


SkillsUSA nationals next step for Waynesburg teen

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WAYNESBURG – While most recently graduated high school seniors are basking in their few months of freedom before starting their higher education or preparing to enter the workforce, one Waynesburg teen is studying up to compete on the national level.

Myles Cramer will be headed to Louisville, Ky., June 25 through 29 for the national SkillsUSA competition, the National Leadership and Skills Conference, in internetworking.

A 2018 graduate of Waynesburg Central High School, Cramer decided to attend classes at Greene County Career and Technology Center his sophomore year.

“It was a decision that gave me opportunities to explore a career I thought I wanted to pursue, which was computer networking or computer science,” he said.

Initially introduced to SkillsUSA through a class instructor, Cramer said he’s incredibly competitive and participation in the program really complements his learning style. He enjoys computer networking because it’s theoretical and numbers-based, rather than working with hardware and software.

“I went to districts my sophomore year in internetworking,” Cramer said. “I got silver, and it was a difficult competition.”

“I wasn’t expecting to do well,” he admits, because much of what the competition would cover, he hadn’t learned in class yet.

But despite that initial difficulty, Cramer continued with it.

“One thing I really love about Skills is it’s not just about the vocational competition. It’s also a leadership club. It’s really about career preparedness,” he said, adding he’s also had lots of public speaking experience.

During his junior year, he felt really confident about his chances at districts. Cramer took silver again in his junior year.

“So, I took second that year and I didn’t move on to (the state level), and that was a little disappointing.”

For his senior year, his last shot, he was determined not to come in second again. After winning at the district level in early December, Cramer moved onto the state competition April 9.

"From there, I really focused on reviewing all the material," he said. "I really didn't know what to expect. I know that there would be a lot of kids that had done computer stuff since they were growing up. Personally, I wasn't exposed to that. My education with computers really started my sophomore year."

Cramer said, heading into the state competition, he didn't have any expectations. The night before, he was reading and watching videos to make sure he was as prepared as he could be. He found an old competition from another state, which eased his fears.

"Wait, I know all this. There's no reason to freak out. I just calmed down and really focused the day of the competition."

He placed first at the state level, qualifying him for the national internetworking competition. There are three parts: networking design, general networking knowledge and hands-on evaluations. Cramer said he's had to set up routers, make cables and other tasks for previous competitions. He said much of his work ahead of time would be paying attention in class and making sure he truly understood the material. Much of the work is based in memorization.

Now, Cramer is setting his sights on the national competition and beyond. His initial dream was to do computer forensics, hopefully for the FBI.

"Actually, as it turns out, I don't really want to do that for the rest of my life," Cramer said.

His interests began to shift. At an internship with Greene County's IT Department, Cramer realized computer forensics wasn't something he wanted to do daily for the remainder of his career.

"I'm now looking to major in math or maybe, depending on how much AP credit I get, possibly dual major in a natural science, like chemistry or physics at Penn State. I'm going to University Park."

He still wants to work for the FBI, because it's a public service career heavy in STEM and he would be making a difference through his work.

"I feel like it would be a really meaningful job for me," Cramer said.

He wants to solve real-world problems and believes the blend of law enforcement and technology would be a perfect fit for him. SkillsUSA actually led him to that possible career path. At a leadership conference, he heard local officers talk about how they use technology.

"Until recently, I didn't make the connection between a STEM career and law enforcement," he said.

Outside of his academic pursuits, Cramer has a passion for marching band and was drum major his senior year.

And as for the national competition, Cramer said he's again not entirely sure what to expect but is preparing as much as possible. Stress won't help, and whatever happens, he said it will be a wonderful experience. To anyone else interested in competing in SkillsUSA, Cramer encouraged persistence.

"It's completely valid (to be) disappointed, as long as you don't let that define your experience."