

Training Tomorrow's Workers and Leaders, SkillsUSA Helps Solve Critical Skilled Employee Shortage.

The Golden Gate Bridge. The Space Shuttle. The Empire State Building. The Internet. They're more than American icons, they're American accomplishments. They are great deeds of skilled workers--from mechanics to electricians, designers to brick masons.

Today, America faces a shortage of skilled workers. The composition of America's work force has changed. Low-skilled jobs are disappearing, replaced by career opportunities in the burgeoning high-skilled sector for those people who have the education and training. Proof of this can be found in our state, where we have lost 2,000 jobs in such critical industries as welding.

Since 1965, SkillsUSA has helped instructors teach, students learn, and businesses mentor our future work force. In the battle to alleviate the skills shortage, SkillsUSA is a driving force at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Skills USA understands the challenges instructors face as they prepare students to enter the work force.

In our state alone, in secondary education, there are approximately 60 technical schools and technical high schools. At the postsecondary level, there are approximately 50 two-year community colleges and technical colleges. In all, there are nearly 60 outlets ready and able to teach the skills that both workers and employers desperately need. SkillsUSA is uniquely qualified to help these institutions



produce a more skilled work force. SkillsUSA stands for the individuals who are--and will be--America's work force.

According to *Winning the Skills Race*, a report issued by the Council on Competitiveness, "the skills shortage has created a buildup of pressure that is forcing employers, workers, educators, community leaders and public officials to cooperate more closely." The pioneering efforts of Skills USA have already forged alliances like these in communities across the United States and right here in Louisiana, alliances that are closing the skills gap between work force supply and demand.

More than 1,527 corporations, trade associations and labor unions actively support SkillsUSA in our state through financial aid, in-kind contributions and involvement of their people in SkillsUSA activities. This ongoing relationship between SkillsUSA and business benefits both parties. By networking with their SkillsUSA partners, students stay on top of current employment trends and learn new ways to steer their careers. Business leaders benefit by maintaining open lines of communication with teachers and students, ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of an

their careers. Business leaders benefit by maintaining open lines of communication with teachers and students, ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of an ever-evolving marketplace.

In the new millennium society faces a workplace that has changed dramatically since 1965. To reflect those changes and the expanded role that we play in preparing students for the workplace, we have changed our name officially from Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA) to SkillsUSA on July 4, 1999. This name not only encompasses both occupation-specific and employability skills, it also defines the core purpose and uniqueness of the organization--to provide a skilled work force for America.

Working with talented instructors, committed businesses and most importantly, eager students ready to learn, SkillsUSA brings it all together to create skilled, successful workers. Their employability--America's competitiveness, America's dreams--depends on it.

If you would like additional information on SkillsUSA, please contact Larry Rabalais at 225-219-8786, or write Louisiana SkillsUSA, Inc. 822 Neosho Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70802.