

## AWARDS



Nine Ames High students competed at the international DECA conference in Nashville, Tenn. Back row, from left, Philip Ma, Kevin Maxwell, Mike Sankey, Stephen McKown and Sam Stuve. Front row, from left, Lydia Romitti, McKenna Meinhard, Grace Jean and Ben Facio. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## Ames student places in international accounting challenge

By Sarina Rhinehart, Staff Writer  
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Ames High School sophomore Phillip Ma recently finished fourth in the world in the virtual accounting challenge as part of the International Career Development Conference held in Nashville, Tenn.

Ma was one of the nine Ames students who traveled to Nashville for the conference, held April 23-26, as part of the student group DECA, a business and marketing student organization. Students competed in challenges ranging from finance to hospitality and marketing sales.

Vicki Hales, business teacher and advisor for DECA, said she was definitely not expecting any of the Ames students to place because, to her knowledge, no Ames student has ever placed in the international competition.

"Iowa students, in general, have not placed at the international event," Hales said, adding only a couple of Iowa students have placed in the past decade. "We represented Iowa very well this year."

In order to qualify for internationals, Hales said these nine students competed in March at the state competition against 450 to 500 students and placed in the top three to advance in their category. Hales said there are 60 to 75 different categories at the competitions.

The international event drew 18,000 students to compete from across the globe.

Ma said in his category, there were 16 international qualifiers.

"My event is basically like a tournament," he said.

The students were given simulated computer accounting files and had to scan through them to find any errors.

"You have to be accurate first and then try and be the fastest," he said.

In the double-elimination competition, Ma said he lost in the first round but was able to come back and advance to the finals.

Ma said it was nerve-racking because a big crowd gathered to watch the finals. In finishing fourth, Ma said, "I'm definitely really excited."

In his first year in DECA, Ma said he has enjoyed how the competitions have made him more comfortable with what he has learning in his accounting class.

"I definitely think like the competition I can apply my knowledge I've learned in class," Ma said.

Ma also said in order to pay for the trip to Nashville, the students had to meet with business owners to gain sponsorship. This year's Ames sponsors included Taco Time, Haverkamp Properties, Ames Chamber of Commerce, Herrick Dental, Trickle LLC, Tax Pro, Blue Sky Orthodontics, Meg Dobson: State Farm, and Hy-Vee.

"I think it's a really good way to practice my communications skills," he said.

## BRIMEYER

# Good business

Back in January, I wrote a column about a talk I attended by Dr. Michael Naughton entitled "The Vocation of Business Leader." Naughton is the Alan W. Moss Endowed Chair in Catholic Social Thought at the University of St. Thomas.

The column seemed to strike a chord among readers. The number of visitors to my website to view the column was 50 percent higher than normal and I received numerous comments.

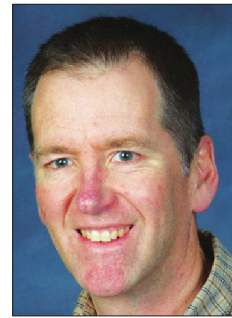
Intrigued to learn more, I read the paper also entitled Vocation of the Business Leader which Naughton was chosen to co-author for the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in 2012. It's recommended reading for any manager, regardless of religious beliefs.

I was impressed with the clarity and completeness of the 27-page document (including foreword and appendix). Its pages are filled with many of the same conclusions of best-selling leadership texts, albeit often explained in a more holistic sense.

The highlight of the paper for me is the requirements for an ethical business:

- Provide good products and services
- Organize worthwhile productive work
- Create sustainable wealth and distribute it justly

Truly good products and services are those that fulfill real needs while promoting social good. Products and services that support and serve struggling populations rather than take advantage of them. Healthy products



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and safe services that are easy on the end user and the environment.

The paper recognizes that the workplace can be a wonderful community. There is an inherent beauty and special dignity in human work ... if the worker is able to contribute their distinctive gifts to the work and is respected and recognized for their accomplishments and uniqueness.

As such, businesses have a responsibility to continually develop employees, not merely so that they can increase their productivity (which is a nice byproduct), but primarily so that they can become more complete. Work changes not only the world but also the worker. We all know people who started a career "still wet behind the ears" and emerged years later as a well-rounded, mature, genuinely happy and complete person. Unfortunately, we can also point to individuals who started a job as an eager, healthy young adult and leave years later injured, broken down and bitter.

Interestingly, the paper emphasizes the importance of a participatory workplace and the value of humble,

servant leaders. The presence of these characteristics makes it much more likely that employees will grow and develop their unique talents.

Finally, there's nothing wrong with profit, so long as it doesn't unduly come at the expense of other stakeholders. Customers can't be held hostage by predatory pricing, vendors can't be squeezed to the point of insolvency. What's left over should be justly shared by employees, management and shareholders. That pretty much rules out a CEO making multiples more than their employees, or stockholders receiving dividends while workers struggle to live on their wages.

Almost weekly we read of an organization that makes the headlines for violating one (or more) of these basic principles. As I write this, the current example is Goldman Sachs' \$5 billion penalty over the sale of mortgage bonds which contributed to the Great Recession and ignited a firestorm of distrust and hatred towards an entire industry.

Inherently good products and services. Work that instills dignity. Just pricing and sharing of rewards. If that describes your workplace, consider yourself lucky.

**RICK BRIMEYER** is the President of Brimeyer LLC, an independent management consulting firm located in Ames which guides organizations to higher performance by focusing on process improvement and leadership development. Further information is available at [www.brimeyerllc.com](http://www.brimeyerllc.com) or by calling 515-450-8855.