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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Graphic Arts Education and Research Foundation Lauds SkillsUSA Championships**

**RESTON, VA...** A total of 41 graphic communications students from 32 different states competed in the 2008 SkillsUSA Championships, a part of SkillsUSA's 44th Annual National Leadership and Skills Conference (NLSC). The annual event, which this year hosted more than 5,000 contestants competing in 91 different trade, technical and leadership contests, showcases the top career and technical education students in the nation. Its purpose is to reward students for excellence, directly involve industry in evaluating student performance and provide training relevant to employers' needs. To that end, the exhibition—which occupies a space equivalent to 16 football fields—is held with the assistance and support of industry, trade associations and labor organizations.

In accordance with its mission to support programs that prepare the workforce of the future, the Graphic Arts Education and Research Foundation<sup>®</sup> (GAERF) was a SkillsUSA official sponsor and provided \$250 scholarships to each of the students who participated in the graphic communications contest. “Those who took part in the competition are true champions in their dedication to excellence, and GAERF is pleased to recognize our industry's most talented students,” said Thomas Saggiomo, chairman of the GAERF Board of Directors and president and CEO of Agfa Corporation in Ridgefield Park, NJ.

To become eligible for the national graphic communications competition, students must first compete at the local and state levels. Two representatives from each state—one at the high school level and one at post-secondary—then advance to

the national competition. At the championships, participants compete in seven skill areas: production planning, digital workflow, electronic prepress, offset press operations, finishing, an oral professional assessment and a technical knowledge test.

This marked the third consecutive year that a PrintED-accredited program has produced a SkillsUSA gold medalist. Medalists at the secondary level were:

- **Gold:** John Litwinowicz, who as a rising junior at Royal Oak High School in Royal Oak, MI, became the youngest student ever to win the gold;
- **Silver:** Alyssa Ailion from Walton High School, Marietta, GA; and,
- **Bronze:** Chloe Grace from Autry Technology Center, Enid, OK.

At the post-secondary level, the winners were:

- **Gold:** Mayda Salas from Riverside Community College, Riverside, CA;
- **Silver:** Justin K. Workman from Salt Lake Community College, Salt Lake City, UT; and,
- **Bronze:** Michael Fleming from Ferris State University, Big Rapids, MI.

Heidelberg provided the gold medalists with \$1,000 scholarship awards and invitations to attend GRAPH EXPO 2008 with their instructors for two days. In addition, their schools will receive the use of a Heidelberg QM46 for a period of one year. Silver medalists received \$500 scholarships, and bronze medalists received \$250 scholarships.

All three secondary-level winners and the post-secondary level gold medalist, Salas, are students enrolled in PrintED-accredited programs.

“We're delighted that four of this year's six medalists hail from PrintED-accredited schools,” said GAERF President Ralph Nappi. “This is a testament to the value of PrintED's rigorous, real-world training in graphic communications.”

GAERF's involvement in SkillsUSA was not limited solely to the graphic communications contestants. As an additional show of support for the event, Nappi represented GAERF at the SkillsUSA opening ceremonies, which were attended by more than 15,000 people. There, he presented the winner of the 2008 National Leadership and Skills Conference Pin Design Competition, Esperanza Rivera, with

an iPod Touch. Rivera is an advertising and design student at East Los Angeles Occupational Center in Los Angeles. Her entry served as the design for the 2008 National Leadership and Skills Conference annual pin.

### **About GAERF®**

The Graphic Arts Education and Research Foundation was created by the National Association for Printing Leadership, NPES The Association for Suppliers of Printing, Publishing, and Converting Technologies and the Printing Industries of America in 1983. These three national associations jointly own the Graphic Arts Show Company (GASC®). GAERF was created to channel a portion of the revenues earned by GASC-managed shows into projects supporting a strong future for the industry. For additional information about the Foundation and its programs, visit the GAERF website: [www.gaerf.org](http://www.gaerf.org) or phone toll-free: (866) 381-9839.

### **About PrintED®**

PrintED, administered by the Graphic Arts Education and Research Foundation, is a national accreditation and certification program, based on industry standards, for graphic communications courses of study at the secondary and post-secondary levels. PrintED provides a career pathway for students to enter the workplace with verifiable credentials, or to pursue further education with college credit already in hand.

### **About SkillsUSA**

SkillsUSA is a national partnership of students, teachers and industry, working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce. SkillsUSA chapters help students who are preparing for careers in technical, skilled and service occupations excel. SkillsUSA has more than 300,000 students and instructors as members. For more information on SkillsUSA, visit: [www.skillsusa.org](http://www.skillsusa.org).

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