

Eastside High culinary students win medals, scholarships at state competition

Students from Eastside High School's Institute of Culinary Arts brought home several awards after competing in this year's SkillsUSA Florida State Leadership and Skills Conference. The team's honors included a sweep of all three medals in one of the categories.



Eastside students competed and medaled in four of the six competitions that make up the Hospitality and Tourism category, including Baking and Pastry Arts, Culinary Arts, Wedding Cake Design and Restaurant Service. For the second year in a row, they took the top three spots in Restaurant Service, which requires contestants to demonstrate the skills needed in the "front of the house" of a fine dining restaurant, including hosting, serving and executing table-side preparations.

Senior Travis Coe took the gold medal in that category, which also earned him a \$2000 scholarship from the prestigious Johnson and Wales University, which is renowned for its culinary arts program. He has also qualified for the national competition, which will be held in Atlanta in late June. Senior Ian Vought won silver and a \$1000 scholarship, while junior Eli Evans took the bronze medal and a \$500 scholarship.

"We train very hard for that contest," said Chef Pam Bedford, who directs the program at Eastside High. "To someone looking in from the outside without any hospitality training it might seem confusing, but there are so many different aspects to service. One little slip up can mean the difference between an exemplary dining experience and a mediocre one."

Junior Johnathan Manche earned a silver medal and a \$1000 scholarship in the Culinary Arts category. He was also elected to serve as an officer in the state organization. Senior Allyson DiFranco took silver in the Baking and Pastry Arts category and also won a \$1000 scholarship. Two of the school's first-time competitors, juniors Adaijah Davis and Amiracle Holmes, won bronze medals in Wedding Cake Design.

"I'm so proud of my students," said Bedford. "Everyone came in with a great attitude, knew the competition would be tough and gave it their all."



SkillsUSA is the premier workforce development organization for students pursuing skilled trades, promoting their development as skilled professionals and leaders in their fields and the community.

"These contests are very competitive in Florida, as our state is a top tourist destination," said Bedford. "In my opinion, our state level contest is just as competitive as the national level."

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