

High schoolers compete in chili cook-off

BENTON TOWNSHIP — A spicy aroma filled the Lake Michigan College Mendel Center earlier this month as 124 high school students from around the region competed in the college's seventh annual High School Hospitality and Culinary Chili Cook-Off.

Five teams participated from St. Joseph High

School, River Valley High School, KRESA Culinary Arts, Benton Harbor High School and Branch Area Careers Center.

They used portable butane burners to prepare their best original chili and cornbread recipes from scratch.

Taking first prize was "Le Chats Brule," the team from Kalamazoo Regional Edu-

cation Service Agency (KRESA) Culinary Arts.

KRESA Culinary Arts Instructor Kharen Shelton said she has been bringing students to the event for five or six years.

"This is an event we love to come to, and every year we have a great time," she said. "I'm always proud of them because they always

take their game to the next level and really want to demonstrate everything we've been working on in class."

"It's good practice for the real world — with the time crunch that you have to complete the dish," said team member Kylie Kalleward, a student at Vicksburg High School.

The dishes were judged by

a panel of local industry professionals, including Lori Ham, chef at Lake Michigan Hills Country Club; Randy Herzog, executive chef at Plank's Tavern on the Water; and Brent Curtis from the Senior PGA.

LMC created the event to give high school students a taste of what a hospitality career might entail.

The other four teams finished:

■ 2nd — Tordue, from Branch Area Careers Center

■ 3rd — K.A.S.A., KRESA Culinary Arts

■ 4th — River Valley Chili, River Valley High School

■ 5th — The Frosted Chilies, St. Joseph High School