

PRESS RELEASE

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**Somerset County Vocational & Technical High School SkillsUSA Chapter
Named National "Models of Excellence" Winner**

Somerset County, New Jersey has a national SkillsUSA champion! The SkillsUSA chapter at Somerset County Vo-Tech was recently awarded first place in the "personal skills" category of the SkillsUSA Models of Excellence (MOE) program. Sponsored by **Lowe's Companies, Inc.**, this program honors the best SkillsUSA chapters nationwide based on student efforts in implementing the SkillsUSA Framework of developing personal, workplace and technical skills grounded in academics. Somerset County Vo-Tech was one of 24 chapters selected as a "Model of Excellence" finalist, competing for top honors during the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, June 23-26, 2015.

"Lowe's is honored to support a student-driven program that represents the very best in student achievement, intentional learning and community involvement," said Troy Dally, Senior Vice President of Lowe's. "The chapter at the Somerset County Vocational & Technical High School defines excellence in applying personal skills through a meaningful recruitment and outreach effort that involved hands-on application and life lessons. Programs such as this are vital because quality SkillsUSA chapters represent our future workforce and reflect the communities in which they reside. Congratulations to these chapter members who have inspired me and hundreds of others with their commitment to excellence."

Somerset County Vo-Tech members were honored for their membership and recruitment efforts during the annual Somerset County Vo-Tech Open House where they promoted the advantages of SkillsUSA to hundreds of area families. During the event, members distributed printed information, shared personal stories, and acted as ambassadors during school tours. They also sold baked goods to add a fundraising component. The personal skills of work ethic, adaptability/flexibility, and professionalism were in full force as chapter members engaged parents and students in a fruitful recruitment, fundraising and public relations effort. Somerset County Vo-Tech members Khushna Parekh and Geneva Magsino represented their chapter during the conference in Louisville.

"SkillsUSA members were involved in all aspects of this student-run initiative from planning and execution to debriefing and evaluation," said chapter advisor Michelle Fresco. "I was really impressed by their professionalism and knowledge when speaking to parents and prospective students, their ability to answer questions, and their overall enthusiasm in selling our SkillsUSA program. They were ready to jump in and adapt as needs changed during the open house. It was truly a collaborative effort highlighted by the successful application of essential workplace skills. This is what SkillsUSA is all about and we're honored to be among the first Models of Excellence honorees."

During their week in Louisville, Parekh and Magsino participated in interviews, a formal presentation, a recognition dinner at the Kentucky Derby Museum, and an awards ceremony at the final conference session. Lowe's sponsored all MOE conference activities and also presented each of the 24 chapters with a \$2,000 grant. In addition to Somerset County Vo-Tech being honored in the "personal skills" category, Palestine High School in Palestine, Texas received top honors for "workplace skills," and the Gloucester County Institute of Technology in New Jersey was recognized for "technical skills." Specific skills identified within each skills area helps ensure tangible benchmarks for student achievement and chapter programming.

“Our Models of Excellence finalists demonstrate high-value, work-centered skills such as communication, personal responsibility, integrity, work ethic and organizational skills; all critical to providing students with the training they need for the world of work,” said Tim Lawrence, Executive Director of SkillsUSA. “The hands-on approach of this program actualizes the SkillsUSA mission of empowering members to become world-class workers, leaders and responsible American citizens. The Somerset County Vo-Tech chapter serves as a role model for other chapters to emulate in strengthening their local programs. We congratulate them on this tremendous honor.”

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About Lowe’s Companies, Inc.

Lowe's Companies, Inc. (NYSE: LOW) is a FORTUNE® 100 home improvement company serving approximately 16 million customers a week in the United States, Canada and Mexico through its stores and online at Lowe.com, Lowe.ca and Lowe.com.mx. With fiscal year 2014 sales of \$56.2 billion, Lowe’s has 1,840 home improvement and hardware stores and more than 265,000 employees. Founded in 1946 and based in Mooresville, N.C., Lowe's supports the communities it serves through programs that focus on K-12 public education and community improvement projects. For more information, visit Lowe.com.

About SkillsUSA

SkillsUSA (www.skillsusa.org) is a not-for-profit association that serves more than 300,000 middle school, high school, college and postsecondary students — and their instructors — in trade, technical and skilled service instructional programs. SkillsUSA partners educators and students with business and industry to help ensure the United States has a well-prepared and skilled workforce. Nationally, SkillsUSA has the support of more than 600 companies, trade associations and labor unions. SkillsUSA programs teach leadership, citizenship and character development to complement technical skill training. The organization emphasizes respect for the dignity of work, ethics, workmanship, scholarship and safety.

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