

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE



Skills Challenge Expected to Grow in 2021

Last year didn't turn out like any of us expected. The Workforce Development Alliance Skills Challenges marked its anniversary in 2020, but we were only able to host one event.

However, we are excited to announce that we are making plans to grow from five events in 2019 to seven events in 2021. Now more than ever, the construction industry needs to continue attracting its future workforce.

To celebrate our 15-year journey, the AGC

Georgia team took a trip down memory lane to catalogue and celebrate the history of our workforce development initiatives.

Beginning on page 6, we've republished an article that was originally shared with our membership in AGC Georgia's Summer/Fall 2020 issue of *Georgia Construction Today* magazine. For those who may have missed it, we hope you enjoy reading this article as much as we had in retelling and reliving old stories.

(Continued on page 6)

2021 Skills Challenges *(Tentative Dates)*

Gainesville: October 27
Macon: October 28
Savannah: November 2
Cedartown: November 4
Moultrie: November 9
**Metro Atlanta:
November 16**
Augusta: November 18

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Highlights from the 2020 Central Georgia/ Southern Crescent Skills Challenge



Congratulations to Camden County's construction program. They earned first place and the coveted Construction Cup in the Central Georgia/Southern Crescent Skills Challenge that was hosted in Griffin on Tuesday, Oct. 27, 2020. Pictured below are individuals who took first place in their competition.

\$10,000 RAISED

Competing schools for the 2020 Central Georgia/ Southern Crescent Skills Challenge

Camden County High School
Crisp County High School
Harris County High School
Jackson High School

Jones County High School
Lee County High School
Mary Persons High School

**95 STUDENTS
PARTICIPATED**

SPONSORS

Ace Electric, Inc.
All-State Electrical Contractors
Apex Painting & Decorating, Inc.
Applying Brothers Company
B & D Concrete Cutting, Inc.
Baker Concrete Construction
C & M Masonry Contractors Group, Inc.

Central Georgia Technical College
Cherokee Brick
Geotechnical & Environmental
Consultants, Inc.
Greene and Associates, Inc.
Griffin Fire Department
Industrial Wholesalers
Jonquil Steel & Construction
M. E. Contractors, Inc.

Mayer Electric Supply
Meja Construction, Inc.
Penco Electrical Contractors, Inc.
ProTech Fire, Inc.
L. E. Schwartz & Son, Inc.
Sidney Lee Welding Supply
Sports Turf Company, Inc.
Stafford Builders & Consultants, Inc.
United Rentals

7 SCHOOLS



Bo Webb



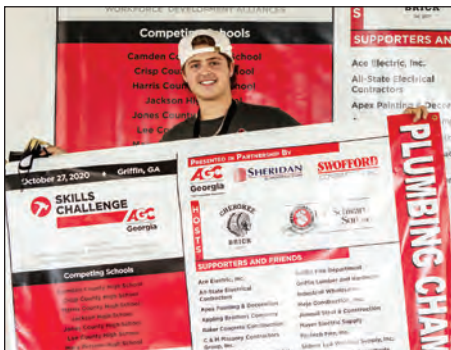
Aaron Kennedy



Robbie Dixon



Chris Shwartz



Noah Burge



Michael Head



Hunter Rhoden

AGC Georgia appreciates the hard work and dedication of Sheridan Construction and Swofford Construction, Inc. Their teams have worked together as our contractor partners to host this regional event for many years.



OVERALL WINNERS

- 1st Place: Camden County
- 2nd Place: Mary Pearsons
- 3rd Place: Lee County

Blueprint Reading

- 1st Place: Bo Webb (Lee County)
- 2nd Place: Sean Townsend (Harris County)
- 3rd Place: Emily Oden (Mary Pearsons)

Carpentry

- 1st Place: Aaron Kennedy (Lee County)
- 2nd Place: Michael Whatley (Harris County)
- 3rd Place: Shawn Johnson (Mary Pearsons)

Electrical

- 1st Place: Robbie Dixon (Jackson)
- 2nd Place: Couper Bates (Camden County)
- 3rd Place: Troy Davis (Mary Pearsons)

