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with celebrity chefs

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ON THE COVER:
SkillsUSA Champion Ruby Ramirez of Somerton, Ariz. Photo by Lloyd Wolf.
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In keeping with a tradition of respect for the individuality of our members and our role in workforce development, SkillsUSA strives to ensure inclusive participation in all of our programs, partnerships and employment opportunities.

Visit the SkillsUSA Champions “e-zine” version at www.skillsusa.org/champions/ to flip through articles, view videos and extra photos and get updates. You’ll find archives of past issues, advertiser links, lesson plans for new issues, and more.

See even more champions on our frequently updated website, www.skillsusa.org, as well as:

www.skillsusa.org/champions/
Keep Spreading the Spirit

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

Q: I’m nearing the end of my technical program. How can I stay a part of SkillsUSA? It’s been great for me.
Tim: In every SkillsUSA chapter, there’s a spirit of leadership, cooperation, service and integrity that seems to be contagious. This spirit comes from each of you, and even out of school, you can still be “contagious.” Your spirit can spread as others follow a positive pathway in education, career, community and life.

In this issue of SkillsUSA Champions, you’ll read about something else that’s “contagious,” but not in a good way: misuse of social media. Some students feel genuinely threatened by something that starts online. If you see cyberbullying at your school, take a stand. Building awareness might be a good service project for your SkillsUSA chapter. I feel strongly that we need a zero-tolerance policy for being hateful in our digital world.

Back to the positive, you’ll read about our SkillsUSA WorldTeam heading to Germany this July and representing each of you in 19 technical competitions. Follow their journey on our website at: www.skillsusa.org/compete/worldteam.shtml.

You can also hear from a former national competitor who says the experience now helps her keep calm in the high-pressure world of television. Kristina Rice is a food stylist for celebrated chefs Wolfgang Puck, Emeril Lagasse and Cat Cora. Kristina has built a successful career while still having the flexibility to raise a family. The rear-view mirror often does show us which experiences help us the most.

As you finish your program this year, don’t let SkillsUSA get too distant in your rear-view mirror. Become part of our alumni network by visiting this Web page: www.skillsusa.org/supporters/alumni.shtml. That way, you can still read SkillsUSA Champions magazine on a quarterly basis. Joining is absolutely free, and it’s a great way to stay connected!

When I was an instructor, one of my greatest joys was hearing from former students to know how they were doing. Stay in touch with your teachers. Drop by for a visit, send email, come back to help your local program, or be a state conference volunteer. Give back to the system that gave you something. You’ll enjoy helping the students coming along behind you, and this looks good on a résumé, too.

Your contagious spirit keeps me going, and it keeps this organization going. Let’s keep spreading the good. I hope I’ll see you at our national conference in June. •

Got questions about SkillsUSA or other topics? Email anyinfo@skillsusa.org or send a letter to the address on the facing page. Put “Ask Tim” in the subject line or mail address.
Building Conference Anticipation In the Nation

From June 24-28, SkillsUSA unleashes the penultimate National Leadership and Skills Conference in Kansas City, Mo. In 2015, the conference moves to Louisville, Ky., so now, more than ever, it’s time to make those Midwest memories count. Plenty of memories will be made during the celebratory Champions Night at the Power and Light District, as throngs of students from across the nation have tons of fun as one. (Say that five times fast.)

The Opening Ceremony will be punctuated by keynote speaker Mike Rowe, host of “Dirty Jobs” on the Discovery Channel. The SkillsUSA Championships will feature the most contests ever (98), and the Awards Ceremony will spotlight the nation’s top tier of skilled champions. It may be the penultimate conference in Kansas City (that means “next to last,” in case you’re wondering), but it’s the ultimate event on SkillsUSA’s calendar.

The Timberland PRO-sponsored community service event returns to SkillsUSA’s national conference this June. Stay up to date with all conference info at: www.skillsusa.org/events/nlsc.shtml.

Spotlight on Those Who Shun It

Behind every great student is a great teacher, one who often doesn’t get (or ask for) the credit he or she deserves. SkillsUSA’s Advisor of the Year award recognizes some of these exceptional educators, and this year’s finalists are: Sharon Farrington (Region 1), Northeast Metro Technical High School, Wakefield, Mass.; Darin Nine (Region 2), Bellevue (Fla.) High School; Cora Duncan-Foster (Region 3), Breithaupt Career and Technical Center, Detroit; Jackson Tegarden (Region 4), Brownsville, Texas; and Chuck Veloni (Region 5), Aberdeen (Wash.) High School.

