Spring 2020 champions

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helps heal old wounds

putting family first
brings first-time success

making the most of second chances

scholarship opportunities are knocking

Blocking Cyberbullies

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Integrity Shines in Dark Moments
National officer Melissa Moreno found the strength to overcome cyberbullying through the lessons she learned in SkillsUSA.
BY TOM KERCHEVAL

Taking a New Course
After facing an unexpected tragedy at 55, Jacqueline Limbrick charted a course that led to college graduation at 58. Now, she’s set to realize her full potential.
BY KAREN KITZEL

Building Buzz in His Community
Gold suits Henry Balding. It’s the color of the state medal he won in Carpentry and the money-making honey produced by his bees.
BY TOM KERCHEVAL
AND TIFFANY GOVENDER

Making the Tough Calls
George Moslener’s harrowing leadership journey to district office was a family effort.
BY TIFFANY GOVENDER

Gold Standard: Advisor
Following in his father’s footsteps, Nick Jordan builds a future for his students and their community.
BY CRAIG MOORE

On the Cover:
SkillsUSA Champion Rahmere Williams of Augusta, Ga. 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.
A Commitment to Service

Executive Director Chelle Travis has a long family history and nearly two decades of work experience in career and technical education. Got a question? She can help.

Q: What does SkillsUSA teach about being a leader at any stage in life?
Chelle: SkillsUSA is first and foremost a leadership organization, and great leadership qualities can create success at every stage of life. Throughout my career, I’ve observed several common characteristics shared by student leaders, professionals and those who engage in leadership in their communities. When faced with challenging circumstances, these individuals answer with resilience, adaptability and a commitment to the service of others.

In this issue, you’ll read about SkillsUSA graduate and grandmother Jaqueline Limbrick, who responded to an unexpected tragedy by transforming her career path to better support her family. Like her, SkillsUSA member George Moslener engaged the support of his own family to navigate a crisis on his journey to district office. Both demonstrated great courage and resilience when uncertainty arose.

You’ll also read the story of Melissa Moreno, who remained committed to her goal of serving SkillsUSA’s membership during a dark time in her life. When she was confronted with cyberbullying while serving as a state officer, she could have let the attacks break her spirit. Instead, she persevered, and soon found herself elected SkillsUSA’s national high school vice president.

SkillsUSA was founded on the principle that good students, employees and citizens all start with a firm foundation built from solid technical skills and the opportunity to lead and serve others. Through service, you learn to cultivate relationships and practice crucial skills like time management, planning, organization and public speaking.

If you’re wondering how you can get involved in service, now is a great time for your chapter to start thinking about SkillsUSA’s National Week of Service. Held annually in May, this is an opportunity for SkillsUSA members across the country to conduct and promote a community service project. I hope you’ll consider sharing stories of all of the great work you do this year. Information and resources are available at: www.skillsusa.org/events-training/national-week-of-service/.

You can find opportunities to develop your leadership skills in the classroom, in the workplace and in your own hometown. When obstacles arise, find support, learn from your experiences, adapt, and, most importantly, remain committed to making a difference through serving others.

Got questions about SkillsUSA or other topics? Email anyinfo@skillsusa.org or send a letter to the address on the facing page.
Full Service

Always Beats Self Service

Sure, competitions are a huge part of the SkillsUSA experience, and those competitive events really start to heat up this time of year. But leadership activities bear equal weight on the SkillsUSA scale, and those include community service.

The President’s Volunteer Service Award (PVSA) allows SkillsUSA advisors, students, and registered alumni the opportunity to earn recognition for their community service and volunteer activities. We know you don’t perform this work to gain personal recognition, but sometimes that recognition can inspire others to get involved, too, and that leads to more service for those who need it. That’s the ultimate goal, right?

For more details, visit: tinyurl.com/skillsusa-pvsa. Get your application in by March 29, and you could be recognized on stage at SkillsUSA’s national conference this June in Louisville, Ky.

