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National Gold Medalists!

On the Cover:
SkillsUSA Champion Jonathan Tyson of Bristol, Tenn. 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.
Stretching to Get Stronger

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 strengthen my skills to make the school year really count?
Tim: In my days as a student and teacher, fall was always the time for looking at all the possibilities and setting new personal goals. As motivational speaker Jim Rohn says, “If you don’t design your own life plan, chances are you’ll fall into someone else’s plan. And guess what they have planned for you? Not much.”

To make your plan, first set a goal to improve your grades or master new skills. Add a personal goal like starting a new sport, then set another one involving your family or community. Push yourself a little; it feels good when you do, and you’ll stretch beyond what you might expect.

Stay focused by starting every morning with a short list of daily goals. Look back at it at the end of the day, and you’ll feel good about what you’ve done. This will help you pay attention to what needs to get done the next day or later in the week.

Your SkillsUSA chapter offers a network for building your professional muscle. Here at SkillsUSA headquarters, we’re pushing ourselves, too, to find new ways to back you up, adding people, programs, classroom resources, competitions, online offerings and support from business, industry and government. To see what’s new and check out our tools for students and teachers, visit www.skillsusa.org often.

Q&A

Break a sweat when it comes to your technical and academic achievements. We created the SkillsUSA Framework to help guide you in developing personal, workplace and technical skills. The framework provides you with a structure for perfectly aligning goals with your future. Then, if you need help carrying them out, try SkillsUSA’s Career Essentials suite. Through Career Essentials, you can set yourself apart from your peers and gain an edge when meeting potential employers.

In this issue of SkillsUSA Champions, our members really illustrate how SkillsUSA can change lives for the better. It’s likely these changes have resulted from each of these individuals setting a goal to accomplish something. From local members making a difference in their school and community, to our students competing on the world stage, every student and teacher in SkillsUSA has the potential to be a champion and (as we’re building on our theme this year) to be “job-ready Day One.”

So, stretch a little and be the best you can be this school year. Your future — and our nation’s — depends on it.

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.
Taking the World Stage For SkillsUSA

he stage is set — the world stage — for the next WorldSkills Competition, coming Oct. 14-19 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

There, nearly 1,300 competitors from 58 countries and regions will compete in 51 skilled events. Among those competitors will be 11 champions known collectively as the SkillsUSA WorldTeam.

Members include the aptly named Jordyn Baker (in Bakery) plus Kylie Burkey (Hairdressing), Asher Chicoine (Plumbing and Heating), Corey Cleghorn and Joshua Whittington (Mechatronics team), Luke Dutton (Bricklaying), Riley Johnson (Web Design), Chandler Kerr (Print Media Technology), Jonathan Robertson (Automobile Technology), Chandler Vincent (Welding), and Krzysztof Zamajtys (Refrigeration and Air Conditioning). For more, visit: www.skillsusa.org/competitions/worldskills/.

Standard-Bearers Unite

he 2017-18 SkillsUSA Championships Technical Standards are indispensable if you’re preparing for competitions this year. The standards feature the latest rules, clothing requirements, eligibility and equipment lists (and more) for every SkillsUSA national competitive event.

Standards are now being revisited and revised as needed every year by the championships’ hardworking technical committees, and this marks the second year that the standards will be available free and online for all professional members. The newest edition goes live in early October. For more, visit: www.skillsusa.org/competitions/skillsusa-championships/technical-standards/.

The SkillsUSA WorldTeam is dressed to impress while preparing for the WorldSkills Competition in Abu Dhabi this October. Look for the results next issue.
SkillsUSA’s “Models of Excellence” program named three chapters as this year’s award-winners at June’s National Leadership and Skills Conference. The winning chapters were chosen from 24 national finalists, each of which had to fulfill rigorous selection requirements.

The program focuses on honoring the best chapters nationwide based on student efforts related to the three areas of the SkillsUSA Framework (which should hopefully roll off your tongue by now): personal skills, workplace skills and technical skills grounded in academics.

Representing the “personal skills” category, Lynn (Mass.) Vocational Technical Institute was awarded first place for exceptional work in conducting its “9/11 Day of Service,” which honored the community’s first responders with gift bags.

The “workplace skills” winner was A&M Consolidated High School in College Station, Texas. Students there facilitated two educational events to teach others about online threats and keeping data safe.

Finally, the “technical skills” winner was Bergen County Academies in Hackensack, N.J., where students demonstrated their culinary, customer service and technological expertise to deliver a record-breaking Thanksgiving pie sale at their school.

To learn how your chapter can participate in the Models of Excellence program (sponsored by Lowe’s Companies Inc.), visit: www.skillsusa.org/programs/chapter-excellence-program/.

Get Rewarded for Rewarding PR

All SkillsUSA chapters and state officer teams are eligible to participate in the new SkillsUSA Public Relations Challenge. This online activity encourages students to demonstrate how they showcase SkillsUSA to the news media in ways that highlight career and technical education as well as student success. Three winning schools and one state officer team will be selected as winners of the challenge and will receive checks made payable to their school or state association. For full guidelines on how your chapter or officer team can participate, visit: www.skillsusa.org/competitions/skillsusa-pr-challenge/.

Membership clearly makes a difference

At its 2017 national conference, SkillsUSA surveyed more than 300 student members to gauge its impact on their personal and professional development. The results? Inspiring.

Eighty-five percent said SkillsUSA helps them become effective leaders. Eighty-seven percent said SkillsUSA is helping them develop 21st-century skills. Eight in 10 said SkillsUSA connects school to the real world, while 77 percent said they are more interested in school because of SkillsUSA. Further, 78 percent credit SkillsUSA with helping them understand the value of community service and giving them opportunities to perform it.

For full survey results and other useful statistical SkillsUSA info, visit: www.skillsusa.org/publications-news/press-room/.
SkillsUSA, America needs you more than ever,” television personality Nick Tokman declared to an inspired crowd of nearly 10,000 in Louisville, Ky. “Now, let’s get to work!”

