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skillsUSA *competition*



Top to Bottom (Left to Right): RESIDENTIAL WIRING student Ted McCrary looks on as judge Travis Duren of the Grady EMC inspects his wiring project.

COMPETITION WINNERS Front row Left to right: Ted McCrary, 1st Place Residential Wiring; Haylee Cross, 2nd Place Plumbing; Israel Hernandez, 1st Place Carpentry. Back Row Left to Right: Anthony Lamb, 2nd Place Masonry; Josh Godwin, 1st Place Masonry; Jordan Howell, 2nd Place Carpentry; Kyle Vickers, 2nd Place Residential Wiring. Not Shown; Adam Maxam, 1st place Plumbing & Holland Irwin, 3rd Place Residential Wiring

MASONRY student Anthony Lamb lays an 8-inch block on the second course of his wall.

CARPENTRY student Jordan Howell nails in a trimmer stud as he frames a door opening in a wall section.

PLUMBING student Haylee Cross prepares to cut a piece of galvanized pipe for her plumbing project.

RESIDENTIAL WIRING student Ted McCrary makes electrical connections for a light that is operated by a 4-way switch.

Local employers in the construction industry seeking skilled workers may not need to look beyond their own backyard for new hires in the areas of plumbing, residential wiring, masonry and carpentry.

Cairo High School construction technology students are graduating from a nationally accredited program that certifies its members have entry-level skills necessary to be successful in the construction industry. The National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) accreditation process assures that students receive quality training based on uniform standards and criteria.

Students in Construction Technology Instructor Todd Gainous' Class put their skills to the test for local judges Friday at the CHS vocational building in preparation for region competition next month in Moultrie.

The 2010 CHS SkillsUSA construction competition is designed to ready the students for region competition and qualifies winners to compete at the state level.

Gainous utilized local talent to critique his students' work and declare winners in the areas of carpentry, masonry, plumbing and residential wiring. Josh Ausburn, a former student/competitor and currently employed as a utility technician with the city of Whigham, judged plumbing and carpentry; Mark Rowe, a former bricklayer/minister of music at East-side Baptist Church, judged plumbing and masonry; and Travis Duren, representing Grady EMC, judged the residential wiring contest.

In the carpentry division, students were required to build a wall with a framed door and window opening designed by Gainous. He noted that the wall meets the building code for house construction in Grady County. The student masons laid a block foundation and dressed it with a brick veneer. Plumbers cut, threaded and soldered pipe, making several connections to simulate piping of a bathroom. Students who competed in the area of residential wiring installed boxes, outlets, switches and light fixtures, culminating with the installation of a 4-way light circuit.

Gainous says the top student in each skills area will represent the school at region trials, and those who finished second will work collectively with the top students on a team project which incorporates all skills into one major project. "By combining skills, it teaches about working together, teamwork, organizing and scheduling," explained Gainous.

Sophomore Haylee Cross, who finished second in the plumbing competition, says the best part about the competition is competing against the guys. "I like to compete against them so that they know that a girl is just as good as they are. Mr. Gainous holds this competition so that we can place ourselves in a competitive environment. When we compete at home, it does make it easier when we get to Moultrie," says Haylee.

Ted McCrary, a junior who took first place in residential wiring commented, "What I like most about the contest is walking up to a blank wall and having to figure out what needs to be done from scratch. Then, when the light circuits work properly and I know I have done a good job, I feel really satisfied."

"Mr. Gainous uses these competitions as a stepping stone to region," added Ted.

"The ultimate goal of this training," says Gainous, "is to give these kids life skills so that when they graduate from high school, they're ready to enter the workforce at an entry level position in any of the four trades.

Students who enter Gainous' construction class for the first time must take two introductory courses and, then, choose an area of concentration.

Gainous' program is nationally accredited by the Construction Education Foundation of Georgia, in conjunction with the NCCER. According to Gainous, CHS students who attend a nationally accredited technical college at the post secondary level will receive college credit for the work they completed as a high school student from an accredited program.

"We're not just a woodshop anymore," says Gainous, "we're giving these kids life skills and experiences that are going to benefit them in the long run.

"For students who tell me they will never work in construction, I assure them that the skills and the knowledge they will get in this class will benefit them when they move into their own house one day. They could install a ceiling fan, move a wall outlet, move or replace a window; they will have those skills when they leave here," he says.

As members of SkillsUSA, a national nonprofit student organization for students enrolled in career and technical education programs, students plan and carry out projects within the school in addition to developing and refining their skills through local and regional competitions.

Over the years, SkillsUSA students at CHS have built lockers and a concession stand for the baseball field, built and donated a storage building to Habitat for Humanity to raffle off as a fundraiser, and assisted with the building of two Habitat houses. SkillsUSA club members are currently planning to construct a storage unit at the new Cairo/Grady County Boys & Girls Club.

Gainous would like to thank Grady EMC, Cairo Pediatric Center, Stones Home Center and SkillsUSA for sponsoring this year's construction competition.