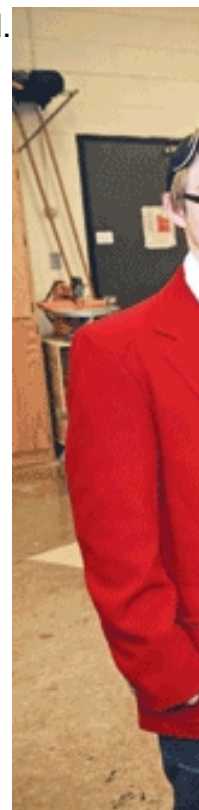


Grafton's four state finalists in SkillsUSA contest include national qualifier in auto technology

A Grafton High School senior has qualified for the SkillsUSA National Leadership & Skills Conference by earning first-place honors at the Wisconsin state finals April 10 and 11 in Wisconsin Dells.

Ian Liebelt, one of four Grafton students who reached the state level, received a gold medal in automotive service technology.

In the same category, Grafton's Mitch DelCamp was awarded a second-place silver medal.



During the competition, students from high schools and technical colleges worked side-by-side on 15 automotive workstations for four hours to demonstrate their understanding of theory, diagnostic problem solving and repair skills.

The workstations tested contestants in engine overhaul, air conditioning, manual and automotive drive line, brakes, suspension and steering, electrical and electronic systems, engine performances and job interview skills.

Grafton's other state contestants were Zachary Brunquell, who placed second in cabinetmaking, and Eric Gergens, who participated in power equipment technology.

Brunquell had seven hours to construct a floor cabinet from raw materials. His silver medal

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marked Grafton's sixth top-three finish in the last eight years in cabinetmaking at the SkillsUSA state finals. His woodworking teacher is Kevin Gain.

Liebelt and DelCamp are students of Carl Hader, head of Grafton High School's automotive technology program.

"The chance to compete is a great motivator for students," Hader said.

"This level of skill development also leads to super career preparation, the chance to be leaders in their next level of education, and in some cases, the opportunity for scholarships as well as advanced placement credits in the technical college system."

Liebelt will represent Wisconsin at the national SkillsUSA event in Kansas City in June. He and Grafton senior Alex Conrad have also qualified as a Ford-AAA automotive team for the state finals May 8 in Mequon.

The state SkillsUSA conference was DelCamp's third competition this year. Previously, he and a teammate won the Milwaukee ADAMM automotive contest in February and placed second in national competition in New York on April 3.

Grafton High School students have participated in the Skills USA contest each year since 1995. In automotive service technology, they have won state titles that qualified them for the national event 10 times.

Hader's teams have finished in the top 15 at each national appearance, placing first twice and third twice.

"A 1-2 medal finish like this one in the Dells really shows the depth of our students and our programs at GHS," Hader said. "I am so proud of their efforts."

Qualifiers for the national SkillsUSA event will vie for honors in more than 90 technical career areas. More than 5,000 students from across the country are expected to participate.

Image Information: GRAFTON HIGH SCHOOL was represented by four students in this year's state finals of the SkillsUSA Wisconsin Leadership & Skills Conference. They included (from left) Ian Liebelt, first place in automotive service technology; Zachary Brunnquell, second place in cabinetmaking; Mitch DelCamp, second place in automotive service technology; and Eric Gergens, a finalist in power equipment technology. Photo by Sam Arendt

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