With those galvanizing remarks, the opening ceremony of SkillsUSA’s National Leadership and Skills Conference ended, and the largest NLSC in SkillsUSA history officially began.

How large? Conference registration hit an all-time high at 10,787, but the Louisville Convention and Visitors Bureau estimates that nearly 20,000 made the trip (including judges, volunteers, exhibitors and other unregistered participants).

The number of SkillsUSA Championships competitors also hit a new high, with 6,251 competing in 100 skilled and leadership contests. In the midst of the competitions, SkillsUSA TECHSPO featured 153 exhibitors from around the nation, including 36 new companies.

SkillsUSA Activate, Leverage and Engage training served nearly 400 leaders-in-the-making (the most ever), and a record-setting 653 special guests from industry, government and education attended the entire national conference.

And then came the giant cherry on top of this metaphorical sundae covered in awesome sauce: the awards ceremony. There, more than 1,000 gold, silver and bronze medallions were awarded to the nation’s best technical-education students.

The numbers were amazing, but as always, the greatest value by far was found in the lives that were transformed, from students to teachers to partners. SkillsUSA cameras were there every step of the way. View all the photos and videos from the event at: http://tinyurl.com/nlsc17media.
They come from all over the United States and from a variety of trades, but these new national officers have common goals: serving SkillsUSA members and sharing our mission.

By Craig E. Moore

In June, a new group of SkillsUSA national officers was elected for 2017-18. Now after three separate training sessions — one right after being elected, one in July and still another in August — these student leaders are ready to serve in the new school year.

“I want the opportunity to connect and interact with the future leaders of our nation and serve them in the best way I can,” says Lizette Moreno, the high-school division’s president.

It’s a sentiment shared by college/post-secondary president Josie Wolfe, who plans to expose the SkillsUSA Framework to as many people as she can.

“There is not a single person who would not benefit from a better understanding of the benefits career and technical education and SkillsUSA can have on students,” Wolfe explains.

Other than five regional vice presidents, SkillsUSA students elected to national office are initially elected to at-large positions. Individual offices were determined during their first week of training.

Courtney Ferrell, who trains the team, says, “The national officer team collectively is excited to focus their energy on the members they serve. During their year of service, they will have several opportunities including leading the Washington Leadership Training Institute (WLTI), visiting state fall conferences, interacting with our business partners and conducting chapter visits.”
JOSIE WOLFE began her SkillsUSA journey in high school while living in Maryland. Now she’s a baking and pastry arts student at Johnson and Wales University in Providence, R.I. Wolfe decided it was time to give back to her fellow members by serving as a national officer. Now college/postsecondary president, Wolfe says “the SkillsUSA Framework has been a catalyst to jump-start my career.”

BRAD RIDDER, vice president, studies computer repair and networking in the Harrisonburg, Va., area at Massanutten Technical Center and Blue Ridge Community College.

MACI KEY is studying machine tool technology. While serving as national secretary, she is enrolled at Wallace State Community College in Hayden, Ala.

MADISON WHITNEY is attending Dixie State University in St. George, Utah, where she is an audio/radio student. She is serving as national treasurer.

JEREMY COPELAND is a student at Mid-America Technology Center in Newcastle, Okla. His major is structural welding. Copeland is parliamentarian on this SkillsUSA team.

ROSAJUNELY CARTAGENA is the national treasurer. She is a student at Liberty High School in Meriden, Conn. She is studying health technology. Lopez serves as SkillsUSA’s high-school secretary.

LAILA MIRZA is a pre-engineering student. She attends Worcester Technical High School in Ocean Pines, Md. Mirza is serving as national high-school parliamentarian.

LIZETTHE MORENO says she’s grateful for the skills she learned through SkillsUSA, so much so that “I want to give back in the best way I can.” The student is doing just that as high-school president. Moreno is enrolled in law enforcement at Porter High School in Kingwood, Texas. After graduating, she plans to join the Marines and attend college. She aspires to become a judge advocate general.

SkillsUSA staff members Karen Kitzel and Jane Short contributed to this report. For more on the new team of national officers, go to: www.skillsusa.org/about/national-officers/national-officer-bios/
Julie Ivan started a SkillsUSA chapter 14 years ago with two interested students. Since then, thousands have come through the Michigan instructor’s program, with many lives changed. As one student told her, “I could have walked the streets of Saginaw, but instead, I walked onto a college campus.”

In her school’s urban environment, most of the students live at or below the poverty line, but nothing stops Ivan from delivering gold-standard leadership and technical instruction. It’s one of many reasons she is SkillsUSA’s advisor of the year.

Her chapter accounts for more than half of the students from Saginaw Career Complex who attend SkillsUSA Michigan’s fall leadership conference. In her culinary, bakery and hospitality program, Ivan values SkillsUSA’s leadership development and competitions equally.

On some lists, Saginaw has ranked as the fourth most violent city in the United States, and there are other challenges. “Our community has lost a lot of industry over the last decade. General Motors has gone out, so we’ve lost,” Ivan says. “When I started teaching 30 years ago, we had 20,000 kids in our school district. We now have 6,000.”

Shrinking student numbers means fewer funds. “Money is tight, and we don’t have everything that all the bigger skills centers might have in the state of Michigan,” she adds. “But I tell the kids, ‘It’s not what you have — it’s from your heart.’ Our students might not have the newest equipment, but if they know how to do the basics in culinary and bakery, it doesn’t matter.”

This past year, her program budget was cut by 50 percent, but it didn’t affect her students, Ivan says. “I told my principal, ‘I will get water out of a stream and the students will not know that we had to go through a financial budget crunch.’”

Eight of her SkillsUSA members have made it to the national level of competition. Ivan also serves on Michigan’s technical committee for Culinary Arts, helping to make sure the state SkillsUSA competition reflects national standards.
Ivan is also an expert for the WorldSkills Competition, helping the international technical committee develop standards for the Bakery contest. She was president of the SkillsUSA Michigan board last year.

