.

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.
A NASCAR Champion Delivers For Students

If it’s a good day when your school receives a free donation of Kobalt tools, what kind of day is it when those tools are personally delivered by NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson? “This was the greatest day of my teaching career,” said Price Jacobs, a 20-year building and construction trades instructor at Lovejoy High School in Hampton, Ga. Johnson’s special delivery to Jacobs’ students marked the kickoff of Lowe’s “Tough Tools for Cool Schools” program, which will donate more than $300,000 worth of Kobalt tools to 500 SkillsUSA building trades programs nationwide.

“The program is great because we are literally putting those tools in the hands of students who need them to further their education,” Johnson said.

For the full press release, visit: www.prweb.com/releases/SkillsUSA/Lowees/prweb2246304.htm.

Isn’t it a great feeling when something promised becomes something delivered? That’s how SkillsUSA is feeling these days regarding the recent availability of its first Skill Connect Assessments, part of SkillsUSA’s Work Force Ready System. These online, interactive assessments were developed and validated by industry experts, and they help you prove your technical skills to potential employers. The first eight (Advertising Design, Automated Manufacturing Technology, Computer Maintenance Technology, Cosmetology, Internet-working, Employability, Photography and Welding) are available now at: www.workforcereadysystem.org.

NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson mingles with SkillsUSA students after delivering a donation of tools.

Assessing the Assessments
NEW SKILLSUSA WORLDTEAM STILL GROWING

What does it take to build an international team of career and technical education champions? “A truly world-class team effort,” says Peter Carey, SkillsUSA New Jersey director and official delegate of the 2009 SkillsUSA WorldTeam.

He’s not exaggerating. The 2009 WorldSkills Competition (WSC) will take place Sept. 1-7 in Calgary, Alberta, and SkillsUSA plans to field a team of 18 competitors, its largest ever. Last issue, we introduced the first seven. Now, five more have joined the elite ranks: Fernando De La Garza (Idaho) in CNC Milling, Hayden LeJeune (La.) in Electronics Technology, Jennifer Miaczynski (Ill.) in Hairdressing, Amelia Mujkic (Mich.) in Printing, and Leroy Rogers (Wis.) in Plumbing.

Be a Part of the WorldTeam!
SkillsUSA has just launched a new Web site so you can join the team effort: www.everydayrealheroes.org. This exciting campaign is well worth a visit. Support your SkillsUSA WorldTeam and share the site with your friends.

Four of SkillsUSA WorldTeam’s newest members (clockwise from top left): De La Garza, LeJeune, Miaczynski, Mujkic

A Different Kind of Casting Call
SkillsUSA recently held a national “state of the organization” webcast. Missed it? Visit http://web.ganconference.com/?meeting=3913885 to catch up.

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* Cars will ship after June 1st and will arrive by June 30th.
They Keep Coming Back For More

By Craig E. Moore

When SkillsUSA returns to Kansas City for its 45th annual National Leadership and Skills Conference, Carlos Jones and Carlos Jones Jr. intend to be there. Come again?

No, you’re not seeing double. It’s a father-son team. Carlos Jones Sr. and Carlos Jones Jr. are both teachers at Camden County High School in Kingsland, Ga., in construction and metals, respectively. They work together to bring as many state champions as possible from their school.

“Last year we took 18 kids to nationals,” Jones Jr. says. His father predicts 2009 will be the year of the school’s first national gold medalist.

Not that they haven’t been successful in the past. Over his 32 years teaching, Jones Sr. has had more than 50 state champions and several national medalists. Jones Jr. has been teaching 16 years and has brought students to the national competition 13 times.

But to them, SkillsUSA is much more than contests. They know that the program can change a young person’s life. “I look at every kid that comes through the door as No. 1,” the younger Jones explains. “I can use skills to show them the opportunity they can use to make their lives successful.”

His dad agrees. “Every day, you are competing for a job. I impress upon my students to go as high as they can go.”

