Experts at **Innovation**

Light Up with Ideas
In partnership with:

SkillsUSA
MEET THE EMPLOYER

National Leadership and Skills Conference
Kentucky Exposition Center
West Hall | Friday, June 29 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

A month’s worth of interviews in a single day

Attend career development seminars

Dozens of SkillsUSA partners, including some of the nation’s largest employers, are ready to showcase their companies and talk to you about career paths, employment opportunities, internships and apprenticeships.

Open to all 2017-18 SkillsUSA members

Bring plenty of résumés and dress professionally.
No appointment needed!

For more information, visit: https://bit.ly/2Gij9qQ
features

The Natural
When this student takes a swing in his field, it’s not at fastballs. He’s making a play for a career in environmental protection.

BY ANN P. SCHREIBER

Turning Ideas into Innovations
What’s it like to invent, design and make real-world products? Step into the wild and wacky workshop — actually, a classroom — where magic comes to life.

BY KAREN N. KITZEL

Pitching Perfectly
“Shark Tank,” meet high school. Launched by a SkillsUSA competition, this teenage entrepreneur is already reaching unexpected heights.

BY E. THOMAS HALL

Gold Standard: Married to Service
This couple’s 30-year commitment to helping others, felt far and wide, is now deemed worthy of a presidential honor.

BY ANN P. SCHREIBER

departments

Ask Tim
BY TIM LAWRENCE

What’s New
BY TOM KERCHEVAL

Toolbox
BY TOM KERCHEVAL

Spotlight
BY ANN P. SCHREIBER

Image
BY E. THOMAS HALL

On the Cover:
SkillsUSA Champion Kelci McClary-Davis of Manvel, Texas. Photo by Lloyd Wolf.
SkillsUSA's Official Magazine
14001 SkillsUSA Way, Leesburg, VA 20176-5494
703-777-8810
www.skillsusa.org

MALEGE STAFF/OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
Tom Hall, Director
Ann Schreiber, Associate Director, Communications
Craig Moore, Senior Manager, Web/Technology
Tom Krenchel, Senior Manager, Audacism
Technology/Communications
Jane Short, Manager, Public Relations/Communications
Karen Kittele, Manager, Public Relations/Communications
Darlene Helen, Specialist, Digital/So"al Media

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Tim Lawrence, Executive Director
Shelly Coates, Associate Director, Conference Management Services
Ashley Ridgeway, Manager, Conference Management Services
Sandra Moore, Administrative Assistant

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE
Kim Graham, Director
Melissa Wilson, Associate Director, Human Resources
Keith Ashby, Manager, Educational Resources/ National Center
Sarah Utterback, Manager, Accounting
Roxanne Hodge, Customer Service Representative

BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS AND DEVELOPMENT
Christa Floresca, Director
Heidi Walsh, Program Director
Dave Worden, Program Director, SkillsUSA Championships
Jim Kregiel, Senior Manager, SkillsUSA Championships
Amy Serafin, Corporate Development Officer
Kaitlin Youngs, Program Manager, SkillsUSA Championships
Helen Carafa, Program Specialist

EDUCATION
Kelly Horton, Director
Gayle Silvey, Associate Director
Gene Dudley, Senior Regional Manager
Anita Foor, Senior Curriculum Manager
Kim Hegdus, Senior Education Development Manager
Patty Duncan, Program Manager, Member Services and Assessments
Courtney Ferrell, Program Manager, Professional Development
Stephanie Bland, Program Specialist
Laura Rauch, Program Specialist
Taryn Zeigler, Program Specialist