Planting Means Growing

Some of our most valuable relationships are forged with a mentor, and SkillsUSA’s Student2Student mentoring program gives chapter members the chance to become one. Through the program, older students put their leadership skills to work while helping younger students discover new options for their future career paths.

If you’re already participating in the program, you could receive national recognition for your chapter at SkillsUSA’s upcoming national conference. For more information on all aspects of Student2Student, visit: www.skillsusa.org/programs/mentoring-student2student.

At SkillsUSA’s 2019 national conference, students helped build bikes for needy kids. What’s your chapter doing to serve your community?
SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES ARE KNOCKING

It’s scholarship season at SkillsUSA, and there’s a variety of great opportunities available to qualified students. Here are two examples:

Robert Flint Student Leadership Development Scholarship
SkillsUSA members with financial needs may be eligible for this scholarship to attend Activate and Leverage leadership training at the national conference this June or the Washington Leadership Training Institute (WLTI) in September. Four scholarships of $1,300 each will be awarded to attend Activate and Leverage training, and four scholarships of $800 each will be awarded to attend WLTI. Nominations can only be made by a state association director, so you’ll need to contact your director if you’d like to apply. You can find state director contact information here: www.skillsusa.org/about/state-directors.

National Technical Honor Society (NTHS) Scholarships
The NTHS annually awards four $1,000 scholarships to registered members at SkillsUSA’s national conference. To be eligible, students must be active, dues-paying members of both SkillsUSA and NTHS. To apply, schools must also operate an active NTHS chapter.

More information on these and other opportunities can be found at www.skillsusa.org/membership-resources/scholarships-financial-aid. Good luck, and make sure to stay ahead of those deadlines!

Burning Questions? Hit the Hotline

Got a SkillsUSA “head scratcher” you need to get answered? That’s exactly why the SkillsUSA Membership Hotline was created. Need help starting a new chapter? Need strategies to strengthen an existing chapter? Need assistance with online registration? Need to know the latest sports scores? With the exception of that last question, the hotline operators are here to help. Call them toll-free at 844-875-4557, or send an email to: operators@skillsusa.org. Hours of operation are 8 a.m.–5 p.m. EST on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; and 11 a.m.–7 p.m. EST on Tuesday and Thursday.

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Taking your level of leadership to the big stage

Becoming a SkillsUSA officer at any level doesn’t just produce a great résumé bullet point; it also creates an experience you’ll point to as a foundational, life-changing element in your growth as a student leader and confident, well-rounded human being.

Becoming a national officer is the epitome of that leadership opportunity in SkillsUSA, but don’t be intimidated. After all, the cast of national officers since SkillsUSA began is full of students who went from thinking, “I don’t know if I can” to, “I’m so thankful I did.”

If you’d like to join that cast, whether this year or down the road, learn more and fill out an application at: www.skillsusa.org/membership-resources/students/national-officer-selection-process.

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Not even national officers are immune to cyberbullying. What this officer learned through SkillsUSA, however, helped her overcome it.

By Tom Kercheval

SkillsUSA national high-school vice president Melissa Moreno, a senior at San Luis (Ariz.) High School, is hardly the stereotypical “social outcast” who’s the cliched target in the bullied-student scenarios we’re most familiar with. On the contrary, she’s a vibrant extrovert, grounded in confidence and driven by a passion for leadership. And yet, Moreno claims to have been the victim of a cyberbullying campaign that dragged on for nearly two years, one that caused her pain, but — in part because of lessons learned through SkillsUSA — never caused her to question her character.

“I’ve lived in San Luis my whole life,” Moreno says. “I love my city, but it definitely comes with a lot of obstacles. It’s a city that is 99 percent Hispanic, and most parents in this town are immigrants who work in the fields as agricultural workers.”

Moreno’s grandparents fit that description. They came to San Luis while following a trail of seasonal produce jobs, but they ultimately decided to stay. Her parents eventually settled there, too, and her mom is now a teacher at Moreno’s school.