So if success isn’t measured in medals, how does one measure it? “Not a week goes by when I don’t have a student come by and say, ‘Thank you,’” Jones Sr. says. That sounds like a winner. •


**What you can expect at 2009’s conference**

SkillsUSA's big show comes back to Kansas City, Mo., June 21-26. By the numbers, it includes:

- More than 5,000 students competing in 91 different skilled and leadership events
- Total contest area of 787,482 square feet (covering more than 16 football fields)
- Combined attendance of more than 14,000
- Eighty-two SkillsUSA University sessions
- More than 125 exciting exhibits in SkillsUSA TECHSPO
- Total in-kind industry and education contributions of more than $35 million

See you there — or watch it all unfold online at: www.skillsusa.org/events/nlsc.shtml.

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“It’s been a real good experience for the kids,” **ARLAN PENNER** (below) describes his students’ SkillsUSA participation. The carpentry teacher at McPherson (Kan.) High School has had seven state champions in a row. One of them, Adam Deeds, won a national medal three times: twice as Penner’s student and once while attending Pittsburg State University.

Penner makes an effort to recruit female students to his program, which has traditionally been male dominated. “On average, we have 10 girls in the program every year,” he says.

His students do a lot more than compete. They are involved in mentoring and community service. The 2007 Kansas Advisor of the Year adds, “It’s important to learn a skill, but it’s also important to learn the value of giving back to your community.”

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Once is not enough for **LILLIE MACK MOSLEY**, whether it’s jobs or weddings. Her husband of 22 years plans to marry her in all 50 states. They married for a seventh time, in Missouri, the day after she competed in the national Carpentry contest (see her SkillsUSA-themed wedding photo in our online edition).

Mosley, of St. Albans, W.Va., has been a coal miner, welder and chemical operator, just to name a few. Her next stop is carpentry, and she’s the only student from Putnam Career and Technical Center in Eleanor, W.Va., to score 100 percent on the course test.

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Moved by a tragedy in an instructor’s family, students are bringing a serious and painful issue into the light — and showing their peers how asking for help can be a sign of strength.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among those 15-24 years old, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. “No one wants to talk about this subject, and it needs to be talked about,” says student Melissa Sabolcik. “There are so many people out there who have these feelings bottled up, and they don’t want to let them out. They take the wrong alternative to stop the feelings instead of just talking to someone about it.”

After an instructor’s nephew ended his life, Sabolcik and her classmates realized that it was time to raise awareness about this painful subject. With Amy Yang and Amanda Laird-Kern, fellow students at Gloucester County Institute of Technology (GCIT) in Sewell, N.J., she helped to develop a suicide awareness and prevention program.

Using the theme “Be Aware, People Care,” they ordered blue-and-white silicone bracelets and had sponsor cards printed for a fundraiser. “The blue represents darkness and the white represents light,” Yang explains. “It symbolizes going from darkness into the light.”

An official sponsor of the local American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s “Out of the Darkness” walk, GCIT’s SkillsUSA chapter organized an October event with N.J. Gov. Jon Corzine as guest speaker.

WEB RESOURCES
- Find out more about suicide prevention and get ideas for your own awareness projects at: www.afsp.org
- As these students learned, getting the facts about teen depression and suicide prevention made these tough topics easier to talk about with their peers. Visit: www.teendepression.org and www.depressionisreal.org
More than 400 people participated. (Corzine is pictured above in the gray sweater.)

Besides the walk, now an annual event, SkillsUSA members held a schoolwide assembly. ACTing Out, the school’s dance troupe, gave several performances.

Speakers were also invited to discuss both the warning signs and the emotional impact suicide has on families and friends. The students learned how to talk to their peers about depression and suicide. They heard how important it is to approach a friend in crisis, regardless of how uncomfortable it may be.

“I think a lot of times, people are afraid to ask for help,” Yang says. “I think it’s good to get help. You should never give up and resort to suicide. Once you’re gone, everyone’s affected. Your whole family will miss you. Your friends will miss you.”

Yang adds that she thinks it’s a sign of strength to get help, “because it shows you have the courage to go out there and find a way to solve your problems.”

Laird-Kern agrees: “I think you should try to help someone even though it’s not easy. If the person won’t talk about it, you should definitely go tell someone else, a parent or a teacher, that the person is troubled.”