Masonry

- 1st Place: Chris Shwartz (Camden County)
- 2nd Place: Michael Griffin (Camden County)
- 3rd Place: Danillo Dillard (Lee County)

Plumbing

- 1st Place: Noah Burge (Mary Pearsons)
- 2nd Place: Trey Allison (Crisp County)
- 3rd Place: Caleb Harris (Lee County)

Roofing

- 1st Place: Michael Head (Mary Pearsons)
- 2nd Place: Leon Wood (Camden County)
- 3rd Place: Samuel Wamer (Lee County)

Welding

- 1st Place: Hunter Rhoden (Camden County)
- 2nd Place: Anthony Corsi (Camden County)
- 3rd Place: James Phillips (Crisp County)

Skills Challenge Competitor Earns Internship



As a student at Mary Persons High School, Brianna Rhodes won first place in Blueprint Reading at the SkillsUSA Georgia competition in 2019 and Second Place in Blueprint Reading at AGC Georgia's 2018 Central Georgia/Southern Crescent Skills Challenge.

Now a junior at Georgia Southern University, Rhodes is majoring in Construction Management. She spent her summer interning at Sheridan Construction working alongside the firm's Senior Project Manager Hal Brown on several projects.

******Have a success story working with a former Skills Challenge competitor? Please share it with us by emailing it to Bill Chambless at chambless@agcga.org.

Celebrating New Construction Lab at 4C Academy

AGC Georgia's Member Development Specialist Bill Chambless was honored to join other industry and community leaders to officially open the new construction lab at Commodore Conyers College & Career Academy (4C Academy) in Albany on November 17.

Our organization was proud to celebrate

alongside other member firms Aldridge-Jordan, Inc., LRA Constructors, Inc., MetroPower and Pellicano Construction for the celebration.

We look forward to continuing our great relationship with the school's construction instructor, Randin Burley for many years to come. Chambless presented Burley with a banner to hang in his lab that includes the AGC Georgia logo and the words "Construction Education Supporter."

We want to give a huge thank you to our member contractors who are involved in their

local construction classrooms. This is the BEST way to help grow the industry's talent pipeline and shape the educational experience young people are afforded in their classrooms.

For more information on how to become involved in a construction program near your headquarters or a job-site, please reach out to Bill Chambless at chambless@agcga.org.



New funding for proven construction workforce development training



In the fall of 2020, AGC Georgia and the Construction Education Foundation of Georgia (CEFGA) teamed up to learn more about the opportunity to receive monies from Georgia's first allocation of the federal Governors Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Funding. This is part of the CARES Act. After sharing our message of how the construction industry has rewarding career opportunities and proven training, we were awarded \$3.3 million.

We are excited about this funding going to our workforce development partner, CEFGA, to help provide more construction training during these unprecedented times due to COVID-19.

The funds will expand CEFGA's Construction Ready program which takes Georgians through a 20-day construction education program that ends with training, credentialing, and job placement.

Since 2014, Construction Ready has trained more than 1,000 workers of all ages for a successful career in construction. They have 97% job placement at the end of the training period and each person receives a starting salary of \$12-\$15/hour. 70% of those placed are employed with their first employer at their one-year anniversary of completing the Construction Ready program.

We are excited to watch how these funds are going to create life-changing opportunities for

individuals who want a rewarding career.

Many graduates are from the metro Atlanta area, but the Construction Ready team is working to expand the program into more regions in Georgia with the GEER funding. To learn more about the program and how CEFGA's Construction Ready program graduates can fit into your company, please reach out to Jamie Buck, Vice President, Construction Ready, at jamie.buck@cefga.org.