ADVERTISING/PARTNERSHIP INQUIRIES
Christa Floresca, 703-737-0603

BOARO OF DIRECTORS
Chris Arvin (Caterpillar Inc.)
Sam Bontum (Snap-on Incorporated)
Charles Wallace (Maryland)
Brent Kindred (Wisconsin)
James King (Tennessee)
Clay Mitchell (California)
Peggy Torrens (Kansas)
Sarah Heath (Advance CTE)
Dean Baker (Association for Career and Technical Education)
Darren Gibson (SkillsUSA State Directors Association)
Jennifer Worth (American Association of Community Colleges)
Troy Daily (Lowe’s Companies Inc.)
Russ Hoffbauer (State Farm Insurance Companies)
John Kett (Insurance Auto Auctions Inc.)
Kaye Morgan-Curtis (Neovell Brands)
Chris Tesmer (Newell Brands)
Cameron Ferguson (Emeritus/Caterpillar Inc.)

NATIONAL STUDENT OFFICERS/ADVISORS
HIGH SCHOOL
Lizethe Moreno/Matthew Busby (Texas)
Scott Hicks/Amy Hicks (Georgia)
Marangelis Lopez/Virginia Cann (Connecticut)
Rosa Cartagena/Terri Inwood (Florida)
Laila Mirza/Rick Stephens (Maryland)
Grace Kerrane/Anne Marie Cataldo (Massachusetts)
Hunter Radford/Joyce Price (Virginia)
Jade Barma/Robert France (Wisconsin)
Brenna Stinnett/Vanessa McClure (Oklahoma)
Bryce Romero/Denny Vasquez (California)

COLLEGE/POSTSECONDARY
Josie Wolfe/Joshua Klemp (Rhode Island)
Brad Riddel/Buddy Ritchie (Virginia)
Maci Key/Jonathan Minyard (Alabama)
Madison Whitney/Greg Bartholomew (Utah)
Jeremy Copeland/Jeff Hetheroon (Oklahoma)

SkillsUSA champions online
Experience SkillsUSA Champions interactively at: www.skillsusa.org. The digital format responds for viewing on all electronic devices. Teachers receiving this issue in hard copy are asked to share it with their students and others via email and social media. Then see even more champions on:

www.skillsusa.org

VOLUME 52, No. 4
SkillsUSA Champions (ISSN 1040-4538) is published four times per school year—Fall (October/November), Winter (December/January), Spring (February/March) and Summer (April/May)—by SkillsUSA Inc. at 14001 SkillsUSA Way, Leesburg, VA 20176. Periodicals postage paid at Leesburg, VA, and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2018 by SkillsUSA. All rights reserved.

POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to SkillsUSA Champions, Attn.: Patty Duncan, 14001 SkillsUSA Way, Leesburg, VA 20176.

The names SkillsUSA, SkillsUSA Champions and SkillsUSA Champions, the SkillsUSA logo, emblem and slogan art are all registered trademarks of SkillsUSA Inc. All rights are reserved, and permission must be granted by the national headquarters of SkillsUSA prior to any use.

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.
Illuminating a Career Path

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

Q: Many of my friends seem to have their career paths all set, but I’m not sure what I want to do. How can I take charge of my success when there’s so much I don’t know about my future?

Tim: I believe students do best when they focus on what they can directly control: doing well in school, being an active citizen and finding ways to contribute to the world around them. Success in our careers and personal lives is determined by the many small choices we make. By choosing to be involved in SkillsUSA, you are helping to shape your future.

Think of SkillsUSA as the high beams on your vehicle, illuminating your path to help you navigate the road ahead. If you master the skills you’re learning and keep moving toward your career goals, you’ll find yourself one day at an intersection in that road where your skill meets the right career opportunity. And if you have worked and prepared, you’ll be ready.

In this issue of SkillsUSA Champions, you’ll read about students who’ve shown determination in shaping their lives. These SkillsUSA students may not know one another, but they share a belief that they can create their own futures. Nathan Simpson, a high school senior in Virginia, is even helping other students take charge of their learning and pursue the career goals they’re passionate about.

You’ll also read about innovative instructors such as California’s Peter Wachtel. He and other SkillsUSA advisors like him work hard to guide their students to become critical thinkers who can embrace both technology and change.