For all the important roles she plays, Ivan always brings it back to her students. “It comes from the heart,” she reaffirms. To reinforce the value of creating a path for the future, Ivan brings former students back into her classes as mentors. One of them, who went on to study at the Culinary Institute of America, works as an executive chef.

This real-world example informs current students that without Ivan’s program, “I wouldn’t have had money in my pocket here in Saginaw. You know what? I have money now. I finished my degree. I’m the first in my family out of 14 kids to ever go to college and finish anything.”

Showcasing service to others
At the start of the school year, Ivan tells students, “I’m here to help you to achieve, to learn and to grow.” To help do that, she mixes her technical program with service and professional development activities.

“We do a professional day where we hold interviews at our local college,” she says, where her program graduates come in to help with practice interviews. All of Ivan’s students also participate in an unpaid work opportunity.

“Our school tries to do as many different community service projects as we can,” she adds. Students help create gingerbread houses for a city display, support a shelter for domestic abuse victims, assist at a food bank, and collect items for needy families during the holidays.

“SkillsUSA has changed me as a teacher, and incorporating SkillsUSA has enhanced my curriculum,” Ivan says.

She tells other teachers, “You will not believe the life-changing difference SkillsUSA makes for students and how it can change their futures. Students come out of my program prepared for the workforce or college. It improves grades, attendance and attitude.”

REGION 1 At Worcester Technical High School in Newark, Md., SkillsUSA advisor Richard Stephens’ chapter of 282 members is its largest ever. Students come from three feeder high schools, and there is a diverse mix of 30 training programs, from biomedical sciences to culinary to nursing.

One popular fundraiser at the rural school is “Kiss the Pig.” Students donate funds for teachers, and the instructor with the most funds in the jar must pucker up. All proceeds help local needy families through the Worcester Gold Program.

It’s lighthearted but it works, says Stephens, a career and technology instructor. “If the students are excited and they want to do something, people get behind it. They really do.”

REGION 2 In Tennessee, Clyde Rush of Cleveland High School incorporates the SkillsUSA Framework and career readiness learning into all chapter activities.

“The SkillsUSA program of work lines up with the personal skills, the workplace skills and the technical skills” of the framework, says the culinary arts instructor, making it an easy decision.

“So, we are definitely doing this,” he tells his chapter. “Students see that industry is there, and we get students off the school premises for experiences, which I think is awesome.”

REGION 3 At a rural school, Ivan’s students work on a trailer built with a State Farm grant that has led to a larger recycling effort, including paper shredding.

REGION 4 Current River Career Center in Doniphan, Mo., may be small, but that hasn’t stopped Debbie Lathum’s SkillsUSA chapter from being mighty. “We try to get as much into the classroom as we can,” says the multimedia instructor. “We prepare them, and we keep talking to them about soft skills; we’re getting students ready for the workplace.”

REGION 5 Oscar Contreras of Hobbs (N.M.) High School says it takes a whole team to make the SkillsUSA program successful: “What we do speaks louder than what we can say.”

His construction students are heavily involved with Habitat for Humanity. The school donated $10,000 to the local Habitat program and helped frame out four houses. Working to earn the President’s Volunteer Service Award, the chapter contributed more than 2,500 hours of community service to others last year.

“We’re all about helping as much as we can in all the different areas that we can,” Contreras explains.
The SkillsUSA Championships awards the best in the nation, from Alabama to Wyoming, in 100 different competitions. Here are the members and schools that took the top honors.

**GOLD MEDALISTS 2017**

**3-D VISUALIZATION AND ANIMATION** Micah Somme/Logan Price, Orange Technical College Mid-Florida Campus, Orlando, Fla.; Laeticia Le/Soren Sandblom, Center for Technology, Essex Junction, Vt.

**ACTION SKILLS** Jesus Torres, Slawson Occupational Center, Bell, Calif.; Robert Kennedy, Azle (Texas) High School

**ADDITIONAL MANUFACTURING** Collin Gaddes/Thomas Houston, Calhoun Community College, Decatur, Ala.; Mathew Marinelli, Cameron Mclaughlin, Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School, Marlborough, Mass. **ADVERTISING DESIGN** Alexandra Christensen, Madison (Wis.) Area Technical College; Anthony Moore, Lenawee Intermediate School District (ISD) Tech Center, Adrian, Mich.

**AMERICAN SPIRIT (team)** Buckeye Hills Career Center, Rio Grande, Ohio. **ARCHITECTURAL DRAFTING** Hunter Huffman, Utah Valley University, Orem, Utah; Jennifer Sprow, Stafford Senior High School, Falmouth, Va. **AUDIO/RADIO PRODUCTION** Chase McKnight/Andrew West, Utah Valley University, Orem, Utah; Brett Hawran/Kyle Shemanski, A.I. Prince Technical High School, Hartford, Conn. **AUTOMATED MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGY (teams)** Ranken Technical College, St. Louis; McCann Technical High School, North Adams, Mass. **AUTOMOTIVE REFINISHING TECHNOLOGY** Dylan Arndt, Ridgewater College, Willmar, Minn.; Dylan Wertz, Vanguard-Sentinel Career and Technology Centers (CTC) Sentinel Campus, Tiffin, Ohio. **AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE TECHNOLOGY** Jacob Greene, Parkland College, Champaign, Ill.; Kevin Vasquez, Norwich (Conn.) Technical High School. **AVIATION MAINTENANCE TECHNOLOGY** Alex Millikan, Guilford Technical Community College, Jamestown, N.C.; Rafal Bielecki, Aviation Career and Technical Education High School, Queens, N.Y.

**BASIC HEALTH CARE SKILLS** Shannon Vasas, Shawnee High School, Billerica, Mass. **BROADCAST NEWS PRODUCTION (teams)** Tulsa Community Center-Riverside; Southwest High School, Fort Worth, Texas.

