

Teens Learn about Job Chances

By Jennifer Moody

Albany Democrat-Herald

Ten mid-valley employers pay a visit to Albany's alternative high school

Thanks to her mom, 15-year-old Kayla Johnson of Albany had a job working at a garden center over the summer.

But until Thursday, she'd never actually had to stand in front of a potential employer for a real, live interview.

"It is very new for me. I kind of freaked out a little in the beginning," said Kayla, who participated Thursday in the Employer Job Fair at the alternative Albany Options School.

But her interviewer, Jill Sharp of Wah Chang, helped put her at ease, talking about the variety of possibilities for an entry-level job.

"I really want them to know there are lots of opportunities in big companies. Not doing engineering doesn't mean you're not a candidate," said Sharp, who discussed lab tech, computer, accounting and marketing options with Kayla. "If students really look at what their interests are, they can find a way to put them in different companies."

High school students at AOS listened to a presentation earlier in the week on how to dress, questions to ask and other etiquette involved in interviewing.

Ten companies took part in Thursday's job fair, guiding the teens through the intricacies of interviewing: Comcast, Wah Chang, Sodexo, Alann Bros., Samaritan Health, the Community After-School Program, Linn-Benton Community College, the Mid-Willamette Family YMCA, the Boys & Girls Club of Albany and Central Willamette Credit Union.

At the Boys & Girls Club table, teen director Nicole Shumaker encouraged Ashley Cavanaugh, 16, to take a volunteer application. Many young hires start by volunteering or becoming part of the high school Keystone leadership program, she said.

Jaime Hansen, assistant director at CAP, said aide positions can be filled with employees as young as 15, and she does currently have an open position. "I would love to find someone here" who's interested in applying, she said.

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Jobs depend on it. Roughly 8,000 people work in the retail sector in Linn and Benton counties, some 4,700 in Linn County alone. The Democrat-Herald urges readers to consider the mid-valley economy when making buying decisions.

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