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Job Shadow Day Participant Hired at Lake Perris as Seasonal Park Aide



Perris High School senior Dontavius "Donnie" Minter, 18, at the Lake Perris State Recreation Area, where he works as a Park Aide after learning about the opportunity while attending the City of Perris-sponsored "Job Shadow Day" in February.

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Perris High School senior Dontavius "Donnie" Minter learned recently that first impressions matter.

Donnie, 18, took part in the City of Perris-sponsored "Job Shadow Day" program in February, which provides high-schoolers the chance to visit a workplace, chat with employees, observe what they do and learn what it takes to earn a steady paycheck.

He came prepared.

He wore nice slacks and a pressed polo shirt, was well-groomed, attentive and polite as he rode through the Lake Perris State Recreation Area with Park Ranger Brady Her.

Donnie peppered the ranger with questions—what were his duties, what qualifications are required to work as a ranger, what's enjoyable and challenging about the job and what are the next steps to putting on the green-and-tan uniform worn by state employees at Lake Perris.

Immediately after the ride-along, Her encouraged Donnie to pick up an application, which he completed and turned in the next day. Within hours, he was called in for an interview and the next day, he was offered a job as a seasonal park aide.

He's been working at Lake Perris the last several weeks. His duties include inspecting boats for invasive quagga mussels, providing directions to park visitors, answering questions and collecting admission fees.

"I love it," Donnie said as he prepared to start his shift on a recent Saturday. "I love working outdoors, interacting with the park visitors and working with great people." The job-shadowing day was a really great experience. It was very organized and beneficial and it shows you really can get a job out of it."



Donnie Minter checks over the engine compartment of a boat to make sure there is no water inside, which could allow the invasive quagga mussel to infest Lake Perris.

Hands-on experience

The Perris Job Shadow Day allows seniors from several high schools to spend a morning observing various professionals go about their daily jobs while giving the students the chance to question the pros about their career path, salaries and potential futures. Perris high school seniors have visited various government agencies, private corporations, Downtown businesses and municipal departments, receiving valuable behind-the-scenes access to business owners and senior managers. Job-Shadow Day began at the request of City Councilwoman Tonya Burke, who works with at-risk youth and advocates on their behalf.

Perris Park Ranger Her said he was impressed by Donnie's appearance, attitude and "overall maturity level"

