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News Release

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Students Earn Medals at SkillsUSA Competition

Aroostook County - Ten students from Northern Maine Community College were among the more than 800 high school and college students who competed in the SkillsUSA Maine State Conference held in Bangor on March 15. Nine came home with medals after taking part in the written and hands-on components of the competition.

“It is exciting for the students to compete in their area of study to test their knowledge and skill. It was a lot of pressure and they were nervous, but in the end everyone did very well. It is a valuable educational opportunity.” said Pam Buck, chair of the NMCC trade and technical occupations department. Buck traveled to Bangor, along with Robert Collins, automotive collision repair instructor, and Rick Taggett, welding instructor, to support the NMCC competitors.

Earning first place gold medals were: Leslie Campbell of Presque Isle, photography; Kyle Doody of Westbrook, electrical wiring; Zack Haggerty of Easton, technical drafting; Albert Mauger of Hermon, auto refinishing; Kord Putnam of Mapleton, plumbing; and Patrick Simpson of West Enfield, computer maintenance. These students are now eligible to compete in the national competition that takes place in Kansas City in June.

Bringing home silver medals were: Brian Buck of Mapleton, plumbing; Tyler Eager of Presque Isle, electrical wiring; and Kurtis Gagnon of Frenchville, welding. Also competing was Anderson Cooper of Calais in collision repair.

This competition is worthwhile for both students and instructors, according to Collins. “Not only does it help students build confidence in themselves, but it gives instructors insight into how well a student can perform outside of the normal lab setting. I would highly encourage students and instructors from any program here at NMCC to get involved and compete at least at the State level,” said Collins.

The statewide competition took place at United Technologies Center and Eastern Maine Community College in Bangor. There were more than 75 competitions for students to participate in. Some directly related to the students’ technical schools, such as automotive refinishing and plumbing, and others, like photography or speech, showcased different skills.

NMCC had not had a chapter for SkillsUSA, formerly known as the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA), in a number of years and just re-established one last year. The students met throughout the year to get the NMCC chapter organized and to prepare for the competition.

“SkillsUSA starts months before the competition. It requires tons of teamwork, cooperation and dedication from everyone,” said Kyle Doody, vice president of the NMCC chapter. “We had a great support system from the college, including students with ideas and other school-wide organizations coming to us with tips on ways to raise needed funds. I befriended many people that I might not have met otherwise. I will always cherish the opportunity I had and will use the leadership experience in many other roles for years to come.”

SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry representatives, working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce. It is a national organization serving teachers and high school and college students who are preparing for careers in technical, skilled and service occupations, including health occupations, and for further education.

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Northern Maine Community College students proudly display the medals they won in the SkillsUSA Maine State Conference held in Bangor. Earning medals were, front from left: Leslie Campbell, gold medal, photography; Kord Putnam, gold medal, plumbing; and Brian Buck, silver medal, plumbing. Back, from left: Zack Haggerty, gold medal, technical drafting; Patrick Simpson, gold medal, computer maintenance; Tyler Eager, silver medal, electrical wiring; Kyle Doody, gold medal, electrical wiring; and Kurtis Gagnon, silver medal, welding. Absent from photo: Albert Mauger, gold medal, auto refinishing.