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The City of Perris Hosted the Third Annual Job Shadow Day



Perris pharmacist Jocelyn Tarcelo, owner of MedPerx Pharmacy, chats with students Lizbeth Zuniga, Alexis Avila and Logan Neumann during the recent Job Shadow Day.

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Pay attention. Ask plenty of questions. Grab business cards. Keep in touch.

Those were sage words of advice to the 40 high school seniors who took part in the City of Perris' Third Annual Job Shadow Day, where they got a close-up look at the real-life world of work and the people who get the job done.

Students from Perris High School, Heritage High School and Val Verde High School got the chance to spend a morning at a variety of businesses throughout the City. They worked in a mechanic's shop, toiled as a barista, quizzed a pharmacist, observed a Perris road improvement project and checked out a logistics center.

Perris Mayor Michael Vargas and City Councilwoman Tonya Burke addressed the teen-agers to take seriously the chance to explore workplaces and quiz employees.

"This is a fantastic opportunity," Vargas told the students who gathered Feb. 2 in the Bob Glass Gymnasium. "I wish I had had this opportunity when I was in high school. It's one thing to read up on a job but to actually go out and watch the expert at work provides a whole different perspective."

Employers taking part in Job included La Gare Coffee Roasters, MedPerx Pharmacy, Dad's Auto, Lowes, Sizzler, the City Engineer's office and several municipal departments.

Burke told the students that her job-shadow day experience resulted in a future job. She noted that national Job Shadow Day is held every Feb. 2 to coincide with another well-known shadow day—Ground Hog Day.

"Today gives our youth the opportunity to get a taste of the real-employment world in the City of Perris," Burke said. "It also gives our businesses to see the youth of our City, I'm excited. This is an opportunity to showcase our businesses and for our youth to showcase themselves."

Be right—first time, every time

Heritage High School students Logan Neumann, Alexis Avila and Lizbeth Zuniga spent the morning at MedPerx Pharmacy on D Street, where owner and pharmacist Jocelyn Tarcelo explained the joys and challenges of the job.

The joys—the job pays well (in many cases \$150,000 a year), people trust their pharmacists and patients are happy to get relief through medicine. The challenges—about 100 new medicines become available every year requiring pharmacists to constantly upgrade their skills, many patients take multiple medications, those meds can interact and the results can be deadly.

Tarcelo's Number 1 rule: "Do it right the first time, every time. Make a mistake, lives are at stake."

Tarcelo said becoming a pharmacist requires a Doctorate degree and continuous studying of new meds, their side effects and how they interact with other prescribes drugs. It's not uncommon for pharmacists to work with the Federal Drug Administration and, if prescription drugs are misused, the Drug Enforcement Agency. But if someone is willing to put in the hours of classroom study and hours of ongoing professional development the rewards are respect and job and financial security in an expanding field.

"The practice of pharmacy is growing, growing and growing!" Tarcelo said. "I am so proud to express my love for my practice."

Soaking in the lesson



La Gare Coffee Roasters owner Abby Silva discusses business with student Maurissa Hill during the Feb. 2 Job Shadow Day in the City of Perris.

The students came away impressed from their pharmacy visit.

Zuniga, 18, said she was glad to learn how medicines can interact and affect the central nervous system with potentially lethal results. Other drugs can cause drowsiness and prove dangerous to drivers and machinery operators.

"It was so interesting," Zuniga said of the chat with Tarcelo.

Zuniga said she plans to earn a medical degree with the ultimate goal of becoming a surgeon.

Avila, 17, said the best part of job-shadowing was the opportunity to learn first-hand from a professional. Avila hopes to forge a career in forensics and pathology.

"I was so impressed with her detailed explanations," she said. "It was nice to talk to someone who knows so much."

Neumann, 18, called the morning "very informative and enlightening." He plans to study biology in college with the ultimate goal of earning a medical degree and working in forensics.

"The City of Perris did a great job finding the different businesses to take part in this event," Neumann said. "It's opened up a lot of different avenues for students to follow."

'She listened well'

At La Gare Coffee Roasters, owner Abby Silva said Val Verde High School senior Maurissa Hill, 18, took to heart the lesson of the day—watch, listen and learn. Hill made coffee, hot chocolate and espresso shot, cleaned a refrigerator and got a behind-the-scenes look at how a commercial kitchen operates. Silva complimented Hill, saying "she listened well."

"It's so important for young people to learn networking skills—connections matter," Silva said.

Hill, for her part, said the barista-for-a-day-morning experience taught her lessons not found in a school classroom.

"There's a lot of steps to owning a business," said Hill, who also is interested in a career in forensics. "You've got to design the business, hire the employees and most importantly—you've got to have a good product."

After the morning on the job, the students returned to City Hall to discuss their experiences and attend a college and military expo, where they learned about higher education opportunities and got a chance to talk to armed forces about the benefits of military service. In-N-Out Burger provided lunch.

The City of Perris would like to thank the following employers for making the Third Annual Job Shadow Day a rousing success: Western Dental, CR&R Environmental Services, Eastern Municipal Water District, Tri-Lakes Consultants, the Perris Police Department, the Lake Perris State Recreation Area, Sizzlers, Pacific Code Compliance, La Gare Coffee Roasters, MedPerx Pharmacy, Dad's Automotive, Jose Marin Realty and the Cesar E. Chavez Library. Various municipal departments also participated, including Code Enforcement, Community Services, Public Works, Development Services and the Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention Team.



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