



News Release

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NMCC hosts local SkillsUSA competition for area high school students

Aroostook County - Students enrolled in the electronics/computer servicing program at the Caribou Regional Applied Technology Center recently tested their knowledge in a skills competition hosted by Northern Maine Community College. For the third consecutive year, Joseph McLaughlin, NMCC computer electronics instructor, and some of the senior students in his program both set up and judged the regional contest which serves as a preliminary for the state SkillsUSA competition.

The event is a contest in computer maintenance technology. It consists of a written exam, which is the industry standard A+ certification exam and accounts for 15 percent of the total possible score. This is followed by a hands-on activity designed to measure the students' mastery of several fundamental computer repair tasks. The latter exercise is performed on individual computers that have been setup with a specific problem by NMCC students.

Each of the nine participating students was assigned a single computer to troubleshoot and tasked with determining the problem and documenting the steps necessary to repair the unit. They were scored on safety, troubleshooting skills, and their documentation of the process used. Scores were combined with the test scores to determine a rank order of the contestants.

Coming in first place was Matt Harris of Presque Isle, with Dan Wardwell and Doug Ewing, both of Caribou, placing second and third respectively.

"SkillsUSA provides students with the opportunity to develop and enhance their technical and workplace skills. This competition is an opportunity for my students to meet and interact with students who are further along in their technical education," said Lisa Anderson, electronics/computer servicing instructor at the Caribou Regional Applied Technology Center. "Holding our local SkillsUSA competition at NMCC exposes my students to new possibilities for the future. This experience provides a glimpse of what it is like to attend college and of challenges that they may face at NMCC. They also have the opportunity to network with people who may be their future coworkers or employers."

According to both Anderson and McLaughlin, that was certainly the case in the first year the regional competition was held at NMCC. The overall top scorer from the first time the College hosted the competition two years ago, Matt McDonald of Caribou, is now enrolled in the computer electronics program and played a key role in assisting and judging this year's competition.

“This allows the high school students to visit the computer electronics lab and see what we do and the equipment we have. This is a great partnership that benefits both the regional technology center and the College,” said McLaughlin. “My students benefit as well. Not only does their role in this competition give them a chance to experience a teaching moment, but it allows them to put a lot of the safety skills and troubleshooting methods which they've learned in class to use as they judge the work of these high school students.”

Work on the competition begins far in advance of the actual event. McLaughlin provides an internet-based study guide for the students to access and practice a month before the students visit NMCC.

After the competition, McLaughlin spends time explaining what was wrong with each of the computers and giving the students some overall troubleshooting tips.

“I am so pleased that we partner with NMCC for our local SkillsUSA Competition. Having the NMCC seniors help with this competition is a wonderful opportunity for both our students and the College students to gain educational and technical skills,” said Anderson. “This is an extension of the strong partnership that already exists between our programs and our schools.”

McLaughlin serves on Anderson's advisory committee and provides technical and educational support when needed.

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High school students from the Caribou Regional Applied Technology Center traveled to Northern Maine Community College on January 18 to take part in a regional SkillsUSA competition in computer maintenance technology. Taking part in the competition were, front from left: Lisa Anderson, computer servicing instructor at the Caribou Technology Center; NMCC computer electronics students Chad Guerrette of Fort Fairfield and Matthew McDonald of Caribou, who helped to set up and judge the competition; Dan Wardwell of Caribou; and D.J. Murphy of Presque Isle. Back from left: Joseph McLaughlin, NMCC computer electronics instructor; Wally Burlock of Van Buren; David Desilets of Caribou; Dan Soucier of Presque Isle; Matt Harris of Presque Isle; and Brad Howe, Doug Ewing and Scott Rossignol, all of Caribou.



From left, Scott Rossignol of Caribou, Dan Soucier of Presque Isle, and Dan Wardwell of Caribou, all students at the Caribou Regional Applied Technology Center, troubleshoot problems with computer equipment as part of a regional SkillsUSA competition hosted recently at Northern Maine Community College.