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Schoharie Career & Tech Hospitality & Culinary team wins 3rd place in New York State ProStart competition

Students from Altamont, Cobleskill, E. Berne, Middleburgh, Schoharie and Sharon Springs create and plate a 3-course meal in 60 minutes

A team of Hospitality Technology & Culinary Arts students from the Schoharie Career & Technical School took third place in the 2009 New York State Restaurant Association ProStart Culinary Competition in Rochester, N.Y., on March 14.

Cooking their way to third place against 17 other teams from across the state were Schoharie Career & Tech students Danielle Christensen and Sherry Stark of Middleburgh, Brittany Ellis of Sharon Springs, Kacey Dean of Altamont and Danielle Cross of E. Berne. The students brought home medals, trophies and scholarships.

Also performing well under the pressure of competition was a second team of Hospitality Technology & Culinary Arts students: Michael Fullford of Schoharie, Nathaniel Buder and Richard Edwards of Cobleskill, and Daniel Arnwine and Raymond Simeon of Middleburgh.

The students said they were impressed by the competition's judges, who were "from all over the country, [and] some were certified master chefs." When asked to comment about competing against their peers from across the state, one Schoharie Career & Tech team member said, "I can't believe how nervous I was, it was so intense." Despite the pressure, the event was educational for the students, who related, "Our team was critiqued by a panel of chef judges after the competition, and we learned a lot."

The students are taught by Chef Nancy Iannacone, 2007-08 New York State ProStart Teacher of the Year and instructor of the 2007 and 2008 New York State ProStart championship teams. The competition, according to Iannacone, is "real world training. Our teams had to demonstrate their creative ability, skills and professionalism while preparing a three-course meal in 60 minutes. Their performance was observed, critiqued and rated by judges from leading colleges and universities and from the restaurant and food service industry. It's such a great experience for the students."

Iannacone recognized the Albany-based New York State Restaurant Association and Educational Foundation for supporting her students' training and competitions. "The Association and Foundation work tirelessly to sponsor this event every year."

ProStart is an educational restaurant and foodservice management program developed and supported by the National Restaurant Association. The program includes rigorous coursework and on-the-job training and leads to nationally recognized, professional ServSafe certification. According to Chef Iannacone, “the ProStart curriculum provides students with a well-rounded, broad and hands-on education in the hospitality industry, preparing them for success in college and careers.”

Founded in 1919, the National Restaurant Association and National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation represent, educate and promote a rapidly growing industry that is comprised of 935,000 restaurant and foodservice outlets employing more than 12 million people.

Hospitality Technology & Culinary Arts is one of more than 40 educational programs offered by the Capital Region Career & Technical School. The school is operated by the Capital Region Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and enrolls more than 1,300 high school and adult students from Albany, Schenectady, Schoharie and southern Saratoga counties. For more information, visit www.bocescareertech.org.