Novelist Paulo Coelho wrote in his book The Alchemist, “Life was always a matter of waiting for the right moment to act.” The book follows the journey of a shepherd, a boy who sells his flock in pursuit of his Personal Legend, or what he always wanted to accomplish. As you travel the path to seek your own legendary goals, prepare as best you can, but remember that sometimes you must stop and adjust your plans. SkillsUSA can be an important tool for you to navigate the twists and turns of school, work and life.

Remember, if you are prepared with the personal, workplace and technical skills outlined in the SkillsUSA Framework, you will be ready for whatever you face. The old saying is timeless and true: “Success occurs when preparation meets opportunity.” Be prepared, always walk through the doors of opportunity when they open, and you will find success in all you do.

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.
National Conference

Gearing Up

To Set Records

Seems like only a blink ago when SkillsUSA’s latest National Leadership and Skills Conference ended, but the 2018 NLSC is already staring us down. The nation’s largest showcase of career and technical education returns to Louisville, Ky., June 25-29, ready to set new records. More than 16,000 will participate, including nearly 6,500 state champions competing in 102 skilled and leadership events, the most ever held.

The Opening Ceremony will feature members from every part of the nation joining their voices in one proud roar. We’ll roll out the largest technical education trade show in the nation with SkillsUSA TECHSPO, conduct wide-scale service projects, and cap off the week with the emotional Awards Ceremony.

It’s the most important event on the SkillsUSA calendar, and it’s ready to change lives. Maybe yours.

Trials to Train Champions

For the first time ever, trials to select the next WorldSkills USA team will be held on the competition floor of this year’s SkillsUSA Championships. The reason? To create a stronger selection process that will in turn produce a more competitive team. Forty-six competitions will be held during the national conference in Louisville, Ky., and experts in each area will judge the projects. Holding the majority of these trials simultaneously also gives team members more time to train for the 2019 WorldSkills Competition in Kazan, Russia. WorldSkills USA is the only team that represents the United States in the area of competitive technical skills worldwide. For more, visit: tinyurl.com/worldskills2019.

SkillsUSA’s 54th National Leadership and Skills Conference is set to drop this June. Stay up-to-date with every moment at: tinyurl.com/nlsc2018.
SERVING OTHERS EARN A SHOT AT BIG REWARDS

SkillsUSA’s National Week of Service is May 7-11, and this year, thanks to our generous friends at Stanley Black & Decker and the new “Show Off Your Skills” challenge, participation could land your chapter a grant of up to $10,000.

The challenge is designed to recognize the ingenuity of SkillsUSA chapters as demonstrated in the service projects they conduct. To enter, chapters need to produce a 60-second video highlighting the service performed and the specific trade skills used in the project. The winning videos will be shared on social media.

Be as creative as you like; we only ask that you clearly identify how your SkillsUSA chapter’s collective skills were used in service to others (and that you keep the video to the aforementioned 60 seconds).

Entries will be accepted from May 7-11. Five finalists will be selected, and those five videos will be posted online May 14 as part of a nationwide vote to determine the grand-prize winner.

The winner of the $10,000 grant will be announced May 18, and the other four finalists will receive a $4,000 grant. Additionally, the state association from the winning SkillsUSA chapter will receive a $2,500 grant.

The great thing about SkillsUSA, though, is that incentives to conduct community service projects are rarely needed. Service has been a cornerstone of our program since 1965. That said, for contest details, visit: tinyurl.com/skillsusa-service.

Shining a Light On Unsung Stars

SkillsUSA honors five of its cream-of-the-crop advisors each year as part of the Advisor of the Year program. Of those five, one will be named the nation’s best at the Opening Ceremony of SkillsUSA’s national conference. This year’s finalists are: Marjorie Kellman, Washington County (Md.) Technical High School, Region 1; Joyce Price, Blacksburg (Va.) High School, Region 2; Jeff Bertke, Upper Valley Career Center, Piqua, Ohio, Region 3; Corine Triplett, Tulsa (Okla.) Technology Center, Region 4; and Shaun Smith, Durango (Colo.) High School, Region 5. Thanks to all the selfless advisors who let students shine.