**BUILDING MAINTENANCE** Tommy Burroughs, Indian Capital Technology Center, Stilwell, Okla.

**CABINETMAKING** Matthew Wootten, Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology, Lancaster, Pa.; Anthony Sacre, Maplewood Career Center, Ravenna, Ohio. **CAREER PATHWAYS SHOWCASE (teams)** Bethlehem (Pa.) AVTS; Dubiski Career High School, Grand Prairie, Texas; Edgecombe Community College, Tarboro, N.C.; Georgia Piedmont Technical College, Clarkston, Ga.; Greenville (Ohio) Senior High School; Mayfield High School, Cleveland, Ohio; San Benito (Texas) High School; Tennessee College of Applied Technology, Dickson; Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical High School, Bourne, Mass.; Wilkes Community College, Wilkesboro, N.C.; YI Career Institute, Altoona, Pa. **CARPENTRY** Dylan Giager, Fort Scott (Kan.) Community College; Mason Volmer, Labette County High School, Altamont, Kan. **CHAPTER BUSINESS PROCEDURE (teams)** Utah Valley University, Orem, Utah; Gloucester County Institute of Technology, Sewell, N.J. **CHAPTER DISPLAY (teams)** Texas State Technical College, Waco; Sullivan Central High School, Blountville, Tenn. **COMMERCIAL BAKING** Dan Thompson, College of Western Idaho, Nampa; Scott May, St. Clair Technical Education Center, Marysville, Mich. **CNC TECHNICIAN** Nathan Voelkers, Pioneer Technology Center, Ponca City, Okla.; Alexander Cope, St. Clair Technical Education Center, Marysville, Mich. **CNC TURNING SPECIALIST** Nathan Melhouse, Alexandria (Minn.) Technical and Community College; Derbe Stroup, Carbon Career and Technical Institute, Jim Thorpe, Pa. **COLLISION REPAIR TECHNOLOGY** Joel Hartstack, Southwestern Community College, Creston, Iowa; Alan Zimmerman, Vanguard-Sentinel CTC Sentinel Campus, Tiffin, Ohio. **COMMERCIAL BAKING** Daylan Torres, Johnson & Wales University, Providence, R.I.; Gwen Frechette, St. Johnsbury (Vt.) Academy

**COMPUTER PROGRAMMING** Richard Bolanos, Sullivan College of Technology and Design, Louisville, Ky.; Samantha Miller, Central Kitsap High School, Silverdale, Wash. **COSMETOLOGY** Chandler McBay, Northeast Alabama Community College, Rainsville; Camry Robertson, Mid-East Career and Technology Centers, Zanesville, Ohio. **CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION** (teams) Catawba Valley Community College, Hickory, N.C.; Northland Career Center, Platte City, Mo. **COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECT** Jacob Ames/Justin Ford, Central Technology Center, Drumright, Okla.; Brian Courtney Jr./Collin Kelly, Minuteman Regional High School (RHS), Lexington, Mass. **COMMUNITY SERVICE (teams)** Washburn Institute of Technology, Topeka, Kan.; Lynn (Mass.) Vocational Technical Institute. **CNC MILLING SPECIALIST** Dan Thompson, College of Western Idaho, Nampa; Scott May, St. Clair Technical Education Center, Marysville, Mich. **CNC TECHNICIAN** Nathan Voelkers, Pioneer Technology Center, Ponca City, Okla.; Alexander Cope, St. Clair Technical Education Center, Marysville, Mich. **CNC TURNING SPECIALIST** Nathan Melhouse, Alexandria (Minn.) Technical and Community College; Derbe Stroup, Carbon Career and Technical Institute, Jim Thorpe, Pa. **COLLISION REPAIR TECHNOLOGY** Joel Hartstack, Southwestern Community College, Creston, Iowa; Alan Zimmerman, Vanguard-Sentinel CTC Sentinel Campus, Tiffin, Ohio. **COMMERCIAL BAKING** Daylan Torres, Johnson & Wales University, Providence, R.I.; Gwen Frechette, St. Johnsbury (Vt.) Academy


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POWER EQUIPMENT TECHNOLOGY: Haley Hughes, State Technical College of Missouri, Linn; Thomas Miller, West Bend (Wis.) High School. PRACTICAL NURSING: Amy Schwartz, Downey (Calif.) Adult School; Sindy Zuniga, Victor Valley High School, Victorville, Calif.

PREPARED SPEECH: Sharon Lockard, Catawba Valley Community College, Hickory, N.C.; Miranda Hormung, Raymond (Neb.) Central School.
PRINCIPLES OF ENGINEERING/TECHNOLOGY
David Escobedo, Maxine Waters Employment Preparation Center, Los Angeles; Joseline Martinez-Cortez, South-Western Career Academy, Grove City, Ohio

PROMOTIONAL BULLETIN BOARD (teams/two golds) Autry Technology Center, Enid, Okla.

TEAM ENGINEERING CHALLENGE (team)
Worcester Technical High School, Newark, Md.

TECHNICAL COMPUTER APPLICATIONS
Jesse Clayton, Salt Lake Community College, Salt Lake City; Evan Amara, Vinal Technical High School, Middletown, Conn.

TECHNICAL DRAFTING
Will Elwood, Pikes Peak Community College, Colorado Springs, Colo.; Chase Rytlewski, Bay Area Technical School, Bay City, Mich.

TEAMWORKS
Worcester Technical High School, Newark, Md.

T-SHIRT DESIGN
Markie James, Catawba Valley Community College, Hickory, N.C.; Nour Tanbal, Tucson (Ariz.) High Magnet School

WEB DESIGN

WELDING
Ryan Fincher, Georgia Northwestern Technical College, Rock Spring, Ga.; Joseph Jarzumskiewicz, Willoughby-Eastlake Technical Center, Willoughby, Ohio

WELDING FABRICATION (teams)
Davis Technical College, Kaysville, Utah; Maple Mountain High School, Spanish Fork, Utah

WELDING SCULPTURE
Erin Beaver, Pennsylvania College of Technology, Williamsport; Jonathan Watson, Cumberland County Regional Technical Education Center, Vineland, N.J.

