

Bucks County students heading to state trade competitions

Joan Hellyer, staff writer | Posted: Tuesday, January 26, 2016 7:00 pm

Three Bucks County Technical High School students and a Middle Bucks Institute of Technology student captured first place in their respective trade competitions Tuesday to qualify for the state SkillsUSA contest.

BCTHS in Bristol Township hosted the SkillsUSA competitions in construction, dental assisting, information technology and plumbing on Tuesday to kick off two weeks of District 2 contests in more than 5 dozen different trades and categories, organizers said. A handful of students competed in each of the competitions on Tuesday.

Jimmy Catarroja, a BCTHS senior from Bensalem, captured first place in the District 2 information technology contest by building a 2-foot-by-2-foot computer in about 25 minutes. Jimmy, a general electronics student, said he used wires and a "mother board," which served as the machine's brains, to create the computer.

"This was a whole new experience for me," said Jimmy, 17, who plans to serve in the U.S. Army Reserves and attend Bloomsburg University to study electrical engineering and computer science after he graduates from BCTHS. "It was a nice warm-up. I have to work more with computers (before the state competition)."

BCTHS Senior Ryan Hahn took home first place in the plumbing division and BCTHS junior Lindsay Palma captured the top spot in the dental assisting contest staged at the comprehensive technical high school that serves the Bensalem, Bristol, Bristol Township, Morrisville, Neshaminy and Pennsbury school districts.

MBIT senior Giovanni Scalfaro, who attends William Tennent High School, captured first place in the construction division at the District 2 competition by framing a wall. Giovanni, 17, said nobody completed the task, but he was pretty close. "It was a little nerve-wracking," he said. "I need to be a



Middle Bucks Institute of Technology student Giovanni Scalfaro puts electrical wiring in a wall he framed during the SkillsUSA district competition at the Bucks County Technical High School in Bristol Township on Tuesday, Jan. 26, 2016. Scalfaro, who placed first in the construction competition, had to frame a wall, put in rough electrical wiring and plumbing, then do drywall, spackle and finish electrical wiring.

little faster with the smaller parts and make some other adjustments (for the state competition)."

Most of the state's SkillsUSA District 2 contests will be held on Feb. 2 and Feb. 3 at Eastern Center for Arts and Technology in Upper Moreland, with the rest spread among several other area tech schools. District 2's high school division includes BCTHS, MBIT, Eastern and three technical schools in Montgomery County and two technical high schools from Delaware County. Automotive Training Center in Warminster and the Williamson Free School of Mechanical Trades from Delaware County compete in District 2's post-graduate division.

Students are vying for a chance to go to the SkillsUSA Pennsylvania State Conference in Hershey in mid-April. Winners in the state contest will compete in the national SkillsUSA competition in Kentucky in June.

SkillsUSA is a national student organization that seeks to develop employment, participation and leadership skills in contestants "to complement the occupational skills developed by students in technical education classrooms or work-based learning sites," organizers said on the state organization's website. "SkillsUSA is an integral part of approved technical education occupation programs."

Students from Upper Bucks County Technical School in Bedminster Township will compete in the state's District 11 SkillsUSA competitions over the next week in the Lehigh Valley to try to earn a chance to go onto the state competition in Hershey, organizers said.

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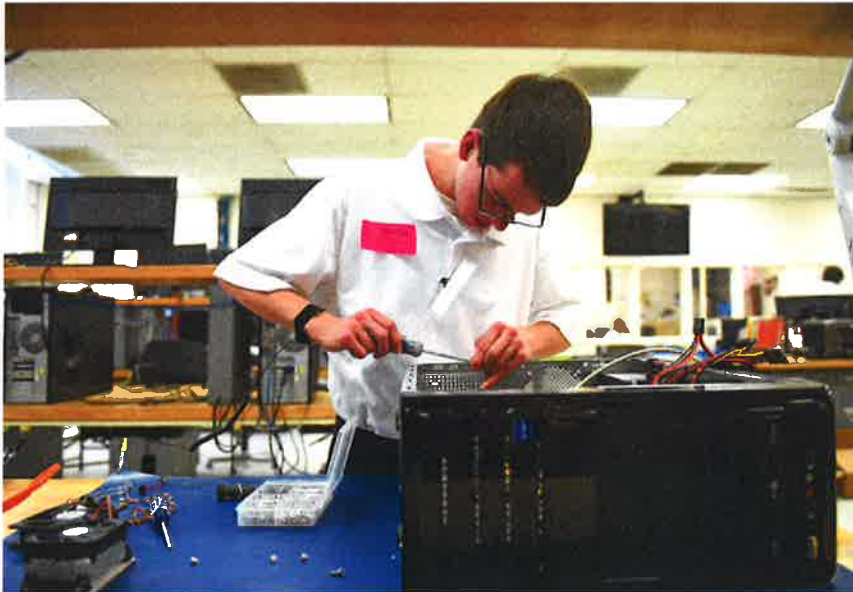
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Chloe Elmer / Photojournalist

Tech students compete at Bucks County Technical High School

Matthew Sawyer, a Middle Bucks Institute of Technology student from the Jamison section of Warrington, works on the computer he built from scratch during the SkillsUSA district competition at Bucks County Technical High School in Bristol Township on Tuesday, Jan. 26, 2016.

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