



News Release

Red Deer Catholic student Dane Schmidt wins gold medal at Skills Canada Nationals

For immediate release – June 4, 2025

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools (RDCRS) is pleased to celebrate the latest achievement of St. Joseph High School grade 12 student, Dane Schmidt - a gold medal in the Welding-Secondary competition at the Skills Canada National Competition held last week in Regina, Saskatchewan.

The Skills Canada National Competition was held on May 29 and 30, 2025 at the Regina Exhibition Association Limited (REAL) District, and featured the top skilled trades and technology students from across the country.

Dane also came away with the RBC Best in Region Award for having the highest mark among secondary and post-secondary competitors from Alberta, and was also awarded the Terry Cooke Legacy of Skilled Excellence Scholarship. The scholarship is awarded to a high school student who has exemplified exceptional dedication in their trade and obtained the highest mark as determined by their z score calculation and best of province ranking. The scholarship represents \$5000 per year to support post-secondary studies in their chosen field for a maximum of five years.

"I still haven't honestly taken it all in yet. It feels really good. I want to thank all my coaches for getting me to this spot and giving me the opportunity to compete to my greatest potential," said Dane Schmidt.

Mike Bownes, Fabrication Instructor at St. Joseph High School, said Dane's win at nationals gives students a look at what's possible in the trades, and highlights Dane's ability to succeed at everything he puts his mind to.

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“Dane has a dedication and the motivation like no other student I’ve worked with. You show him how to do something and he does it until it’s exactly what you want,” said Bownes, remarking that Dane’s silver medal wins at Regionals and Provincials fueled him heading into this year. “I am very proud of Dane and I am just so impressed with where he’s at. He is an exceptional talent.”

“Being the best (high school) welder in Canada is a very prestigious award and something that Dane has worked really hard for,” added Gary Gylander, St. Joseph High School Principal. “As the principal here, I have seen him grow and put a lot of effort and work into where he is at. It’s a testament to him and his dedication. Additionally, it’s a testament to his teacher Mike Bownes, who makes sure these students have a career path open and available for them.”

Tracey Millar, Career Pathways Coordinator with Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools, said Dane’s accomplishment is massive for such a new program.

“Single-enrolled dual-credit programs in welding are not very prevalent in the Province of Alberta,” she said. “The fact that we have one and it’s been so well supported is a noteworthy achievement. St Joseph Principal Gary Gylander was instrumental in supporting this program from its onset, and supporting Mike and the students that are in that program. When teachers like Mike Bownes, have a relationship with a student, skill development comes much easier. That’s why these single-enrolled dual credit programs that we have in high schools are so important, because it gives students an extended period of time to develop those skills. Dane has followed a strong development path for the last three years to establish this level of excellence in his trade.”

“We are incredibly proud of Dane for bringing home gold at Skills Canada. His achievement showcases not only his exceptional talent and work ethic, but also the strength of skilled trades education in our schools. As both a welder and Board Chair, it’s inspiring to see a young tradesperson excel on the national stage. Congratulations, Dane—you’ve made our entire RDCRS community proud.” said Board Chair Murray Hollman.

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Thank you to Lasermann Cuts Ltd. for their sponsorship of Dane and support of the Fabrication Program, and to our partnership with Red Deer Polytechnic, especially RDP instructor and Skills coach Lee Yasinski, for his ongoing mentorship.

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools serves over 9,600 students in 21 schools in Red Deer, Blackfalds, Sylvan Lake, Rocky Mountain House, Innisfail, and Olds. It also supports the learning of over 950 students in a Home Education Program. The Division is committed to serving children and parents with a complete offering of learning opportunities delivered within the context of Catholic teachings and within the means of the Division.

For more information, contact:

Communications Department

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools

P: 403-343-1055 Ext. 310238

E: communications@rdcrs.ca

W: www.rdcrcs.ca