Thank you to Blake Riedling, Operations Manager with Brasfield & Gorrie, for hosting a jobsite tour of the firm's ThyssenKrupp project to highlight rewarding career opportunities in construction to guests from Governor Kemp's office and the Technical College System of Georgia. Pictured left to right: Mark Woodall, AGC Georgia Director of Governmental Affairs; Neil Bitting, Assistant Commissioner, External Affairs & Facilities with the Technical College System of Georgia; Ian Caraway, Legislative Liaison and Policy Advisor at Office of Governor Brian P. Kemp; Zach Fields, Vice President of K12 Pipeline with CEFGA; Jamie Buck, Vice President of Construction Ready; Irene Munn, principal of the Munn Firm; and John Wilhoite, Senior Vice President of K12 Pipeline with CEFGA. Photo taken by Blake Riedling, Operations Manager with Brasfield & Gorrie.

Asking Construction Employers to Share Part-Time and Internship Opportunities

AGC Georgia encourages all contractor members to share with CEFGA what opportunities your firm has to offer young people looking for an introduction into the construction industry. CEFGA wants to partner with industry professionals to help meet a mutual goal of getting new talent into the construction by "Introducing the Next Generation to the Skilled Trades."



Please consider offering 2 minutes of your time to answer a few questions that will help CEFGA better serve the industry.

Visit <https://bit.ly/3pUgDh8> or scan the QR code to the right to be taken to the survey. If you'd prefer to speak with a CEFGA team member about opportunities for young people, please connect with Liz Campbell at liz.campbell@cefga.org.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

CELEBRATING OUR 15-YEAR HISTORY

The AGC Georgia team took a trip down memory lane to catalogue and celebrate the history of our workforce development initiatives that partner contractor members with local construction programs. We've traveled a long way since the first discussions began in 2006, and none of our successes would have been possible without many members working together to take ownership of their regional offerings. We are proud to showcase the initial discussions, partnerships and events hosted by AGC Georgia and our members that were the seeds to our student construction competitions known today as Skills Challenges. These programs have become a nationwide model for exponentially growing high school students' interest in construction careers.

2019 Skills Challenge Totals

- Competing schools: 81
- Student Competitors: 742
- Total Contributions by Sponsors: \$200,000+
- Sponsoring Firms: 236



SKILLS CHALLENGE

AGC
Georgia

It all began simply enough.

In August 2006, AGC Georgia hosted a series of Members First meetings around the state to educate members on ways to get involved in workforce development. AGC Georgia CEO Mike Dunham and CEFGA Executive Director Scott Shelar crisscrossed the state along with AGC Georgia's Member Development Specialist Bill Chambless to launch the two organizations' new workforce awareness efforts. It became obvious after these regional meetings that a "one-size-fits-all" approach wouldn't work. Each region had unique opportunities and members in those areas who wanted to initiate their own grassroots efforts to jump start workforce development.

It's often said that when the industry peaks, everyone needs workers to fill the pipeline. When the industry is stable, workforce is not an issue. During these early meetings, AGC Georgia and CEFGA encouraged contractors to think about the benefits of creating initiatives that would keep filling the skilled talent pipeline,

regardless of economic conditions or workforce demands.

Less than a month after the August 2006 meetings, Central Georgia Workforce Development Alliance (WDA) held its first gathering at the Macon Chamber of Commerce. Dunham facilitated a meeting with more than 30 member firms in attendance.

All of the subsequent alliances have worked diligently to adopt and develop relationships with high school construction teachers to provide materials for schools' construction labs. In addition, professionals with all types of responsibilities, from the executive level to skilled talent, visit classrooms to share their career journey. Engaged firms also conduct mock interviews with students to help them become job ready and serve on their school's construction advisory committees.

This is just the tip of the spear on ways contractors can make big differences in the caliber of their local construction programs. As time has passed and other regional WDAs were formed, the idea sharing between

the alliances has been very powerful. Fifteen years later, AGC Georgia is considered a leader among its sister chapters and enjoys sharing best practices developed by our grassroots member efforts.

"One common denominator between each alliance is that AGC Georgia members took ownership of the alliances and events that followed to make it their own," said Dunham. "We always knew it would become a success once we could share our vision for the incredible impact it would have on the future of the construction industry workforce."

