

# NRC student wins

# gold medal at Skillbuild

**A student from the Northern Regional College in Ballymena has scooped a Gold Medal for Lead Sheetwork at the Skillbuild NI Competition.**

Neil Laverty, a first year student, is on the Programme - Led Apprenticeships NI training scheme which is funded by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).

Neil is celebrating his achievement with his fellow students and staff at the college.

The competition which brought Construction apprentices from all over Northern Ireland tested their skills in the largest multi-trade skills competition in Northern Ireland at South Eastern Regional College (SERC).

Providing a unique stage to showcase excellence and talent, Skillbuild NI is held annually each spring,

with over 100 of the top construction apprentices competing to win coveted titles in 13 different craft areas ranging from brickwork to wall and floor tiling.

The winners may then go on to represent Northern Ireland in the UK Skillbuild Finals and potentially the UK at WorldSkills.

Skillbuild NI competition test pieces are designed to challenge the ability of apprentices to follow detailed instructions, produce accurate and neat work and be economical with materials while working to strict timescales – all essential requirements for today's construction industry.

The competition not only encourages trainees to improve their own skills, but provides an example of the high quality work being produced in training organisations across NI to meet local industry skill needs.

Commending the competitors on their

hard work and dedication shown in their area of expertise, Alan Shannon, the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Employment and Learning, said: "The Skillbuild Northern Ireland competition allows our young apprentices to demonstrate that they have the high level of skills which our economy needs to stay competitive."

"Skillbuild, as with all skills competitions, is about raising the status and standards of professional and technical education and training, and industry benefits from having more skilful, highly motivated staff."

He continued: "Northern Ireland has a proud record of success in skills competitions at a national and international level."

"With 14 young people from Northern Ireland on the UK Squad for WorldSkills 2011, the largest inter-

national skills competition which is being held in London in October, we look forward to building upon past successes, and hopefully bringing home more medals which will once again prove that we have a world class workforce here in Northern Ireland."

David Cooper, chairman of Skillbuild NI, said: "Skills competitions are an excellent way to showcase the high level of technical ability and occupational competence of young people within the construction industry."

"Competitions such as these have a major role to play in stimulating interest by showing the public just how exciting, challenging and rewarding a career in construction can be. Recruiting the talent of the future is a challenge our industry must meet if we are to avoid the skills gaps of the past."

"We are hopeful that Northern Ireland can once again produce

medal winning members of Team UK such as Fermanagh apprentice Trevor Woods who won a bronze medal in joinery at the last WorldSkills competition held in Calgary in Canada in 2009.”

Ken Webb, Principal and Chief Executive of **SERC** supported the comments and added, “It’s been an honour to host this prestigious competition.

“Skillbuild has given 110 young people, embarking upon their construction careers, the opportunity to showcase their skills. They have represented the Further Education sector extremely well and the winners will now go on to represent Northern Ireland in the UK and further a field.

“We are delighted for all the winners and wish them every success in the UK final. I commend also the commitment from their lecturers, family and friends who have been supporting them.”



**Neil Laverty NRC Ballymena student who won the gold medal in Lead Sheetwork at the Skillbuild NI Competition is congratulated by Tina Campbell. Neil is a first year student on the Programme-Led ApprenticeshipNI training scheme at the college which is funded by the Department for Employment and Learning.**