The 2013 Advisor of the Year will be named at the National Leadership and Skills Conference in June.
PARTNERSHIPS OFFER DEALS ON OPPORTUNITY

The support of SkillsUSA’s many industry partners keeps the organization growing every year while providing unique opportunities for our members to do the same.

SkillsUSA recently partnered with Gates Corp., whose “Tools for Schools” program is a great way for automotive instructors to bring supplemental educational materials from a global company into the classroom. The goal of the online program is to ensure the latest automotive technology and information is made available 24/7, and by using the materials, schools can earn tools and get answers from experts. For more information, visit: www.skillsusa.org/blog/tag/gates-corporation.

Cengage Learning is providing a variety of learning materials to SkillsUSA members at a substantial discount. Product areas include plumbing, computer programming, job interviewing, photography, computer maintenance and more. Members receive a 20 percent discount, and 5 percent of the purchase is donated to SkillsUSA. Visit: www.informationdestination.cengage.com/skillsusa for more.

Once again, Harley-Davidson Motor Co. Inc. has donated a motorcycle as part of a raffle benefiting the SkillsUSA Alumni and Friends Association and state alumni associations. For each ticket sold, the state alumni group selling the ticket receives $2. The winner will be announced at the Awards Ceremony (winner does not have to be present) of the national conference. For details, visit: www.skillsusa.org/events/harley.shtml.

SkillsUSA Bling Caps the Gown

Graduation is a time to celebrate years of hard work while preparing for a new life chapter. But don’t forget to celebrate your SkillsUSA involvement, too. Adding SkillsUSA graduation regalia like honor cords, stoles or tassels to your already spiffy cap-and-gown ensemble is a great way to show pride in your proud organization. To order, visit: www.skillsusastore.org.

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MANUFACTURING
A NEW BADGE
FOR MEMBERS

Both educators and employers are beginning to more fully embrace the reality that learning occurs in many ways and in many places. One way to recognize and provide credentials for such learning is found in the growing movement toward “digital badges.”

SkillsUSA is introducing a digital badge program for its student members. Think of something like Boy Scout merit badges, but for technical learning that’s earned or conferred online.

The Harvard Business Review has cited the digital badge movement as one of four innovation trends to watch in 2013: “From Khan Academy to Coursera to edX to the O’Reilly School of Technology, badges increasingly enjoy consideration as human capital’s coin of the realm for online education.”

The Mozilla Foundation, with financial support from the MacArthur Foundation, is leading an initiative it calls “Open Badges” (details at: www.openbadges.org). SkillsUSA, along with Project Lead the Way (PLTW), is working with a Mozilla grant to launch its digital badge project. The grant was landed by the Manufacturing Institute, which is the workforce development arm of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM).

The project is still in development, and for the time being, these digitally conferred credentials are being referred to as “M-Badges.” To qualify for a SkillsUSA M-Badge, a student member will need to be enrolled in a manufacturing curriculum or one related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

The student member will also have to meet at least two of the following five criteria:

- Earn a passing (“cut score”) grade in any Skill Connect Assessment
- Attend a regional, state or national-level leadership training event
- Win a gold, silver or bronze medal in any state-level SkillsUSA Championships contest
By meeting this criteria, SkillsUSA M-Badge holders will have successfully met NAM-endorsed qualifications for demonstrated knowledge and applied skills in manufacturing and STEM fields, making them attractive candidates for employment or continued education. SkillsUSA’s partners in manufacturing will be apprised of the M-Badge program and encouraged to offer SkillsUSA M-Badge holders opportunities for internships, summer jobs, job shadowing and interviews for full-time employment.

The online process of conferring badges to qualifying SkillsUSA students will run through a special page on the SkillsUSA website. The information is being shared with instructors who have active SkillsUSA member sections in manufacturing occupations and STEM curricula. These instructors will be responsible for identifying which of their students have met the qualifications to attain a SkillsUSA M-Badge.

Students will apply to the dedicated Web page to receive the M-Badge, and the instructors will certify online that the students qualify. SkillsUSA, through a NAM-contracted technology supplier, will then confer M-Badges to the students by email.

As the M-Badge program grows and matures, there will be opportunities for SkillsUSA’s dues-paying professional members to receive forms of M-Badge recognition, and SkillsUSA may develop a variety of M-Badge types to recognize acquisition of specific technical or employability skills by its student members.

