

DECA COMPETITION

Future business leaders state their product cases

'Battle for the Broadmoor' features 700

BY JON POMPIA
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Amanda Rodrigues had no doubt that her company's drones were exactly what this hard-sell real estate mogul needed.

"So, I want to first start by telling you exactly what drones we offer," Amanda began. "Because you don't want to buy something you know nothing about, right?"

Before the presentation was over, Amanda had thoroughly covered drone size, battery life, camera resolution, controls, ease of use and cost, and was duly rewarded with a signed contract.

The savvy East Eagle was one of 700 future business leaders from throughout Pueblo and Lamar taking part in a District 9 DECA competition tagged "Battle for the Broadmoor."

DECA is a Career and Technical Student Organization activity that prepares the next generation for leadership in the business and marketing worlds.

Before local professionals serving as judges, the students — sharp of attire as well as intellect — presented their plans in such categories as apparel and accessories, restaurant management, hospitality, automotive services, travel and tourism, sports and entertainment and sales.

The role players were vying for a slot at the Colorado DECA State Leadership Conference at The Broadmoor in February.

Whether charged with coming up with an incentive plan to make a small automotive business more competitive, working out an appealing way to market a new fashion line or increasing ticket sales to university sporting events, the students had no choice but to be creative, convincing and quick-witted.



CHIEFTAIN PHOTOS/JOHN JAQUES

Jayden Norton, 15, a sophomore at Pueblo East High, takes part in the DECA state competition at Colorado State University-Pueblo's Occhiato Ballroom.



Seven-hundred students take part in the DECA state competition at Colorado State University-Pueblo's Occhiato Ballroom.

"I think DECA really teaches the major aspects of business," said Mitchell Hausman, a District 9 state representative and competitor from Pueblo West High School. "How to work through problems and then publicly speak to someone, one on one, in a way that conveys a sense of knowledge and understanding."

While students sign up to

compete in a specific event, the particular business scenario or situation is revealed only a short time before the presentation is made before a judge.

"DECA helps improve a student's self-confidence and the image they project," explained Jack Harrington, state vice president for Colorado DECA. "As well as their ability to think through things on

their feet.

"They don't have to sit down and think about it; they can actually process and do things faster and be more innovative because they don't have all that time to collect their thoughts."

But in the eyes of those to whom those thoughts were presented, the future of the business world is in capable hands.

"Very impressed," said Simon Gonzales, owner of Iron Athletes and a judge in sports and entertainment. "These kids are very good at what they do. They did their research."

Of a similar mindset was the real estate mogul (Bill Skay of Airgas) who signed off on Amanda's drones.

"Being in sales, it's nice to see that there are kids who have an acumen for selling.

"And that requires confidence and not being afraid to ask for the order at the end of the day. And all three of the students I've seen today did a great job of doing that."

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