The family has worked hard to carve out an ever-evolving, ever-improving life for themselves, not just for their benefit, but for the benefit of the entire community. “I think one of the biggest obstacles that comes with our town is people not seeing our potential,” Moreno says.
“We have so many students who are strong enough, talented enough and skilled enough to really make it out there in the workforce.”

Moreno has clearly become one of those students, but her drive to get there was evident even before she joined SkillsUSA. “I was always that kid that wanted to be involved in school,” she says, “not just in school, but also every extracurricular activity available. That’s helped me gain a lot of opportunities throughout my educational journey.”

**A shocking discovery**

When Moreno was encouraged to join SkillsUSA as a freshman, she initially thought of the organization as just another one of those aforementioned “extracurricular” activities. After becoming introduced to SkillsUSA’s leadership track through the photography program she’d enrolled in, however, she soon realized that membership in this unique organization wasn’t something “extra”; it was something *integral* to every facet of her development as a student and leader moving forward.

“My first time in SkillsUSA was very shocking,” Moreno recalls. “As a confident freshman, I came in thinking, ‘Oh, I know I’m a leader. Oh, I’m super professional.’ But what I learned was that you can always grow more. You can always be doing more, being more, being better.”

“Some people found out that it had obviously been me [who reported the incident],” Moreno explains, “and things really became toxic for me after that with those people. I saw many posts written about me in group chats and on Facebook. They were being offensive toward my character and trying to smear my reputation with their friends. It even started to spread, where people were creating fake Instagram accounts for me and posting things about my character, saying I was a traitor, stuff like that. It was all a very overwhelming experience, because I felt like I had done the right thing.”

**No pain, no gain**

If the intent of the bullying was to damage Moreno’s reputation and inevitably break her spirit, it soon became apparent that the efforts were doomed to backfire. “I had other great friends and family that supported me,” Moreno says, “and my state officer teams were supportive through all of it. But I think what kept me going through that unhealthy environment was my belief in our mission and my belief in SkillsUSA, because I truly believe that what we’re doing in our organization is so empowering.”

**What kept me going through all of these challenges and that unhealthy environment was my belief in our mission and my belief in SkillsUSA, because I truly believe that what we’re doing in our organization is so empowering.**

Moreno credits advisor Nereida Lansman with helping her discover those paths to self-improvement. “She and I became very close,” Moreno says. “She provided me a lot of opportunities, including the chance to attend the SkillsUSA Arizona Fall Leadership Conference.”

The experience at the conference sparked an epiphany in Moreno. Here were tangible examples of leadership that made sense to her, ways she could harness her unbridled curiosity and ambition while focusing them on a controlled path toward success.

“It led me to change my mindset from being a fixed mindset to a growth mindset,” she says, the excitement of that discovery still evident in her voice. “There’s always room for improvement, and if you keep that growth mindset, that improvement will come as your journey comes as well.”

That first exposure to SkillsUSA leadership made Moreno want to jump in headfirst, which is exactly what she did. “The next year, I became our school’s first-ever state officer,” she proudly recalls. During her first term, Moreno delivered a keynote address on one of the elements of the SkillsUSA Framework that continues to resonate most strongly with her: integrity.

Ironically, that speech would lead to a decision by Moreno that would take the words she’d written and delivered and put them to the test in a dark and difficult real-world situation that would prove to be one of the most defining experiences in her life so far.

**A fateful decision**

Shortly after delivering her speech on integrity, Moreno claims to have learned that a student committed an infraction during the conference that, from Moreno’s point of view, violated the standards she now felt partially responsible for upholding as a new leader. After some soul-searching, Moreno decided to report the incident to her advisor, not to simply “tattle,” but to ensure that such an incident would not happen again.

The report was delivered, the matter was dealt with, and, at least at school, the situation seemed to have been resolved. Outside of school, however, a nearly two-year test of Moreno’s strength of character was just getting started.

“Some people found out that it had obviously been me [who reported the incident],” Moreno explains, “and things really became toxic for me after that with those people.”

