

**For Immediate Release**

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## **SkillsUSA California Woodworking Students Compete Remotely**

### ***AWFS® and SWM Team Coordinated and Judged Contests***

**ANAHEIM, CA – April 29, 2021** -- Industry professionals from AWFS® (Association of Woodworking and Furnishings Suppliers®) member companies and the Society of Wood Manufacturing (SWM) supported students from high schools across the state competing in the first ever remote SkillsUSA California Cabinetmaking and Introductory Woodworking contests. The contests were designed to be completed entirely at home, and students submitted videos and participated in virtual interviews with the judges.

#### **Virtual Competitions a New Experience for All**

The virtual woodworking skill contests consisted of four components: a written test, which included safety, mathematical, and woodworking knowledge questions; a woodworking project that could be built at home; a brief video presentation to explain the project; and a live virtual interview with the judging panel. The skill contests were designed so that the students could complete the projects using basic hand tools and items they could purchase using gift cards generously provided by Lowe's. A team of AWFS staff and industry volunteers developed the project plans, using the same industry standards and practices as usually followed for an in-person competition.

"The SkillsUSA contests are a valuable way to introduce students to concepts and processes that are used in our industry," says SkillsUSA CA Cabinetmaking Technical Committee Chair Saúl Martín. "Even in the new virtual environment, the students were able to read shop drawings, prepare a bill of materials, and practice fundamental woodworking skills."

The virtual live interviews served as an opportunity for students to practice their career preparedness "soft skills". During the 3-5 minute interviews, judges asked the students questions about what they learned during the process, challenges they overcame, and their favorite part of the experience. Contest judges used criteria such as accuracy of measurements, safety, and use of tools to determine the scores.

#### **Regional Contests are the First Competitive Level**

The virtual regional contests took place in February. California is divided into six regions which typically compete independently of one another, however in the virtual scenario, many elements of the regional contest were combined across regions. For example, all regions received the same instructions and were scored by the same judging panel on the same day.

The regional Cabinetmaking project was a triangular shelf and required cutting a 45 degree angle using hand tools and assembly with nails and glue. The regional Introductory Woodworking project was a rectangular bookshelf which had to be constructed by hand and assembled with nails. Introductory Woodworking is a California state-only contest, intended to give first year woodworking students exposure to the competitive environment and encourage them to return to compete in the Cabinetmaking contest the following year. Fifty-one students from across the state registered to participate in both regional contests.

#### **State Championships Determine Who Advances to Nationals**

The students who earned the top scores from the regional contests were invited to compete in the state championships, which took place virtually on April 16. In a process similar to the regional contests, the Cabinetmaking students built a small wall cabinet with a drawer and two doors, and included mounting drawer hinges, knobs, and a magnetic latch. The

Introductory Woodworking students built a tool box, requiring the use of a coping saw to cut out the handle. A total of twenty students participated in both state contests.

"We were incredibly impressed with the quality of the students' projects and presentation videos," says AWFS Education Manager Adam Kessler. "Most of them had to build these projects in their homes, backyards, or garages. But they overcame challenges and they should be very proud of their work." During the interviews, students shared with the judges that this was their first time using hand tools and some students shared that the project was more difficult than they anticipated. Some encountered a new learning experience by going to Lowe's to procure the required tools and supplies.

### **Industry Volunteers Contributed Time to Serve as Judges**

AWFS® is grateful to the team of volunteers from Society of Wood Manufacturing (SWM), a chapter of AWFS®, who contributed their time to serve as judges:

- Saúl Martín, [Architectural Woodworking Company](#)– **Contest Coordinator**
- Kenneth Thomas, [Inland Woodworkers Association](#) - Cabinetmaking Judge
- Mike Trejo, [Inland Woodworkers Association](#) - Cabinetmaking Judge
- Randy Zubieta, Oceanside High School - Cabinetmaking Judge
- Jordan Clarke, Bellflower High School– Introductory Woodworking Judge
- Karl Frey, [Colonial Saw](#)– Introductory Woodworking Judge
- John Mason, San Gabriel High School - Introductory Woodworking Judge

The project plans were developed by SWM and drafted by AWFS® Education Manager Adam Kessler, along with support from Saúl Martín of Architectural Woodworking Company.

### **Congratulations to the SkillsUSA California State Student Medalists!**

Eileen Nguyen of Mark Keppel High School (Alhambra, CA) received the highest score and the Gold medal in the state high school Cabinetmaking competition and has been invited to represent California in the 2021 SkillsUSA National Leadership & Skills Championships. The national competition was developed by the National Cabinetmaking Technical Committee, consisting of AWI members, and will involve a timed project completed in a school or professional shop and proctored by a neutral third party industry professional. SWM has raised funds to cover national registration fees for the California competitor.

Rounding out the Cabinetmaking medalists: Nolin Searls of Alhambra High School (Martinez, CA) earned Silver and Daniel Lopez of Monache High School (Porterville, CA) earned Bronze. In the Introductory Woodworking contest, Emily Tran of Mark Keppel High School won Gold, Chris Tse of Mark Keppel High School received Silver, and Kyleen Mitchell of Monache High School received Bronze. Congratulations to all student competitors!

If you would like to learn more about SkillsUSA woodworking or participate in future SkillsUSA California woodworking events, please contact Adam Kessler at [adam@awfs.org](mailto:adam@awfs.org) or (323) 215-0312 for more information.

**About SkillsUSA:** SkillsUSA is one of the largest national career & technical student organizations in the nation. It promotes job readiness with skills and leadership training and supports students entering skilled trades.

### **ABOUT AWFS®**

The Association of Woodworking & Furnishings Suppliers® (AWFS®), founded in 1911, is a non-profit organization that wholly owns and produces the biennial AWFS® Fair. The largest trade association serving the entire home and commercial furnishings industry, AWFS has more than 400 members, including manufacturers and distributors of machinery, hardware, software, tooling, lumber, components, plastics, wood products and supplies for the woodworking industry including cabinet, furniture, millwork and custom woodworking products. To learn more, visit <http://www.awfs.org/>.