

PEI skilled trades team heading for nationals

by Gloria Welton, Patricia Roy, and Stella Shepard

In March, 35 gold medal winners were announced at the **Skills Canada PEI** awards night in front of an audience of close to 500 people.

“In the spring, **Skills Canada** organizations across the country hold provincial competitions,” says **Josh Silver**, Executive Director of Skills Canada PEI and Red Seal certified. “These competitions are in **trades, technology**, and in some provinces **leadership skills** competitions are also offered to students in both high school and post-secondary.”

“The events support the efforts of people taking the journey from competitor to tradesperson,” says Josh. “There is a whole new

appreciation for people in trades. The work is more year-round than ever before, and a good living can be earned in trades and technology. We hope that the young people of today 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.”

This year the provincial gold medal winners will travel to Waterloo, Ontario for the national event. “Those who win gold at the Nationals go on to represent Canada at the World Competition in London, England,” says Josh. “If you thought the national event was exciting, you should see the Worlds.”

For more information about **Skills Canada PEI**, visit www.skillscanada.pe.ca or contact **Josh Silver** at 566-9352 or e-mail josh@skillscanada.com

Profiles of three provincial gold medal winners who are getting ready for the nationals:



Carpenter nails gold

John Kelly of Kensington, is currently in the one-year Carpentry program at Holland College in Slemon Park. John is this year's gold medal winner in the **Carpentry post-secondary** category.

“For the provincial event we had to build a picnic table that can fold down into a bench,” says John. “The benches were later sold to help offset the cost of travel to the national competition.”

“I am really looking forward to the national event and really thankful for the opportunity. My instructors are great and are giving me some much-needed help to prepare.”

John will be working on a more complex build at the national event. He says he will need to deal with the pressure of working with an unfamiliar blueprint and finishing a product in a limited amount of time. As well, there will be many people watching the event, but he plans to keep busy hammering away and aiming for another gold.

Employment prospects

Once his course is over, John says he may return to work for his former employer in his home town. “It depends how much work is available to them, so I haven't really decided yet. I know I will find work on the Island. Right now I have been concentrating on the course and the national event. After that, I plan to go on to earn a Red Seal in carpentry.”



Every word is gold

Marianne LeBlanc of Cornwall is a grade 12 student at **Bluefield High School**. She won gold in the **Prepared Speech** category of the provincial competitions.

“This was a new category this year and I was glad to enter,” says Marianne, who welcomes any opportunity to speak in public. “I have seven years of 4-H experience, and I have participated in many public speaking competitions. I felt confident enough to give it a try.”

“A few days before the competition, I was given the topic: **Skilled Trades and Technology Careers: the Connection to Canada's Future**. I must admit I knew very little about trades but I did my research. After it was all done, I learned a lot and had a whole new appreciation for trades. A mentor has been assigned to help me prepare for the nationals.”

Career plans

Marianne has applied to St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia and plans to take the Business program with a major in Accounting. “My aunt owns an accounting firm in Vancouver and I have spent enough time with her to realize this seems to be a good fit for me.”

“In the business world you need to be ready to present your ideas at any time and adapt to many work settings. This experience in public speaking and getting more familiar with trades and technology will really help me as I continue my education.”



Two time gold winner

Shawn Bell of Murray River is a second-year student in the **Industrial Electrical Technology** program at Holland College in Slemon Park.

Shawn placed first in both the **Mechatronics** and in the **Automation & Control** competitions.

Shawn's interest in electrical technology dates back to his boyhood days playing with Tonka toys. “When I was a kid, I enjoyed dismantling and rebuilding electrical motors in toy cars and trucks,” says Shawn. “It was fascinating and fun.”

Shawn graduated from **Montague Regional High School** in 2004 and found employment in lobster processing. He maintained the canning equipment at his work station, which reinforced his passion for working with technology. It was a turning point in his life in deciding on a career.

“When I graduate from college this year, I plan to continue to work on PEI, hopefully in the industrial electronics field,” says Shawn. “It's a challenging and interesting career that will provide a good living wage. My long-term goal is to become a **Red Seal** industrial electrician.”