

Manitoba students put skills to the test — and win

By Martin Cash

MANITOBA high school, community college and skilled-trades students took home more than a dozen medals in the 14th annual Canadian Skills Competition that was held in Calgary this week.

Manitoba had a team of 61 students at the event that competed in 40 different categories from aesthetics and aircraft maintenance to welding and women's apparel design.

Skills Canada Manitoba, the organization that co-ordinated the Manitoba group, promotes skilled trades and technology as great career paths for young Manitobans.

"Everyone knows that there is a skills shortage across the country," said Maria Pacella, executive director of Skills Canada Manitoba. "We want to heighten the awareness of career

opportunities in those fields for students."

Twenty-six Manitobans won medals in 20 categories including gold medals in robotics, TV and video production, landscape gardening, IT software applications, carpentry and computer animation.

The gold medalists will compete in the world competition, also in Calgary, later this year.

Pavlo Tovaryanskyy, a Grade 12 student at Technical Vocational School, was part of the four-member robotics team from Tec Voc.

"It was a great experience," said the 18-year-old who is thinking about studying mechanical engineering.

"The fact that we won such a big competition against other very good groups was great."

Tovaryanskyy, along with Grade 11 student Myles Robinson, and Grade 10 students Christiane Bingham and

Codey Scarrett built a robot designed to pick up hockey pucks at four stations and drop it at four stations. Their robot beat devices from students in Ontario, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan.

Pacella said she has noticed a shift in perception among the schools and students about the message of her organization.

"Whereas some of the trades might have been seen as dirty jobs, more people now understand there are well-paying exciting careers to be had," she said.

"Teachers and guidance counsellors used to be reticent about our message; now they are far more welcoming. Now they are asking us for information about what to tell the kids about careers in technology and skilled trades."

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BRIAN GOULD PHOTO

Pavlo Tovaryanskyy (left) and Codey Scarrett with their award-winning robot.