

Class gives students hands on experience

Written by Chris Lee

Learning the skills and techniques necessary to work and survive in today's job market is key for anyone looking for employment. College is one place where people learn and study those things. Here in Holyoke, students are trying something different before heading off to college.

Kristi Ham teaches a careers class at HHS where students get hands-on experience in a field of their choice by going out into Holyoke and working for employers.

Ham has 20 students in her class and 24 job placements. Everything from making flower arrangements to helping sick animals is experienced by class members. She also mentioned the 24 placements is up from 19 last year.

Larry Banaka chose to work at Wolf Auto with Casey Blake. Banaka said he has been studying Blake's work and what he goes through to sell vehicles. He also mentioned he details cars and works on the Web site with the help of a classmate from HHS.

Banaka would like to attend college and receive a job at a dealership after graduation.

Kimberly Peña decided to try her hand in the flower business and spend time at the Flower Garden.

Peña said making flower arrangements has always been something she was interested in. She hasn't decided on a career but would like to major in graphic design or dietetics in college.

Ashley Gragg chose to spend her time helping the kindergarten classes at Holyoke Elementary. "I love working with kindergarten age children," she said. "This is one of my career choices so I thought it would be a good idea to get experience."

Gragg helped the students with letter sounds, reading and assisting them take the Accelerated Reader tests.

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Ham said the class is very beneficial to students who participate. She also mentioned the businesses in Holyoke have been very helpful and accommodating to the students.

Students are able to see if the path they want to choose in college will be worth it. Some find they aren't as interested as they thought they would be while others confirm their interest.

Ham mentioned the class sometimes leads to summer jobs and in one case, the company transferred a student to the bank branch in the town where she was attending college so she could continue working for the business.

Careers class students had to set up interviews with prospective businesses, create resumes and cover letters and come up with references.

Students must also draft follow-up letters, evaluations, self evaluations and critiques.

Although Holyoke doesn't offer every imaginable job, Ham said students are able to come close to working in positions they are interested in and so far it is turning out well.



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