Going for the Gold?
Expert Contest Tips
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SkillsUSA WorldTeam in London
Direct from the WorldSkills Competition:
The largest U.S. group ever sent to the internationals makes a splash “across the pond.”
Find out who took top honors. Plus, your national student officers react to being asked to represent our country at a leader’s forum.
BY TOM KERCHEVAL

Tenth Annual Championships Insider’s Guide
What’s the most important skill to have if you want to win (and who doesn’t)?
It’s tough to narrow it down to just one, but our various contest experts are up to the challenge. And if you think it’s all technical, their answers will surprise you.
BY CRAIG E. MOORE

Gold Standard: Twice a National Medalist
Tyler Brown has loved airplanes most of his life, so a career in aviation maintenance was inevitable — until he decided to combine it with electronics, computers and (of course) flying.
BY ANN P. SCHREIBER

On the Cover:
SkillsUSA Champion Loran Strickland of Holcomb, Miss. Photo by Lloyd Wolf.
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I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. E. Thomas Hall, Editor.
A Global Gold Standard

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

Q: How can I make sure my skills compare to the best in the world?
Tim: Just a few weeks ago, 17 SkillsUSA students were competing on the world stage. Accompanied by four of our national officers, they were in London for the intense, four-day WorldSkills Competition. SkillsUSA’s WorldTeam represented their country extremely well, earning four international honors. I’m proud of the entire team’s passion, professionalism and strong competitive spirit. As I heard from many of its members, “You never know how far SkillsUSA and our competitions can take you.”

If you want to be ready for such an experience, it all starts now. Your local, district and regional SkillsUSA competitions are kicking into high gear. Decide to be the best you can be every day, and work relentlessly for the gold standard.

By following these goals, you may be the next state champion this spring in your technical area or in a leadership event. You may be among nearly 6,000 competitors converging on the SkillsUSA Championships in June. You may even be one of the students going to Germany in July 2013 for the next WorldSkills Competition.

To be sure you are ready, take the advice of those who’ve experienced the heat of a contest. This issue has insider tips from dozens of technical committees — our industry partners who design and manage each event — as well as Tyler Brown, a competitor with multiple medals. It’s also very important to study the SkillsUSA Championships Technical Standards. If you can demonstrate the skills within the standards, you can be successful. Finally, this simple advice still works for most winners: practice, practice, practice.

Over the first six months of 2012, thousands of gold, silver and bronze medals will be presented to SkillsUSA champions in every state and in three U.S. territories. Our medals are unique, but have you ever looked closely at one of them? It may be bright and shiny now, but each medal starts out as a lump of plain metal that must be individually shaped and polished. Work hard to hone your technical and leadership skills. Allow yourself to be shaped by your learning, your experiences and your personal goals.

More importantly, keep working to meet the gold-medal standard you set for yourself. If you’re sure you have done your very best, whether or not you receive a gold medal, I know you will have a golden experience.

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.
Passionate Leaders
Inspire D.C. Capitol Gains

From 25 states and Puerto Rico, they came to Washington with one main goal: to take the SkillsUSA message to the corridors of power in the world’s most powerful city.

The 269 students and chapter advisors who attended SkillsUSA’s Washington Leadership Training Institute in September accomplished that goal and more. During visits to 103 decision-makers on Capitol Hill, students let legislators know how important career and technical education has been to their lives and how supporting CTE is vital if future generations are to experience the same benefits.

Throughout the amazing week, students also took part in intensive leadership training, interacted with SkillsUSA’s board of directors, visited D.C. landmarks and — oh, yeah — had a ton of fun. For more info and a plethora of photos, visit: www.skillsusa.org/events/wlti.shtml.

The Sky’s Not the Limit

The final flight of the space shuttle Atlantis marked a first for SkillsUSA students: space travel. OK, so the students themselves weren’t on board, but their ideas were.

SkillsUSA members from Massachusetts Regional Vocational Technical School in Fitchburg, Mass., formed one of 11 teams nationwide selected to participate in the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program. Victoria Holbert (SkillsUSA’s high school president), Miguel Velez III, Kayla Nolette and Leighton Noel comprised a team that designed an experiment to study tooth decay in microgravity, an experiment carried out on Atlantis. To learn more, visit: ssep.nasa.gov.

