
Carpenter High Student Wins Silver Medal in Provincial Competition May 18, 2010

Carpenter High student Derek Gower has won a silver medal in welding at the twelfth annual Saskatchewan Skills Competition held in Prince Albert recently. This is the second medal in two years for Northwest School Division students at the Skills Competition, joining a bronze medal won last year by Neilburg's D.J. Graham in commercial cooking.

Approximately 500 students from both high schools and post-secondary trade schools attended the forum to compete in a variety of trades and technology areas. These range from culinary arts and bricklaying to hairdressing and machining. Each discipline sets up two separate practical challenges, one for the high school students and one for the trade school students, designed to test the skills required in trade and technology occupations. Students are then evaluated by judges who are experts in their fields. The winners from each area move on to national and finally international competitions.

Derek, a grade 11 student, was one of seven students attending the competition from Carpenter High. He successfully completed his project within the 6-½ hour time frame, and was both surprised and pleased at the silver medal outcome. "It was my first time and I wasn't expecting very much, but I was very happy with the outcome," said Gower.

"It was a tough project that they got," noted teacher Mike Tourigny. "There was only one weld that separated the high school project from the post-secondary trade school piece. They set the bar quite high this year. The students worked for 3 hours, took a ½ hour lunch break and then worked for another 3 ½ hours. They came out exhausted, but smiling."

"It was both hot and stressful," agreed Derek. "You were given the blueprint, the materials, the 6 ½ hours, and that was all."

"The project required students to make a small (26 by 30 cm) section of I-beam from 11 pieces of flat steel," said Tourigny. "They had to make a series of 12 different welds using both MIG and stick welding. These included pressure welds, structural welds, vertical welds, horizontal and fillet welds. It tested them from A-Z, both physically and mentally. It was very technical work"

"The most difficult weld," said Derek, "was a 26 cm MIG vertical uphand weld."

Both Gower and Tourigny agreed that, come job search time, the silver medal was an excellent addition to a resume. "It's an excellent career leg up," said Tourigny. "A lot of industries know all about these competitions and they know which students are coming out with good results."

Tourigny also spoke at length about how thankful the school was to Robwel Constructors Ltd. for their ongoing support of the welding program at Carpenter High. "It's really important to us," he said. "They sponsor us, they put a lot of resources into our programs and they hire a lot of our students. We appreciate the support we receive and are very grateful."



Photo Credit – Mike Tourigny