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Job Shadow Day Gives Students a Career Glimpse



Perris Mayor Michael Vargas addresses the assembly of students who took part in the City's 2017 Job Shadow Day: "Stay in school, go to college, get that degree. You won't regret it."

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Dozens of Perris Valley high school students traded their textbooks and classroom lectures for safety glasses, laboratories and a morning patrolling Lake Perris as part of the City's second "Job Shadow Day" on Feb. 2.

The day provides high school seniors with the chance to go to work with the pros, where they get the chance to witness a wide range of jobs and job skills, ask questions, pick up information and learn first-hand the responsibilities and rewards of employment.

Students shadowed lab workers at Eastern Municipal Water District, a Lake Perris State Recreation Area police officer, the City of Perris, police and fire stations, a dentist office, fulfillment center and other Perris businesses.

One high schooler interested in working in the public sector spent the morning accompanying Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez as he made the rounds to various departments on the City Hall Campus.

City Councilwoman Tonya Burke addressed the students before they left for their specific job sites. Mayor Michael Vargas spoke to the students upon their return.

Burke urged the students to ask lots of questions from the workers they were shadowing. Inquire about their specific duties, the education needed to obtain their job, their likes and dislikes about it, their salaries.

"I want you to feel special today because you are special," Burke said.

She said she is pleased the City of Perris is partnering with employers and local community colleges to create pathways to successful careers.

"It is important that our City has stepped forward and made a commitment to help ensure our residents are ready for the workforce that is coming in the future," she said. "The most important thing to take away from this day is to understand how important a job is to your future."



Perris City Manager Richard Belmudez and City Councilwoman Tonya Burke said Job Shadow Day is a great opportunity to introduce high schoolers to the world of work.

Inside the lab

Leticia Vargas and Taleyah Willett spent the morning at Eastern Municipal Water District, where they donned lab coats and safety goggles while touring the laboratories used to check the levels of minerals, organics and contaminants in drinking water. It's all part of the utility's continuing commitment to ensure a safe water supply.

Leticia and Taleyah attend Nuview Bridge Early College High School. Leticia, 17, hopes to attend college and study environmental science, so the trip to EMWD was a natural. Taleyah, 18, plans on studying creative writing in college.

Both came away impressed by the thoroughness of the testing and the technology employed. Leticia noted that a "lot of intricate steps go into making the water safe. The top priority is to make sure the water is up to standards. A lot of work goes into tap water."

Taleyah noted that technology plays a critical part in testing water used by the district's customers.

"Everything is done with technology, not by hand," she said. "That ensures faster, better and more accurate results."



EMWD lab Andrew Rozenstraten explains the safeguards the utility goes through to ensure water-quality safety to Nuview Bridge Early College High School students Taleyah Willett and Leticia Vargas, who toured the facility as part of 2017 Job Shadow Day.

Patrolling Lake Perris

Alex Morraz, 17, a Val Verde High School student, got a behind-the-scenes look at law enforcement at the Lake Perris State Recreation Area. The highlight of his day came when Officer Brady Her put him in a patrol boat and cruised around the water at 35 mph, looking for boats in distress, debris on the water or other obstacles to navigation. Other law enforcement duties at the lake include searching for lost hikers, protecting natural resources and investigating crimes like auto burglaries.

Her's view is spectacular. Snow-capped mountains jut skyward in the distance, and the sun glinted off the water as he made his rounds.

"This is my office," he said. "I love it."