**The efforts to shame Moreno for standing up for her values — and the values of the organization she’d grown to define — were not in vain.**
Cyberbullying is not just a buzz word; it’s a real epidemic that affects thousands of students every year. In fact, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, 20 percent of students between 12 and 18 experienced bullying in the 2016-17 school year, and 15 percent identified cyberbullying as the main method bullies used. Those same statistics claim that girls are three times more likely to be cyberbullied than boys.

Melissa Moreno has been on the receiving end of that bullying, but she came through stronger for the experience. That doesn’t mean it didn’t hurt though, and she has advice for anyone who might be experiencing this rising form of abuse.

“As soon as they called my name, I remember thinking everything I had gone through was worth it,” she remembers. “Moving on from all that was such an exciting moment.”

As Moreno nears graduation, she’s considering many options, but what seems to be inspiring her the most is becoming a business lawyer. Perhaps the draw comes from recent personal experience. “As a lawyer,” she explains, “it’s your responsibility to fight for what you believe in.”

As she looks toward the future, Moreno continues to take pride in her past. “I’m so thankful I had the opportunity to be a pioneer for our school [by becoming its first state officer],” she says, “because now we have so many other students here not only interested in running for SkillsUSA state office but also for other career and technical student organizations.”

One of those students is Miguel Nunez, another state officer from San Luis High School, who joined Moreno at the 2019 NLSC to become a national officer (Region 5 vice president) right alongside her.

“Seeing that success that we’ve had through career and technical education and SkillsUSA has encouraged many more students and many more kids in our community to not only want to be involved with SkillsUSA but to believe in themselves,” Moreno declares. “It shows them that even through all these obstacles that are faced in a border town and that we face as children of immigrants, we can still make it through.”

Reflecting back on her trials and successes, Moreno adds, “I’ve had a very interesting SkillsUSA journey, because it’s not one that’s been easy, and nothing’s been handed to me.” And her current views on leadership? “It’s not about being the loudest person in the room,” she reflects, “but being the biggest server you can possibly be and offering that service to a mission that you believe in.”

**Moreno’s Tips for Victims of Cyberbullying**

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“First off, it will get better,” Moreno assures. “Even if you don’t think it will right now. There are so many stories from other people that would show that’s true.”

According to Moreno, developing a strong sense of self-belief is crucial to getting through the ordeal. “As long as you know who you are and have an understanding that you deserve better than this, you will get better than this. If you know yourself, who could possibly get you to believe anything different?”

Moreno is quick to add, however, that no one should try to deal with the situation alone. “Support from your inner circle is very important,” she says.

If you’re currently being bullied, don’t give up. Tell an adult at home or at school. Use social reporting tools to flag the bullying. Capture the evidence. Don’t engage the culprits directly. If someone you know is being cyberbullied, support them. Call it out for the crime (and cowardice) it is. For more tips, visit: [www.stopbullying.gov/resources/kids](www.stopbullying.gov/resources/kids).
It is often said that life is a marathon, not a sprint. Nobody knows that better than Jacqueline Limbrick, who graduated from college last May at age 58.

“I started college again when I was 55,” Limbrick reflects on the ultimately fulfilling journey set in motion by unimaginable tragedy. “March 25, 2014, was a tragic day for me. I lost my only daughter Brittany, 28, to a brain aneurism, and she left four kids behind.” Limbrick — a mother of three and grandmother of eight — took custody of her daughter’s children, who at the time were two, four, nine and 12.

That is a shocking life twist, but Limbrick not only embraced the changes, she pivoted, returned to college and changed careers so she could better support a growing family. She graduated last May with a degree in office systems technology from Southwest Louisiana Technical Community College (SOWELA) in Lake Charles, La. The college, one of the largest, most progressive multi-campus postsecondary technical schools in Louisiana, became her second home.

Circling back to the beginning

Before she returned to college, Limbrick had a busy career in the corrections system, working up to 12 hours a day. Life was hectic, and days went by in a tiring blur that left little energy for anything else. When her Brittany died, life changed so fast. Losing her only daughter caused Limbrick to stop and reconsider everything in her world, including her work and the future course of her life. Grieving, she took time away from work to regroup.