2017 NATIONAL CONFERENCE HONOREES
Advisor of the Year: Julie Ivan, Saginaw (Mich.) Career Complex (story, Page 11)

Alumni Career Achievement Award: Doug Beasley, business owner and SkillsUSA volunteer for over 30 years, Winfield, Ala.

Ernie Gary SkillsUSA Championships Volunteer of the Year: John Williams, construction team chair, Farmington, Mo.

Honorary Life Members: Mike Cowles, former SkillsUSA Ohio director; Alex Gromada, SkillsUSA board member representing the Association for Career and Technical Education; Marven Mack, SkillsUSA advisor for 36 years, Texas State Technical College in Waco; Faustino Peña, retired advisor from Texas State Technical College in Harlingen, supporter since 1971

Models of Excellence First-Place Chapters: A&M Consolidated High School, College Station, Texas; Bergen County Academies, Hackensack, N.J.; Lynn (Mass.) Vocational Technical Institute

Outstanding Alumni Award: Brandilyn Gage, instructor, Western Monroe County Career and Technical Education Center, Spencerport, N.Y.


President’s Volunteer Service Award: 122 individuals and 17 teams; for the list, go to: www.skillsusa.org/membership-resources/awards/presidents-volunteer-service-award/

Student2Student Mentoring Grand Prize: Hobbs (N.M.) High School

Torch Carrier Award: Sam Bottum, Snap-on Incorporated
Remember the ’80s? The decade gave us musicians Madonna and Bon Jovi, movies The Breakfast Club and Back to the Future, and fashion that included leg warmers and stone-washed jeans. The personal computer was a new concept, and we played video games including Super Mario Brothers and Tetris. It was also the decade SkillsUSA introduced its Professional Development Program (PDP).

Essentials’ for the next generation

New technology offers experiences teaching students to be career ready

Some things never change, like industry’s demand for employability skills. But because the way students learn is different today, a new turnkey curriculum, SkillsUSA Career Essentials: Experiences, is needed to better engage them in this area. Program director Heidi Walsh tells how and why it was developed.

For information about the SkillsUSA Career Essentials suite of products, visit: www.careeressentials.org.

A groundbreaking employability skills curriculum, PDP was created to help instructors meet business and industry’s need for employees with more than just technical skills. In demand were teamwork, effective communication, good customer service, leadership and work ethic. PDP was designed to help instructors meet this challenge, and over the last several decades, it did just that.

Fast forward to a new century that now includes the internet, Instagram and tweeting; smartphones and tablets; hover boards and self-driving cars. Advancing technology has created significant changes in the way instructors teach and how students learn and acquire information. But what hasn’t changed since the 1980s is the demand for employees with career-ready skills beyond the technical — and the challenge of teaching them.

Recognizing advances in both technology and education, SkillsUSA gathered business partners, students, administrators and teachers for a better way to teach employability skills, one worthy of replacing PDP. SkillsUSA Career Essentials: Experiences is that next-generation curriculum. It provides today’s students with the career-ready skills needed for success.

“What industry is looking for really hasn’t changed since the advent of PDP,” says Dr. Chip Harris, director of Tennessee State University’s Center for Career and Technical Education. “The difference between PDP and the Experiences is how that information is delivered. And, that’s important because the participants are of a new generation, a new way of thinking and are all technology-oriented.”

Using authentic, project-based experiences advances students from having an awareness of skills to demonstrating the skills they are learning. Teachers are empowered with high-quality skill development resources and current technology that, along with the project-based format, keeps students interested and engaged. All of the resources are delivered digitally through a learning site that provides:
• 24/7 access for students and instructors on computers, tablets or smartphones
• Turnkey tools and resources for instructors
• Built-in grading and badging system
• A learning community for instructors to share best practices and additional tools and resources

Easy to implement

“I think the 24/7 availability of the curriculum, in a medium that students are used to and operate in every day, is a huge step up from where we were with PDP,” says Peyton Holland, SkillsUSA North Carolina executive director. “For students who are engaged in the digital world on their phones almost all day long, now they can have that same opportunity to access curriculum content that’s relevant and meaningful to them.”

The online curriculum has 15 project-based learning experiences that contextualize the essential elements of the SkillsUSA Framework in real work situations. There are nine fundamental experiences and a capstone experience that can be completed within an academic year. Each experience spans two to three weeks and includes a 30-minute instructor-led entry experience, which is followed by a student-led, individual or group project with e-learning modules to provide just-in-time, bite-sized learning. Instructors have the flexibility to adapt each experience to the local context.
Sylvia Phillips, Georgia’s career and technical student organization coordinator, attended a recent rollout and training for the new curriculum. She says her first impressions were positive.

“I am excited about this tool because I think it is the answer to a lot of the conversations that we are having in our state with business and industry about what we are doing to close this gap of soft skills,” Phillips adds. “I like that the language is a common language for educators as well as business and industry, and I love the intentionality with which it has been built, tying the measurable assessments to the actual experience itself, the project-based learning experience.”

She goes on to say that “teachers are going to love the flexibility in the ability to deliver it the way that works best for them in the classroom depending on how much classroom instruction they need to give or how much they can let it be really driven by the student. The turnkey resources for the teacher make it very easy to implement.”

Harris agrees: “It takes all the burden of preparation and organization off the teacher.”

And that is important for today’s instructors, who face many challenges as they prepare students for success in today’s world of work. They know that technical skills alone are not enough, and for students to stand out, they must have the essential career-ready skills.

SkillsUSA instructors aspire to have a positive impact on their students and play an important role in student success. The SkillsUSA Career Essentials: Experiences curriculum gives teachers everything they need to give students all that they need.

Holland recalls, “I went through PDP when I was a student. I remember a lot of what I got out of that helped me. And I think it’s just a great opportunity to refresh that for the new market of students that we’re dealing with. They learn differently than I learned, and I think it’s the right place to be at the right time.”