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Containing a cyberepidemic

The most devious online ‘virus’ spreads through human contact

By Larry D. Teverbaugh, Ph.D.
(CareerSafe LLC Founder and CEO)

Every two minutes, one youth is injured in the workplace. Every seven minutes, one youth is hospitalized, and every five days, one youth is killed, all due to workplace incidents. More alarming, young workers from 16-24 years old continue to claim the highest rates of work-related deaths, injuries and illnesses, easily doubling those same statistics from any other age group.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention attribute high rates of deaths, injuries and illnesses among young workers not only to the types of employment, but also to inexperience and lack of safety training, variables that can easily be controlled with proper instruction. Safety education is often overlooked, but it is one of the most important elements of on-the-job training, and it can offer long-term job benefits like increased employability.

But beyond the physical threats, our young workers now face new safety risks from a place outside the work environment: cyberspace. As a nation, we are alarmed at the growing risks our students face as they socialize, work, study and play online. Not a day goes by that we do not learn of students who’ve been victimized by cyberbullying, sexting, identity theft or fraud.

In addition, there has been a rise in the criminal prosecution of students who did not understand the legal ramifications of their online actions with regard to sharing inappropriate pictures of underage classmates, downloading and sharing intellectual property without permission, or hacking computer systems for “fun.”

Even more frightening is the emotional pain and suffering that students face from a 24/7 connection to those individuals who would do them harm through cyberbullying, cyberstalking and exploitation. Many victims end up feeling like there’s nowhere to hide in our increasingly interconnected digital world. Here are some facts to put student cybersafety into perspective (sources noted in italics):

- A 2012 study of 41 youth suicide cases found that 78 percent were bullied at school and online (The youth in the study ranged from 13-18 years old.) (American Academy of Pediatrics)
- More than half of adolescents have been bullied online or have bullied others
- Fewer than one in five cyberbullying incidents are reported to law enforcement (www.bullyingstatistics.org)
- Sixty-eight percent of teens agree that cyberbullying is a serious problem
- One million students were harassed, threatened or subjected to forms of cyberbullying on Facebook during the past year (www.internetsafety101.org)

Rebooting the system

Now that we have the facts, what can be done to reduce the risk for our youth? Take some tips from the Department of Homeland Security:

- Keep personal information private, including family or school names, telephone numbers and addresses
- Think twice before you post anything online; once it’s in cyberspace, it is out there forever
- Stop any questionable online behavior
- Speak up. If you see something inappropriate, let the website know and tell an adult you trust. Don’t stand for bullying, online or off
- Use strong passwords that are hard to guess, and don’t share them with anyone other than your parents
- Don’t open email or links from unfamiliar sources. If you think an offer is too good to be true, it probably is

Above all, if you or someone you know has been compromised or bullied, don’t be afraid to talk to a parent, guardian, teacher or a trusted adult.

In addition, if the safety guidance you have received does not seem appropriate, it’s never too late to take the proper steps to attain safety, both online and in the workplace.

The issues cited in this article will not disappear, but we can make a difference through raised awareness.

On June 25, CareerSafe will be celebrating National Young Worker Safety Day at SkillsUSA’s National Leadership and Skills Conference. The day is part of a larger campaign called “A Million Safer: A Young Worker Safety Initiative.” Our goal is to reach 1 million students by December 2015.

Will you join us in making “A Million Safer”?
For more information on CareerSafe, visit: www.careersafeonline.com.
With 20 competitors in 19 contest areas, SkillsUSA will field its largest team ever at the upcoming WorldSkills Competition. The members are beyond excited.

“I’m looking forward to competing against the best of the best in the world. It will be nice to see where we stand internationally,” says Ohio’s Jarrod Nichols, who’s part of the Mechatronics team.

Some of the team members already know what that’s like, having traveled in late 2012 to Brazil for WorldSkills Americas (photos, bottom right).

The buildup to completing the SkillsUSA WorldTeam has been exciting in itself. The newest member, Alex Pazkowski of Michigan, was selected during events surrounding the Daytona 500.

WorldSkills Germany will host the 42nd biennial competition from July 2-7. Events will be held at the Leipzig Trade Fair and Exhibition Center, but you can follow the U.S. team’s progress online at: www.skillsusa.org/compete/worldteam.shtml. For now, get to know the members on the following pages.

