

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Autry SkillsUSA Chapter Awarded for Unique Partnership with Bennie's Barn

ENID, OKLA. — A unique partnership between Autry Technology Center's SkillsUSA chapter and local nonprofit Bennie's Barn led to a gold level Chapter of Distinction award.

The gold level is the highest level of the Chapter Excellence Program (CEP) that a chapter can achieve at the state level. Each chapter has to submit three activities for consideration in their CEP application, one for each of the three components of the Framework. Autry was selected for **Technical** Skills for the service learning project that they partnered with Bennie's Barn to complete during the fall.

Autry's Graphic Arts SkillsUSA members utilized the technical skills they are learning in their program to design, print, and bind a 12-month calendar for Bennie's Barn that was utilized as a fundraiser for the nonprofit.

"It was a huge honor to be selected as one of the top 24 chapters in the country," said Cheryl Cooksey, Graphic Arts instructor and SkillsUSA advisor. "There are over 4,000 chapters nationwide."

The chapter will be receiving a \$2,000 grant to cover the cost of attendance at the National Skills and Leadership Conference in Louisville, Kentucky on June 25-29. The Autry SkillsUSA chapter will be recognized at the SkillsUSA National Skill and Leadership Conference (NSLC) in June by advisor Cheryl Cooksey, treasurer Ashley Gonzalez and chaplain Meagan Littlefield.

Bennie's Barn was founded by local residents Chip and Christy Baker. After what seemed to be an unbelievable and untimely death they found themselves mourning the loss of a dear friend and community advocate, Bennie Mullins. In an effort to allow her memory to stay alive and with the wealth of her giving heart, they decided to honor and continue to keep her legacy alive through Bennie's Barn.

Bennie's Barn is Enid's own nonprofit, PATH certified horse therapy program. Their mission is to rescue abused, neglected, and potential slaughter horses and utilize the horses for the therapy of adults and children with any ability and for veterans who have suffered scars of war. Bennie's Barn includes 160 acres of horse therapy land, an indoor riding facility and a number of staff and volunteers. Together, they are healing hooves and hearts through horse therapy.

Autry Technology Center has been a part of the Enid community since 1967 and is one of 29 CareerTech schools across Oklahoma. The center has more than 25 career programs and offers a wide variety of evening and weekend short-term courses and certifications for many diverse career fields. Autry serves nearly 16,000 individuals each year, including many area employees who receive training through the Business and Industry Services Department that works with over 500 local businesses each year.

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