‘There are people who can help’

Toni Terpolilli, the students’ SkillsUSA advisor, is the instructor who lost her nephew to suicide.

“In our area, there’s definitely a problem,” Terpolilli explains, “so that’s how we began the whole thing. We have to tell kids that it’s not the end. There are people who can help, and I wanted them to know where to go to get help. There is a stigma attached with this, and that’s what the kids are afraid of. They need to learn there are others who may feel the same way.

“This is such a touchy area,” she adds. “Schools can be a little reluctant to address this. We asked our principal, and she said, ‘You have to talk about this, because it’s a problem.’ From top to bottom, our school, they support it.”

Terpolilli’s sister-in-law attended the assembly and was so impressed, she encouraged the chapter to take the show on the road. “We’ve actually had two other places book the assembly,” the advisor says. DVDs of the program are also available.

“‘We as adults sometimes minimize the problems that these kids are having,’” Terpolilli explains. “‘To us, their issues are small, but to them, they are huge. And we need to realize that and not just say, ‘Oh, it will be OK.’

“For the first year after my nephew passed away, I just couldn’t get a grasp of it. But then I talked to one of our school-based youth counselors, and we realized that we had to do something.”

Her students created brochures of the warning signs to share with classmates.

“This is a tough topic to get high school students at such a young age, from 14 to 17, to embrace,” Terpolilli says. “At first it was a little scary, but then they researched it. They learned about it. They shared it with their peers. Now it’s not so scary to talk about.”

To prove that point, Sabolcik adds, “If someone were on the edge, I would tell them that like everything in life, there are all different sides. There are bad sides, but there are also good. There are ways to find that good side. There are people out there who can help you with your problems.”

(To learn more about GCIT’s program or how to start your own suicide awareness program, e-mail Toni Terpolilli: TTerpolilli@gcit.org.)
Building a ‘green’ home: Students’ work scores higher than builder’s in energy rating

Greener than grass. That’s what Mark Enger says of the home his students are now building for Habitat for Humanity. They’re raising the bar on energy efficiency from last year’s standards, when the students’ work not only met all the building code certifications for building a residential home but exceeded Energy Star standards as well.

“There was a professional builder in the same area who could not meet the testing specifications of what the students accomplished on this home,” Enger explains, “meaning our home tested tighter and more efficient than a home built by a professional builder.”

Enger’s residential construction class is part of the Professional Technical magnet program in Joint School District No. 2 at Meridian (Idaho) High School. The class is one of the only high school classes in the state to provide this type of hands-on learning and experience. Students get graded for their work on the house.

The Meridian School District and Boise Valley Habitat for Humanity have formed a partnership to provide occupational training to students and homes for needy families in the community.

Each year, students build a Habitat home that is ready for the owners by June. The program was developed to incorporate the different disciplines of construction education and give students real-life experience while being graded. Students who participate can test for college course credits. Enger is now in his fourth year on the project, and the school’s been at it for eight.

“The Habitat home benefits people in the community, obviously, but we can use it for its many training facets — masonry, construction, digital home-technology integration, architecture ... it’s doing the whole thing,” Enger says.

When Enger started teaching this program four years ago, he had no idea what he was getting into, so he recruited his son to ensure he had someone he could depend on. Three other students signed up.

“Now I have 60 students registered for the level-one construction course and over 30 some odd students out on the job site building the home,” he adds.

Once Enger starts talking about the benefits of the project, he can’t stop. “We’re saving the taxpayers money. Sixty thousand dollars was covered through donations to Habitat. The school district doesn’t use one dime of the taxpayers’ money.”

The Habitat for Humanity Construction Center relocates each year to a new Habitat building lot location within the Meridian School District boundaries.

The program follows the National Center for Construction Education and Research curriculum endorsed by the Associated General Contractors.

Puzzle pieces giving autism a full picture

Inspired by dean of students Mike Galler and his son Trestin, who has autism, the students at Bethlehem Area Vocational Technical School in Northampton, Pa., wanted to raise awareness. They ended up raising more than $8,500 for the Lehigh Valley chapter of Autism Speaks.

