

Coventry students ready to show skills

School sending 3 SkillsUSA participants to June nationals

KENDRA LEIGH MILLER
kmiller@ricentral.com

COVENTRY — Close to 100 students from the Coventry High School's Career and Vo-tech program competed in SkillsUSA this year and attended the Leadership Conference

Of those who attended, 18 students won various awards including first place, gold medal winners senior Samantha Menezes, for Basic Health Care Skills; junior, Melissa Cole, for Medical Terminology and junior State Officer Drew Ferguson.

The program is a partnership of students, teachers and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce by providing education programs, events and competition that support career and technical education (CTE) in the nation's classrooms and the most recent SkillsUSA annual competition took place in March at the Community College of Rhode Island over the course of the month, ranging in 10 to 12 areas including healthcare, medical math, carpentry, graphic arts, various technologies and automotive industry, to name a few.

Cole learned about the program through a teacher and as soon as she found out about it, she hit the books, studying all medical terminology.

"I've been working at it since September and I'm ready to go to nationals in Kentucky but I'm nervous," she said.

The judges at the national level include professors at the college level as well as professionals in their fields and students who take part are also at the high school and college level.

"I think I wanted to be involved to motivate myself," said Menezes, who already has early college acceptance and is interested in basic healthcare. "As part of the competition, you also have to do a presentation and are evaluated on your skills and how well you perform basic healthcare skills. I was a patient volunteer last year, so I had the advantage going into the event this year of at least having an idea of what would be expected of me and I had just completed an anatomy course in school, so when I took that test the information was already learned where I



Kendra Leigh Miller • Daily Times

Coventry High School students Drew Ferguson, Samantha Menzes, and Melissa Cole will head to the SkillsUSA nationals.

Students head to Ky.

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saw students in other grades having a tough time.”

“It’s a very competitive thing,” said Career/Tech Director Lori Ferguson. “We’re trying to get sophomores involved,” she said.

Drew Ferguson is a State Officer and was chosen by a panel after submitting his resume, signatures and letters of recommendation.

“My role is to promote the Career/Tech program and do this through leadership skills and learning how to put together an action plan,” he said.

Cole enjoys being involved because it gives her an opportunity to meet people and put her knowledge to the test. She has an idea about how the school might be able to help her meet another goal, though.

“I really want to do well and

win,” she said. “We’ve got to get a skills week together here and get the younger students involved.”

Preparations are underway to go to Kentucky from June 20-25 and it’s not all going to just be about the competition. They’re planning on doing some sightseeing and take in a show.

As for their futures after graduation, Cole has aspirations to become a surgeon, Menezes a nurse and Ferguson is interested in graphic arts and sports marketing.

“I’m so proud of these kids for putting themselves out there and competing with their peers,” said Lori Ferguson.

“This is my first year in Skills and I’m excited to go to Nationals and being a representative for my school,” Drew Ferguson said.