

# Client selects top Web site designs from McCann students as part of SkillsUSA

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NORTH ADAMS -- It's not often that a high school student gets asked to design a corporate Web site, but that's the task that was handed to 64 information technology students at C.H. McCann as part of their SkillsUSA competition two weeks ago.

"Every year, we ask the students to design a Web site for a fake corporation that I make up as part of the assignment, but this year, I was approached by my brother-in-law, Michael Zeoli, who serves as the chairman of the Wemelco Credit Union in Springfield," information technology teacher Perry Burdick said on Friday. "The credit union was looking to improve its site and make it more appealing to a younger crowd."



McCann information technology student (Gillian Jones/North Adams Transcript)

Zeoli was on-hand Friday to announce the credit union's top three picks, which will be incorporated into the credit union's final Web site design. The top three teams were also presented with gift cards from the credit union -- \$100 each for first place, \$50 each for second place and \$25 each for third place.

"The board and staff chose the three Web site designs that most represented our corporate image, ease of use and content," Zeoli said. "We were very impressed by all of the designs. A lot of them were very professional."

The company partnered with the students in a way to tap into the mindset of a younger generation, he said.

"You presented us with a range of ideas that was very important to us," Zeoli said to the students. "It gave us an idea of how we need to move forward with our Web site. A lot of the board members are 'old' and don't know what appeals to a younger generation. It's a big step for us to move into the arena of being accessible to students."

Wemelco's clients include the employees and family members of North East Utilities and its affiliates.

Juniors Sara Ostrowski of North Adams and Morgan Valois of Clarksburg took top honors, with a majority of their design being the basis of the new credit union site.

"It's very exciting," Valois said. "It's going to be very helpful in the future to have our work out there with a legitimate business."

Ostrowski added, "Working with a real company definitely put more pressure on us this year. Usually the company is imaginary, so you have a little bit more room to work within."

Senior Joe Shacar of Lanesborough and his partner, Caleb Cristafolini of Stamford, Vt., took second place, while sophomores Nicole Bona of Clarksburg and Stephen Lane of Williamstown earned the third place slot.

"I think working with a real company really changed the way we looked at it -- it gave us more of a drive to meet the expectations of the company," Nicole said.

Her sentiment was echoed by the other winners, who said putting the SkillsUSA in a real-world context gave the competition an extra boost.

"It really put our skills to the test," Shacar said. "We have a really great program here to begin with. We're training for the information technology certification as part of this course."

Stephen Lane said it was experiences such as being asked to design a Web site and the opportunity to work in the field with teachers that helped him decide on McCann after attending the Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School from sixth through eighth grade.

"I liked BArT because it was new and small and a good direction for me at the time," he said. "I came to McCann for an open house and learned about this program -- which is the best program available to me -- and decided almost immediately that I was coming here."

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