BY CRAIG E. MOORE
Food stylist Kristina Rice on the set of Sullivan Productions, a leader in television marketing.
Prom Day for the PRESSURE COOKER

The Life of a Food Stylist

By Ann P. Schreiber

Kristina Rice, food stylist and chef, not only knows how to make a chicken taste good, she makes it look so good that television viewers open their wallets.

Rice has appeared on the Home Shopping Network (HSN) with top celebrity chefs including Wolfgang Puck, Emeril Lagasse, Cat Cora, Roy Yamaguchi and Todd English. She works on- and off-camera with the chefs, preparing food and demonstrating cooking products for live television.

Her opportunity to be on TV came when the on-air talent didn’t know the breast of a chicken from its wings. Off camera, Rice desperately tried to get the woman to display the chicken properly. “I’m just like, ‘Turn it around, turn it around,’” she remembers. “And then I’m like, ‘You know what? I can do everything but push the button for this girl.’ And they said, ‘Well, do you want to do it?’ and I said, ‘Sure!’”

She’s been working as a food stylist for more than 13 years. Answering an online ad for a job that turned out to be working with Puck on HSN, Rice was hoping for a flexible, part-time job schedule while her children were small. But when she started getting more offers from more chefs, she started her own company, Saute4U.

“If your product or your food is going on the air, my job is to make your product shine and my guests shine,” Rice explains. “So, it’s ‘prom day for the pressure cooker,’ or it’s prom day basically for whatever product that you’re selling.”

A graduate of Pinellas Technical Education Center (PTEC) in St. Petersburg, Fla., Rice was a Culinary Arts contestant at SkillsUSA’s 1986 nationals.

“During the competition, they hand you a packet, and in that packet you have a certain time frame. In that time frame, you need to accomplish answering all the questions, breaking down the recipes accurately, finding your fine ingredients without waste, making it in a timely manner. And, making your presentation is a key part. That is every component of what a food stylist does.”

Another competition experience helped when she first appeared live on the air.

Whether she’s helping celebrity chefs look their best or feeding a movie crew, Kristina Rice can’t be star struck. She has to make everything ‘just so.’

QUICK READ

Food stylists make food look extremely appealing. Because they work on live television and with crews of photographers or videographers, food stylists must have culinary knowledge and great teamwork skills. They also need an eye for detail and an artistic sense of arrangement and color.

Check out Kristina Rice’s official website: www.kristinarice.com/
Nervous and nine months pregnant, Rice remembered something she’d learned while training for the Chapter Business Procedure contest: “If you get through the first 90 seconds, you’ll be fine.” Then, she says, “the baby did a back flip and the host stopped, because I stopped.” Asked if she was OK, Rice replied, “Yeah, I’m fine. I just have to get my son’s foot out of my lung and we’ll be all right.” In that down-to-earth moment, she connected with her viewers and says sales shot from about 500 per minute to 1,500.

Knowing how to improvise
Connecting with viewers and having a sense of humor helps in live television, where the occasional “oops” is inevitable. “I’ve burned things when I’m doing cookware. I think I made a grilled cheese sandwich, and I fried it because I kept flapping my jaw,” Rice laughs. “I forgot that the burner was on high. I was saying how you don’t need to cook it on high and ‘blah, blah, blah,’ and I flipped it over and it was blacker than coal.

“What did I do when I saw it? I said, ‘Well, look how easily I burned it.’”

Details are critical for live television. When Rice is preparing for a show, she needs to know exactly what kind of food and how much of it is needed, as well as when and how it’s going to be prepared and presented.

She also has to know who’s on camera left and who’s on camera right. “If something flubs up from Demo One to Demo Two, Demo Three needs to be prepared,” she says, “so that when you’re on Demo Three, the food stylist can come in, fix it and be gone if it’s possible.

“So, timing is everything. Presentation is everything, detail, working well with others. It doesn’t matter whether or not I’m in the same room with Iron Chef Cat Cora or Wolfgang or Gordon Ramsey or my best friend and husband. You can’t get star struck. You have to listen, focus, not take anything personal and make it so. My whole world is making it so.”

With five employees and counting, Rice and her husband, Vern, also run a craft service company.
“It’s the best job. Listen, I can’t have a better job. My job is awesome and wonderful. I mean, you get to work with a team — you get to create your own team. You get to collaborate and form partnerships. You get to delegate to a person’s strengths. It all comes down to what I learned from VICA.”

