

# SkillsUSA MASSACHUSETTS STATE COMPETITION TO DRAW 2,100 STUDENTS

*Top winners from April 25-27 event to advance to national championship*

RAYNHAM, MA, UNITED STATES, April 15, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- At a time when more young adults are pursuing trade careers where jobs are at the ready, the best high school trade and leadership students – and the next generation of state workers – will put their skills to the test during the 50th annual [SkillsUSA Massachusetts State Leadership & Skills Conference](#).

Students in trades from automobile service technology to welding, as well as leadership categories, will compete in shops set up at Blackstone Valley Technical High School and other nearby venues April 25-27 (Competition Day is Friday, April 26).



SkillsUSA Massachusetts Logo

“

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*Karen Ward, Executive Director of SkillsUSA Massachusetts*

The April competition is SkillsUSA Massachusetts’ centerpiece for showcasing that participants have the right personal, technical and workplace skills to enter the job market immediately or pursue continued education after earning their high school degree. The event will also bring in 300 teachers and advisors, as well as 500 event judges.

On April 26, Massachusetts Gov. Maura T. Healey and Lt. Gov. Kimberley Driscoll will issue a Governor’s Citation that recognizes SkillsUSA Massachusetts and the conference for its work as a “talent pipeline, being a vital component to recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce.” Josh Cutler, undersecretary for apprenticeship, work-based learning

and policy in the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, will visit and tour the championships.

In most of the [72 trade categories](#), students will have up to eight hours to complete an assignment that simulates a task they could face on a jobsite. A team trades contest, called TeamWorks, brings together a carpenter, plumber, electrician and mason to build a small house over two days. Teams and individuals are competing for gold, silver and bronze medals and more than \$1.5 million in prizes and scholarships.

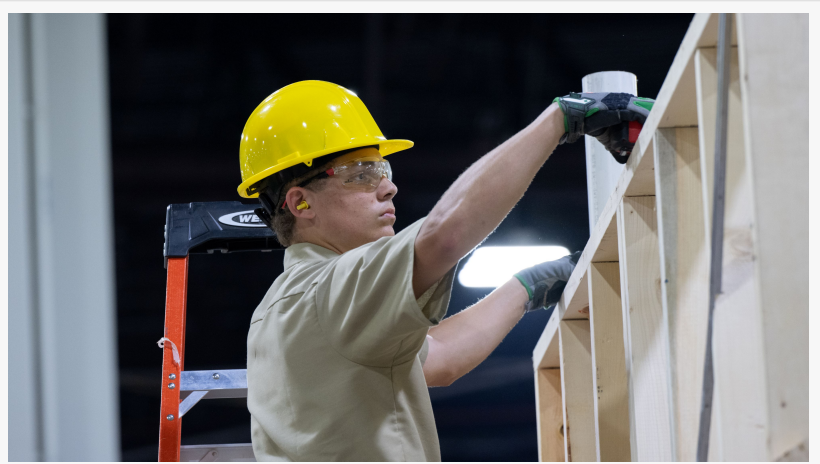
“This competition showcases years of investment by students, with the support of their teachers and advisors, in mastering very technical and precise trade skills,” said Karen Ward, executive director of SkillsUSA Massachusetts. “This event creates a fun and energetic environment, but it’s also a serious undertaking where you see the best of the best from across Massachusetts demonstrate that they have what it takes to be successful in their chosen trade.”

The state competition comes as more young adults are choosing trade careers, a welcome sight for many industries that have struggled in recent years to find and keep qualified workers. The Wall Street Journal this month reported how Gen Z is attracted to trades due to higher pay, increased technology in traditional trades, and a desire to avoid escalating college costs.

Cole Kelley, a senior from Shawsheen Valley Technical High School in Billerica, is one of those.

Growing up, he considered an engineering career, but he decided he enjoyed being hands-on and building things, leading him to enroll at Shawsheen to study HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning). After spending too much time in hospitals as a young kid suffering from headaches, Kelley now wants to work with HVAC systems in healthcare facilities.

“At Shawsheen, I learned about the amount of job openings they have in the trades and the skills gaps, as these are physically demanding jobs,” he said, adding he can work in healthcare without spending at least eight years in college and going into hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt. “This is exactly what I want. I can do what I love and make a more than livable wage.”



Student Competing in Carpentry



Student Competing in Culinary Arts

Now, Kelley is seeking his third state HVAC medal to add to a silver and gold. Those honors earned him spots in the national competition, where he claimed gold medals in back-to-back years. If he advances from the 2024 state competition, he will aim for his third national gold.

Kelley currently is interviewing for a paid apprenticeship, where he will continue on-the-job and classroom training for the next five years. He will exit the apprenticeship with several earned licenses, with the union paying for his preparation. Registered apprenticeships – which equally benefit workers, businesses and local economies – have increased by 106% over the past decade, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

The state competition includes the top two students from participating schools in six districts in 72 disciplines, based on results from online qualifying rounds that assessed foundational knowledge. Joining them are students who will compete in 11 skill events and 29 leadership disciplines, such as extemporaneous speaking and community involvement. Several new trade events debut this year, reflecting recent changes in their disciplines, including include natural hair and braiding, cybersecurity, and biotechnology.

State champions will advance to the SkillsUSA National Leadership & Skills Conference in Atlanta from June 24-29.

Over the past 50 years, SkillsUSA has been preparing a skilled workforce for careers in Massachusetts. “We aren’t just educating students; we’re developing our future workforce,” Ward added. “Our [corporate partners](#) recognize the caliber of these students and proactively reach out to recruit these talented new workers because they will have an immediate, positive impact on their businesses.”

#### ABOUT SKILLSUSA MASSACHUSETTS

SkillsUSA Massachusetts, an educational nonprofit organization, is dedicated to equipping high school, college, and adult learners with the skills and knowledge necessary for successful careers in technical, skilled, and service-oriented industries. Through its comprehensive curriculum, hands-on experiences, competitions, and community service initiatives, SkillsUSA Massachusetts aims to foster leadership, teamwork, and technical proficiency among its members. The program has 39,000 members in Massachusetts CTE high schools, post-secondary programs and colleges, covering more than 130 trade, technical and skilled service occupations.

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