

Media Source Press
Circulation 13,725
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All Saints Mens Group with Stephanie Houston Training & Development Officer, Community & Development Health Network (Elevate). The group have received funding from Elevate to support a Health Equality Project.

RIGHT: Aidan Hughes who recently graduated from the University of Ulster with an Honours Degree (1st Class) in Software Engineering and a Diploma in Professional Practice. Aidan is a past pupil of St. Joseph's PS, Dunloy, and St. Louis Grammar School in Ballymena. He was also an IT student at the Northern Regional College in Ballymena, where he graduated in 2019 with a Foundation Degree in Computing. Aidan is currently employed as a Software Engineer in Test by Chicago Mercantile Exchange Group and is based in the company's Belfast Office. Aidan is the youngest son of Cathal and Kathleen Hughes.



Seven NRC students qualify for WorldSkills UK finals

SEVEN students and apprentices from Northern Regional College will be among the 500 plus competitors from across the UK battling it out for honours at the WorldSkills UK 2022 national finals.

The finalists who will represent the College in four vocational skills areas are: Industrial Robotics, Ryan Crooks from Cullybackey; Luke Cassidy, Charlie Carson and Jason Scott; CNC Milling, David McMullan; IT Support Technician, Jack Carlisle and Joinery, Conor Dallas from Loughjuel.

WorldSkills is a competition-based development programme, designed by industry experts, to enhance the practical skills and knowledge taught on vocational training courses. The skills competitions are designed to boost the competitors' skills and confidence and assess their employability attributes against set criteria in a competitive environment. There is clear evidence to show that WorldSkills has a positive impact on competitors, with 90% of previous entrants saying their career progression improved after competing.

Ryan Crooks from Cullybackey is a trainee design engineer with Wrightbus and one of four engineering students at the Ballymena campus to qualify for the Industrial Robotics final.

He previously completed a Level 3 BTEC Diploma in

Manufacturing Engineering and a HNC in Business and is currently a Higher Level Apprentice doing a Foundation Degree in Manufacturing Engineering.

He said he has learnt a lot from participating in WorldSkills and would encourage others to get involved in the competition. "Although robotics is not currently used widely in my area of work, participating in the WorldSkills UK Skills Build competitions has greatly helped my robotics knowledge and this will help me with my Foundation Degree."

He added: "I would definitely recommend WorldSkills competition. Even if like me, you are competing in an area that you are not currently working in, it is always helpful to have knowledge in another topic."

Last year, Northern Regional College's engineering students at the College Ballymena campus had a clean sweep in the Industrial Robotics category at the national finals. Brennan Wilson and Louise Heath won gold, Cameron Middleton and Adam Kirkpatrick were silver medalists and Jude Moore and Aaron Stevenson were bronze medal winners. Savannah Hodgins, who studied Creative Media Production (Digital Game Development) at Newtownabbey was a silver medalist in the 3D Digital Games Art category.

Cameron Middleton and Adam Kirkpatrick subsequently secured a spot on the UK national squad and travelled with Team UK to the international WorldSkills competition in Luxembourg



Conor Dallas, a second-year apprentice at Mivan will be among the 500 plus competitors from across the UK battling it out for honours at the WorldSkills UK 2022 national finals.

in October this year.

Conor Dallas, who is a second-year apprentice at Mivan, will represent the College in Joinery, said: "Entering a technical competition like WorldSkills is a challenging experience but progressing through the different stages of the competition has been enriching. I have learned much more preparing for this competition than I would have ever learned if I didn't require a competitive level of knowledge of joinery."

"If a student finds challenges exciting and are willing to take an opportunity to learn, the WorldSkills competitions are a great way to do it."

Gordon Kane, Curriculum Area Manager for Engineering and the College's Skills Champion said: "We are justifiably proud of all the finalists for what they have achieved so far. Reaching the national finals is a major

achievement and their success reflects their commitment and dedication to the pursuit of excellence." He continued: "The College uses competition-based programmes like WorldSkills to raise standards in training which in turn will help drive economic growth."

"We hope that the success our students and apprentices have enjoyed so far in WorldSkills will encourage more young people to consider an apprenticeship and technical training as a route to great career success."

Over 500 finalists will compete for gold, silver and bronze medals in 62 different disciplines at the WorldSkills UK 2022 national finals which will be held at six venues across the UK in November.

The winners will be announced at a ceremony hosted by TV presenter Steph McGovern from her Packed Lunch studio Friday, 25 November.



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