After taking a break to settle in the children, she returned to her position, but was laid off after a corporate buyout. While receiving unemployment benefits and searching for a new job, she realized she had a unique opportunity to do something more with her life.

“What do you want to do?” she asked herself. “I really didn’t want to go back into the corrections system because of the long hours.” Instead of just another job, Limbrick wanted to pursue new training that would catapult her into a different field.
Her goal was a steady job with Monday through Friday hours and higher earnings that would mean she could take better care of her family. She was not a traditional student, and raising four grandchildren meant she had become a mom all over again. Still, she wanted to make the most of this educational opportunity, so she explored local college offerings and found that SOWELA just felt right. She enrolled, and upon meeting advisor Adrienne Abel, she quickly gained interest and excitement about being back in school.

She still had many responsibilities at home, but her close family ties meant that her sisters, brothers and others regularly pitched in to babysit or to fill in the gaps. “There was always someone there to help me,” she remembers with gratitude.

Making the most of second chances
Limbrick immersed herself in her schoolwork and joined several student organizations. That initiative led her to serve on the college’s student government association, and she became even more motivated to do well as a student.

As she attended more campus meetings, her excitement continued to grow. “All of a sudden I wanted to do more and I wanted to be more. I wanted to be part of SkillsUSA through all of it,” she said. “SkillsUSA not only teaches you how to hone your technical skills, but you learn how to interact with different people and be comfortable in various situations, and you learn from these experiences and build up your confidence.”

Her focus changed from, “I don’t think I can do this” to, “Yes, I can definitely do this.” She claims she enjoyed the technical aspects of SkillsUSA the most because “it puts what you learn into practice in a career-driven atmosphere.”

Limbrick served as the SkillsUSA Louisiana postsecondary state secretary, president of her local chapter and vice president of the SOWELA student government association. She became a top student, earning a 3.6 GPA. Her academic achievement led to her induction into both the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and the National Technical Honor Society.

Whenever she was overcome with fear that she wouldn’t succeed, her advisor always said, “Just give it a try.” Those words became a theme for Limbrick’s new life. She credits her advisor as being the main reason school was such an incredibly positive experience the second time around.

“Ms. Abel was my biggest cheerleader,” Limbrick says. “Not just for me, but for all the students. She was constantly pushing us and guiding us to be our best and to do our best. Whatever we needed for our education or for our classes, she made herself available.”

Abel returns the compliments: “Jacqueline was an exceptional student who took the time to totally immerse herself in the college’s organizations and extracurricular activities. SkillsUSA was the program she truly loved, and, since graduation, she has continued to support our chapter.” Abel says that Limbrick embodies the true spirit of SkillsUSA and of paying it forward.

“SOWELA was like my family,” Limbrick admits. “You get to know all of the students. Being part of all the different campus organizations, I got to intermingle with various students and programs. I even got to meet parents of the students who were planning to attend SOWELA before they even enrolled.”

It has been a learning experience that she enjoyed — every moment of it. “Without the backing of my college and the staff and the support from my family, I wouldn’t be here,” Limbrick concludes.

Limbrick studied office systems technology, but also took medical terminology classes to learn medical coding. She now works for the Department of Children and Family Services, a job that incorporates her skills, education and SkillsUSA training.

She was interviewing for the position last summer when she attended the 2019 National Leadership and Skills Conference. She enjoyed competing in Medical Terminology at the state event as the only non-nursing student competing.

While her life has been full of twists, it wasn’t the sad twists that molded her, but how she handled each turn of events. When Limbrick was in college the first time, she focused on her basketball game over academics. She dropped out to start a family and wanted to go back to school many times. It was not until life was the hardest that she pushed herself and truly discovered who she was and the incredible potential she possessed.

At 59, she is still growing and learning. “And you know what?” she says. “I am quite all right with that.”
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Henry Balding, a SkillsUSA member and junior at South Pasadena (Calif.) High School, is one of those typical 17-year-olds. You know, the ones who build homes from the ground up, create thriving businesses, win gold medals at SkillsUSA competitions for areas they’re not even involved with at school ... OK, so maybe Balding is as far from “typical” as your grammy’s flip phone is from “current.”