Working with that organization since 2007, the school has hosted “Walk Now for Autism” events for the funds. Students have also invited guest speakers, helped in classrooms and held spa nights for parents.

Autism Speaks’ symbol is a puzzle, because its mission is finding the missing pieces of autism. Using this symbol in an awareness project last year, the school’s SkillsUSA national competitors won a bronze medal in Community Service.

This year, they’ve enlisted help from Monroe Career and Technical Institute in Bartonsville, Career Institute of Technology in Easton, and Upper Bucks Area Vocational Technical School in Perkasie. Together, the schools have made 750 wooden puzzle pieces. Carpentry students cut the pieces, auto collision classes prime and smooth the edges, and cosmetology students help autistic children paint them.

According to Galler, representatives from Autism Speaks flew in from Los Angeles to discuss turning these efforts into a model awareness program to implement in elementary schools.

Bronze medalists Shea Emanuel, Aaron Longley and Vicky Cook with Trestin Galler.
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The Way Ahead
'FIGHTING BACK'

Picture a champion. You don’t see drug addiction, physical abuse or juvenile detention. But for Gary Stange, it’s part of what he’s both seen and overcome on the road to becoming a gold medalist in his state.

After “my parents ended up splitting, I went from grandparent to grandparent for a while, then to court to see who would get custody,” says Stange (whose name is pronounced as rhyming with lanky).

Shuttled back and forth from Mississippi to South Dakota — and from grandparents to foster homes, juvenile detention and placement homes — Stange eventually attended 21 different schools. The abuse he suffered had left its mark, emotionally as well as physically.

“I went through a hard time with that. It’s how you think the world is. And you think it’s never going to stop. But you’ve got to fight,” he says.

Stange stoically rambles through the inventory of his troubled life as if he were reviewing a grocery list.

“While in the placement home, I hit a cop and went to juvenile detention for about four months. I was only 13.

“My little brother lived with my aunt and uncle for a while. Now he’s staying with a friend. I practically had to raise him,” Stange remembers. “He was in a foster home for the same amount of time that I was, but I was a troublemaker and ended up in the placement home.”

Placement homes offer specialized care for at-risk youth.

“When we moved back to Mississippi the last time, I got into some stuff I didn’t need to ... and, I just couldn’t do it anymore,” he adds. “I decided I wanted to finish my education. I realized that I had to do more than my parents have.

“So, I moved to South Dakota on my own. I was 16. I took a bus from Vicksburg, Miss., to Rapid City, S.D., then had a friend drive me back to Faith.”

Faith is the town where he now lives. When Stange speaks of it, coincidentally, hope begins to fill his voice. It was in Faith that his life slowly started to change.

A rough start in life gave this young man his fighting spirit. Learning to take the fight to the right place was another story. It all came together in a place called Faith.

By Ann P. Schreiber
“I stayed with my girlfriend, whom I’d been with for years. She’s been a real big help,” Stange says. “I stayed there for a week and had to get out. Her dad didn’t want me there. I had to find a place, and I ended up staying with a preacher for about a month in his basement. Things didn’t work out there. He was too busy to keep track of me.

“I stayed with another family for about a year. The hardest part was trying to get enrolled in high school. You need parental signatures for everything. I was really just having a hard time staying in school, because I didn’t have the signatures. I was technically not even a student.

“But I did finish and graduated in 2007, and I put myself into [Rapid City’s] Western Dakota Tech,” he adds. “I had to prove that I was independent. Now I’m going to college, and I think I’m doing pretty good.”

Stange attributes New Beginnings, a program run by Lutheran Social Services in Aberdeen, S.D., for helping him get established on his own.

“If it weren’t for them and a few of the people there, I don’t know what would have happened to me,” he says.

Proving them wrong
Stange joined the chapter at Western Dakota Tech, competed and made it to nationals. His motivation for not giving up? Proving his family wrong, he says. “My family said I couldn’t do it. I’m from a long line of failures.”

Yet he adds, “You’ve got to believe in yourself. You can’t let anyone drag you down. Don’t think that you have to be like your parents. There’s so much opportunity. Go with what you know, and try.

