

Lehigh Valley Career and Technical Education Students Ready to Get to Work

By Paul Muschick

LEHIGH VALLEY- A new generation of students who will help to fuel Lehigh Valley's growing economy with skills they developed through career and technical education were honored recently at the SkillsUSA Council's annual Signing Day.

More than 80 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 the event on May 2 at Lehigh Carbon Community College.

Modeled after the popular events where high school athletes sign with colleges, the students signed with their future employers, military academies, and institutions of higher learning as their parents and other supporters watched.

"Local employers keep telling us what they need. They require a steady flow of talent that is trained and ready to maintain operations with the flexibility to change and grow. Today is a celebration of you, the students who have chosen to maximize your skilled

trade training with an eye on becoming successful and financially secure. Today, we are proud to recognize all of you who have made a solid investment in your future," said Andy Hammer, Executive Director of SkillsUSA Council District 11.

SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers, and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce. A nonprofit national education association, SkillsUSA serves middle sch□

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.

The graduating students recognized at Signing Day will be entering fields including manufacturing, engineering, construction, business and technology, health and human services, culinary arts, an□

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



She credited her instructors and SkillsUSA with not only teaching the skills she needs for a career, but with helping her to overcome her social anxiety and become more comfortable interacting with others.

"SkillsUSA will forever be a part of my life," Yondura said. "I'm so grateful for the opportunities I've had and the opportunities I've allowed myself to go out there and do. SkillsUSA was the thing that pushed me out of my bubble and allowed me to be here right now giving this speech. This SkillsUSA Signing Day demonstrates how far we have all come and where we're all heading."

priorities of LVEDC, which works with partners to uncover regional occupation and skills demand and build strategies to ensure that our workforce is prepared for the career opportunities at local employers.

Karianne Gelinas, LVEDC's Vice President of Regional Partnerships & Talent Strategies, told the students there is a demand for their skills.

"Our economy and our population are growing, and we need people like you here who have learned the best from our career and technical schools and are now ready to make your next move," she said.

Lutron is among the Lehigh Valley companies that has hired SkillsUSA students.

"The current technical schools represented here today have been a great source for new hires at Lutron," said Ken Borger, Lutron's Human Resource Manager. "Well-qualified graduates from these schools have the capability to meet our customers' needs today and grow and expand in the ever-changing world to meet the needs of our customers down the road."

The graduates include Natalia Yondura of Upper Bucks County Technical School, where she studied baking and won awards at the state and national SkillsUSA competitions.