Harley-Davidson has once again donated one of its iconic motorcycles (or, if you’re up on the lingo, “hogs”) as raffle-bait for the benefit of SkillsUSA. The bike in question is a 2018 Street Bob, and it looks as amazing as the ride it provides.

All funds raised will benefit SkillsUSA’s Alumni and Friends Association. Tickets are $5 each or five tickets for $20. The winner will be announced during the Awards Ceremony of SkillsUSA’s national conference. Don’t worry, though; as much as we’d love to have you there, you don’t have to attend the conference to win.

The online ticket order deadline is June 1, so hurry. To order, visit: bit.ly/HarleyRaffle18. For questions, email Taryn Zeigler at tzeigler@skillsusa.org.

Take a chance on the only raffle that roars

Photo: Lloyd Wolff
SkillsUSA Week — sponsored by Carhartt — was celebrated in early February, and, judging by the photos and stories we’ve received from chapters nationwide, it was a rousing success.

Our national officers set the tone with trips to chapters across the country and one high-profile visit to Washington, D.C. There, they met with Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos (top photo) and various senators to advocate for SkillsUSA.

The national officer team was busy all week, but so were many of you. Students at Woodville Tompkins Technical and Career High School in Savannah, Ga., dedicated an entire building on their campus to SkillsUSA (middle left). They renamed the edifice “The SkillsUSA Building,” and all but one of their programs will be housed there.

There were events all week at the Tennessee College of Applied Technology in McMinnville, including a proclamation from Mayor Jimmy Haley making SkillsUSA Week a citywide celebration (middle right).

Students at Greater New Bedford (Mass.) Regional High School demonstrated their SkillsUSA pride by wearing red (bottom left), one of many chapters across the country who did the same during the week’s “Wear Red Day.”

Winners of a new SkillsUSA Week video contest claimed their prize: a visit from TV personality Kayleen McCabe and SkillsUSA executive director Tim Lawrence (bottom right), who commended students at St. Helen’s (Ore.) High School for rebuilding on-campus structures.

For more photos and coverage of SkillsUSA Week, visit: tinyurl.com/skillsusa-week.
SkillsUSA days help an eagle learn to soar

T's a moment many kids dream of in backyards and playgrounds every day. (OK, let’s be honest: Adults still dream about it, too.) It’s that moment when a championship game is on the line, and it all comes down to you.

Current Philadelphia Eagle and former SkillsUSA student Brandon Graham lived that dream on Super Bowl Sunday. The Eagles took a 38-33 lead in the fourth quarter, but more than two minutes left seemed like an eternity for ice-in-his-veins New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady. Graham’s fumble-inducing sack, however, effectively emptied Brady’s hourglass, earning the Eagles their first Super Bowl trophy.

Graham and his teammates emerged as champions, but that’s a term Graham was already familiar with as a member of SkillsUSA during his last three years as a student at Crockett High School in Detroit. Graham helped lead his chapter’s Opening and Closing Ceremonies team to three straight state championships. While the national prize eluded them, Graham revealed in a 2007 interview for this magazine what lessons he learned and how he applied them to his future career in football.

“In the three years I attended the nationals,” Graham said, “I learned that you must be professional at all times. I learned to develop my leadership skills by standing in front of people and talking without being too nervous. I improved my communication skills, and that helped both on and off the football field.”

At the conclusion of our 2007 interview, Graham, then a sophomore at the University of Michigan, hoped to become a first-string contributor with the Wolverines football team. He ended his college career as the 2009 Big Ten Conference co-MVP winner, became a first-round NFL pick and is now a Super Bowl champion.