SkillsUSA members celebrate their arrival at the U.S. Capitol, one of many emotional moments during the annual Washington Leadership Training Institute.
CHAMPION’S TOP SUPPORT HONOURED

You know what they say about sequels: “They’re never as good as the original.” Well, SkillsUSA’s second Champion of the Year award dinner joins the ranks of “The Godfather Part II” as an exception to that rule.

This year’s recipient is Jim Lentz, president and chief operating officer of Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A. Inc. During the celebratory dinner at New York’s historic Waldorf-Astoria hotel, Lentz and Toyota — a valued SkillsUSA partner for more than 25 years — were publicly honored for their support in front of nearly 300 industry partners and other guests.

“I love playing golf,” Lentz said just after donning an honorary SkillsUSA blazer. “I’ve always dreamed of winning the Master’s and getting that green jacket. But this red one is much better, and it’s much more important.

“My hope for all SkillsUSA students,” Lentz continued, “is that you find that higher purpose in your work, and that all of you in this room tonight be proud of the fact that you’re part of a great organization that improves lives and is indeed creating a better world.”


PROVIDING RELIEF FOR THE LONG HAUL

When disaster strikes, Americans are generous, but as time passes, people forget. Not SkillsUSA. When a tornado devastated the city of Joplin, Mo., in May, the city’s Franklin Technology Center was nearly destroyed. Still very much in “rebuild” mode, the school recently received a welcome donation from SkillsUSA’s warehouse in Kansas City, Mo., as volunteer teamsters unloaded a semi-truck teeming with equipment, tools and other materials for the school’s ongoing use in a variety of programs. “We vow to give back when given the opportunity to repay the kindness,” said David Rockers, the school’s director.

GOING ALL-IN TO STOP THE DROPOUT CRISIS

Some messages bear repeating, so here’s a reminder to participate with SkillsUSA in the “26 Seconds” campaign. But maybe you’re just not interested in winning prizes and grants while helping to stem America’s dropout crisis.

Still here? Good, because every 26 seconds, a young person drops out of high school, and that’s a stat you can help change. Visit the BMOR Project at: www.facebook.com/26seconds and pledge to graduate. When you do, select SkillsUSA as your affiliation. The organization with the highest pledges per month gets a grant. Participating each month makes you eligible for monthly prizes and, as a grand prize, an end-of-year celebration for your school and community. For all the details, visit: www.26seconds.com.

Photo: Jeff McCallen

National officers Victoria Holbert and Emad Madha thank Lentz (center).
WorldTeam Shines Bright Across the Pond

SkillsUSA recently took its largest WorldTeam in history to London to compete in the 41st WorldSkills Competition. The 17-member squad did itself, SkillsUSA and the United States proud.

The event featured more than 1,000 competitors in 46 different contests and representing 53 countries. Competition was fierce, but U.S. team member Bradley Clink took the silver medal in Welding while Laina Call, Daniel Lehmkuhl and Rachel Koppelman earned Medallions of Excellence in, respectively, Hairdressing, Automobile Technology and Cooking. (Medallions of Excellence are awarded for scores of at least 500 points out of a possible 600.)

Even before the event, the WorldTeam made its presence known in Washington, with a series of visits to congressional representatives on Capitol Hill and officials at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and U.S. departments of Labor and Education.

The team also garnered unprecedented national coverage with a major article in Parade magazine, which has the largest circulation in the nation with nearly 70 million readers. (Catch up online at: tinyurl.com/6nueypt.)

While the 2011 SkillsUSA WorldTeam was certainly hoping to return with 17 gold medals, members realize that success can be measured in many different ways. The exposure they helped bring to career and technical education in our country has been invaluable and will no doubt benefit future WorldTeams.

“I’m extremely proud of every student on the SkillsUSA WorldTeam,” said SkillsUSA’s executive director, Tim Lawrence. For photos, videos and more details, visit: www.skillsusa.org/compete/worldteamphotos.shtml.
The 2011 SkillsUSA WorldTeam was joined in London by four of the organization’s national officers: Victoria Holbert (who serves as high school president), Emad Madha (high school treasurer), Elena Melekos (Region 1 vice president) and Chance Litwin (college/postsecondary president).

In their own words, Madha and Melekos (pictured at the top of the next column, far left and far right, respectively) offer some thoughts on their experiences in London and how their English adventure has helped shape their worldview.

**Emad Madha:** As the national high school treasurer of SkillsUSA, I was invited, along with Elena Melekos, to speak at the WorldSkills Leader’s Forum during the WorldSkills Competition in London.