Central Georgia Workforce Development Alliance

- Established: 2006
- First Careers in Construction Fair: 2008
- First Central Georgia/Southern Crescent Skills Challenge: 2016

In the beginning, Alliance leaders - Dave Cyr from Parrish Construction Group, Charlie Garbutt from Garbutt Construction Company



Students at Spalding High School participate in a panel discussion with three veteran construction jobsite field professionals to learn about their career paths.

and Chris Sheridan, Jr. from Sheridan Construction – each contributed \$5,000 toward the creation of an Alliance fund.

These leaders, along with executives from Piedmont Construction Group, initiated meetings with Bibb County Board of Education Superintendent Sharon Patterson to educate her on the importance of creating a construction curriculum for schools. After discussions, a new construction program was started at Macon's Southwest High School. MetroPower's Tony Varamo joined the group, and they met with the school superintendent at Lamar County to halt the shutdown of that district's construction program.

The initial Alliance funds donated by the general contractors covered the necessary materials for high school programs, charter buses to transport students to construction-related events and purchased a \$500 gift card for each instructor who achieved CEFGA accreditation for their program.

In 2008, each of the firms that originally donated to the Alliance fund made another contribution of \$2,000 to sustain momentum. They also hosted the Central Georgia WDA's

inaugural Careers in Construction Fair at Central Georgia Technical College.

The Alliance targeted middle and high school students for its daylong event. Construction industry vendors set up booths, while some provided hands-on experiences for students and, most importantly, introduced them to the world of construction.



Camden County celebrates winning the Construction Cup at the 2019 Central Georgia/Southern Crescent Skills Challenge. All stakeholders in the event were appreciative of Mary Persons High School students for volunteering to build the stage for the annual gathering.

The industry has stepped up whenever there has been a need. All-State Electric delivered a load of electrical supplies to Lamar County, Greene & Associates provided plumbing supplies to several programs and many others have helped.

At an Alliance meeting, a Putnam County instructor mentioned his students could not afford the safety boots needed to compete in an upcoming Skills Challenge event. Sheridan coordinated the purchase of boots for every welding student with Alliance funds. In return, the instructors have built items needed to host Skills Challenges. In 2019, Mary Persons High School instructor DJ Hurm and his students built a large stage in sections that will be used annually at the Central Georgia/Southern Crescent Skills Challenge awards ceremony.

With more than 14 years of a successful partnership between AGC Georgia members and academic leaders in the region, the Central Georgia WDA is still going strong. Their early work became a blueprint for other alliances.



In just the third year of hosting a Skills Challenge in Moultrie, the regional event now has the most student competitors of all regions. The 2019 event coordinated events for 250 competitors.

Southwest Georgia Workforce Development Alliance

- **Established:** 2006
- **First Careers in Construction Fair:** 2007
- **First South+Southwest Skills Challenge Event:** 2017

Organized in late 2006, Southwest Georgia held the state's first Careers in Construction event at Albany Technical College in September 2007. The leaders, which included Pellicano Construction, LRA and MetroPower, organized the industry to fund and participate in the inaugural event. In addition, the Alliance was the first to add a small-scale mock skills competition in 2011. This type of competition would plant the seed for the larger Skills Challenges hosted today.

Members of the Alliance also serve on construction program advisory committees at various schools in the region. Companies such as MetroPower and A. West Enterprise actively recruit students from these programs to enroll in apprenticeship programs.

In recent days, members are supporting the new program at Commodore Conyers College & Career Academy (4C) in Albany. The program has had to host classes in a makeshift lab with

little space. With this Alliance's support, renovations are underway for a new, fully equipped lab scheduled to open in the fall of 2020. In addition, 4C students are now regulars at the annual South+Southwest Skills Challenge.

Trey Anderson of Anderson Construction in Ft. Gaines has also been involved in this region. He reached out to Early County BOE and invited AGC Georgia and CEFGA to

the table with the superintendent and other school administrators in 2018. Early County now has a construction program, and they participated in the 2019 South+Southwest Skills Challenge.