In keeping with SkillsUSA’s commitment to service, Graham also founded a football camp in Michigan called “Select 100,” designed to help young athletes find their own path to success. Part of that path for Graham was SkillsUSA.

“I would say to any student,” Graham said while still in college, “that the best thing to do when you enter a career center is ask, ‘Who is the SkillsUSA advisor and when can I join?’” •

ADVANTAGE IS CBRE

CBRE Facilities Management & Technical Services

CBRE manages over 5 billion square feet of commercial real estate worldwide, and we’re searching for the best and brightest technical talent to enhance our facilities management and maintenance platform.

If you possess technical aptitude but don’t have experience working in commercial real estate, CBRE has a 90-day paid training program designed for candidates who are new to the industry and seeking an entry-level technical role. We are always recruiting for positions working with HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and other building systems.

At CBRE, our advantage is YOU!

To apply for a position, visit www.cbre.us/about/careers and search for req #18003688.

Scan the QR code on the right to view our recruiting video.
Collin Kelly is passionate about the world around him. A graduate of the environmental science and technology program at Minuteman High School in Lexington, Mass., Kelly says he was born into the career path. His father is in law enforcement for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and works in natural resource protection. His mother is an environmental educator, speaking to groups about climate change and its negative effects.

The student has put in nearly 100 hours volunteering with the USFWS and pulling up invasive plant species. When people stopped to ask what he was doing, he learned that many had no idea what such plants were and how these invaders hurt the native environment. These talks inspired a gold-medal-winning entry in a national competition, SkillsUSA's Community Action Project. For a national wildlife refuge, his team created educational display panels that explained invasive plant species. While discussing the idea, USFWS employees recommended also addressing the topic of pollinators. These are critical to the environment and agriculture but need more public awareness.

Kelly is now majoring in biology with a concentration in wildlife at Framingham State University. For his academic excellence and SkillsUSA involvement, he earned a Janine Baker Legacy Scholarship, named for a well-known and loved SkillsUSA advisor at Minuteman.

He is certain his SkillsUSA involvement increased his chances of getting into college. Had Kelly chosen a particular one in Maine, he would have had six credits transferred from Minuteman, a testament to the level of science taught there.

At his state SkillsUSA conference, Kelly participated in Exploratory Project Demonstration. He says the experience got him hooked on SkillsUSA. The student learned how to present himself, do job interviews and deliver presentations. Career and technical education, combined with SkillsUSA, gave him much more than a diploma, Kelly says. “You have knowledge that most other people don’t have.”

By Ann P. Schreiber
This California CAD instructor teaches students how to imagine innovative products for the future. “The skills, experience, and wisdom will come in time,” he says.

Peter Wachtel is that wacky, wonderful teacher you’ll always remember. Engaging and fun, he allows imaginations to run wild in class.

The industrial technology instructor helps students use the tools, computers and machines that enable them to experience the process of translating a rough idea into a finished product. Nearly 170 of them take his classes in product innovation and design, computer-aided drafting (CAD) or architecture.

Wachtel started at Camarillo (Calif.) High School in August 2016, but he’s no stranger to the classroom. For over 20 years, he’s taught at prestigious institutions: Pratt Institute, Parsons School of Design, Otis College of Art and Design, Art Center College of Design, The Art Institutes and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His goal? Bringing college-level education to high school.

As the inventor of many products and holder of multiple patents, he is able to share what it’s like to invent, design and produce real-world products.

Wachtel and his students are relatively new to SkillsUSA but excited to expand their knowledge and test their skills. “This is our first year,” he explains. “We implement different parts of the SkillsUSA curriculum into our classes so that all students are involved and participate.”
Across the U.S. our forges blaze, our assembly lines run true, and our people continue to put six generations’ worth of expertise into every tool we create.

While Klein has grown with the global economy, we have never lost our commitment to the American Tradesmen who have trusted our tools for 160 years.

