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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – July 8, 2009

## **PCC Auto Tech student completes 3 years of excellence in national SkillsUSA competition**

**PUEBLO** – The third time definitely was a charm for Pueblo Community College’s Frank Cowgill III.

A recent Automotive Service Technology program graduate, Frank demonstrated the leadership skills that he has gained at PCC by capturing the gold medal in the “Job Skill Demonstration A” category during the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference held last week at Kemper Arena in Kansas City, Missouri. He gave a demonstration of a tire pressure monitoring system, an idea originally hatched by fellow PCC auto student Alexei Serepera

Cowgill devoted eight months to preparing for the competition under the tutelage of PCC Auto Service Tech Chair Robert Maez, who previously had been named the State Advisor of the Year at the state SkillsUSA competition. Lending video assistance to Frank’s training was Maez’s youngest child Nora, 19, who will be attending PCC in the fall semester to study Early Childhood Education.

“Robert’s input into the presentation was huge and he had a big part in the editing process and in narrowing down the focus throughout the preparation,” said Cowgill.

Winning a national gold medal is difficult enough, but it was the second one captured by Cowgill, who won the gold two years ago and added a silver medal in K.C. last year. His previous demonstrations were on emissions and pollution exhaust systems last year and fuel delivery systems two years ago.

Cowgill, 38 and a Pueblo native, has been such an exceptional student that he became an assistant instructor during the past year for PCC auto classes that were taught at Canon City High School. Before that, he worked for Mike Minnick at Pueblo Dodge Chrysler Jeep, which provided Cowgill with the equipment for his demonstration.

In the “Job Skill Demonstration A” event, contestants demo and explain an entry-level skills used in the occupational area in which they are training. Cowgill noted how his

demonstration maturity caused him to direct his focus this year more toward the audience instead of the judges. He said he learned a great deal about leadership and presentations skills by competing both at both the state and national levels.

“SkillsUSA is huge, and being able to compete there for three years and do well was just a very good experience,” Cowgill noted, adding that he plans to give back to PCC by helping train other students for future SkillsUSA competitions.

PCC offers both Automotive Service Technology and Automotive Collision Technology programs that have associate degree, certificate and mini-certificate options, and the College provides the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that workers need for employment with auto dealerships, independent shops and other auto-related companies.

The Automotive Service Tech program prepares students for a wide range of careers in automotive maintenance and repair service as well as service writing and parts management. The Automotive Collision curriculum prepares them for careers in structural and non-structural collision repair, refinishing, estimating, upholstery, paintless dent repair, glass installing, and custom body and refinishing.

Students can complete an associate degree in two years, but along the way they earn a new mini certificate in a specific competency area each semester. Skilled technicians are in great demand, and students can be hired for internships during their first semester at PCC, allowing them to earn a good income while also attending school.

Starting pay in the industry after one or two years of college is approximately \$34,210, and the level of pay increases substantially based on performance, experience and area of country in which employed.

PCC’s automotive programs are based on teaching excellence and are accredited by the National Institute for Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF). They also offer paid apprenticeship for high school students through the Automotive Youth Education System (AYES) program.

For more information, contact Auto Service Technology Chair Robert Maez at (719) 549-3354.

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*Founded in 1933, Pueblo Community College is a premier teaching institution focused on providing academic and service excellence to help its students acquire the 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills needed to better their lives. An educational and technological leader, PCC fosters economic development and utilizes strong partnerships in the communities it serves through its Pueblo, Fremont and Southwest campuses.*