East Georgia Workforce Development Alliance

- **Established:** 2012
- **First East Georgia Skills Challenge:** 2013

Scott Clark with R.W. Allen Construction started this region's Alliance in 2012 by bringing together classroom instructors and learning what they needed from the industry. He was integral in providing materials, hosting jobsite visits and serving as a sounding board for the instructors to help them build their curriculum to make students job ready.

After a short time, Clark wanted to expand the mission when learning about a small-scale student competition in Central Georgia that was led by Dean Cutler, the East Laurens High School construction teacher. In early 2013, Clark connected Jeff Johnson, the construction instructor with Burke County High School, with Cutler to learn about the competition. Together, Clark and Johnson



Trey Anderson takes students with Early County on a jobsite tour.



Scott Clark with R.W. Allen and Ben McGhee with Gold Mech visit the construction program at East Laurens High School to present an AGC Georgia Foundation check to help the program purchase materials for lab projects.

brainstormed and created the first-ever full-scale Skills Challenge. Through the regional partnership of R.W. Allen and GoldMech, the inaugural East Georgia challenge was hosted at the Augusta Fairgrounds in November 2013.

Clark continues to use Skills Challenges as a way to give even

more to the region's schools. With the success of raising funds to host each Skills Challenge, he started hand-delivering a \$500 check from the AGC Georgia Foundation to each school that participated. As of the 2019 Skills Challenge, the Foundation check to each school has grown to \$2,000.

Southern Crescent Workforce Development Alliance

- **Established: 2015**
- **First Central Georgia/Southern Crescent Skills Challenge: 2016**

After attending the 2015 East Georgia Skills Challenge, Joe Tuggle from Swofford Construction brought the idea back to this Alliance and decided to join forces with Central Georgia WDA. Under the leadership of Sheridan Construction and Swofford Construction, the first Central Georgia/Southern Crescent Skills Challenge was held in November 2016 at the Kiwanis Fairgrounds in Griffin.

After three years, the Alliance outgrew the space and moved their Skills Challenge to Macon. Tuggle jokingly marks the years by the number of attendees fed at each event. The first year was 300, second was 425, third was 520 and this past year had more than 600.

This region's activity does not end with Skills Challenges. Tuggle has organized industry panel groups at schools and secured donations of numerous construction materials to programs around the region.



CEFGA and AGC Georgia representatives, along with Joe Tuggle, meet with Henry County education leaders to discover ways industry can become more involved with the district's construction curriculum.



Leaders from the South+Southwest Workforce Development Alliance meet at JCI Contractors to plan the annual Skills Challenge.

Henry County's Academy for Advanced Studies metals program was out of steel to do lab projects. Tuggle made a call to his supplier, and a trailer load of donated material was delivered. He did the same with the school's construction program. Recently, Tuggle joined AGC Georgia and CEFGA staff to visit with school administrators who were concerned about budget cuts and the impact that could have on the programs. The school's leadership also wanted the industry's input on how best to pursue NCCER accreditation. Students in this program attended their first Skills Challenge event in 2019.

South Georgia Workforce Development Alliance

- **Established: 2007**
- **First Careers in Construction Fair: 2011**
- **First South+Southwest Skills Challenge event: 2017**

Early leaders for the South Georgia WDA Careers in Construction Fair included ACE Electric, Valdosta Mechanical and True North Construction Group. ACE Electric has continued to be a champion throughout the

years, including regions outside of the Valdosta area, and has provided great leadership for the newer Southeast alliance.

This Alliance reorganized in November 2016 and is now called the

South+Southwest WDA under the leadership of JCI Contractors. During the initial meeting held in a JCI job-site trailer, the seed was planted for a Skills Challenge event. In 2017, the Alliance held its inaugural event at the Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie.

In the first year, 17 high schools, 162 competitors and 70 student observers attended the event that raised \$22,750 in sponsorship dollars. Just two years later those numbers increased to 24 high schools, 250 competitors and 150 student observers with more than \$38,000 in contributions.