Students who enter his program may have an interest in design and invention, but most have not thought about a future in industrial design. Through project-based learning, they’re introduced to a variety of possible career paths: industrial designer, toy designer, entertainment designer for theme parks, set designer, prop designer, manufacturer, drafter or model maker. These paths tie to postsecondary programs and offer good starting salaries. All of Wachtel’s classes are articulated for three credits at any U.S. college or university.

**Imagination and innovation**

Wachtel makes class more exciting by bringing many real-world projects inside the classroom. The students built logo breadboards for The Cave, a restaurant at a local winery. They designed Harry Potter souvenir cups for Universal Studios, a project that included a research outing to the theme park. And, they’ve mentored younger students on product design, including the Girl Scouts.

To help fund some of their activities, students sell products out of their school workshop. The teacher proudly shares student projects on Twitter.

Wachtel’s own love of designing started when he was a child. “I always loved to design and figure things out creatively,” he says. “I built a go-cart out of a lawn mower when I was 9, and my dad’s still mad at me. Since then, I’ve designed over 500 toys and products and worked with the best companies in the world.”

One of Wachtel’s products is the World-Famous Grill Wrangler, a three-in-one tool he launched through an innovation collaboration platform called Quirky. The combination spatula, tongs and fork has been demonstrated on NBC’s “The Tonight Show” and the “Today” show.

The innovative instructor cites one important reason for his program’s success. “My teaching technique focuses on imagination. I tell students that everything around you is worthy of exploration. The desire and love for what you do — make it part of your life. The skills, experience and wisdom will come in time.”

Collaboration is key, Wachtel says, as his students teach one another as much as he leads class. “It’s great for students to learn from each other’s strengths,” he adds.

He teaches students to love learning. As for himself, “I love teaching students how to solve problems and think creatively, to discover something new. Their eyes light up when they discover talents and skills they never thought they had.”

---

**Wachtel’s students work on a range of designs, including one pitched to Universal Studios**
Brimming with ideas, Nathan Simpson isn’t going to let a little thing like youth stand in his way.

The high school senior, 17, recently was awarded a federal contract for videography services, possibly making him the youngest Department of Defense contractor on record.

Not only that, Simpson is helping other students his age make their dreams a reality. He serves on the leadership board of GripTape, a nonprofit that provides 15-to 19-year-olds with $500 microgrants to pursue whatever they’re passionate about. “We’ve had some students, they wanted to start their own photography company,” he says. “We had another girl, she started a fashion line and had a fashion show. It’s really anything the student wants to do.”

GripTape helps ensure students from disadvantaged schools or households have a “rich learning environment.” It’s backed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Michael Bloomberg and the Carnegie Institute.

Simpson, who will enter James Madison University this fall, began his professional career doing freelance web design for his high school. He was only 15 years old. A year later, he was hired by his hometown of Appomatox, Va., to rebuild its tourism website and eventually all of its web properties.

In SkillsUSA, his four-student team from Appomatox High School has won the national Entrepreneurship competition for two years in a row.

Simpson first competed in 2016. After his team took home the gold that June, one of the judges, Pat Scannell of Maker-smith, “went above and beyond after the competition,” the student says. “He followed up with us, sent out an email, and he told me, ‘Let me make some introductions to some guys for you, because this business that you presented has legs.’”

That led to the team hoofing it up to Washington, D.C., the following December. “We weren’t soliciting for an investment,” Simpson says. “We were just pitching for advice at that point.”

With a sharp eye for opportunity and years of work experience, this entrepreneur has a great idea of what it takes for students to succeed. He should — he’s still in high school.

By E. Thomas Hall
The students made their presentation to a man—I'm not going to say the name, but he's worth nearly half a billion dollars, and he co-founded a very well-known Internet company,” Simpson remembers. “He asked, ‘How much money do you need to start this company?’ We said, ‘$12,000,’ and he laughed. He said, ‘That is not worth my time. Come back and ask for $50.’"