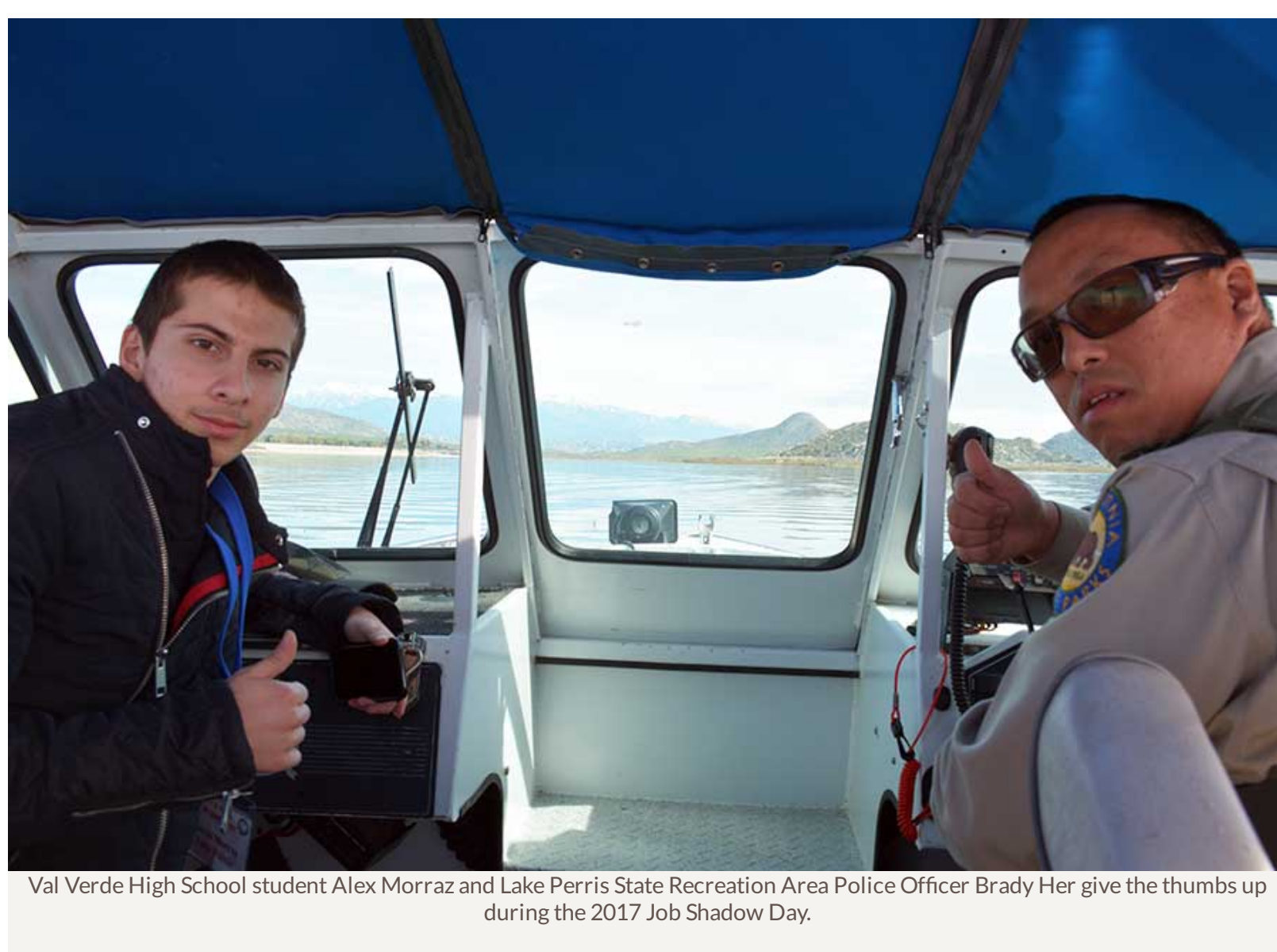
Her said a pair of students who took part in the previous job shadow day in Perris have been hired as park aides at Lake Perris. Both are doing excellent work.

"There is nothing more fulfilling than knowing that you've had a hand in shaping somebody's future," Her said.

Alex said he is considering a career in law enforcement (along with business or information technology) so the ride-along fit nicely into his future plans. He said his morning at Lake Perris revealed to him that policing and operating a state recreation area "is a big operation."

He said he appreciated the City's efforts in organizing and participating in job shadow day 2017 because "it introduces you to a career you ultimately pursue when you get out of high school."

"Today was a great learning experience," Alex said. "And it was fun too."



Val Verde High School student Alex Morraz and Lake Perris State Recreation Area Police Officer Brady Her give the thumbs up during the 2017 Job Shadow Day.

Advice from the Mayor

Mayor Vargas called job shadowing an excellent opportunity to become exposed to the world of work.

"There's nothing better than to have hands-on experience," Vargas said. "You can read about a job in a brochure but you can't compare it to being hands-on with a person in the work force. There's no comparison. This was a very enlightening day for our students."

Vargas urged the students to continue their education in two or four-year schools, noting that college opens up more and better paying job opportunities.

"Stay in school, go to college, get that degree," he said. "You won't regret it."



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