

IVHS welder takes second at SkillsUSA

By Darcy Wallace
IVN Staff Writer

Illinois Valley High School welders were the new kids on the block at the SkillsUSA competition in Milwaukee, Ore., April 8 and 9.

Tougher rules, a different format and a more competitive atmosphere might have overwhelmed IVHS welders. But, they didn't seem to show it as several students excelled in categories such as gas, tungsten, oxy-acetylene and arc welding.

Senior Robin Highbarger took second place in overall welding, just missing the chance to compete at the national level. Still, it was the farthest Cougar welders have gone in competition, and they're planning to build on it.

"They came up to me during the awards ceremony mentioning all the extra events we could do," said IVHS instructor Amy Meyer. "I wasn't even the one who brought it up. Some of them want to become state officers next year. This is something that I feel all of a sudden opened their eyes."

Highbarger competed along

with Curtis and Devan Elmer, Austin Hart, Cody Kinney and Brandon Campbell. Devan Elmer took sixth place in Oxy-Acetylene welding, and the others excelled in their events.

Fellow students Elissa Matthews, Seleena Leija, Bryce Gardenhire, Mason Janoski and Blanka Koci all showed their support.

Back in February, IVHS students nabbed 14 personal awards and 12 event awards at the RCC Weld-a-thon, more than any other high school represented. For years, it was the main competition Cougar welders attended, and students knew what to expect.

This year's welding class wanted to try something different. So Meyer talked to a North Valley teacher to learn that SkillsUSA was coming up, and IVHS had less than two weeks to sign up and prepare.

At SkillsUSA, Cougar welders were in for some surprises: ultra-thin metals. No questions allowed. No inquisitive glances at your instructor. Just a blueprint, and you're on your own.

"They weren't allowed to talk to me, look at me, and they weren't

allowed to ask questions," Meyer said. "They had to adjust on the spot."

Many events at the Milwaukee competition were Oregon-only, meaning there is no national-level contest in that particular category. Meyer said Devan Elmer was one student who placed in the Top Six after having to miss the RCC event earlier in the year.

"This was his [specialty] that he prepared the entire time for," Meyer said. "They threw some curveballs at him so for placing sixth I was really proud."

A sizeable group of students didn't weld at SkillsUSA but still traveled with the welders to support their peers. In the awards ceremony, Cougars had to dress up in formal attire, something they weren't used to, but made the most of.

"It was such a big event that the students were able to see all the different scenarios and still support their fellow teammates," Meyer said. "To have them be so well-behaved, so respectful, well mannered, it was amazing to see that. It was literally the best trip I have ever had in my six years of teaching."

Students practice in the IVHS shop room during the afternoons on whatever type of scrap metals they can find, practicing and refining technique.

According to Meyer, many people donated materials of their own and welding students have also collected materials or asked for donations from other local residents.

Residents Sam Michel, Mel and Molly Hearn, Dave Waslin, Richard Renkens, Daniel Gardenhire and Bob Richardson donated items, along with local company Heiler Iron Works. ShopSmart also allowed students to bag groceries to help raise funds.

"[The students] are very passionate about it," she said. "They're thinking, 'wow, this is something I love and we can actually do this.'"

According to the U.S. Dept. of Labor website, skilled welders are needed in almost any manufacturing category you can think of, from bridge-building to car racing. Employers have reportedly struggled to find qualified welders for high-level work.

Though Highbarger did not

make the national event, Meyer said she plans to fundraise for helmets for the students and better gear for future competitions.

She also credited volunteer Robert Scott, stepfather of one of her students, for his help chaperoning the students at the RCC Weld-a-thon and helping motivate the students.

Welding students, many of them with at least another year left of high school, have every intention of participating in more welding contests next year. With one year of SkillsUSA under their belts, Cougar welders could win more awards in the future for IVHS.

"One thing I tell [the students] no matter what is that I don't expect them to win medals; I expect them to have fun and do their best," Meyer said.

"There's a reason they were chosen to [compete]," Meyer added. "They have the natural ability, or they've been practicing. I tell them that if they aren't sure what to do, just do what feels right because they've been practicing, they know this; adjust as necessary and do what they can."



(Photo by Darcy Wallace, *Illinois Valley News*)

Illinois Valley High School welders from Amy Myer's class, including Curtis Elmer, Devon Elmer, Robin Highbarger, Austin Hart, Cody Kinney and Brandon Campbell attend SkillsUSA in Milwaukee, Ore., April 8 & 9.

Benefit Dinner
for St. Matthias Church

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5:00 to 8:00



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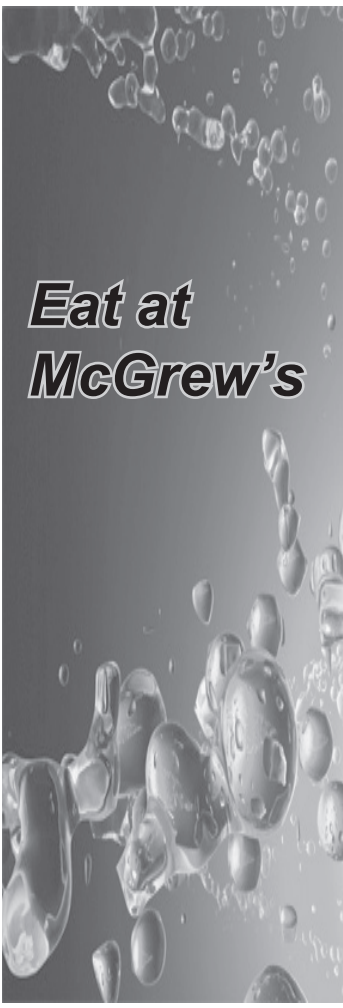
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Solution on page B-2

HOW TO PLAY SUDOKU

1. Each of the numbers from 1 to 9 should only be placed once in each column.
2. Each number from 1 to 9 can be placed only once in each row.
3. The numbers 1 to 9 can appear only once in each 3x3 grid.



Eat at McGrew's

Crossword brought to you by

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Across

1. A state of irritation
5. Meat from a calf
9. Sanctified
11. Talk in a noisy, excited, or declamatory manner
13. Hypothesis
14. Refined
15. A wing of an insect
16. Impoverished
18. Teaspoon (abbr)
19. Large
21. Two items of the same kind
22. Cambodian unit of money
23. Primp
24. Autocratic
25. A watery solution that circulates through the vascular system of a plant
26. Hindu dress
29. Raised marks on the skin
33. A figure that branches from a single root
34. A slippery or viscous liquid
36. A coarse file
37. Curve
38. A pen for livestock in southern Africa
40. What or which person or persons?
41. Japanese woman
43. Kit
45. Catching sight of something
46. Clean with hard rubbing
47. Slender gull
48. A member of a European people

Down

1. Austrian composer and conductor
2. Period of time during which glaciers covered a large part of the earth's surface
3. Back or backward
4. Flowerless and seedless vascular plant
5. Make or become different
6. Recede
7. Line of defence
8. Transparent optical devices
9. A token that postal fees have been paid
10. Coloured
11. Martial art
12. Answer
17. Two continents
20. Any habitation at a high altitude
22. Oarsman
26. A specific identifiable position in a process
27. Take into custody
28. Directions for making something
30. Custom or rule
31. A close-fitting pullover shirt
32. A blemish made by dirt
34. Using speech
35. State in southeastern Asia
38. Ruler or other important people in Asian countries
39. An unknown and unpredictable phenomenon that leads to a favourable outcome
42. A title
44. One of the digits of the foot

Crossword Solution on Page B-2



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