



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 9, 2024

CACTC CELEBRATES SCHOOL, COMMUNITY DURING SkillsUSA WEEK

Uniontown, PA - For students attending career and technical schools, Feb. 5-9 is SkillsUSA Week. At Connellsville Area Career and Technical Center (CACTC), students are using the week to show appreciation to their own, as well as reach out to the community as a whole.

CACTC Workforce Development Coordinator Tina Dull explained SkillsUSA is a “nationally recognized organization that is available to all career and technical students, both secondary and post-secondary.” Dull said the organization features a number of components, including teaching students personal skills, leadership skills, workplace skills and technical skills.

“What the students, I think, enjoy the most are the competitions,” Dull said.

Competitions begin at the district level, with Connellsville students competing against several other schools in the area. First-place district winners advance to the state competition, and those who take first at the state level move on to nationals, which are held in Georgia. Dull said students can compete in their area of study, but some may choose to participate in a more general category, such as public speaking, interview skills or resume writing.

“They can even do a job demonstration,” she said, noting the demo can focus on one particular aspect of a student’s skill set.

Students kick off competition season, which CACTC SkillsUSA President Lydia Hawk said begins in November or December and runs through nationals in June, with a formal conference at Seven Springs.

SkillsUSA Week isn’t formal; in fact, CACTC officers said it’s much more of a celebration. “It’s kind of just one big group party during the week,” Hawk, a senior Health Occupations student, said.

On Monday, students served teachers and staff members doughnuts and hot chocolate as a show of their appreciation. On Tuesday, the school’s SkillsUSA members recognized one outstanding fellow member, which happened to be Hawk herself. On Wednesday, students hosted tours of the school. For Advocacy Day on Thursday, students visited Connellsville Area Middle School and spoke with eighth-graders about the programs of study available to them when they reach high school. Friday will be a Give Back Day, when students will visit residents at Heritage Apartments in Connellsville.

“We’re going to do a Valentine’s Day craft with the elderly and serve them lunch,” Hawk said.

According to Health Occupations junior Mya Hough, SkillsUSA Week is an important part of the school year. “They’ve given us so much with this program,” she explained. “I feel like this whole week, we’re able to give back in some way.”

Culinary Arts junior Addison Wilders said she enjoys seeing what other schools bring to the competitions and how CACTC compares. “I really like seeing other schools and their techniques and how they do stuff,” she said.

Cosmetology senior Taylor Bell said not only has SkillsUSA given students the opportunity to go to different locations and compete, but the organization also helps them go places in terms of finding a career. “We have the opportunity to show our skill set,” she said. “If you do well, you can go to states. It helps us find jobs in our (field).”

Computer Networking senior Spencer Long also highlighted that aspect of the organization, and of attending CACTC in general. “Something that’s really nice about the technical school is we’re completely different than the high school,” he said, noting the focus at CACTC is on helping students prepare for a good job immediately upon graduating.

He added having SkillsUSA on a resume is beneficial in that job search because employers are aware of the amount of leadership and other skills it provides.

Cosmetology senior Chaney Dewitt said CACTC is definitely different, in a very good way. “I would say 95% of the population up here are all hands-on learners,” she said. “We like to be at our own level and learn at our own pace.”

She said the teachers and staff give students the chance to do that, and SkillsUSA competitions allow them to put what they’ve learned on display. “We’re kind of like our own society here,” she said. “We’re a small family here, which is nice.”

Though they may be in their own world to a degree, the students said the community service and outreach aspect of SkillsUSA Week is important to them.

“I’m a people person, so I really like the community service aspect of it and giving back to the community,” Dewitt continued. “I like to get our community involved as much as we can.”

Addison Wilders agrees. “I really like to just help other people – let them know what we’re doing and help them know more about it.”

For more information about SkillsUSA, visit www.skillsusa.org. To learn more about CACTC, visit <https://cactc.casdfalcons.org/>.

###

This communication is part of the Fayette County PR Initiative, which is funded through the Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) and Hotel Tax Grants in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, The Redstone Foundation and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.

For more information, contact Kristi Kassimer Harper, Public Relations Specialist, at 724-437-4571, kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info or Jamie Rankin, Journalist, at 724-437-4571, jamierankin13@gmail.com.