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SkillsUSA

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06

SkillsUSA Competition

The Golden State Flexes Competitive Muscle at the SkillsUSA 49th Annual State Leadership and Skill Conference



14

Topping Out San Diego Courthouse

Final Beam of \$555 Million New Courthouse Raised 400 Feet for Placement atop High-Rise



24

Carlsbad Desalination Plant Award

Named Desalination Plant of the Year for 2016 by Global Water Intelligence

12

WCC's Connecting Association
WCC's hosts Connecting Associations

13

News From Around The US
Interesting Construction News

16

P.S. It's The Law
Contracting is a Risky Business

20

Perry Plumbing wins Award
SBA Awards Perry Plumbing

21

Phil's BBQ Grand Opening
New RB Location Opens

22

Orange County News
ECA host Golf Tournament

26

Gelman LLP
Don't Take the Loss for a Sub's Default

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SkillsUSA CALIFORNIA

49th Annual State Leadership and Skill Conference

*The Golden State Flexes Competitive Muscle at the SkillsUSA
49th Annual State Leadership and Skill Conference*

By: Mary Montgomery

With more than 100 competitions in numerous trades, contestants from across California represented the Golden State well at the Region Six SkillsUSA 49th Annual State Leadership and Skill Conference. Held at the Town & Country Resort & Convention Center, nearly 1,200 students from 60 California schools attended the conference March 31 to April 3 in San Diego.



SkillsUSA's mission is to empower its members to become world-class workers, leaders and responsible citizens.





A lot of the students look to the conference as an opportunity to receive job training and internship opportunities that might lead to a full-time career.”

—SkillsUSA Student



going for Gold

SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry representatives working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce. In competitions sponsored by industry, contestants showcased their skills in trades including: carpentry, electrical construction wiring, HVAC, industrial motor controls, masonry and plumbing. And that's not all! Competitions were also held in automotive refinishing, collision repair, culinary arts, information technology services, occupational safety & health, related technical math and welding fabrication.

The spirit of teamwork that comes with the possibility of advancing to the Skills USA national competition is palpable. “Our culinary class is really a family,” said one contestant. “We are very close,” she added. Another contestant spoke about the collaboration involved in his Youth in Government Project: “We’re a coalition of students selected by a City Council that, together, weigh-in on community matters.”

SkillsUSA continues on Page 8



SkillsUSA continued from Page 7

Region Six, which spans San Bernardino, Mono, Orange, Inyo, Riverside, San Diego and Imperial counties, had students competing in 81 separate contests. Each contest had competitors competing in two categories: high school and college/ post-secondary. SkillsUSA California State Construction Contests are an opportunity for tomorrow's talent to experience first-hand industry at its best. A partnership of students, teachers and industry representatives working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce, SkillsUSA serves teachers and high school and college students who are preparing for careers in technical, skilled and service occupations.

Each participating school has a student delegate who helps plan the conference's events, from workshops, social activities and the competitions themselves. Before the contestants arrived, much planning went into preparing for their arrival and coordinating the event, with many volunteered efforts of time and in-kind services made by San Diego industry partners.

Jack Chapel, Education Coordinator for Associated General Contractors Apprenticeship and Training Trust. Chapel who also serves as the SkillsUSA California Construction Trades Technical Committee Chair, said the most valuable takeaway for students is the combination of "leadership skills and soft skills".



ABC Apprenticeship representatives with SkillsUSA Students

SkillsUSA conferences are divided into two sections: leadership and skills. Leadership events focus on soft-skills, such as public speaking, mock interviews and community service projects. Skills events focus on various skill sets, such as

computer programming, automotive service technology, aviation maintenance, culinary arts, robotics and video production. Competitions are judged by industry partners in corresponding career fields. At each competition, judges from the industry have scorecards with uniform judging criteria used to measure

each contestant's aptitude and technical prowess. Each contestant must also prepare a resume to participate in each competition, an exercise that adds to their real-world job skills experience.

SkillsUSA's mission is to empower its members to become world-class workers, leaders and responsible citizens. The program teaches students various technical skills required for employment in career technical educational fields, along with the soft-skills required in the workplace.

One student delegate from a 400-student high school in Stockton spoke about the low socioeconomic levels associated with his district and the value of SkillsUSA: "A lot of the students look to the conference as an opportunity to receive job training and internship opportunities that might lead to a full-time career."



AGC Apprenticeship representative Jack Chapel, with SkillsUSA Students



Masonry Industry Training Association also participated in the event

He said. For example, SkillsUSA has been successful in linking students specializing in automotive technology with internship opportunities with auto manufacturers Toyota and Chevy.

California's state gold medalists will move on to competing in the SkillsUSA National Contests in Louisville, Kentucky set for June 20-24, 2016. At the national conference, where all state gold medalists are invited to compete, officials will continue the positive momentum behind expanding trades training school programs and student opportunities.

Serving more than 300,000 students and instructors annually in 13,000 school chapters located in 54 territories, SkillsUSA has more than 14,500 professional members. Since 1965, the organization's professional members have provided leadership training to students in the career and technical education sectors.

SkillsUSA encourages growth through participation in leadership and skill activities to enhance classroom learning. The organization's California membership continues to grow and serve more student and professional members throughout our state. In 2015, SkillsUSA California was recognized by the national office for establishing the highest number of new SkillsUSA chapters in nation and for continued college post-secondary membership growth. 2016, the organization's 49th year, will no doubt be another record-setting one for its State association.

For more information on SkillsUSA, visit www.skillsusaca.org. The SkillsUSA California Leadership and Skills Conference would not be possible without local industry support. For a complete list of supporters see CNV's April Digital Version.



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