

Students showing off their skills

BY MELISSA MARTIN
STAFF REPORTER

They've got the skills to pay the bills — and maybe take them across Canada, too.



Photo by Melissa Martin

A student puts finishing touches on a men's hairstyle at the 2009 Skills Games.

On April 9, more than 500 students from local high schools and colleges convened at Red River College's Notre Dame campus for the 12th annual Skills Manitoba Competition.

The event sees apprentices in 40 trades — from hairstyling to steel cutting to landscaping — compete for a gold medal and a chance to attend the Canadian Skills Competition in Prince Edward Island next month.

Hundreds of students and adults milled about the event floor. The biggest spectator sport seemed to be the robotics competition. Ten robots and their human creators battled for gold.

This year, event organizers asked participants to build a robot that could

pick up tennis balls and drop them into a series of slots.

It finished with a nail-biter final round between Nic Maunder's Tec Voc team and a team from Brandon's Crocus Plains.

In the end, Crocus Plains captured the gold, but just barely.

"It was really close," said Maunder, 15, as he packed his robot away. "At the end of the last round, my last ball bounced out. If it hadn't, we might have won."

Undaunted, Maunder plans to return to the competition next year.

Winners in other categories were announced during a special ceremony later that afternoon.



Photo by Melissa Martin

R.B. Russell floristry student Paris Rose Munoz crafts a bouquet in the floral arrangement competition.