

# Local pupils shine in national spotlight

BY ADAM TINGEY

Brandon students showed their skills in Charlottetown last week.

Seven students from Crocus Plains high school and four from Assiniboine Community College were in the Prince Edward Island capital last week to compete in the 15th annual Canadian Skills competition.

The four-day event had more than 500 students from across the country compete in more than 40 trade and technology specialties — everything from robotics to resumé writing.

Each province and territory sent a team of students, all of whom had won a gold medal in their respective provincial skills competitions. Manitoba's took place this past April.

Students went into each competition with a basic idea of what tests would be awaiting them — and nothing else. They had their knowledge, creativity and quick thinking to get through the challenges ahead.

When the competitions were over and the points tallied, representatives from both Crocus Plains and Assiniboine Community College came away with gold and silver medals.

Grade 12 Crocus Plains student Travis Rose received the gold medal for autobody repair.

"It was a great experience," Rose said.

Rose spent 12 hours over two days working on four different projects which varied from bumper repair to vehicle estimation for damages.

Rose said he was really happy with his work.

"The first day I was kind of nervous," Rose said. "The second day I felt really good with my work ... everything turned out how I wished it would."

Fellow Grade 12 student Eric Thiessen was the winner of a silver medal for Architectural CADD (Computer Aided Drafting & Design).

Thiessen was given a design for a house, and was given the challenge of modifying the floor plan, including adding a suite to the existing house.

He thought the first day could have gone better, but Thiessen made up for it on the second day, resulting in a second-place finish.



**Second-year ACC student Jackie Higgins (left) won a gold medal in IT software applications, while Keith Otto, a second-year web design student, finished in second place. (Submitted)**

The stress for the students didn't end when the competitions were over.

Results weren't announced until the next day, leaving competitors with hours nervously waiting for the outcome.

"It's nerve-racking," Thiessen said. "When your name gets called it like 'Oh, that's a relief.'"

Rose added that when he heard the bronze and silver winners it meant only one thing — gold or nothing.

"Anytime that your school can get provincial recognition, let alone national recognition, it's amazing and it brings a lot of notoriety to the Brandon School Division and Crocus Plains," Crocus Plains principal Barry Gooden said. "We couldn't be prouder of their accomplishment."

It was also gold or nothing for second-year ACC student Jackie Higgins. The office administration student was the winner of the gold medal in IT Software Applications, making it the third year in a row that an ACC student has medalled in the competition in this category.

This also marks the fifth year running that Assiniboine Community College has received a medal in website development.

Keith Otto, a second-year web design student, grabbed the second-place hardware in that competition.

Damon Roth, chair of the School of Trades & Technology at ACC, had nothing but praise for the students and their achievements.

"It's a good feeling to see our students get onto the podium," Roth said.

"These are the students we've worked with. We've seen them over the period of two years grow from where they came from to acquire their skills, acquire their knowledge and then be able to take what we taught them and put it into an actual hands-on experience."

Thiessen and Rose were both happy with the experience they had in Charlottetown last week, and they see the bigger picture of what the competition can mean for students.

"It lets you see how good you are and how you can handle the pressure and the stress and what the real world working experience is like," Thiessen said.

"And what else is out there," Rose added. "It lets other people know what we do ... this opens people's eyes."

Crocus also had two competitors finish just shy of the podium. The robotics competitors finished fourth in their field. There was a fourth-place showing in the resumé-writing competition as well.

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