

Career Planning for Students in the Copper River Basin

By Jim Lorence, Copper River School District Guidance Counselor

Why did you choose the career you are in? What education and training was required to enter your profession? What do you like the most about your job? What do you like the least? These were some of the questions students asked presenters at the Copper River School District Career Day this past fall.

Choosing a career is not an easy task. Important decisions like this require much thought and planning, and exposure to the types of careers available in today's world can certainly help. Giving our students a better understanding of the opportunities awaiting them was one of the primary goals of the day-long event held at Glennallen School in Glennallen, Alaska.

This was not your typical career fair format; we wanted to achieve a blended experience where the students listened to speakers in the morning sessions, but were also given the chance to meet with them informally. This format provided structure to the day, but gave students freedom to interact one on one with

speakers.

Approximately 200 students in grades 6 through 12 participated in the day, which kicked off with a welcome to all presenters and students in the school's auditorium.

In addition to demonstrating a wide range of career fields, another goal of the event was to present careers that required a small amount of formal school coupled with on-the-job experience as well as careers that required four-year degrees and more.

To achieve this balance, I invited 24 presenters from throughout the Copper River Basin, Valdez, and Wasilla.

Presenters represented a wide variety of career fields, including public relations, culinary arts, theater, law enforcement, recreation, natural resources, real estate, graphic arts, medical, engineering, and more. Each of them graciously came to school that day, volunteering their time to talk with students about the "real world" out there.

Copper Valley Electric Association was just one of the local businesses on hand. It was a great opportunity for representatives to talk to the students about the electric industry and the wide variety of positions common in many electric utilities. Travis Million, CVEA Manager of Generation, discussed engineering and operations, and outlined future possibilities with CVEA, while Sharon Crisp, CVEA Manager of Member Services, shared her knowledge about marketing and public relations.

From the list of careers, students pre-selected four presentations they wanted to hear, and rotated through those sessions every 20 minutes.

As I walked around the school viewing the presentations, I saw that students were listening attentively, clearly engaged in the discussions about their futures.

Travis Million, CVEA Manager of Generation, talks to students about opportunities at their electric Cooperative and throughout the utility industry.

Photo by Sharon Crisp





Top Left, students meet with ARMY representatives to find out how they can become Army Strong. Top Right, Cross Road Medical Center was on hand to answer student's questions about the medical industry.

Photos by John Berner

They posed many excellent questions to the presenters.

From the speakers' perspective, it appeared they were enjoying the opportunity to take a break from their regular routine at the office and help kids. According to Travis Million, "This was a great opportunity for CVEA to come speak to the young people in our communities about our industry and the future opportunities available to them at their local Cooperative."

After lunch, each student was given the opportunity to meet with the presenters in a large group setting in the gymnasium. This gave students a chance to ask specific questions of any presenter they wanted.

One final goal of Career Day was to provide students guidance regarding how they should start their career planning while still in school. This was achieved when all students attended a seminar on this topic.

Marnie Graham, Public Affairs Specialist for the Bureau of Land Management Glennallen Office, designed and gave this presentation. It focused on the steps students should take to determine and pursue the career they desire.

At the end of the day, students were asked to fill out an evaluation. One sophomore student wrote "I liked it (career day) because it gave me an idea of what I want to do when I get out of high school". This was exciting to read because that, in essence, is what career day is all about. ■

The Copper River School District would also like to thank the following for helping make this a successful day: Ahtna, Inc., Alaska Apprenticeship Training Association, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Alaska Employment Service, Alaska State Troopers, American Village of Alaska, Bureau of Land Management Glennallen Office, Copper River Native Association, Copper River School District Board of Education, Crossroad Medical Center, Keller Williams Realty Alaska-Randolphwagner.com, Larz Enterprises, National Park Service, United States Army, United States Marine Corp, and United States Navy.