It was truly an honor to represent SkillsUSA and the youth of America. At the forum, Elena and I spoke on the importance of youth leadership and the future of social media.

Our message had a positive impact on the audience, as it drew on the value of preparing students for leadership roles to tackle the challenges of the future. They were able to see how the leadership development of SkillsUSA directly benefits our students and how implementing similar programs in their own countries would be great for their students as well.

It was an amazing experience to behold, with people from all over the world coming together in one place, exchanging ideas and business cards, competing against each other and yet making friends the whole way through. The WorldSkills Competition was truly an international experience.

**Elena Melekos:** The 2011 WorldSkills in London was incredible, inspirational and a once-in-a-lifetime chance. The feeling of pride in my country and in each hero that attended was unexplainable. Seeing flags from different countries wave proudly and hearing cheers that could awaken the world was a feeling I will never forget.

Attending WorldSkills was the opportunity for me to truly realize that dreams really do come true when you believe in yourself and always work your hardest. In my eyes, each competitor was a hero who helped inspire his or her own country and all SkillsUSA members to follow their dreams and always do their best.

WorldSkills provided me with the realization that our world has well-rounded individuals and leaders that will help each country grow and become successful.
Which skills are the most important to have when competing in the SkillsUSA Championships? For this annual guide, we asked the technical experts in each contest. Will you be prepared?

Compiled by Craig E. Moore

**AVIATION MAINTENANCE TECHNOLOGY**
Time management, locating information in reference material, and reading for technical content. — Wayne King, Kentucky Department of Education

**BROADCAST NEWS PRODUCTION**
Since our contest involves all aspects of a project, the range of essential skills is necessarily broad. Successful students know their gear and can adapt to a variety of production genres, write for a specific audience and deliver a compelling presentation. — Phillip Harris, consultant, Springfield, Va.

**CHAPTER BUSINESS PROCEDURE**
Be able to demonstrate and perform parliamentary procedure in a practical, logical sequence. This includes creating officer and committee reports, presenting a motion and disposing of it properly according to Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised. — Mark Johnson, Pittsburg State University

**COLLISION REPAIR TECHNOLOGY**
Metal repair, welding, structural analysis, plastic repair, and job application and interview. Contestants will have three written tests: ASE [Automotive Service Excellence],
estimating, and identifying suspension and steering components and functions. — Darrel Andrews, State Farm Insurance Companies

**COMPUTER MAINTENANCE TECHNOLOGY**

Troubleshooting skills are critical. Know the common causes of problems to narrow down the possibilities efficiently. Develop a 10-item troubleshooting “attack list” of items to consider. A problem can be easily resolved if you are able ask your customer the right questions. — Christopher Sessa, Cardiovascular Consultants

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

Politeness, maintaining control, safety, interviewing and running subjects through dispatch, reporting (accuracy and completeness) and handcuffing. Showing personality and making eye contact. — Heather Mussey, Liberty (Mo.) Police Department

**CULINARY ARTS**

Basic knife skills, protein fabrication, basic preparation and cooking techniques, organization and *mise en place*, construction of a written plan and time line, and excellent food safety practices. — Bruce Mattel, Culinary Institute of America

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**WEB RESOURCES**

- The important updates every contestant should read: [www.skillsusa.org/compete/updates.shtml](http://www.skillsusa.org/compete/updates.shtml)
- Download your contest’s rules and (in many cases) last year’s contest project when you purchase a Contest Single: [www.skillsusa.org/store/singles.html](http://www.skillsusa.org/store/singles.html)
- Because there wasn’t enough space for every bit of advice in this edition, an expanded Insider’s Guide is online at: [www.skillsusa.org/downloads/PDF/insiders12.pdf](http://www.skillsusa.org/downloads/PDF/insiders12.pdf)

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**NSHIIPS**

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If you have a web-enabled phone, you can text FOOD IS LIFE to 87794 to view the CIA Food is Life video.

Standard message rates apply. Text STOP to quit and HELP for more info.

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**PLUMBING**

Reading and following directions and isometric drawings. Working with cast iron, copper and PVC piping using a variety of joining methods. Patience, flexibility and doing all of the above in a safe manner. — Merry Beth, PHCC Educational Foundation

**PRACTICAL NURSING**

Critical thinking, communication, documentation, skills performance and safety. — Marilyn Ingold, Manatee Technical Institute, Bradenton, Fla.