“He’s a fantastic kid, a real jack-of-all-trades,” says Mike Hogan, career and technical education chair at SPHS and Balding’s cabinetry instructor. “But the beekeeping is the big deal. He has beehives everywhere.” Wait ... beehives?

“I have a small migratory beekeeping operation,” Balding explains. “I harvest honey and do bee relocation.” Balding became interested in beekeeping when he was 12 as a way to cope with the passing of his father. Today, “Balding’s Bees” is swarming with success (sorry), complete with two employees, a bee supply store and a contract with Whole Foods. His father would most certainly be proud.

Another source of pride came in 2019, when Balding won his school’s first gold ever for carpentry at SkillsUSA California’s state competition. That little wax cell of info is even more impressive when one realizes that SPHS doesn’t have a carpentry program. How did a cabinetry student make the leap? Hands-on experience.

“A few years ago, we had some work done at our house, and I worked with the guy who did it,” Balding says. “I work with him a lot now.” Balding also works on his own projects, most recently a family cabin he shares with his mom. “I framed up the walls, did the stucco, drywall, roof, electrical, all of it,” he proudly declares.

Balding serves his SkillsUSA chapter as parliamentarian, and he credits SkillsUSA with “keeping me in school. They’re just awesome classes.” With job offers already from construction companies, as well as a budding interest in law enforcement, Balding’s option-heavy future is shaping up to be as sweet as, well, you know.

By Tom Kercheval and Tiffany Govender

Carpenter bees are a thing, right? Maybe that partially explains this carpenter’s interest in beehives. Explaining his unlikely successes takes a little more work.

By Tom Kercheval
and Tiffany Govender
Inspired by his experience, Moslener decided to run for chapter office and was elected vice president in his sophomore year. Encouraged by his peers and advisor, Moslener decided to run for district office the following year. Surprised by the unexpected and enthusiastic support he received while campaigning, he was thrilled to be chosen to represent District 5 in Texas.

Taking action, together
Moslener soon found himself planning to travel to Canyon of the Eagles in Burnett, Texas, where newly elected officers attend summer leadership training.

Photo: Lloyd Wolf

With many challenges and triumphs along the way, George Moslener’s leadership journey was a family effort.

By Tiffany Govender

George Moslener was already familiar with hard work and the value of education before his advisor, David Lanham, introduced him to SkillsUSA. Moslener’s parents own and operate Canyon Creek Irrigation, a small nursery and tree farm in Wylie, Texas. Moslener’s responsibilities in the family business include helping out with sales and billing, accounts payable and general office management.

Despite his hands-on work experience, Moslener had no particular vision for his future when he entered Wylie East High School. “Coming in as a freshman, I didn’t really know what I wanted to be,” he says. However, after speaking with his advisor and several students at his school’s orientation, Moslener decided to give Lanham’s criminal justice class a try. “My advisor put on a video,” Moslener continues, remembering how Lanham first introduced students to the program. “I saw the red blazers. I saw kids standing on stage with medals and I saw the hard work they were doing. I thought, ‘Wow, that’s really cool. I think I want to do that.’”

Moslener soon got the nudge he needed to get started when his friends persuaded him to join the Crime Scene Investigation district team competition, but Moslener recalls feeling out of place that first year. “Going there, I didn’t really have any friends. It was really hard for me to fit in,” he says.

That all changed one morning over breakfast. A candidate for district office approached Moslener and invited him to join her. “She talked to me and we became friends,” he explains. “Through that, I felt like people do care, and they want me to succeed. We all have common goals. We all want to do our best.”
Attendance is a mandatory part of being a district officer, but just one week before the training began, Moslener received a distressing call that jeopardized his attendance. His grandmother, who had been battling a serious illness for several months at her home in Mexico, had suddenly taken a turn for the worse.