“It’s true, the sky is the limit. You can do whatever you want as long as you are willing to try.”

Since high school, Stange has had his own apartment. He’s had to work two jobs to afford the place while attending school. But he isn’t complaining. Shrugging his shoulders, he says it’s no big deal.

“I’m working right now as a structural welder as I go for my degree in collision repair. I got lucky and got a job through a school career-day event.”

Stange smirks before he launches into a lighter tidbit of his life involving his instructor, Wayne Kessler.

“My mom’s been married three times, including to a guy who was my instructor’s cousin. So I’m kind of related to my instructor. I milked the cows at my instructor’s dad’s house. And, I never knew it until I started school.”

With an air of acceptance, he offers: “I just want kids to know it’s not the end of the world if you end up like I did.”

“It’s how you think the world is. And you think it’s never going to stop. But you’ve got to fight.”
Finding Her Heart’s Desire In Her Own New Back Yard

Lives are marked by milestones: the good (like graduations and weddings) and the not so good (separations and heart attacks). LaManda Slover experienced them all in little more than a year.

By the time she started her senior year, LaManda Slover was already a newlywed. She’d left her family in Cleveland, Okla. (“I’d say Hallett, but that isn’t even on the map,” she laughs) for Fort Hood, Texas. Her husband, Jimmy, had just enlisted in the Army, and she planned to stay with him only for the summer and then finish high school back home.

Then the orders came that changed everything. Jimmy was being deployed to Iraq months earlier than expected. “Oh, no, so soon,” Slover remembers thinking. She decided to remain in Texas and enjoy the time together they had left. Five months after their move, Jimmy was gone, and she was living alone and attending Shoemaker High School in Killeen.

Hard lessons followed, like $1,500 in telephone calls to Iraq the first month. The 18-year-old considered moving back to her old school, where she’d completed a nurse assisting program. She wanted to earn a phlebotomy certification as well.

Then Slover found out about Shoemaker’s cooperative education program, which led to a full-time position at a nursing home — and a “mom away from home.” That was co-op teacher Brenda Drawdy. “She didn’t know where to go looking for jobs in, you can imagine, a strange place,” Drawdy recalls. “I just happened to have the right connections.”

In more ways than one. “I went into SkillsUSA to help me meet people,” Slover says, “and that’s how I met all my friends.” As a gift to local children with deployed parents, she helped her chapter collect hundreds of stuffed toys. The project won a state gold medal in Community Service.

Aside from the resulting trip to the SkillsUSA nationals, Slover was planning on being the first person in her family to graduate from high school. Then came a major setback. “I had a heart attack at school,” she explains, and needed surgery due to a pre-existing condition. “I had to get back in school. I couldn’t fail.” Although out for two weeks, with Drawdy at her side in the hospital, she caught up.

Graduation neared, but two days before it, Slover hadn’t heard from her husband, who was making a special trip. “And he knocks on my door. I was like, ‘Ahh! You made it for graduation, everything!’ I was just so afraid he wasn’t going to,” she says.

Their visit was cut short by SkillsUSA’s conference. “Usually he leaves me at the airport, and this time I left him,” Slover notes. “I lost a day with him, but I think we did awesome in our competition.”

It would be hard to forget a senior year like hers. She and Jimmy are now focused on another move, to Fort Riley, Kan., but Slover remembers its lessons: “Don’t ever use a calling card with a cell phone!” •
Acts of *Selfless Service* Often Need to Be *Shared*

SkillsUSA’s National Week of Service is May 3-9, and we want to know about your projects! That’s why SkillsUSA is offering a special gift to all chapters who send us a report on their community service activities during this annual event commemorating SkillsUSA’s founding.

While planning your project, remember to appoint photographers to chronicle the event. When it’s completed, come together as a class and discuss what you accomplished. Why did you choose this project? What were the highlights? How many were involved? How were your technical skills put to use? Assign a student (or your advisor) to take notes during the discussion and write up the final report (just a few paragraphs). Then, e-mail it by May 31 to kperrino@skillsusa.org and look for your gift to follow soon after. Oh, and don’t forget the photos!