**PRINCIPLES OF TECHNOLOGY**

Know the physics principle(s) including the mathematical formula for your presentation. Practice your presentation skills. — Scott Watson, Granite School District, Utah

**TEAMEWORKS**

Have the necessary skills for construction, electrical, plumbing or masonry, but also a positive attitude and sense of a total teamwork. — Jim Bohn, Robert Bosch Tool Corp.

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS CABLING**

Follow the directions. Good math skills are key. Skills such as scoring and stripping cable, crimping connectors, labeling cables in a 110 punchdown exercise and ladder rack exercise, and good customer service even under pressure. — Teresa Maher, Electronics Technicians Association International

**WELDING**

Interpreting drawings, welding procedures and welding symbols. — Gene Hornberger, retired welding consultant

**WELDING FABRICATION**

Teamwork, time management and welding skills. — Jason Schmidt, The Lincoln Electric Co.

**WELDING SCULPTURE**

This is a leadership contest. Put as much effort into your notebook and presentation as your sculpture. — Karl Watson, Somerset (Ky.) Community College

The judging will be weighted on the welding processes used. — Chas Yost, Miller Electric Training Department

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**3-D VISUALIZATION AND ANIMATION:** It’s a combination of creativity and problem solving. — Linda Sellheim, Autodesk Education

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

Possessing both technical skill and the ability to think conceptually produces inspiring images. Ultimately, students who methodically rely on their training and pay attention to detail will win this contest. — Bruce Chenaille, Pennsylvania Academy of Recording Arts

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**OPENING AND CLOSING CEREMONIES**

Very good pronunciation and enunciation of words. Also, not just repeating the words, but putting feeling behind them. — Lisa Romeiser, Eastern Monroe Career Center, Fairport, N.Y.
With His Sights Set High, Job Offers Are Taking Off

A single visit reignited a student’s love for all things aviation. After winning multiple medals in the SkillsUSA Championships, he’s writing his own flight plan for a career.

Tyler Brown is interested in all things aviation, especially avionics. “I like aviation, I like electronics. Why not do both?” he explains.

The SkillsUSA champion in Aviation Maintenance Technology already had two job offers before graduating from Burlington (Vt.) Technical Center. But this past summer, he decided to combine his love of aviation plus electronics and recently completed an avionics program.

While going through both the high-school and postsecondary aviation technology programs at the center, Brown first won the state high-school gold medal in Aviation Maintenance, then the national high-school bronze. The next year, he earned college/postsecondary gold medals at the state and national levels.

“When I was little, my dad was an airport fireman, so I used to go to the airport sometimes to see him, and I was always fascinated with the planes up in the sky,” Brown says. “And then, freshman year of high school, the tech center [representatives] came around, and I heard about the aviation program. That sparked memories of me liking planes, and so I thought I’d give it a try. I loved it, and I’ve been trying to excel at it ever since.”

The center’s aviation program is based at Burlington International Airport, next to a hangar for Aerodyme Corp. Brown approached an Aerodyme supervisor, said he was interested in learning more and asked if there were any openings. They talked again a week later, and Brown was hired on the spot. He’s now one of two aircraft technicians performing major alterations and updates to aircraft.

SkillsUSA advisor Richard Sylvester, the school’s aviation director, says Brown frequently helps friends and family with an extensive knowledge of computers and programs. This skill earned the student a second job at the Vermont Flight Academy, where he’s currently servicing computers and taking pilot lessons. Once Brown earns his airframe and powerplant (A&P) certificate, he’ll be the only aircraft technician at the academy.

Besides avionics and computers, Brown developed an interest in business, helping out at his father’s electrical company.

By adding business studies and experience to his broad love of aviation, he hopes to one day start his own company. “Starting an aviation company would be the best of every world,” he explains.

Overall, Brown’s thankful for the edge SkillsUSAs given him in the job market. “SkillsUSA is great because ... this really shows people that I’m not just a typical employee. I have shown that I excel at what I do, and that I can be more valuable than other people who’ve applied.”

By Ann P. Schreiber
NASCAR reporter and SkillsUSA alumna Wendy Venturini recently helped SkillsUSA produce public service announcements. Help spread the word!

