



WestLinn Tidings



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STAFF PHOTO / VERN UYETAKE

Emma Foster, 16, of West Linn is a junior at ArtTech High School and enjoys spending time with local dogs. She finds interning at The Dog Club in West Linn to be a "good way to get my foot in the door for a job." This is her first job on her own, and she is hoping to continue working through the summer.



LEARNING on the job

Students at Arts and Technology High School get a taste of the real world in weekly internship positions

By LINDA HUNDHAMMER
Staff Reporter

The 80-student Arts and Technology High School (ArtTech) in Wilsonville is different — in all the right ways.

It offers small classes, a small student body and a personalized education for students who thrive in just such an environment. Plus, the school now offers its students something even more unique: jobs.

As part of the ArtTech curriculum, every student is required to participate in an internship program for four to five hours on Fridays. The students are placed in positions according to their interests. Jobs include positions at the U.S. Army recruiting office, Willamette Falls Hospital, the city of West Linn, a dog grooming facility and the CREST farm, to just name a few.

"I strongly believe it is our duty to better prepare all students with employment skills while they are still in high school," said Anne Burns, a youth transition program specialist at ArtTech and West Linn High School and internship coordinator at ArtTech. "Students who participate in non-paid internships have a much better chance of getting paid employment in this economy."

For West Linn 16-year-old Tyler Berry, who is working at the Army Recruiting Station in Oregon City, the internship program has been a great fit.

"I've always wanted to join the military. I'm from a military family," Berry said.

"My sister is in the navy, my dad is in the army and my grandfather was in the marines. I called the recruitment office to get this position, and I was really excited when I got it."

A casual young man from Maine, Berry dresses up for work on Fridays in the required slacks and a tie.

Krysten Carner, 16, of Wilsonville is working at the National Alliance on Mental Illness in Milwaukie.

"I am hoping to go into psychology and counseling, so this has been cool," Carner said. "I do whatever they need me to do, and I am really liking it. It is fulfilling."

ArtTech High School has been open since 2005 and has served as an alternative for students who are considered "outside the margins" of mainstream high school. Many consider it a "school of second chances."

For Julia Judge, 15, a sophomore from West Linn, the entire ArtTech experience has been right for her.

"I knew when I was failing every class in middle school that a big high school was not going to be for me," Judge said. "But then my sister started at ArtTech and came



STAFF PHOTO / LINDA HUNDHAMMER
Julia Judge, a sophomore at ArtTech High School, stacks animal beds at Healthy Pet in West Linn. Her internship on Friday afternoons helps her learn her own strengths along with responsibilities in the work place.

home smiling every day. Now I am passing all my classes with at least a B+."

Judge's internship is at Healthy Pet in West Linn, and she said, "I love it here. It is great working with the animals. It has a family feel; and I feel safe."

For Amber Nurmi, owner of the Healthy Pet, having Judge on the staff has been "a great help. She takes on responsibilities that seem far beyond that of a 15-year-old. We love having her."

The ArtTech internship program, up and running since October, provides students with academic credit and practical experience.

"Some of the students stumbled a little at the beginning," said Saskia Dresler, principal at ArtTech. "Just typical teen things like appropriate dress, punctuality, communication — but our school staff is here to help them work things out and do the necessary follow up. If a job is a bad fit, or something is not going well, we help them find ways to speak up, talk to their boss and use their own advocacy skills."

"The students have gained confidence at their jobs," Burns said. "And, maybe more importantly, they've learned the

importance of perseverance and endurance.

"For many this is the first time they've had adults as peers, and they are learning to master those kinds of interpersonal skills."

For West Linn's Jessica Judge, a junior, the position at the city of West Linn has been a positive experience for both parties. Judge has worked in the parks and recreation department, with the sustainability task force, with the project coordinator and in the finance department.

"We are showing Jessica a broad spectrum of what the city does," said Ken Warner, recreation director for West Linn. "Her internship has worked out really well for us. It is refreshing to have a young person in the office. We are so impressed by her eagerness to do more."

ArtTech has a continuously expanding database that includes more than 100 potential employers thanks to the volunteer efforts of Sandra DeSpain. DeSpain is a former school-to-work coordinator for Clackamas County.

"I have been doing this for more than 16 years," DeSpain said. "It is exciting to watch the students find their voice."

"I asked for this assignment, and I love my placement," said Emma Foster, 16, of West Linn, who interns at The Dog Club of West Linn. "I get to work with the dogs. Plus, it is nice to have work experience and to get my foot in the door in the workplace."

For more information about the ArtTech internship program, or if you are interested in having an ArtTech student intern at your business, contact Anne Burns at 503-830-0263 or burnsa@wlwv.k12.or.us.

The Arts and Technology High School is located in the former Wesleyan Church at 29796 S.W. Town Loop Center in Wilsonville. For more information, call 503-673-7375.



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Tyler Berry, 16, interns at the Army Recruiting Station in Oregon City, and Krysten Carner, 16, is at the National Alliance on Mental Illness in Milwaukie. Both Berry and Carner pursued these internships in order to learn more about their fields of interest.