

High school students tout their trades during SkillsUSA Regional Conference at Morrisville State College

Photo by Ken Chapman, new media strategist

Haley Morris, of Canastota, prepares to compete in the Cosmetology Sr. event. She was among more than 40 high school students competing with Madison-Oneida BOCES and nearly 900 regional high school students participating in SkillsUSA.

MORRISVILLE, NY—Boosting the self-esteem of others comes as a natural skill for Haley Morris.

Her passion for doing so has led Morris to pursue a career in massage therapy, which she plans to combine with her love for cosmetology and one day work at a spa. “I like helping people feel better about themselves,” Morris said as she prepared her workstation in Hamilton Hall. Morris, of Canastota, got a head start on her dreams through the SkillsUSA Area II Regional Conference, hosted on the Morrisville State College campus Feb. 2.

The 17-year-old was one of nearly 900 regional high school students participating in SkillsUSA, an annual contest event featuring students from technical schools and BOCES programs throughout Central New York. The competition features more than 60 contests clustered within numerous job fields that include computers and communications, construction, culinary arts, health, leadership, mechanics, services, and security and law.

The competitions allow students to showcase their talents and brush up on their skills, just as Morris was able to do through the cosmetology contest. She had limited time to complete two haircuts, an updo hairstyle, and a style with a curling iron and blow dry on the mannequin head in front of her.

“I’m able to be very creative,” Morris said of the event, in which she was competing for the second straight year after winning top honors a year ago. That earned her a spot in the state competition, where she placed fourth.

The event also gave Morris a feel for the campus, which she will now return to again this coming fall as a student in the massage therapy program.

With competitions held across campus, many of the participants are likewise exposed to the college’s one-of-a-kind facilities.

Students in John Scutt’s auto vehicle maintenance basic event performed under-the-hood fluid checks, precision measuring and drum brake component identification under the clock while at the auto lab.



“They’re asking a lot of questions about the college and are impressed by our automotive facilities,” the associate professor of automotive technology said. “From these auto competitions alone, we will probably have at least six students who choose to join one of our programs.”

Automotive technology competitions also included motorcycle service, collision repair and auto service, joining events such as power equipment, small-engine service, precision heavy equipment, diesel equipment and welding within the mechanics cluster.

Current Morrisville students also benefited from SkillsUSA, gaining experience in their fields of study by assisting with competitions and judging events alongside Morrisville State faculty and staff, and industry and education representatives.

Stefan Amegashie, an agricultural engineering student and native of Ghana, helped Morrisville professor Fred Bach run his diesel equipment technology contest.

“Part of the college experience is getting involved,” Amegashie said of his decision to lend a hand. “I wanted to see what knowledge participants had and how they apply it.”

He also wanted to share his positive experiences. Amegashie has big plans for his Morrisville degree.

“Knowledge to fix equipment is shallow in Ghana and techniques are trial and error,” he said of his plans to move back to his homeland and start an automotive repair company someday.

Following regionals, a statewide SkillsUSA competition will be held at the New York State Fairgrounds April 25-27. First-place winners from that event will then advance to the 54th annual SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference (NLSC) in Louisville, Ky., June 25-29.

Morrisville State College’s curricula are enriched with applied learning and pave the way for opportunity at both the Morrisville and Norwich campuses. An action-oriented, interactive learning lab, the college is a national leader in technology and has been lauded for its exemplary, innovative and effective community service programs.

The college was ranked among the Best Regional Colleges in the North by U.S. News and World Report Best Colleges 2018 issue and was also recognized in the Top Public Schools, Regional Colleges North in the 2018 Best Colleges rankings. For more information about Morrisville State College, visit www.morrisville.edu.