As a class, watch and listen to the audio and video versions of the PSAs at: www.skillsusa.org/educators/psa.shtml. Next, split into two groups: “radio” and “television.” Each group should identify three local stations that might consider airing the PSAs. Contact the stations (find their information online) to see what their PSA submission requirements are. (The files on the Web page above can be downloaded and burned to CD or DVD.) Regroup as a class and share your findings. Also, discuss strategies for sharing the PSAs through social media like Facebook and Twitter.

Sharing what SkillsUSA means to you with media and peers can go a long way in reaching others and helping the organization continue to grow. For more tips, download the Marketing Toolkit at: www.skillsusa.org/students/mktgtools.shtml.

Concealed talent brings no reputation.
— DESIDERIUS ERASMUS

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 Jan. 25. Congratulations to last issue’s winners: Ashley Dixon of Russellville, Ark., and Jessica Fried of Patchogue, N.Y.
Freezin’ for a reason

To see who could raise more money for the Special Olympics of Connecticut, students from two Middletown schools — Vinal Technical High and Middletown High — challenged their counterparts at a third, H.C. Wilcox High in Meriden. The response was, “Bring it!” With 34 of its students dressed as bees, Wilcox faced off with the other schools at nearby frozen Crystal Lake, plunging in and raising $2,600. Why bees? Wilcox chose the theme “worker bees” for the event and earned the “Rockin’ Schoolhouse Award” from the Special Olympics program. More photos at: www.cttech.org/wilcox/student/SkillsUSA/News/Penguin-Plunge/album/index.html.

JUST LIKE MAGIC: TURNING SCRAP INTO NEW TOYS

Students at Lewiston (Idaho) High School use scrap lumber from construction classes to build rocking horses and sets of building blocks. These go to the “Toys for Tots” program sponsored by the U.S. Marine Corps.

Students trim and glue together the horse heads, seats and rockers. Broken broomsticks are used for handles.

As part of the program, they also help the Marines pack numerous boxes of holiday presents for local families.

Social networking helps troops

Thanks to the students at Tennessee Technology Center at Chattanooga, more than 150 National Guardsmen in the 190th Engineering Company have received care packages during deployment to Afghanistan. By sending email messages, hanging posters and creating a Facebook page, students got the word out to the campus and community and collected the donations.

The strength to raise funds

The SkillsUSA chapter at Douglas (Wyo.) High School was approached by the Converse County Coalition to build a strongman high-striker. Also known as a strength tester, this carnival-style attraction is often seen at fundraisers. Strongmen and women strike a lever with a large mallet, sending a puck up a tower to ring a bell.

By not having to rent a high-striker, the coalition, which draws attention to the needs of crime victims, would be able to increase its net fundraising proceeds. SkillsUSA students built the device and, in the process, increased community awareness. Once the high-striker was built, their chapter invited the public to take swings for 50 cents a try.

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As part of the program, they also help the Marines pack numerous boxes of holiday presents for local families.
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.

If you know how to use the books, you can do anything. Use what’s given to you and everything is possible.

National winner Tyler Brown of Vermont, on using technical manuals in competitions

Better than the one at the mall: Digital design students Kathy Fellman (left) and Kristin Bowman have fun using the Photo Booth program. Their advisor is Michael Sheffield of McGavock High School in Nashville, Tenn. The photographer is student Maria Ayala.

Toyota supports a wide variety of worthwhile organizations and events throughout the country, but few are as dear to our hearts as SkillsUSA.

SkillsUSA Champion of the Year Jim Lentz, president and chief operating officer, Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A. Inc.
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- Architectural Drafting
- Audio-Radio Production
- Automated Manufacturing Technology
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- Aviation Maintenance (College/Postsecondary)
- Cabinetmaking
- Carpentry
- CNC Milling and Turning Technology
- Commercial Baking
- Computer Maintenance Technology
- Computer Programming
- Cosmetology
- Criminal Justice/CSI
- Culinary Arts
- Customer Service
- Electrical Construction Wiring
- Electronics Application and Technology
- Employability
- Energy Industry Employability
- Engineering Technology
- Internetworking
- Major Appliance Repair
- Marine Service Technology
- Masonry
- Mechatronics
- Medical Assisting
- Motorcycle Service Technology
- Nail Care
- Nurse Assisting
- Photography
- Plumbing
- Power Equipment Technology
- Practical Nursing
- Robotics
- Technical Drafting
- Television Video Production
- Welding

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- Graphic Communications
- Offset Press Operations/Binding and Finishing
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