



SkillsUSA Alumni Story

NAME: Colleen Yaeger Kriebel

SCHOOL ATTENDED: Central Montgomery County Area Vocational Technical School
(Currently Central Montco Technical High School))

TITLE: Baking and Pastry Arts Competitor *1st Place PA STATE 1999

YEAR YOU JOINED SKILLSUSA / VICA: 1998-1999

Highest Achievement in the Organization:

Winning the Gold Medal at the Pennsylvania State SkillsUSA Baking and Pastry Arts Competition in 1999 was life-changing. It validated my skills, fueled my passion, and opened doors I never imagined. The scholarships I received that day made college a reality—something I hadn't considered due to financial limitations. That achievement laid the foundation for my career.

Best Memory:

Waiting as they announced the winners was an unforgettable moment. My heart pounded as they called third place, then second—neither of them was me. Then, I heard my name: Colleen (Yaeger) Kriebel from Central Montco Technical High School. I ran to the stage, overwhelmed with excitement, as they placed a gold medal around my neck and handed me scholarships. That moment changed my life forever.

How the Experience Changed Me:

Before competing, I lacked confidence and hesitated to step outside my comfort zone. My instructors saw potential in me that I didn't see in myself. Their encouragement pushed me to take a chance, and through that experience, I discovered discipline, perseverance, and self-belief. Competing also gave me a deep appreciation for mentorship—something that eventually led me back to CMTHS as an instructor.

Wisdom to Share with Current Student Members:

If you're unsure about competing in SkillsUSA, just do it! You never know where it might lead. I was hesitant, nervous, and full of doubt, but taking that leap changed my life. SkillsUSA is more than a competition; it's an opportunity to grow, gain confidence, and build your future. If your instructors see potential in you, trust them—and yourself. You might surprise yourself.

Summary:

My journey began as a shy student at CMTHS, hesitant to compete in a classroom baking competition. Winning led me to districts, states, and nationals—where I became the first CMTHS baker to compete at that level. The scholarships I earned through SkillsUSA allowed me to attend The Culinary Institute of America, setting the stage for a 26-year career. Now, as the Baking and Pastry Arts Instructor and SkillsUSA Coordinator at CMTHS, I've come full circle, eager to inspire the next generation. Take a chance—compete, and see where it takes you!

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