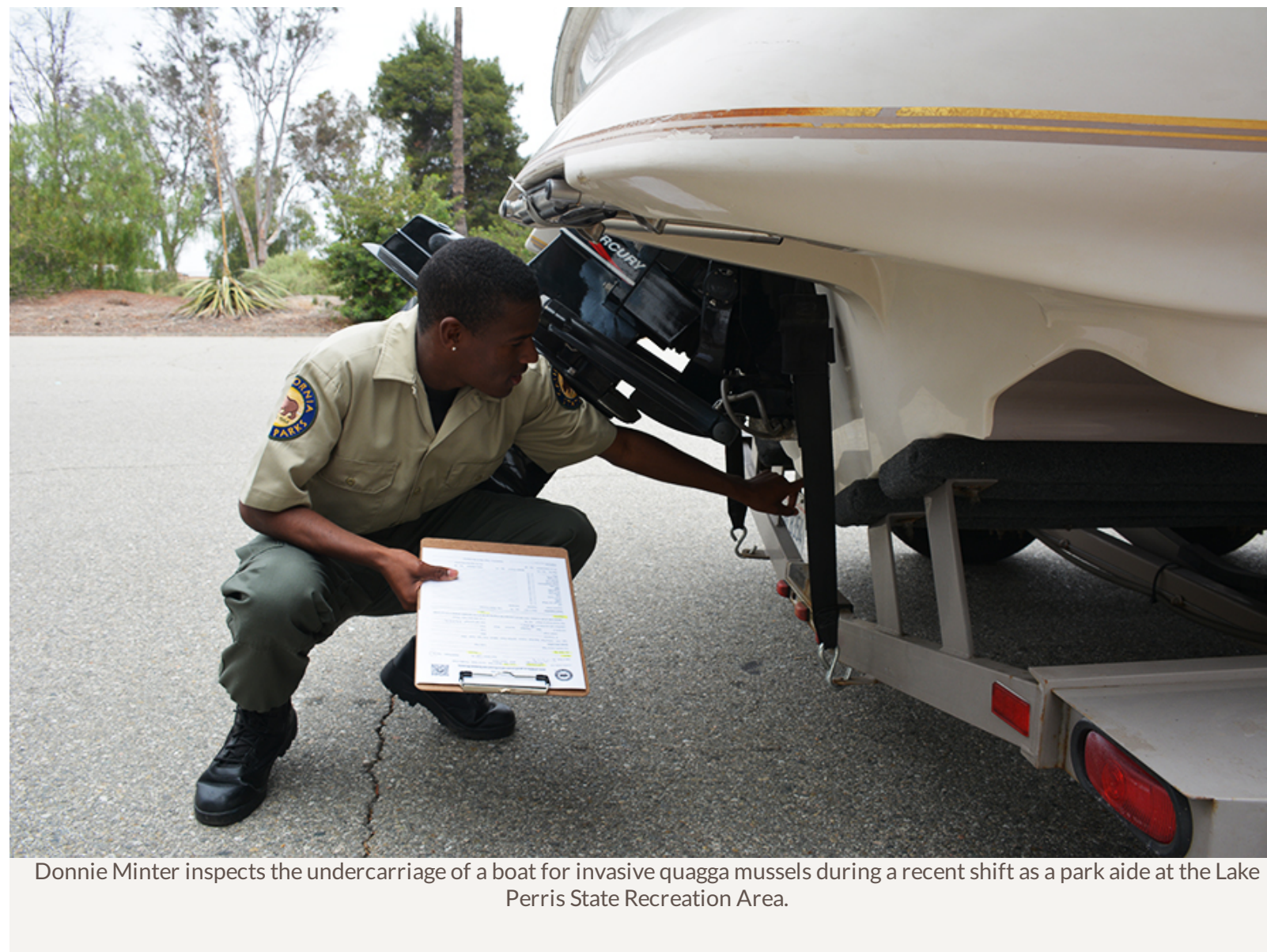
"He asked the right questions and showed interest in the park," Her said. "He said he really wanted to be a Park Ranger and asked what he needed to do to attain that goal."

Her said Donnie's Lake Perris seasonal job puts him in touch with dozens of visitors every week. That should help the reserved and shy teen develop a more outgoing personality.

"You'll see a different person after one or two seasons at the lake," Her said. "Donnie's a super-fine gentleman who will definitely make a great contribution to the community."

Lake Perris supervising Ranger Alexis Pettigrew said interviewing Donnie struck a chord with her. She started her career as a seasonal park aide and climbed her way up the ranks. She said Donnie is the third job-shadow day success story who gained employment and experience at Lake Perris.

"I believe in giving deserving people their first job," Pettigrew said. "You can't get a job without experience and you can't get experience without a job. We've hired a lot of exceptional employees who started out as seasonal Park Aides."



Donnie Minter inspects the undercarriage of a boat for invasive quagga mussels during a recent shift as a park aide at the Lake Perris State Recreation Area.

Pettigrew said Donnie's Park Aid duties provide plenty of hands-on experience.

On any given day, he will be checking boat registrations, directing traffic to the various water-craft launch ramps and directing visitors to the various Lake Perris hiking and biking trails. But he's especially on guard against the potentially devastating impact of the quagga mussel. The mussels attach themselves to all sorts of water systems—pumps, pipes, dams, aqueducts and fish hatcheries and can quickly clog them.

The mussels grow in the tiniest amounts of water so Donnie and other park aides carefully inspect all boats for the standing water or even dampness. That means running their hands over boat keels, undersides and decks and searching for signs of water or dampness on carpets and engine compartments.

Any amount of water or dampness bars the boat from entrance into Lake Perris for at least seven days until the threat of mussel infestation ends.

Future in law enforcement

Donnie will begin classes at Moreno Valley College in the fall, where he'll be working toward his Associates Degree in Administration of Justice. Then he'll begin his Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) studies with the goal of wearing a badge and enforcing the rules and regulations at Lake Perris.

Until then, every weekend Donnie accrues valuable experience developing his people skills and problem solving techniques—all while getting a workout climbing in and out of boats scouring for the ever-dangerous quagga mussel.

"I get tired," Donnie said. "But it's worth it. I'm really glad I got this job."



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