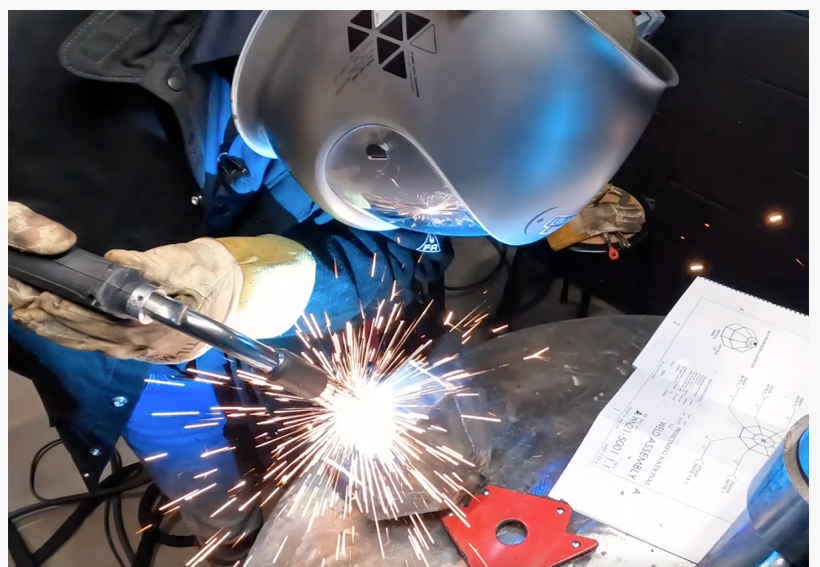


Alabama Student Wins National Competition in Project MFG's National Welding Challenge

Despite a four-year business degree, student finds real value in the skilled trades

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, UNITED STATES, December 9, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A Jefferson State Community College student can now add a national title to his impressive resume. Payton Schmitt was just crowned the "Project MFG National Welding Champion" during Episode 2 of Project MFG's YouTube sensation Clash of Trades.



Winner Payton Schmitt in action

The 26-year-old worked his way through qualifying competitions to arrive at the national welding competition in Cleveland, hosted at Lincoln Electric headquarters. The competition showcased Schmitt's welding prowess over 13 other students from across the country while under the eyes of expert judges from Lincoln Electric, Osborn, and Weld Like A Girl; plus, sponsors from the Department of Defense (DoD), and the production crew filming Clash of Trades Episode 2.

“

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*Andy Davis, IBAS Program
Chief Technology Officer*

The competition results have been under wraps for several weeks as editors skillfully put the footage together to create a 50-minute competition reality show from the 270 minutes of total competition time where students tested their welding capabilities in theory, virtually, and in hands-on application using multiple welding processes. [Here is Episode 2 of Clash of Trades.](#)

Payton Schmitt graduated from the University of Alabama with a four-year business degree, only to discover he couldn't find a career he was passionate about. He decided to enroll in Jefferson State Community College to learn welding after his dad

bought him a cheap welder for their garage. He has now discovered a career path that is lucrative and fulfilling, and is completing his welding school training while working part-time as a welder.

Schmitt wants to own his own welding shop someday and hopes to work on race cars and roll bars. He said, "With the money I won I will be able to do so much. As far as starting my own business, I will be buying nothing but big tools with it." These 'big tools' will be bought with the \$2,000 cash award for his national win supplemented by welding equipment valued at \$1,000. "This is so exciting! It has been hard to keep this a secret from my friends and family," said Schmitt. "But I am thankful to my teacher, Danny Taylor, who gave me the skills and confidence to be my best."

Jefferson State Community College Welding Instructor, Danny Taylor, attended the event to support Schmitt and his other two students who competed; one who finished in second place, Clayton Womack. National finalists came from seven other schools including Calhoun Community College, North Central Kansas Technical College, Northwest-Shoals Community College, Tennessee Center of Applied Technology, Wichita State University Tech and Johnson County Community College.

The DoD's Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment (IBAS) Program provides funding for Project MFG under its National Imperative for Industrial Skills initiative. The creation of Clash of Trades intends to change the perception of the skilled trades by highlighting trade skill competitions, sharing student stories from young people entering the field, and the future-focused work of the U.S. manufacturing industry.

"Project MFG elevates the next generation of highly skilled trade professionals by attracting top student talent to compete, shaping new narratives and igniting investment so more students can enroll in high-skill, high-tech programs," said Bill Ross, President of Project MFG.



Schmitt and "Weld Like a Girl" Judge Shanen Aranmor

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Andy Davis, IBAS Program Chief Technology Officer and competition observer stated, "Project MFG is a game-changer in how young people look at industry and the critical trades. The enthusiasm and drive for excellence they displayed are traits that will form the backbone of our future defense workforce."

Project MFG began, in part, because studies show the manufacturing industry is experiencing exponential change and new technologies are not eliminating jobs as some predicted. Actually, studies show more jobs are being created ([2018 skills gap in manufacturing study](#) by Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute). The skills gap may leave more than 2 million positions unfilled if more young people don't enter the skilled trades. The DoD declared this deficit as one of the most vital challenges for the U.S. defense industrial base ([U.S. DoD Nov 2020 release](#)).

About Project MFG

Project MFG elevates the next generation of highly skilled trade professionals by creating competitions throughout the United States, shaping new narratives and igniting investment so more students enroll in high-skill, high-tech programs. As an integrated workforce development and recruitment effort, Project MFG collaborates across academic, industrial and government communities to expand the U.S. industrial base workforce.

Project MFG is a program of the Global Learning Accelerator Inc., a 501(c)3 nonprofit, funded by DoD, and operated and managed by RD Solutions, LLC. The mission of the Global Learning Accelerator is to inspire young people to confidently explore and pursue their passions for lifelong success.

For information about Project MFG and Clash of Trades, please visit: www.projectmfg.com.

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For media inquiries, please contact Robb Yagmin at 913.908.0028 or email robb@pspublicrelations.com.

Robb Yagmin

PSPR

+1 913-908-0028

robb@pspublicrelations.com

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