

CHAMPIONS SHARE THEIR SUCCESSES WITH WORLDSKILLS

Former WorldSkills Champions are encouraging this year's Competitors to gain more skills and international experiences by taking part in WorldSkills' new global exchange program, the Champions Exchange.

Stretching from Austria to Australia, the group, known collectively as the 'Champions Exchange Team' have come to Shizuoka armed with initiatives that they believe will see WorldSkills branded as a 'door-opener' to the global skills economy for young people all over the world.

Among the group is Automobile specialist, Ross Wasson. Since receiving the gold medal at the WorldSkills Competition in 2001, Ross has enjoyed much success in his career at home in Ireland and last year headed down-under to work with Ferrari, in Sydney, Australia. Motivated by his international experience, Ross is now encouraging other Competitors to benefit from the WorldSkills Champions Exchange program.

"After the WorldSkills Youth Forum in Melbourne, the Big Brother Big Sister movement supported me to take part in an exchange in a Ferrari workshop in Sydney," Ross said.

"Here I learned the ins and outs of one of the world's most prestigious car brands. I really enjoyed the experience and have since been offered the opportunity to return and work at the Ferrari garage on a permanent basis. I had however already committed to a contract in Ireland managing the technical department of 14 Land Rover garages across the country.

I see the immense value in a skills exchange program and would welcome any WorldSkills Champion interested in working in one of our Land Rover shops to come and join me in Ireland for a period."

The Champions Exchange group will scout the WorldSkills Competition site in Japan to find Competitors and Employers that would like to take part in the WorldSkills Champions Exchange.

WorldSkills Champion from Singapore, Kian Ann Tan, said:

"We have a goal of recruiting 80 Competitors to take part in an exchange in the next two years. Likewise, we're approaching WorldSkills' top employers and sponsors to offer up placements to WorldSkills Champions."

Kian is confident that employers will be lining up to take part. He said:

"Not only do employers have the chance to learn from the international experience of the WorldSkills Champion undertaking a placement in their workplace, the WorldSkills Champions Exchange is also an opportunity to connect with like-minded employers in the global skills market".

Notes to Editors

1. Ross Wasson (WorldSkills Youth Forum Representative, Ireland and Automobile Technology Gold Medallist, 2001) and Kian Ann Tan (WorldSkills Youth Forum Representative, Singapore, and ITPC Network Support Gold Medallist, 2001) are available for interview. Please contact Michelle Bussey (michelle.bussey@worldskills.org) to arrange an interview.

2. For more information about the WorldSkills Champions Exchange please visit:
<http://www.worldskillschampions.com>

3. Background

Last year, WorldSkills International hosted a Youth Forum attended by 35 past Competitors from 15 Member countries/regions to elicit their views about how to improve the overall WorldSkills experience for future participants.

Their report, "Just the Beginning" (available on the WSI homepage: www.worldskills.org) contains many recommendations and ideas which have been considered and responded to in subsequent WSI meetings.

The WorldSkills Strategy Committee, at its meeting in Rotterdam earlier this year, considered one of the Youth Forum proposals which was to create an exchange program for past WorldSkills Competition Competitors as an extension of their WorldSkills experience. This is where the WorldSkills Champions Exchange was developed.

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