For more, visit: [www.skillsusa.org/events/service.shtml](http://www.skillsusa.org/events/service.shtml).

Nobody makes a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little.

— Edmund Burke

Find the photo, win a prize

No, the picture on the left isn’t abstract art. It’s actually a distorted part of another photo in this issue. Find the original photo and send us the page number where it appears to win a SkillsUSA track jacket (first prize) or cap (second prize). To enter, e-mail your answer, name, address and telephone number to: anyinfo@skillsusa.org, with “Photo Contest” in the subject line. Or, mail to: SkillsUSA Photo Contest, 14001 SkillsUSA Way, Leesburg, VA 20176. One first-place and one second-place winner will be picked from a random drawing of correct entries. Entries must be received by Aug. 1. Congratulations to last issue’s winners: Danny Ramirez of Troy, N.Y., and Steven Hill of El Paso, Texas.
HANDPRINTS RAISE PROFILE OF CHILD ABUSE

With the theme “Hands Can Hurt, Hands Can Heal,” the SkillsUSA animation chapter students at San Benito (Texas) High School have raised awareness about child abuse prevention. They dubbed their week of awareness activities the Handprint Project. Chapter members gave teachers blue ribbons to distribute to more than 1,000 students.

They helped classmates make painted handprints on a poster as a pledge to stop abusive behavior. Guest speakers addressed several classes. Students held a stuffed animal drive for Maggie’s House, a nonprofit that houses abused children.

Victims of abuse were allowed to write their stories anonymously on T-shirts that were displayed on a clothesline at the school. A culminating community event at the Heavin Resaca Trails park featured the same shirts, plus an awareness walk (photo, above), concession stands and entertainment.

As a resource for victims and survivors, the students also developed a Web page and posted public service announcements they produced. See their work at: www.sbcisd.net/thehandprintproject.html.

Helping a classmate recuperate

After Jessica McGowan suffered a severe back injury in a horseback riding accident, Jamy Meeks and Nick Dipaolo, her teachers at Jones County High School in Gray, Ga., and principal Chuck Gibson rallied volunteers to help.

With the work of their construction students, donated materials and a discount and free delivery from Ace Hardware, the group built a wheelchair ramp at the high-school senior’s home.

While McGowan recuperates, her mother, a county school system employee, will be off work to take care of her. To offset this loss of income as well as the medical expenses, teachers wore jeans to school for a $5 donation and opened a bank account to accept other donations.

Pint-sized podcasters

Digital media seniors at Delcastle Technical High School in Wilmington, Del., help elementary students create podcasts. The youngsters write and illustrate stories, then are recorded reading them. Using GarageBand software, the seniors import the audio and scans of the pictures, add music and mix the sound with voice tracks. They upload their podcast collection to www.myistorybook.com. This project was entered in SkillsUSA’s Student2Student Mentoring recognition program (see winners at: www.skillsusa.org/educators/mentrecog.shtml).
SkillsUSA Champions features our members’ photography. We’re looking for images of local chapters in action, or photos showing individual members’ concentration or perseverance. The photographer’s chapter is awarded $150. E-mail: thall@skillsusa.org for details (put “Image Photo” in the subject header), or write SkillsUSA Champions, 14001 SkillsUSA Way, Leesburg, VA 20176.

If you stop, you’ll never know in life what you really can do. My father, he was a hard-working man, and he always just went out and did what he had to do to support his family. Seeing his level of sacrifice is what gave me what I needed in order to push me to be the best that I can be.

Lillie Mack Mosley, SkillsUSA competitor, launched her new career in carpentry at Putnam Career and Technical Center in Eleanor, W.Va.

If you want your program to be successful and you really want your students to be successful, you must get involved in SkillsUSA.

Carlos Jones Sr., 32-year teacher, Kingsland, Ga.
Ordinary is not an option in the Air National Guard. Want to work on planes? How about spacecraft? There are nearly two hundred specialty fields where you can get the skills and knowledge to start a fulfilling career. Visit GoANG.com to learn about paying for college and serving your country and community. Find out how you can shape your future in the Air Guard.

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