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Your support enables SkillsUSA to provide students with the personal, workplace and technical skills that prepare them to be Champions at Work.

Donate at www.SkillsUSA.org
Angibel Tome-Martinez earned a national gold medal in SkillsUSA's Criminal Justice competition.
In Their Own League

Working within the legal system has been a lifelong goal for Angibel Tome-Martinez. A great student, she was about to start college at age 17 with a full scholarship. “I just had to provide proof of residency,” she says. “That license-sized card was the only thing keeping me from being able to go to college right out of high school, and because I didn’t have that, a lot of my dreams and aspirations took a major halt.” Or to put it bluntly, “when I graduated high school, I found out the hard way that I was an illegal immigrant,” she explains.

Born in Venezuela, Tome-Martinez was only 9 when her mother came to the United States with two children in tow. The family embraced everything American. Her older brother is a now a successful businessman. Two siblings were born here: a brother who excels at playing baseball and a sister, a Navy Junior ROTC student, who plans to serve in the military. While “Angie” was bright enough to skip second grade in her native country, she says “learning was a struggle” in her new home near Atlanta. There were cultural differences, too. Girls were expected to grow up faster here, but she kept her Barbie dolls in her school locker until she was 14. “I was called a baby a lot,” she adds with a wistful smile.

Tome-Martinez remembers her mother buying a home, paying taxes and raising the children to be contributing members of society. “I had no idea that I was an illegal immigrant,” she says. “At 16, I was just excited to be close to graduating.”

The shocking discovery set off a decade-long journey for the aspiring attorney to get her career back on track. “I went 10 years battling through the immigration system so I could adjust my status here,” she explains.

A champion for others

Now 28 and a criminal justice student at Chattahoochee Technical College in Acworth, Ga., Tome-Martinez uses her experience to help others. She recently opened her own business to help families navigate the legal immigration process. “It’s not as easy as people think,” she says. “You hear a lot of, ‘Just do it the right way.’ Well, there are only a few right ways to do it, and the ways that there are, they are lengthy processes. It’s a lot. Like if you have a sister that wants to petition for her brother, he’s going to be put in a visa waiting process that takes about 15 to 16 years if they’re from Central or South America, and he has to stay unmarried. Really? He’s 20 years old now; in 13 years, I hope he’s married and has children.”

By E. Thomas Hall

The long arm of the law increasingly belongs to a woman. It’s no wonder these students have taken up the cause to protect and to serve.

QUICK READ

- At 16, Angibel Tome-Martinez was surprised to learn she was here illegally. She studied law enforcement while navigating the immigration process.
- Future lawyer Jaqueline Ramirez, first in her family to attend college, says SkillsUSA doubled her odds of success.
- In law enforcement, Amanda Ohlau gives back to her adopted country.
Again, she speaks from experience. Married at 19 but left as a single mom with two children, to pay the bills Tome-Martinez took jobs as a paralegal and as a hotel banquet captain.

She joined SkillsUSA while working on her associate’s degree, recently earning a national gold medal in its Criminal Justice contest. “During my mock interview for the competition, they asked me why I wanted to do law enforcement and go to law school,” she notes. “And I said, ‘With my major, my main goal is to give back to my community. As a law enforcement officer, I can give back to my community in one way, and as an attorney I can give back to my community in another way.’”

Helping more people contribute
Tome-Martinez started IFLA—Immigration and Family Legal Assistance to help people like her mother, who is still navigating the system. “Getting a visa to come to the United States is a lengthy process,” she says, “and they scrutinize everything.

Everything. Your financial circumstances in your home country. They want to make sure you have ties in every way to your country so that you won’t stay here. But the people that have those means don’t need to come here. The ones who come here are people who are running away from violence, who are running away from persecution, and they just want to be able to work and provide for their families.”

Her website, GetIFLA.com, states that even one mistake on the immigration paperwork can result in the denial of an application or even deportation. But except where a criminal record is involved, an experienced paralegal can usually help people work through the process, she says.

“Yes, there are illegal immigrants that are criminals, but certainly there’s plenty of us that would willingly and lovingly provide and give back to the community.

“And I feel like if we gave an opportunity to the people that want to contribute to our country — and I said ‘our,’ because to me, I’ve been here since I was 9 years old, this is home,” she adds. “If we gave those people the opportunity, you know, the hard-working single mother, the father who just wants to truly provide for his family, if we gave them an opportunity to integrate themselves into our society legally, there is no telling how many wonderful things that would open the door to.”

In hot pursuit of career success, students steer away from the past

T

through SkillsUSA, young women from different parts of the country are leveraging their love of legal studies into leadership positions.

Jaqueline Ramirez, who wants to be a lawyer, will be the first in her family to attend college. It’s not the Nashville student’s only milestone. For two years straight, she was student body president at her middle school. An advocate for community service, she led the Key Club at McGavock High School. Most recently, she served as high-school president for SkillsUSA Tennessee, whose director, Tracy Whitehead, says Ramirez “inherited hard work, determination and kindness from home.”

For her part, the student feels “I’ve always been in that determination mode. Always. It just comes naturally.” She’s enrolled in her high school’s Academy of Life Science and Law and will graduate with honors in fall 2018. From there, she’s mulling the University of Chicago or UCLA — all of which, despite her personal drive, she calls a “big step out of the comfort zone of my background.”

SkillsUSA has put her ahead of her peers, Ramirez adds. “I feel like if I was destined to be successful before SkillsUSA, I’m destined to be successful times two because of the people I’m getting to know and the connections I get to be a part of.”

Optimistic despite a rough start

Law enforcement student Amanda Ohlau has dreamed of becoming a police officer since attending a career fair in fifth grade. “Ever since then, I told myself I was going to serve my country,” she says.

Adopted country, that is. Hungry and malnourished, with no toys of their own, Ohlau and her younger brother were brought over from a Russian orphanage when she was only 3. Arriving home, her new parents “sat me down in the grass,” she remembers, “and I just played for a good, solid two hours, because at the orphanage they didn’t have grass, it was all dirt, and there was one tire swing for us to play on.”