“A craft service,” she explains, “provides drinks, snacks and healthy choices for the crew when they are shooting commercials, movies or infomercials.” For the film “Magic Mike,” they worked with a crew of more than 150 during location shoots around Tampa and Clearwater, Fla.

Rice realized Saute4U was a success when she no longer needed to advertise. Listening to her talk, there’s a hint of disbelief in that she’s done so well — and an overwhelming sense of gratitude.

She credits her North East High School instructor, William White, for encouraging her to try culinary arts and pulling her out of a bad crowd. “Mr. White pushed me to do better for myself,” she says, referring to him as “an amazing, wonderful, awesome, underappreciated teacher.”

Experience competing in SkillsUSA, which was known at that time as the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA), helped Rice enter PTEC five levels above other new students. Her instructor there, Chef Robert Lee, helped Rice cope when her advanced placement roused resentment from classmates. After she graduated, Lee found her a job as a personal chef in the home of an older couple. They had nine grown children, and their families all lived in the same area. It was a great experience, Rice says.

Her résumé includes being an assistant restaurant chef at a major hotel as well as a food and beverage manager for a country club. After having her first child, Rice was asked to open a restaurant. “I said, ‘No thank you, no. I don’t want to be married to that. I want to be married to my family.’ She was talked into it, but the partner bailed and stress levels were high. Rice got rid of the restaurant and had another son. “My priorities were, I didn’t care about the restaurant, I would like to give my son a brother or sister,” she adds.

The best of both worlds

With family always first and foremost, Rice’s goal is to put food on the table. Not that it’s ordinary food.

“Our kids have magnificent palates,” she says. Cooper, age 7, enjoys grilled octopus, and her 12-year-old, Drew, likes squid, muscles and salmon. “Will they eat peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches? Not to save my life, but they will eat lamb. They will eat fish and salmon and everything under the sun, but God forbid, will they eat bologna or peanut butter, something simple?” she laughs.

Working at a round-the-clock TV station provides the flexibility to make her children a priority. “I could go to work at 5 or 6 at night because we didn’t have a show until midnight, put in my time, go grocery shopping,” Rice says. “I’d do my shows, be home at 3 or 4 in the morning, and then my husband would go to work. So, I could love and squish my babies, launch them to school or go play in the playground, and have the best of both worlds. Why would I ever want to punch a time clock?”

“I don’t care about the money,” she emphasizes. “I just want to be happy.” Being a food stylist makes her happy. “It’s the best job,” she says. “Listen, I can’t have a better job. My job is awesome and wonderful. I mean, you get to work with a team — you get to create your own team. You get to collaborate and form partnerships. You get to delegate to a person’s strengths. It all comes down to what I learned from VICA.”

“"There really is no such thing as a typical day on the job.”

-Chad Baxter
Branch Manager
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We look forward to seeing you at NLSC in June!
Serving a New Generation Takes the Right Prescription

“Anything is possible, and there is no such thing as ‘I can’t,’” says Karen Carbajal, who’s working her way to a medical degree and whose spirit is echoed by classmate Josefina Plata.

Confidence. Compassion. Dedication. It takes all these things to become a medical doctor, but add the right amount of encouragement and opportunity, and Josefina Plata and Karen Carbajal are well on their way to reaching that goal.

These students have come so far already, it’s hard to imagine that they won’t fulfill their dreams. Seeking a better education, Plata, an aspiring pediatrician, left Mexico to live with an uncle in Florida when she was only 12. Her classmate Carbajal, who plans to work with newborns as a neonatologist, worked two jobs to support her family after her father died.

Both entered the patient care technician program at Manatee Technical Institute (MTI) in Bradenton, Fla. Instructor Denise Walker (pictured with Plata, left, and Carbajal) says Carbajal “came into my classroom as a shy, insecure young woman.” The family had recently moved from North Carolina, and it had taken Carbajal’s mother three months to find a new job. The student, then 15, worked at a restaurant and a sporting goods store when not caring for her younger brother.

And Plata, Walker observes, also had to “work very hard to overcome her insecurities. She was self-conscious about her accent, and was unsure about participating in SkillsUSA because she was going to have to speak in front of people.”

Leaving her family behind was also “very, very hard,” says Plata, who was born in the United States but had lived in Mexico since she was 2. “I was just confused, couldn’t understand how my parents thought that sending me away from them was better for me.” She got a job to pay for a ticket home each summer.

