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## Youths earn awards for 3D designs

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MT. VERNON — Some students at Mt. Vernon Township High School are bringing their dreams and creativity forward as they train for a career — and are winning awards along the way.

The 3D Design and Animation students recently competed at the state level in Skills USA and earned a first place for the fourth year in a row.

"We've only been in existence for six years," instructor Gary Hatfield said. "I sprung the idea for the 3D [computer-aided design] program on administration 10 years ago and we got the big N.O. ... After four years, I went to the board and did a presentation, and they approved the class."

The class has grown from its first 12 students. Next year, the class will have two sections with more than 20 students in each section, Hatfield reported.

Skills USA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry representatives working together

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to ensure America has a skilled work force and help each student excel, according to information on the program. It's a national nonprofit organization serving high school and college teachers and students who are preparing for careers in trade, technical and skilled service occupations. The organization was formerly known as VICA — Vocational Industrial Clubs of America.

Hatfield said the first year the 3D design and animation students competed at the state level, they earned a third-place award. The second year the team didn't place, and Hatfield blamed himself for not being able to work with the students as much as previously.

But the students have performed famously from that point forward, earning first places.

"The 3D CAD is not like CAD drafting, which is a discipline," Hatfield said. "There are a lot less lectures, a lot more tutorials, example problems and time working with the program."

The class uses the 3D Studio Max program, Hatfield said.

"My approach in class is that I can't teach creativity — that has to come from them," Hatfield explained. "I never approach teaching creativity. I teach them the discipline of it from a real world aspect."

Saving their work, giving time parameters and deadlines



Austan Skidmore and Kolten McCaulley proudly display their medal awards and the trophy they won at the state level in the Skills USA competition for 3D design and animation. The two kept the school's winning record going, winning first place four years in a row. TESA CULLI/REGISTER-NEWS

and keeping students focused on size relationships are a few things Hatfield said he emphasizes in the class.

"I put myself in the place of someone running a studio and what a studio would expect from an artist other than creativity," Hatfield said.

Students in the program say CAD drafting is about geometry and discipline, while 3D CAD animation is also about the same things — only with an outlet for their dreams.

"It takes discipline, but it's an art form," student Dustin Smith said.

The students who competed at state were given the job of creating a 3D commercial with the theme "100 years of celebration of a city." The problem included how long the com-

mercial was to be, how many frames per second and the type of animation the competitors could use. The students from MVTHS were teamed into groups of two and given three hours to complete the task from start to finish. The winning team was Kolten McCaulley and Austan Skidmore.

"I want to thank God that we won," Skidmore said. "Because we were really praying."

The two created a 40-second animation, creating a town named North Salem which sits on a lake or ocean. Their ani-

mation featured a boat sailing out of the harbor.

"We couldn't do one for our hometown, because then the judges would know where we were from," Skidmore added.