



Signing Day Recognizes Graduates of Lehigh Valley Career and Technical Schools

By Paul Muschick

More than 100 soon-to-be graduates of Lehigh Valley area career and technical schools got their moment in the spotlight as they announced the next steps in their careers.

Students from Lehigh Career & Technical Institute, Bethlehem Area Vocational-Technical School, Upper Bucks County Technical School, Monroe Career and Technical Institute, and Career Institute of Technology participated in SkillsUSA Council District 11's annual Signing Day event on May 12 at DeSales University.

Modeled after the popular events where high school athletes sign with colleges, the 104 career and technical students signed with their future employers, military academies, and institutions of higher learning.

Representatives of many businesses, colleges, and the military attended Signing Day to support the students who will be joining them.

It's important to honor the people who "are going to make a difference building bridges, taking care of us, saving lives, protecting lives. That's why this event exists, to show off what current technical education is all about," said Andy Hammer, Executive Director of SkillsUSA Council, who is a former college athlete.

SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers, and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce. The Lehigh Valley boasts the only SkillsUSA Council that not only offers all the benefits of SkillsUSA national, but also professional development conferences and interest clubs year-round here in the Lehigh Valley.

"Our students will be heading off to careers in biomedical technology, engineering, business management, automotive, manufacturing, just to name a few," Hammer said. "Local employers constantly tell us what they need, and they are requiring a steady flow of future talent to maintain their operations. Bryce Torres of Northampton Area High School is graduating from Bethlehem Area Vocational-Technical School, where he studied electrical construction. He told the parents and supporters who packed the room at DeSales that he has been "blessed with many opportunities" because of his participation with SkillsUSA.

He competed for two years in the District 11 Championships in industrial motor control and won third place. He is employed by Diefenderfer Electric and will begin an apprenticeship program with IBEW Local 375.

Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corp. (LVEDC) was the Title Sponsor of Signing Day. Promoting and coordinating a skilled and prepared workforce is one of the priorities of LVEDC, which works with partners to develop curriculum and training opportunities including internships.

"Skills development and job opportunities come in all different realms, it's not all just about going to college," said LVEDC President and CEO Don Cunningham.

"The economy needs people that can work with their hands ... and can contribute and carve out a good life for themselves and their family, and to make their community a better place," he said.

The event's Supporting Sponsors were Freshpet, Lutron Electronics Co., and Mack Trucks.

Ken Borger of Lutron said the technical schools have been a great source of talent for the company. Three students from this year's Signing Day class are headed to Lutron, joining 37 from previous classes.

The 104 students at Signing Day will be joining the workforce at 41 area businesses, attending 24 colleges and universities, and enlisting in the Army, Marine Corps., and National Guard.

Nationally, SkillsUSA serves more than 331,000 students and instructors annually.



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