Moslener phoned Lanham to explain the situation and let him know that, while his grandmother came first, he hoped to make it back in time for training. “It was a hard decision to make,” Moslener says. “I really wanted to visit my grandma before she passed. I also wanted to go be a district officer, because I worked hard for it and I didn’t want to let my school down.”

Although the Moslener family drove through the night, George’s grandmother passed away before many of her family members arrived. “It was a whole mixture of emotions,” Moslener says. “The family in Mexico and the family in the U.S., we don’t get to see each other very often. But after the funeral and the procession, I told [my grandmother], ‘I want to do this for you. I want to be a district officer. I want to do what’s right for my family.’”

The family decided to return to Texas immediately so Moslener could participate in his leadership training. Moslener asked a cousin in Wylie to retrieve his SkillsUSA gear and pass it to Moslener’s advisor, while — back in Mexico — his family set out on the nearly 12-hour journey to Texas.

Midway through their drive, the family faced another serious hurdle when their car slid off the road, causing damage to the vehicle’s oil pan. With no other option available, they put in a call to yet another family member: Moslener’s uncle, who had left for Texas several hours before them.

The uncle backtracked to pick Moslener up, and the journey to leadership training was soon underway again. Several hours later, exhausted but relieved, the two arrived at Canyon of the Eagles — late, but in time for Moslener to catch up with his fellow officers.

“The whole time, I was thinking about my grandma,” Moslener says. “As a leader, you have to make tough calls. I’m real glad I’ve taken the actions to get where I am, because I love SkillsUSA. I wouldn’t trade any of these experiences I’ve had. They’ve all helped to shape who I am today.”
EVERY DREAM HAS A JOURNEY
EVERY CAREER HAS A PATH
WE CAN HELP YOU ON YOUR WAY

The Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation provides need-based scholarships to the children of Marines enrolled in accredited career and technical education programs.

Application and eligibility criteria are available at

www.MCSF.org

@marinescholars @marinescholars MarineScholars
Providing a Second Chance
To Build a Better Future

Advisor Nick Jordan teaches construction while building up his students, his school’s program and the reputation of both in the community.

Second chances mean a lot to Montecito (Calif.) High School advisor Nicholas Jordan. As a construction teacher for a continuation high school, Jordan knows that, for many of these students, a second chance is just what is needed.

“I see myself in my students and value my ability to relate to them,” Jordan says. “I was not scholastically inclined. I doubted my self-worth and failed to see opportunities based on my strengths.”

With his past in mind, Jordan does his best to provide his students with opportunities and experiences they might not otherwise be getting.

“Teaching in the skilled trades provides a medium for students to explore working with not only their minds but their hands,” he explains. “They take what they learn in the classroom and immediately see its purpose in solving a problem.”

Jordan was lucky enough to be exposed to career and technical education early, as both of his parents were educators. His father, Michael, was a SkillsUSA advisor.

“I grew up in my dad’s classroom and auto shop before he retired after 31 years teaching automotive and motorcycle service technology,” Jordan says. “It was only natural, then, that Jordan would become a teacher himself. Once he did, his father was also instrumental in Jordan’s decision to become a SkillsUSA advisor. “He and his students reigned as California state champions for 20 years, from 1990-2009,” Jordan says. “Needless to say, I have some pretty big shoes to fill.”

Jordan seems well on his way to carving his own path. He’s formed community partnerships with local businesses and accompanied TeamWorks and Carpentry competitors to both state and national competitions.

However, the capstone of Jordan’s 2019 SkillsUSA experience happened not in June at the national conference in Louisville, Ky., but in May, right in Montecito, when his students participated in SkillsUSA’s National Signing Day. At this event celebrating skilled trades and the students who pursue them, four of Jordan’s students signed employment commitments with Swinerton Incorporated, a commercial construction company.

If the secret to happiness is loving what you do, Jordan seems to have a head start. He also seems to know the importance of the work he engages in every day.

