

PEI trades competitions are in for a great year

Submitted by Joshua Silver, Red Seal Certified and Executive Director of Skills Canada PEI

The 2010 Skills Canada PEI Competition is taking place in March across the Island. We encourage everyone to check out the events schedule on our website and come out to watch these exciting events.

I have a Red Seal in carpentry, teaching experience at Holland College, and two decades of carpentry experience in the field. I know all too well the dedication and education that goes into transforming from an apprentice to a Red Sealed tradesperson.

Along this journey, apprentices have a great opportunity to join the Skills Canada PEI Competition. This is an extraordinary opportunity for an apprentice to network with fellow trades people, instructors, employers and industry leaders. It's a great way to increase the skill level and knowledge base of the trade.

In an effort to promote the trades, Skills Canada PEI partnered with Holland College, HRSDC, and the province in 1996. Our flagship event is an Olympic style competition where participants are tested on their knowledge and ability.

Presently, there are about 40 different competitions. This vast list includes architecture technology and design, welding, automotive, carpentry, website development, hair styling, TV/Video production, and many more.

Gold medalists from our provincial competition go on to represent PEI at the National event in Kitchener Ontario.

Those who win gold at the Nationals this year go on to represent Canada at the World Competition in London, England. If you thought the national event was exciting, you should see the Worlds.

The excitement level during competitions is tremendous. The ability and knowledge level of the competitors always impresses me.

We encourage young people to take a good look at the possibilities that the trades have to offer. There is solid evidence that shows a career in the trades is a sound decision.

- A skilled trade worker can expect to earn an average of \$50,000.
- Apprentices can "earn while they learn" right from the first day of training.
- An estimated 400,000 workers are due to retire in the next 15 years.

For a complete list of the PEI competitions in March, visit www.skillscanada.pe.ca

For more information about this year's national event in Ontario, visit www.skillsontario.com

For more about this year's Worlds event in London, visit www.worldskillslondon2011.com

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Trades stay in the family

by Patricia Roy

Working in the trades has become a tradition for a family from Nail Pond. Glenn Ellsworth and his son Dallas are both involved in learning about, teaching and working in the trades.

Glenn has worked in trades for a number of years and now is teaching trades skills. Dallas is taking the two-year industrial electrical course at Holland College. Both father and son now spend their days at Slemon Park.

The family operates a hobby farm and raises their own beef cattle. "Growing up in this environment, you learn many transferable skills."

Glenn has had many careers. After high school, he worked in retail. Then he became an automotive mechanic, a career that until then had been a hobby. He stayed in that location for about six years and then worked for an auto dealership and later for a parts retailer.

Many job choices for trades people

"All in all I was in the automotive industry for about 18 years," says Glenn. "Through time, I realized that my favorite part of the job was the social interaction and the teaching opportunities with the apprentices."

While exploring career options, he decided to explore teaching. Glenn, who has his Red Seal in the Automotive trade, was approved to do substitute teaching at Westisle Composite High School. "I decided to become a teacher part-time," he says. "I had promised my wife that I would hang up the wrenches for a year to see if I could make enough to support the family." Glenn went on to teach trade skills to participants of the Trade Essentials and Passport to Employment programs. "I had not taught adults before, but decided to explore the possibility."

Advice for those thinking of changing careers

"Open every door and at least look in. You don't have to step through those doors but you have to know what you are turning down," he says.

Glenn has found his career change to be a positive step. "What I am doing now, working with adults, is very rewarding."

Glenn says teaching was a natural fit for him since he had unknowingly been doing just that while working in the automotive industry. "I think I've found my niche, and others can too," he says with a smile.



Glenn Ellsworth and son Dallas are shown with some of the articles written when Dallas entered provincial and national skills competitions starting in grade 10.

Why trades?

Dallas chose electrical because he thought it would be a cool course to take in high school. "I picked it as an elective going into grade 10," he says. "My teacher convinced me to enter the Skills Canada PEI Competitions that year."

Dallas won the Island competition and earned fourth place at the nationals. The next year, he won the provincials again and placed third at the nationals. When he was in grade 12, the national competition was held in Charlottetown and Dallas won gold. "This time Mike Holmes got to shake my hand," he says with a laugh.

Now that he is at the post-secondary level, he says the competition will be much more difficult. "Post-secondary competitors can come from any Canadian college. Other tradespeople are also invited to participate."

Employment potential

Dallas worked for an electrical contractor in Tignish last summer and found the experience rewarding. "I had the opportunity to work on many different high-end projects in the West Prince area, such as wind mills, the hydrogen plant, and fish plants.

Dallas will need 8,000 hours of work to qualify to write the Red Seal exam. Time spent in college counts as 1,360 hours per year. Becoming an industrial electrician will allow him to work in such areas as hospitals, power plants, manufacturing facilities and electrical generating plants.

Advice for youth

"There is lots of work in the trades," says Dallas. "If a person is willing to work, they will never be out of a job. And there is really good money to be made. Some people quit school and think going to work right away is the answer, but if they only put in the effort for a while longer, they could be set for life."

For more information about the Holland College electrical program, visit www.hollandc.pe.ca

