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Davies dominates at SkillsUSA RI, Cardoso wins CTE educator of the year

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Steve Cardoso, recipient of the SkillsUSA RI CTE Educator of the Year Award.

LINCOLN – Davies Career and Technical School left this year’s SkillsUSA RI competition with 11 gold medals, 12 silver medals, nine bronze medals and one CTE Teacher of the Year award.

“Teaching at Davies has meant everything to me,” said Steve Cardoso, the recipient of SkillsUSA RI’s CTE educator of the year award.

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Cardoso is the longest serving educator at Davies with 36 years of teaching under his belt. He began his career in February of 1988 teaching electronics technology to ninth and tenth graders, and now teaches pre-engineering to all grade levels.

Cardoso told *The Breeze* that he was very surprised when he was chosen for the award, “my attention isn’t to the details of the competition, my attention is to the educational material and producing winners.”

This award was extra special to Cardoso, because SkillsUSA has been a part of his classroom for 35 years, and he believes that Skills is a great motivator and experience for students to compete and succeed.

Cardoso’s only wish is that some of the original Davies faculty were around to see him receive the honor. The staff he currently works with or those retired wished Cardoso congratulations; he said their well wishes mean as much to him as winning the award does.

Despite having been at Davies for over three decades, Cardoso said he “hasn’t lost his fastball,” and that he works just as hard now as he did when he was first starting out. He also said he has no intention of slowing down or retiring any time soon.

“I love being in the classroom, that’s why I’ve stayed here for this long,” he said. “I feel like the luckiest guy to work here at Davies.”

Cardoso hopes that him winning this award and displaying a strong passion for his career helps to encourage a new generation to become math, science and CTE teachers.

“Mr. Cardoso’s award and recognition positively impacts both Davies and the reputation of our programs by validating the high quality of education students receive at Davies,” said Susan J. Votto, Supervisor of Career and Technical Education at Davies. “Davies continues to be at the forefront of career and technical education in the State of RI... Davies continues to provide high-skilled students to support the needs of our industry partners.”

These high-skilled students are able to display their talent during SkillsUSA RI, where students compete against their peers from across the state in their specific area of concentration.

“Competing gives you a sense of what your job would be like. It’s one thing to know about your study on paper, it’s another to execute it,” said Penelope Ferreras, who took home the gold for Basic Health Care Skills.

Fatou Gaye agreed with Ferreras. Gaye won gold in Nurse Assisting, and said she enjoyed being able to showcase what she's been working hard to learn.

Going up against peers in a high-stakes environment makes things feel real, said Melvin Shaw, first place winner of the CNC Milling Specialist category. "Just one decimal place could've messed everything up... it's very different from being in a nurturing classroom."

Megan Cobb, who won first place in Graphics Communications, told The Breeze

that her experience in the competition was very similar to her experience in the workplace. She also said that competing in SkillsUSA helped her become prepared for work, and working in her specialty prepared her for SkillsUSA.

For Ferreras, participating in and placing in SkillsUSA gave her confidence in her pathway. "I had some self-doubt, but being up there was a jaw-dropping moment. It made me feel really good to know that I was good at what I'm doing."

Ferreras, Shaw, Cobb and Gaye are four of eleven Davies students heading to the national 2023 SkillsUSA competition in Georgia. Other gold medalists include Wilbert Cante, Jovany Neves, Mario Tapia, Kurtis Waters, Joslyn Brown, Clarissa Pires and Haadiyah Folarin.