The team never got the startup funds, “but the opportunity that we had was insane,” the student adds, “to be able to pitch to that level of people, you know. And that guy was worth more than some of the people on ‘Shark Tank.’ So, just getting that experience was amazing.”

In 2017, Simpson laid the groundwork for another gold-medal Entrepreneurship team. But with new duties as a SkillsUSA state officer, however, he wasn’t eligible to compete alongside his group at nationals.

“Simpson remembers being in 10th grade when his computer systems technology instructor, Jason Clark, ‘came up to me and said, ‘Nathan, you owe me $17 bucks.’ And I said, ‘Why do I owe you $17 bucks?’ He said, ‘I just signed you up for the best thing that’s ever going to happen to you.’”

That was SkillsUSA. “I would not be the person I am today without it,” Simpson says. While he’s competed in other events for young entrepreneurs, “the access to successful people has allowed me to shift my mindset. It’s just the ability to connect with people.

“I’ve always been blessed with opportunities, and I’ve always worked hard to make the most of them, but this opportunity was different, because there’s so many different avenues. You can grow from it as a high school student, as a college student. You can grow from it as an industry professional. It’s a multitude of ways.”

live. play. skillsusa.  
STAY CHILL  
STAY HYDRATED  
Visit the SkillsUSA Store — www.SkillsUSAstore.org
By Ann P. Schreiber

A Partnership of Service Spans More Than 30 Years

Love and marriage go together like SkillsUSA and service, particularly for teachers Mike and Brenda Jackson, whose devotion changes lives and builds leaders.

For more than 30 years, Mike and Brenda Jackson have been a team — one with a passion for service to their community. They’re the first married couple in SkillsUSA to both earn the President’s Volunteer Service Award (PVSA) for 4,000 hours of service over a lifetime.

Instructors at River Valley High School in Mohave Valley, Ariz., the two have been serving young people since they met at Idaho State University. Mike, who teaches graphic arts, has coached football, wrestling and track, while Brenda, a culinary arts instructor, has coached cheerleaders. Both have worked with youth through their church ministry. Including their students’ efforts, the couple’s impact has been felt on more than 15 organizations in Arizona.

“When students get engaged in learning and see the relevance, they gain confidence and self-esteem,” Mike says. “When you walk them through their first bake sale or their first community service event, it changes their whole perspective, and they feel they are capable of doing more than they thought. Soon they start seeing hope and look at going to college for something that brings them joy. “When we as teachers prepare, show motivation, genuinely care about our students and expect excellence, our students thrive,” he adds.

With Brenda and her students’ culinary training, the River Valley High team typically provides food to raise funds and feed volunteers. “Wherever they have food or a booth, we have served,” Mike explains.

Spending time working on community service with students allows the Jacksons to lead by example. Developing a caring collaboration has a lifetime effect on the students, which is also improving their school’s graduation rate.

“We feel if we just mentored only during the school day, we would not be able to make much progress,” Mike says, adding how he wants students to see the couple is involved beyond the classroom. Showing faith in a student at a pivotal point in life can prevent him or her from spiraling down a bad path, he points out.

SkillsUSA’s focus on personal, workplace and technical skills helped Brenda’s chapter earn silver Chapter of Excellence status in only her first year as an advisor. Its community service aspect helped her choose SkillsUSA.

While service to the community has its rewards, both Jacksons agree that student success is also satisfying — especially when one returns to school to say thanks and “I got the job!”

Learn about the President’s Volunteer Service Award at: http://bit.ly/2pqe88D
Re-evaluating Our Past Helps Change Our Future

We’ve all heard comments that end with the phrase “like a girl” before, and it’s a rare occasion when they’re meant as compliments. Women on traditionally male-dominated career paths often deal with hurdles their male counterparts never have to leap.

As a class, come up with some examples of a career where you might expect to find a male on the job. Ask yourselves why that’s the case. Are any of those reasons still viable today? If not, what are some possible reasons why women might still have a hard time breaking into this field? What can be done to change things? What can men do to make women feel more accepted and comfortable in a male-dominated environment? What can women do to facilitate those actions?

