

FUTURE CRIMEFIGHTERS OF ALASKA

High School Students Compete
in Criminal Justice Skills Contest

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King Career Center student Catherine McKoy fidgeted as the mother and her two children in front of her comforted each other. She apologized and offered her condolences over and over after delivering the dreadful news that their husband and father had died in a plane crash.

Her schoolmates wavered between fake sobs and hiding their smiling face as they tried to keep in character for the roles they portrayed while McKoy was competing in a state SkillsUSA competition at the Anchorage-based [King Career Center](#) last week. McKoy, a high school senior, was vying to be Alaska's representative in the national criminal justice Skills USA contest that evaluates competitors on

professionalism in the field of law enforcement. The previous day three teams competed for the chance to represent Alaska in the crime scene investigation portion of the two-day competition running March 19-20.

SkillsUSA – formerly known as the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America, or VICA – is a national organization serving teachers and students in high school or college who are prepping

KCC student Alyssa Ralston wraps up the tape used to measure a mock crime scene while judge Jessica Hansen, in the background, writes down Ralston's team scores for the CSI completion on March 19.

Soldotna High students Megan Herrick, on left, and Sabrina Hilbrink measure a crime scene set up in a mock hotel room during the CSI portion of the contest on March 19.





KCC student Catherine McKoy talks to an actor that is portraying a grieving widow during the criminal justice competition on March 20.

for careers in technical, skilled and service occupations. The national contest, slated for June 22-26 in Louisville, Kentucky,

evaluates students on their mastery of entry-level job skills in a large variety of careers from 3-D visualization and animation to welding and many things in between. KCC hosted several components of state-level SkillsUSA competition last week including the culinary arts.

McKoy and most of the other students competing got most of their knowledge from classes offered through KCC's [Public Safety and Security program](#). Like other technical and vocational programs at the center that expose students of career skills, students experience certain aspects of a career in law enforcement or security.

"I'd rather that they make mistakes in high school than as a trooper getting off of (field training)," said Teena Calkin, who after spending nearly 11 years working in adult probation, became the program's instructor nine years ago. "Here's the opportunity to learn what you can and can't do."

KCC students Bella McLean, on left, and Alyssa Ralston, wrap things up during the CSI portion of the competition on March 19. Trooper Investigator Steve Kevan, on the right, watches while Judges Vic Aye, Teresa Gregg, and Jessica Hansen grade the team's performance.

Students in the KCC program wear uniforms twice a week and even have practice being interviewed on the stand to include answering questions on what they did or didn't do during their crime scene investigations. Calkin gets help from professionals not only in law enforcement and private security firms, but judges, public defenders and prosecutors. Not every student goes on to a career in law enforcement, but the communication skills, leadership and professionalism they learn in the program are universally applicable. Calkin estimates that roughly 140 to 150 kids have taken classes in the program since its inception, and have gained valuable "character education."

Besides the death notification, McKoy and KCC classmate Hans Friese were graded on fingerprinting and handling a welfare check that turns



CRIME SCENE

into an arrest for the criminal justice portion of the contest on March 20. The day before three teams – two from KCC and a third that traveled from Soldotna – did a crime scene investigation that included collection and measurement of evidence. They all had to submit resumes as part of the competition. All contestants were also graded on report writing and an oral interview with judges that included Alaska State Trooper Vic Aye; Dan Cloud of Purcell Security; Teresa Gregg, a former Anchorage police and University of Alaska-Anchorage police officer and current paralegal; and Jessica Hansen, who works for a federally-contracted private security company. Hansen was among Calkin's first graduating class in 2008.



Soldotna High students Megan Herrick and Sabrina Hilbrink got a crash course on crime scene investigation from trooper Investigator Steve Kevan of the Alaska Bureau of

KCC student Hans Friese dusts extra powder off while trying to collect a latent fingerprint from a plate during the criminal justice competition on March 20.

KCC instructor Teena Calkin, on right, clarifies directions to judges, from left to right, Teresa Gregg, Dan Cloud and Vic Aye, during the criminal justice portion of the competition on March 20.



Investigation before it was their turn Thursday afternoon. Kevan and another ABI investigator had been working with the KCC students prior to the contest to show them efficient ways to diagram a crime scene, how to work together for better time management and examples of report writing, Calkin said. That included cutting their scene processing time from about 30 minutes to the competition time of 20 minutes.

The teams worked in near silence, measuring a mock hotel room littered with two shell casings and bloody clothes. A wad of fake money sat near the door of the room and an open pill container sat on top of



WINNERS

Crime Scene Investigation Alaska: Isbella McLean, Shaina Avery and Alyssa Ralston of the King Career Center

Criminal Justice Alaska: Catherine McKoy of the King Career Center

King Career Center will have four fundraisers to raise money to attend the national competition in Louisville in June. The two dinner and two brunches are murder mystery themes with the KCC culinary students doing the cooking. Prices are \$50 each or \$90 a couple.

Dinner at 6-9 p.m. on Friday, April 10 or brunch at 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday April 11 at the King Career Center. Theme is Murder of a Millionaire.

Dinner at 6-9 p.m. on Friday, May 1 or brunch at 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 2 at the King Career Center. Theme is Reunion at Murder High Class of '85.

KCC student Hans Friese finds suspected illegal drugs during a mock pat down that was part of the criminal justice competition on March 20.



some clothes. They photographed the entire room, then each individual piece of evidence with number placards sitting next to each piece of evidence. A measuring tape was used to document how far the pieces of evidence were spaced in the room. Then they collected as much of the evidence as they could and placed them in labeled bags. In the stress of competition, one team collected a paperclip that was unintentionally left on the floor, but left a shell casing behind.

As with any competition, all of them fretted over what they did and didn't do during their evaluation. But that's all a part of the learning process.

The End

KCC students Josephine April, on right, and Alyssa Ralston place evidence in bags during the CSI portion of the competition on March 19.