With Walker’s guidance, the two students gave presentations for SWAT (Students Working Against Tobacco) and rose to the national level of SkillsUSA competitions: Plata in Career Pathways Showcase and Carbajal in Nurse Assisting.

“Having to go through all these competitions, it’s helped me gain confidence in myself and not be shy,” Carbajal adds.

Finding the right amount of compassion to be a doctor was no trouble at all. Carbajal says she developed a love for children by helping raise her brother. And Plata, after a first visit to the facility where they’d be taking care of patients, told her instructor with tear-filled eyes, “Mrs. Walker, I want to take them all home.”

Carbajal and Plata are now nursing students at MTI and plan to go on to get their doctor’s degrees at a university. To stay dedicated to your goals, Plata advises, “There’s many people out there who’ll tell you you can’t or that you’ll never be able to do it. But always try, and try your best, and you’re going to be able to do it.”
There are still parents out there who may not react well to hearing, “Mom (or Dad), I want to go into a career and technical education program.” How can you help change misconceptions about the value of CTE and SkillsUSA?

As a class, split into a “parents” group and a “kids” group. In the parents group, pretend you’re all concerned parents, and develop a list of reasons why you’d have reservations about your child entering a CTE program. In the kids group, anticipate issues parents might have with CTE, and talk about ways to counter them.

Now it’s time for the two groups to interact. Let one of the “parents” go first by expressing a concern about CTE, then let one of the “kids” try to ease that concern.

All parents want their children to succeed. Let them know how CTE helps make that possible. For more, visit: www.skillsusa.org/supporters/parents.shtml.

My heroes are and were my parents. I can’t see having anyone else as my heroes.

— Michael Jordan

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 sport duffel bag (first prize) or travel mug (second prize). To enter, email your answer, name, address and phone number to: anyinfo@skillsusa.org (include “Photo Contest” in the subject line). Or, send to: SkillsUSA Photo Contest, 14001 SkillsUSA Way, Leesburg, VA 20176. One first- and one second-prize winner will be drawn at random from the correct entries. Entries must be received by Aug. 1. Congratulations to last issue’s winners: Lindsay Cumiff of Hanson, Mass., and Jacob Eaton of Phoenix.
LEARNING ABOUT CAREERS FROM THE PROS

Communications professionals recently shared their work experiences during Communications High School’s career-day event in Wall, N.J. The annual half-day event features careers relating to the school’s training focus. This year's guests included MAC makeup artist Natalia Starosolsky, Jazzercise business owner Kellyann Skorupski and former “Saturday Night Live” cast member Siobhan Fallon Hogan. •

Culinary arts students at Mountain View High School in Stafford, Va., hosted a booth at the Metropolitan Cooking and Entertaining Show at the Washington, D.C., Convention Center. Besides four types of pepper jelly, students sold salad dressing and chai tea latte mix. All were paired with coffee mugs in a gift package displaying SkillsUSA's logo as well as the school’s. Proceeds supported the chapter. See video of the students interviewed at the show: http://iloveitspicy.com/2012/11/04/dc-metropolitan-cooking-entertainment-show-wrap-up/. •

Making wishes come true

During the holidays, Osborne High School’s SkillsUSA members helped to sponsor six boys at Chris Kids, an organization that serves abused and neglected youth in the metro Atlanta area. The Marietta, Ga., students raised more than $500 by assembling and selling holiday grams (pictured) to students, faculty and staff at $5 each. The funds covered gifts and wrapping. Teachers and community leaders donated items as well. The students were able to fulfill items on the boys’ wish lists and more: high-end sneakers (Nike Kobe Bryant and Air Max, Pumas and Adidas), MP3 players and gift cards. •

Governor visits chapter

Maryland Gov. Martin O’Malley toured North Point High School in Waldorf, Md., during SkillsUSA Week. At a press conference at the school, he stated, “We must continue to promote innovation in our classrooms to prepare our students for the jobs of tomorrow.”

The same week in February, the chapter kicked off its fundraising campaign, “Kure for Kaitlyn,” for the Children’s Organ Transplant Association. The funds will be directed toward the care of a nearby middle-school student in need of a bone marrow transplant.

To showcase recent SkillsUSA regional competitions, students displayed photos and banners designed by the graphic communications students. •
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, email 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. •

Because of SkillsUSA and the organization’s values, morals and the focus on students and their success, I now can confidently wake up every day and be that person who makes things happen.

National officer Mary Kamuiru, Chattanooga, Tenn.
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