“Being a skilled trades teacher allows me to fight against the stigma that choosing a pathway in the construction industry is less worthy,” he says. “It’s incredibly rewarding knowing that I’m helping to develop America’s skilled workforce.”
Shining a Light on True Value Means Sharing the Spotlight

Yepp, we Americans sure love our sports heroes. Understandably so; they bring us joy, inspiration and something to aspire to. But could our society function without sports? What about career and technical skills? Could we function without those?

As a class, split into two groups. In one, discuss the positive contributions sports bring to our everyday lives. In the other, list the positive outcomes people with technical skills provide. Come back as a class and share the two lists. Does one outweigh the other in overall importance?

On May 8, SkillsUSA will hold its second annual National Signing Day. It’s a day when students declare their commitment to a future skilled career, much like top student athletes declare their commitment to the college they’ll play for. It’s a way to borrow a little bit of that spotlight that shines so brightly on athletics and turn it toward the people who keep our society running and our economy moving every day. For more, visit: tinyurl.com/skillsusa-signing-day.

The value of a man should be seen in what he gives and not in what he is able to receive.

— Albert Einstein

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 March 15.

Congratulations to last issue’s winners: Christopher Bova of Watertown, NY, and Troy L. Thompson of Shawnee, Okla.
**BUILDING TIES**

ONE BOOK AT A TIME

Carpentry students from Bossier Parish (La.) Technical School had an opportunity to serve their community and make a difference by building two public bookcases outside of a local parent center. The “Free Little Libraries” allow visitors to stop by and either pick up a book to read or leave books for others to read. The parent center staff believes students will really benefit from the project by increasing their literacy skills through reading the books that are available. The SkillsUSA students plan to continue working with the parent center to come up with new projects that serve the community.

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**Honoring the men in blue**

SkillsUSA members at the Alliance Academy for Innovation in Cumming, Ga., hosted a breakfast to honor their school’s resource officer for National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day. They decided to extend their gratitude for local law enforcement by inviting the Forsyth County Sheriff’s Office, too. The school offers courses in healthcare, firefighting and criminal justice, all of which work in conjunction with the county’s sheriff’s department, fire department and local healthcare professionals. Students also wanted to recognize the honorees’ diligent efforts and contributions to the community and the school.

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**They’re sharing spirit for our soldiers**

Students from South Pasadena (Calif.) High School are making their mark in the local community by supporting military members and their families. That support took the form of two focused community service projects devised, developed and carried out by SkillsUSA American Spirit team members Jolene Lee, Andrew Cheung and Luyang Zhang. The first project saw the trio collecting shoes from South Pasadena schools for a shoe drive to support the American Soldier Network. The donated shoes were either given to children overseas or used to make new shoes for military soldiers and their families. The second project focused on patriotism and citizenship, as the students hosted a card drive where students crafted hand-written holiday cards to send to active military members. The team hopes that the service projects will motivate students and community members to become more involved with giving back and caring for those around them.
SkillsUSA Champions features our members’ photography. We’re looking for images of SkillsUSA chapters in action or showing individual members’ concentration or perseverance. For details, email anyinfo@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.

Quality decision-making skills are essential. In my health science program, I learn to analyze data and situations. By applying quick decision-making in first-aid scenarios, I practice to ensure that the best possible results will be achieved for those who receive my care.

MAKEUNA ECCLES, 2019-20 HIGH SCHOOL PRESIDENT

SkillsUSA IS MAKING AN ENORMOUS CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICA’S WORKFORCE AND TO OUR ECONOMY.

DEPUTY SECRETARY DR. MITCHELL ZAIS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DCA is comprised of nearly 240 companies including local, regional and national contractors and the equipment manufacturers, distributors and other companies that support them in the safe installation of natural gas pipelines and other underground utilities.

DCA is proud to partner with SkillsUSA

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The SkillsUSA Career Essentials suite engages students in career-readiness skills along every point in their educational journey, whether it be middle-school, high-school or college/postsecondary. The curriculum generates high levels of student engagement and is built on evidence-based outcomes that support the industry-validated Career-Ready Assessment. Together, curricula and assessments work to culminate in students earning the industry-recognized Career Essentials credentials.

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