

MCC hosts annual Ford/AAA auto technician competition



Joseph Hart Jr., left, and David Degroot of Chippewa Valley High School work on a 2014 Ford Fiesta during the Ford/AAA Student Auto Skills Competition held Wednesday at Macomb Community College.

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Tomorrow's automobile technicians were on display Wednesday when AAA and Ford Motor Co. teamed to sponsor the annual Student Auto Skills competition at Macomb Community College.

Two-person teams representing 10 Michigan high schools battled the clock and each other to identify and repair identically "bugged" 2014 Ford Fiesta automobiles.

When the final wrench was placed back in the toolbox, Alan Labarge and Mike Smith from Oxford High School emerged with top honors. Dan Balsley is their instructor.

Labarge and Smith will share some \$69,000 in scholarship money and represent Michigan in the national competition in June at Ford's World Headquarters in Dearborn.

Sara Larson and Matt Sundling of Delta Schoolcraft Independent School District from the Upper Peninsula town of Escanaba finished second while Patrick Murphy and Robert Miller from Fowlerville High School placed third.

Other participating schools included: Capital Area Career Center, Mason; Kent Career Technology Center, Grand Rapids; Milford High School, Milford; Portage Northern High School, Portage; two teams from the St. Clair County Career Technical Center, Marysville; and Chippewa Valley High School, Clinton Township.

Teams were selected for the competition based on online test scores that gauged competitors' automotive knowledge.

The Chippewa Valley team featured a unique father-son combination as students David Degroot and Joseph J. Hart Jr. competed under the direction of their instructor, Joseph J. Hart Sr.

The purpose of the annual competition is two-fold: to reward outstanding students enrolled in auto technician courses in Michigan; to encourage students to consider careers in the high-paying field after they complete high school.-