Now a gymnast and a senior at Rockwood Summit High School in Fenton, Mo., Ohlau says SkillsUSA “has definitely made a big impact on my life.” Her goals include becoming an officer in the Navy SEALs.

“SkillsUSA helps me define myself as a better leader, guiding other people and knowing that, yes, you can come from a rough childhood, but there’s always a light at the end of the tunnel,” she adds.
A Sharp Turn To a New Career

By Ann P. Schreiber

After a layoff, Paula Carvell lost her six-digit salary as a manager. Her son, Kevin Williams, had remodeling skills but needed credentials after returning from an Air National Guard tour in Iraq. Johnathan Kooser worked in construction for years until sidelined by medical conditions.

A technical school in Topeka, Kan., offered something for all three. Carvell, who has a master’s degree in business administration, admits she didn’t know how to swing a hammer before she and her son headed for the building technology program. That soon changed.

Carvell’s layoff from an energy company coincided with her needing to be a family caregiver. This gave her a chance to reflect on her next career move. Because of her previous job, building energy-efficient homes appealed to her.

She and Williams talked, and both agreed to enroll at Washburn Institute of Technology. After joining SkillsUSA, mother and son went to the 2016 national championships in TeamWorks, with Carvell as carpentry lead and Williams the overall team leader.

Through their SkillsUSA chapter, they met former construction worker Kooser, who completed a one-year culinary arts program at the school. He’d pursued a love of cooking to the state championships.

ON THE WEB

Learn about Washburn Tech’s award-winning Community Service project at: www.washburntech.edu/discover/community/recycled-rides.html

See photos of the career-changing event here: www.washburntech.edu/discover/community/car-show.html

View the gold medalists’ award-winning Community Service presentation at: https://youtu.be/xVu1A5YKIP4

When it comes to work, it wasn’t these students’ “first time at the rodeo.” Yet after being united by SkillsUSA, such an event was exactly the source of inspiration that they needed.
Coming together, the three discovered a new passion: working on their chapter’s Community Service contest project, Recycled Rides. It earned the team a national gold medal in June, but even better, led to an answer each had sought.

During the last week of school each year, Washburn Tech holds a fundraiser for the Care Closet, which provides students with short-term financial help to complete their education. The event includes a car show, barbecue and fair, as well as a Recycled Rides giveaway to a family in need.

Carvell, Williams and Kooser, who were on hand to help present a refurbished van, took part in a heavy-equipment rodeo.

A life-changing backhoe rodeo
“I got on the backhoe first,” Carvell says. “You had to scoop a basketball off of a cone, pick it up, lift it over here and drop it into a wastebasket.” In a flash, “I was in love. ‘Scoop that puppy up, come over here, drop it in. ... I can do little things up here and make big things happen out here.’”

It was a revelation. “Oh my gosh, I love this,” Carvell remembers thinking, “and what I’d really like to do is get out there and be a full-time equipment operator and make things happen, dig in the dirt. And, I’d rather be in blue jeans and boots.”

She’s quick to point out, “If I hadn’t gone into building tech, I might not ever have been brave enough to get up on a backhoe.” As for SkillsUSA, “it’s amazing the confidence and courage it’s given me. Because even if they tell you when you lose your job that it’s not performance-related — ‘It’s just, you know, the economics’ — it still feels horrible.”

By learning new skills, “I’ve got my courage back, which is good,” she says. That courage led Carvell to a job driving a dump truck at a quarry and empowered her to help with a major renovation at the family’s cabin in Cascade, Colo.

Carvell’s son also participated in the rodeo, where it became clear that training in heavy equipment would complement what he’d learned completing the building tech program. Williams was one of the few who, with a spoon taped to an excavator, could pick up a golf ball from a pile of sand and put it in a coffee can.

“From a little kid, I always was on the playground with the little handles and the scoop and the sand and was digging a moat all the way around myself,” he says. Something clicked for him at the rodeo, and now Williams wants to get his commercial driver’s license. Ultimately, he wants to be able to lay out a raw piece of property, dig the basement and build a house on that ground.

Like Williams, Kooser had thought about running heavy equipment at a young age, but he never had the chance until the rodeo.

“For me, it was a pretty easy feat,” Kooser says. “It just sparked a fire in me that drove me to go ahead and join the commercial heavy-construction program.”

He’d competed in the national Community Service contest in 2016, presenting the Recycled Rides project while Williams and Carvell were tackling TeamWorks.

“Yeah, I’d done culinary arts,” Kooser remembers. “I took that program a year ago and finished it in one year. That was after I had a pretty lengthy construction background previously and actually had some medical conditions that ended that career for me.

“So, I started some soul-searching to find out what I wanted to do with the rest of my life, and I’ve always liked to cook,” he adds. “But that has turned into something that I’m going to use as a retirement after the next 20 or so years in the commercial heavy construction field.”

Above: Kevin Williams (left) and Johnathan Kooser help repair a van for Washburn Tech’s annual Recycled Rides giveaway. Left: Paula Carvell uses new skills to improve the van that was presented to a family in need.
Aft er walking to the podium at her high-school graduation, Emily Anne Kresho thanked her drafting teacher, Robert Jett. While her next step is a four-year university, she taught her that it doesn’t have to be the path for everyone.

“It is a large misconception that one must attend college to succeed in the workforce,” Kresho said in her salutatory address. “Many students leave school with a large amount of student loans and have a hard time getting a job. Additionally, there exists a skills gap in our country.”

She shared the words of Mike Rowe of “Dirty Jobs” and his foundation: “We are profoundly disconnected. There is a gap between white-collar workers and blue-collar workers and a misguided belief that vocational tracks are less than others.”