Tulsa Welding School, based in Jacksonville, manages the welding competition for this region's competition. The South+Southwest Alliance is also fortunate to have members that go above and beyond. TTL, MetroPower, ACE Electric and A. West Enterprise attend almost every meeting and do the hard work onsite to make this event possible, as well as set up their own booths, help with registration and provide competition judges.



Construction teachers participate in Camp T & I each summer to fine tune their skills. Industry professionals help lead the workshops to make sure teachers are using current best practices in their curriculum.



Representatives with the construction industry meet with Harris County School's leadership to re-establish their construction program.

West Central Georgia Workforce Development Alliance

- **Established: 2010**

Led by Batson-Cook and MetroPower/Columbus Power, this Alliance has stepped up to partner with construction programs in the region. Several of the programs participated in the 2019 Central Georgia/Southern Crescent Skills Challenge. Columbus is slated as a potential Skills Challenge site in the future.

Batson-Cook and MetroPower have also been big supporters of Camp T&I (Trade & Industrial), which is one of the best training opportunities for high school construction teachers. The camp is held every June.

In recent years, Harris County reached out to CEFGA to discuss

reopening its program that had shut down several years earlier. The county sought assurance that the industry would support it. AGC Georgia and CEFGA met several times with the superintendent and principal to start a program, and several firms helped search to hire their instructor. In just a short amount of time, the program had competitors in the 2019 Central Georgia/Southern Crescent and South+Southwest Skills Challenges.

Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Alliance

- **Established: 2016**

- **First Northeast Skills Challenge: 2017**

In 2015 and 2016, Lanier College & Career Academy construction teacher

Rodney Presley joined with several peers to organize a small competition exclusively for Hall County students. Carroll Daniel Construction provided support and funding for this event since it was before the region's Alliance was organized. The core group of instructors began to grow, calling themselves the Mountain Men, as word spread about the student competitions. They embraced the opportunity to connect with both AGC Georgia leadership and DOE representatives to share best practices and helped grow their program's curriculum. A formal Alliance between regional industry representatives and construction educators was formed in 2016 after a kick-off meeting hosted by AGC Georgia and Carroll Daniel Construction.



Roswell High School students join their instructor to accept the Overall Winner Banner and Construction Cup from Carroll Daniel Construction's Landon Boyd at the 2019 Northeast Georgia Skills Challenge.



Bowen & Watson hosted a jobsite tour for students from Stephens County High School.



Four students represent their school in the TeamWorks competition at the 2019 Northwest Georgia Skills Challenge.



Joe Marchese presents at an elementary school Career Day. He kept the student's attention by showing them fun technology used on construction jobsites. It's important for contractors to get involved with students as young as kindergarten.

In 2017, Bowen & Watson joined Carroll Daniel Construction to host the region's first Skills Challenge event in Gainesville. It hosted 100 student competitors from 13 high schools and another 200 students observers. The industry provided nearly \$19,000 to the AGC Georgia Foundation to go toward hosting the challenge.

Northwest Georgia Workforce Development Alliance

- **Established: 2018**
- **First Skills Challenge: 2019**

After seeing the success of regions around the state hosting their own Skills Challenges, Chris Britton of Brasfield & Gorrie and Dan Baker of Duffey Southeast joined their resources to host the first Northwest Georgia Workforce Development Alliance Skills Challenge in the fall of 2019 at the Polk County College and Career Academy. In the first year, 75 students from 11 schools competed. More than 75 student observers also attended the event to learn more about careers in construction and learn what it takes to become competitors in future years. This region also raised more than \$31,000 in sponsorships. After event expenses, a portion of the proceeds were given to the participating schools.

Southeast Georgia Workforce Development Alliance

- **Established: 2014**
- **First Skills Challenge: Planned for 2021**

Early alliance members included Marchese Construction, Elkins Construction, Mock Plumbing and Bonitz of Georgia. A lot of work has been done through the years supporting existing high school construction programs and working with Chatham and Effingham to start/restart additional programs. Planning is underway for Marchese Construction, Choate Construction, West Construction and ACE Electric to host the area's first Skills Challenge in Savannah in 2021. ■