SkillsUSA recently held a live Facebook chat with TV personality Kayleen McCabe and national officer Maci Key to discuss this very topic. View the archived video at: tinyurl.com/skillsusa-women.

I was raised to believe that excellence is the best deterrent to racism or sexism. And that’s how I operate my life.
— Oprah Winfrey

Find the photo, win a prize

No, the picture on the left isn’t abstract art. It’s actually a distorted part of another photo in this issue. Find the original photo and 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 Aug. 1. Congratulations to last issue’s winners: Gavriel Rodriguez of Grandfalls, Texas, and Cindy Prindle of Limerick, Pa.
SPREADING KINDNESS AND MULCH

Students in architecture, digital design and filmmaking programs applied for and received a $2,250 SkillsUSA Lowe’s grant to help renovate the playground on the campus of John F. Kennedy High School in Granada Hills, Calif.

The students wanted to complete a kindness-themed activity and came up with the plan to fix up that abandoned playground. They removed a tree and a fence, spread mulch and gravel, built planter boxes and painted a playhouse and a brick walkway.

SkillsUSA Lowe’s grant helps Kennedy High students renovate a playground.

It’s their move

Less electronics, more human interaction and exercise inspired Adam Taylor and Victoria Moreau to develop a chess/checkers garden for their community in Pocomoke City, Md. Large pavers were used to create the oversize game board, allowing players to walk through the pieces to make their moves. The Worcester Technical High School students also planted an herb garden nearby to add aromatherapy to the mental exercise of playing the games.

Developing a safe way

Engineering club students at Sylmar (Calif.) Biotech Health Academy developed an idea for an identification card to be used by homeless people. Featuring a user photo and a scannable datamatrix code, the cards would help outreach workers and others track homeless individuals to better target resources. The code would connect users to a database. In addition, a social-media-style website would allow the community to learn how the homeless are being helped and to share ideas and resources. Job training would be emphasized. They call the system Safe-Way. See news coverage: http://bit.ly/2FxGpUy.

An art gallery shows skills

Graphics design students at C.S. Monroe Technology Center in Leesburg, Va., had the opportunity to show their painting, photography and digital work at an exhibit at the town hall. Locals were able to view student works at a gallery opening, and students had a chance to showcase their skills and talent.

The show began five years ago as a partnership between the school and the Leesburg Commission on Public Art. The show features work from first- and second-year students. Styles include paintings, collages and digital images created using Adobe software. Some represent class work, and others reflect works done outside of class.

(From left) Students Sydney Velandria, Armeen Afsharjavan, Julia Spewak and SkillsUSA National Vice President Brad Ridder enjoy a gallery opening for C.S. Monroe Tech Center students.

(SPREADING KINDNESS AND MULCH)

(SPREADING KINDNESS AND MULCH)
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. •

SkillsUSA has always done a great job of being very inclusive to women in every trade and competition.


Have you ever used a product or service and thought you could improve it if you were able to be a part its ideation or creation? This is true of SkillsUSA. I get to see potential hires work. I see how they interact. I see when they face pressure and how they respond to it.

Chris Sessa, Cardiovascular Consultants LLC, Arizona
SkillsUSA

GRADUATION REGALIA

A classic way to show off your members’ hard work and achievements

Order your graduation regalia at: www.SkillsUSAstore.org

Note: School policies on displaying graduation regalia during the graduation ceremony may vary.
The most important skills are the hardest to teach—until now.

Industry-demanded, industry-validated for job-ready Day One students

- We’ve become intentional about developing career-ready students
- *SkillsUSA Career Essentials: Experiences* is the next generation of employability skill-building curricula developed for today’s students. *SkillsUSA Career Essentials: Experiences* is everything you need for your students to be career-ready.
- 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](http://www.careeressentials.org)