Kresho also stressed to the audience the importance of having a good work ethic. Hers is fierce. As a four-year drafting student at Stafford High School in Fredericksburg, Va., she served as SkillsUSA chapter president, vice president and secretary. She was the 2015 district and state champion in SkillsUSA’s Technical Drafting contest, placing fifth nationally, and 2016’s national Architectural Drafting gold medalist. Kresho is an American Design Drafting Association (ADDA) certified mechanical and architectural drafter.

She’s also a top athlete. As senior team captain, Kresho was the state 5A field hockey player of the year. She ran track and played tennis as well. With academic scholarships, she’s now at the University of Delaware, majoring in computer science and playing Division 1 field hockey.

Kresho believes SkillsUSA’s technical and workplace training made her a person deserving of a scholarship and also helped her land a job in computer-aided design.

“I also got a lot of leadership skills and communication skills and professionalism skills that I think will definitely help me in the future,” she says. “I mean, things come up in the workplace where there’s a project that you’re working on and there are many ways to approach the problem, many solutions that could come about.”

She adds that SkillsUSA teaches problem solving, communication skills, the ability to represent yourself well, and to accept others’ opinions and options.

“When a student’s deciding between doing CTE and not doing CTE, I would say that career and technical education is a huge part of what makes someone stand out to a college, to a job, to so many organizations, and it’s not the most time-consuming thing,” she says. “I think that the benefits of career and technical education and of SkillsUSA definitely outweigh any time management issues.”

Drafting a Strong Message To Change Misconceptions

Career and technical education led Emily Anne Kresho to a job and a university scholarship. So when the high-school student had a public platform, she had to give credit where it was due.

By Ann P. Schreiber
You’re an employer looking to fill a long-term position. One of your two prospects has exactly the technical skills you need, but you have doubts about this applicant’s employability skills and ability to work well on a team. The other is lacking in technical experience, but this prospect’s confidence and leadership potential impress you. Who gets the job?

Split into two groups. One should list the pros and cons of hiring the candidate with stronger technical skills. The other should list the pros and cons of hiring the candidate with stronger employability skills. Compare the lists as a class, and make the final decision as a group.

While they crave both, many companies value employability skills over technical skills in new hires. Having both will make you almost impossible not to hire. SkillsUSA’s new Career Essentials suite of products was created to help you become job-ready Day One. Make sure to check it out this year at: www.careeressentials.org.

We recruit for attitude and train for skill. — Atul Gawande

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 tell us the story or page where it appears to win a SkillsUSA special “sackpack” (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 Nov. 15. Congratulations to last issue’s winners: Billie Bushika-Alcala of Dalton, Mass., and Pete Avalos of Midland, Texas.
A SLICE OF LIFE FOR THOSE IN HUNGER

Minnesota SkillsUSA recently participated in the 363 Days food program by preparing and donating more than 1,000 sandwiches for the homeless and hungry. The project supports the work of Allen Law, a teacher in the Inner City Minneapolis Public School System for 32 years. Law, the sole delivery person, spends every night from 9 p.m. to 10 a.m. driving the inner-city streets of the Twin Cities in search of people to help. Learn more here: http://www.363days.org/index.html.

HELPING FIND A WAY HOME

Students at W.F. Kaynor Technical High School in Waterbury, Conn., partner with Acts 4 Ministry Inc., a nondenominational group that supports families in need. To help homeless clients transition into housing, students raised $1,300 for bed linens and household items by hosting a charity dodgeball game. At the ministry’s facility, students sorted donations for the thrift store, washed dishes, loaded trucks, cleaned, reviewed applications and helped with inputting data. They also helped clients “shop” for donated clothes, worked in the laundry, cleaned the client shower between uses and served food. Carpentry students fixed and assembled furniture. To raise awareness of the issue, team leaders did research, then conducted lessons on homelessness. The SkillsUSA chapter’s Community Service contest team placed fifth at nationals. See their PowerPoint presentation here: https://youtu.be/Y-wZm3U7mvY.

NONPARTISAN EVENT DRAWS VOTERS

At Southwest Career and Technical Academy in Las Vegas, students created a nonpartisan meet-and-greet event with local and national political candidates and referendum representatives. To promote the candidates night and encourage voter registration, SkillsUSA members worked with government classes. Seniors made presentations to underclassmen and reached out to local businesses, community groups and news media. They also created a social-media campaign, #SWCTACandidateNight. Refreshments were prepared by culinary arts students, and snacks were sold to raise funds. The chapter’s Community Service contest team presented this project and earned a bronze medal at nationals. See their PowerPoint at: https://youtu.be/cy9vPEguKWM.
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.

Firefighting students Tanner Lewis (left) and Nic Carroll put away hose after a training exercise at Miami Valley Career Technology Center in Englewood, Ohio. Photography student Julienne Yoho, whose SkillsUSA advisor is Troy Baker, caught them in action.

You are people who like to get things done. You are this nation’s future, and I am so heartened that you are there.

Lt. Gov. Jenean Hampton of Kentucky, at SkillsUSA’s national conference

You must have education and industry at the table so the student gets the academic skills, the technical skills and the employability skills. That’s the winning package, that’s what leads to success, and that’s what leads to sustainability. In SkillsUSA, you get that — that’s what makes you so successful.

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Orem, UT

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Jim McKenney
Keya Paha Co HS SkillsUSA
Springview, NE

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- Based on research from 1,000 employers of what employees need to know and be able to do
- The SkillsUSA Framework has allowed us to define, implement and measure these skills
- 24/7 access to students and instructors on computers, tablets or smartphones

- SkillsUSA Career Essentials: Experiences takes your students to the next level of demonstration within the SkillsUSA learning continuum. It prepares students for the transition to the workforce or higher education through authentic project-based experiences
- The online curriculum empowers teachers with high-quality skill development resources and advances the impact of the SkillsUSA Framework
- Turnkey tools and resources for instructors
- A built-in grading and badging system
- A learning community for instructors to share best practices and additional tools and resources

For full details on the SkillsUSA Career Essentials suite of products including purchasing information, please visit: www.careeressentials.org