



LABOR, LEARNING AND LOVE OF CRAFT



MIKE CROWLEY/Meadville Tribune photos

LEFT: Crawford Tech senior Elizabeth Rifemberrick checks the blood pressure of classmate Madeleine Brenot as Chanelle Massey listens to double-check the reading. Rifemberrick was one of five Crawford Tech students to compete in the statewide SkillsUSA competition held earlier this month in Hershey, finishing seventh in basic health care. **RIGHT:** Kharizma Garlick, a senior in the Crawford Tech welding program, places her creation on a shop table. Garlick placed third in the welding sculpture category at the competition for students in career and technical schools.

Crawford Tech students perform well at state competition

By Mike Crowley

MEADVILLE TRIBUNE

For a group of Crawford Tech students who recently competed against their peers in the SkillsUSA Pennsylvania Leadership and Skills Conference, it's hard to measure how much time went into preparing for the competition.

Every half-day they spent in class at Crawford Tech contributed, of course, as did time studying outside of school and, for some, hours spent working in a related field each week. Needless to say, the time invested was high.

In some cases, however, it's possible to be more precise.

Kharizma Garlick, for instance, a

Meadville Area Senior High senior who is in the welding program at Crawford Tech, spent most of her Fridays last year working on the artwork that would ultimately be her submission in the welding sculpture competition. Toward the end of her junior year, she worked on the sculpture — and the skills needed to create it — full time, as she did for much of the current year.

Along the way, she logged the hours she spent on the sculpture — all 540 of them. She also used those hours effectively, using all metal ingredients to create a surprisingly realistic natural scene rather than the sort of industrial work that often tends to be associ-

ated with welding sculpture.

"I wanted people to be like, 'Oh, I know what this is — this is a waterfall, these are trees — this ground's very interesting, it has a nice texture to it.' I wanted people to be able to see the texture but also feel the texture," Garlick said during a recent day in the welding shop. "I just love nature — anything to deal with the outside in general, I'm all for it. If I was able to go no-service, no-anything and just live out there, I would."

The resulting depiction of a waterfall erupting from a forested mountainside proved good enough to earn Garlick a bronze medal in the SkillsUSA competi-

tion held April 7-10 in Hershey. Garlick was one of five Crawford Tech students who finished first in their fields at the District 10 competition earlier this year to move on to states. Four of the five finished in either second or third place and brought home medals from the statewide contest.

While none will be moving on to the national competition, Rob Kightlinger, the electronics technology instructor who helps oversee the school's SkillsUSA teams and accompanied the state finalists to Hershey, there was plenty to be proud of.

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“You have to win gold to move on to nationals,” Kightlinger said, “but 80 percent medalists is pretty good, I would say.”

Another of the students who brought home some hardware was a student in Kightlinger’s shop: Edward Bivens, a Maplewood Junior-Senior High senior who won a silver medal in electronics technology.

Where Garlick came to the event with her work complete and spent most of her competition time taking a written test on welding and engaged in interviews where she walked the judges through the creation of the piece, Bivens was deploying his skills in response to a variety of 45-minute challenges: a customer

service exam; a written exam; and soldering, breadboarding and troubleshooting tasks.

With less than an hour to complete a circuit according to plans he had never seen before, Bivens and other competitors were hard-pressed to finish in time.

“I was pretty scared for the first 10 minutes or so but after that it wasn’t bad,” he said. Taking time amid the somewhat overwhelming atmosphere to introduce himself to the other participants also made for a more tolerable experience. “Getting to know everyone that was there definitely helped because then it didn’t feel like a competition — more or less, just something that I had to do.”

Crawford Tech was also represented by Alyssa Whalen, a Saegertown Junior-Senior High sophomore who finished second in the un-



MIKE CROWLEY/Meadville Tribune

The welding sculpture of a waterfall flowing through a forest helped Crawford Tech senior Kharizma Garlick take third in the welding sculpture competition at the recent SkillsUSA Pennsylvania Leadership and Skills Conference in Hershey.

der-500 hours cosmetology category; Graclyn Jordan, a homeschooled sophomore from Saegertown who finished third in the open job skills demonstration competition; and Elizabeth Rifemberrick, a Conneaut Area Senior High senior who placed seventh in basic health care.

For Rifemberrick, the com-

petition included a five-to seven-minute speech on a health-related topic — she chose ultraviolet radiation — as well as demonstrations of fundamental skills like CPR, using personal protective equipment and taking vital signs from live volunteers. The speech left her feeling “definitely nervous,” Rifemberrick said. “I felt more confident once I got to the skills portion.”

Rifemberrick currently works as a patient care technician at Meadville Medical Center (MMC) and anticipates passing the exam to qualify as a certified nursing assistant. In the fall, she’ll begin the 20-month program at MMC’s Sharon School of Nursing to become a registered nurse.

“I enjoy working with people, hearing what happened, hearing what they’ve been through, and how I can help as much as I can,” she said of the career in nursing she has already started. “Everything that I’ve learned here really helps me there, and I get to learn more stuff every day. I work with new people with all different types of diagnoses — I love it.”

As Rifemberrick practiced taking a patient’s blood pressure with two of her classmates in preparation for the

upcoming CNA exam, Garlick, in a shop down the hall, offered a similar reflection. Next to her was sculpture — the waterfall constructed of the E7018 electrode rods used for stick welding and copper filler rod used in tungsten inert gas welding, and the shiny pine trees painstakingly created out of individual fork tines.

Garlick believes the in-depth, hands-on nature of her project and larger Crawford Tech experience will serve her well when she joins the Navy in July in hopes of becoming an aviation structural mechanic for safety equipment systems.

“I feel like I’ve come a long way,” she said. “From what I’ve learned and all the troubleshooting that I had to do, overall I’m very happy with the outcome.”

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