

Students Host Technical School Fair

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By Patricia Villers, New Haven Register Staff SHELTON —

Students in Shelton High School's Cooperative Work Experience class got plenty of hands-on experience planning at a recent Career/Technical Training Fair. The event, the first of its kind at the school, was held to highlight post-secondary options for students, as well as to provide resources for members of the community seeking employment or changing careers.

The Cooperative Work Experience class project involved organizing the fair, which featured more than 20 schools. There were representatives on hand from community colleges, cosmetology academies, two-year technical schools and more from across Connecticut. Business teacher Pat Laskowski, coordinator of the Cooperative Work Experience program, said the class received a \$300 grant through The School for Ethical Education in Milford to help defray expenses of operating the fair.

The idea is to help students "connect to outside learning," Laskowski said. All of her students, who are seniors, have jobs at various locations. They spend one day a week at the job site, she said, and are required to make up missed

school work. James, a senior student said the class started the project by researching technical schools and contacting them by phone and e-mail. He said students made fliers advertising the fair, and designed a pamphlet for it. James said he plans to attend Porter and Chester Institute to study computer networking. Fellow senior Tiana said working on the fair planning was "a lot of work, but it looks good on our resumes." Her goal is to become a registered nurse. She spends one day at week at Lafayette School. "I sit back and watch what the nurse does".

David Wangaard, executive director of The School for Ethical Education, said the nonprofit organization "encourages kids to have a vision" of the career they would like to pursue. He said the agency supports service-learning projects such as the Shelton High School program. J. Yvette Tucker, an admissions representative from Naugatuck Valley Community College, said the idea of having students organize the fair was "wonderful." She said it appeared the schools represented at the fair "reflect what (the students) want to do" in the future. Rachel Stimpson, who was representing Lincoln Technical Institute in Shelton, said technical schools often "get lost in the shuffle" at college fairs held for high school students. "Smaller technical career fairs benefit the technical schools." Jennifer Spignesi, admissions representative for Lincoln College of New England in Southington, formerly Briarwood College, said the most popular courses of study are dental hygiene, mortuary science, criminal justice and nursing. Medical assisting is the most popular program at Fox Institute in West Hartford, said admissions representative Katie Day. The school offers "lifetime job placement" for students, she said. Peter Leone, career programs specialist at Porter and Chester Institute's Stratford campus, applauded the idea of having students plan the event. He said his school offers automotive technician programs, a field he called "recession-proof."



Technical school fair hosted as service-learning project by cooperative work experience class.