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New Web Site Launched

By Donna Bombard

Linking Learning to Life (LLL) launched a new web site at the end of April 2003. The new site is located at www.linkinglearningtolife.org. Along with the expert assistance of Union Street Media and input from staff and board members, LLL was able to launch a site that is user friendly, navigates easily and offers a great deal of school-to-career information.

The new site offers business

and educator partnership information and allows students to explore career opportunities right here in Chittenden County! The site also includes a complete listing of programs and services, contact information, and detailed information related to many model programs developed over the last several years.

Some of the new features included on this site are the School-To-Career online database and Learn to Earn program information. The

School-To-Career database features listings of schools, alternative programs and businesses that participate in school-to-career activities.

Businesses and school contacts that are not displayed in the database are strongly encouraged to fill in a brief on-line form to make sure that you are included in this important regional resource.

Please check out: www.linkinglearningtolife.org

Career Fairs Expose Students to Career Opportunities

By Rebecca Dodge-Katz

Career fairs were recently held at Essex High School, Champlain Valley Union (CVU) High School, and South Burlington High School. Career fairs benefit all involved. Students are exposed to career options, employers recruit new help, and teachers use fairs as a tool for incorporating career information into the curriculum.

Students are often directly involved in organizing career fairs. At CVU, the Future Business Leaders of

America publicized the event. At South Burlington High, juniors and seniors in the Independent Living classes did much of the work recruiting and hosting employers.

Russ Aceto, Career Day organizer at CVU, said that it had become "part of the vernacular of the school." He estimated that the fair had 35-40 presenters and was visited by 900 students. In addition, CVU has expanded Career Day by hosting 35 Career Speakers



Special Olympics Presenter Cindy Elcan

who give classroom presentations.

At South Burlington's Career/Job Expo I had the opportunity to speak with students, presenters, and staff to see what career

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South Burlington High School gets REAL

By Bill Minard,
S. Burlington High School

Students at South Burlington High School have the opportunity to enroll in REAL (Relevant Entrepreneurship through Action Learning), where they learn to develop a viable business plan.

The program is designed to help individuals develop skills, expand their knowledge, and create tangible products, including new enterprises. Participants engage in community, market and industry analysis as they assess potential for various businesses. Concepts in financial assessment such as cash flow, breakeven analysis, and

profit and loss statements must be mastered before students embark on their task.

A number of students have moved on to major in business at post-secondary institutions

Implemented in 1995, a number of students have moved on to major in business at post-secondary institutions. Of course, other students have determined that entrepreneurship is not for them, often commenting on the fact that it

is a lot more work and involvement than originally anticipated. Many graduates have stated

that the experience has made them better employees, as they have developed an appreciation for the owners, and as well have an understanding of the value of customer service.

Teacher Bill Minard states that "REAL is an exciting class to teach; participants come in motivated, it is experiential in nature, and I get to see the real creative side of students." Matt Kaufman, a 2001 enrollee and

a teacher's aid for 2002, expressed, "I learned many business concepts that will be helpful as I prepare for a business major in college. I submitted my plan to the St. Michael's College business plan competition and was awarded a \$40,000 scholarship." That should be helpful for the college expense cash flow statement.

The REAL program at South Burlington High School currently enrolls approximately 20 students per year.

For more information about the REAL program, contact Bill Minard at 652-7095 or billm@sbschools.net.

Career Fairs cont.

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fairs are all about. Over 960 students came to the fair and 56 careers were represented. Students from the Independent Living class had contacted employers, secured food and door prize donations, done publicity for the event, and hosted presenters at the fair.

Nancy LaVarnway, coordinator of the 4th annual Career Fair said, "Benefits to students include career exploration, securing shadowing and internship opportunities plus community service options. In addition, students may find

summer, full time or part time employment options."

Organizations represented included the New England Culinary Institute, IDX Corporation, Gardener's Supply, Burton, Armed Services, local colleges, and more.

I was drawn by the display by Black River Designs, an architectural firm from Montpelier. It included model buildings, as well as blue prints of renovations done at South Burlington High School a few years ago. The employers from Black River Designs, Guy Teschmacher and Keith

Robinson, came to the fair to get students interested in careers as architects. When asked what skills youth who wanted to work for their firm should have, they both said,

Career fairs have really become part of school vernacular

"Good enthusiasm and attitude." Students working at the fair definitely were enthusiastic. They said it had taken a lot of work, but were glad to have the

experience.

Researching career fairs, I realized how many presenters were there, not only to find new employees or summer interns, but to get students excited about the careers they enjoyed. Once students decide they are interested in a particular career, job shadowing and internship opportunities can be developed.

Career fairs are one of a number of school-to-career initiatives happening in the area. Linking Learning to Life looks forward to supporting career exposure events like these

36 Hours of College Life: LLL's 2003 College Explorations Retreat

by Anya Schwartz

Swimming, attending classes, ice cream at the Johnson State College President's home, campus tours, frisbee on the green, late-night basketball, speaking with professors, study abroad and student panels. You name it, we experienced it!

Linking Learning to Life's 2003 College Explorations Retreat brought 18 BHS students to Johnson State College and Saint Michael's College for a glimpse of college life. By bringing a targeted group of students to experience

college first-hand, we hoped that these students



Johnson State College

would come to view college as a concrete possibility for their future.

Attending a college class was the highlight for some students. "Women in Art?" One student asked skeptically before sitting in on this after-lunch 1.5 hour Johnson State College class. "The class was really

interesting! The students all participated so much.

It went by really fast," commented this same student after the class. After experiencing college for a weekend, many retreat participants are now planning to take a college class through LLL's College Connections program.

Another highlight was spending the evening with Johnson State College President, Barbara Murphy. President Murphy graciously hosted a private ice cream social for the LLL group in her home. In addition to speaking with President Murphy about life at Johnson, students en-

joyed chatting with three JSC students, asking them about their classes, their professors, and their social lives while they dished out scoops of chocolate ice cream.

Overall, the retreat was a great success. Afterwards, 100% of students reported that they have a better idea of what college is like. Students reported without exception that they felt more determined to go to college, or that they identified themselves more strongly as college-bound. Asked to rate their overall experience, nearly two-thirds gave the trip a perfect 10! Although planning for the 2004 retreat won't start for several months, students are already asking, "Where are we going next year?"

Linking Learning to Life Employs New Community-Based Learning Coordinator

Geoffrey Pippenger recently joined the Linking Learning to Life team as its new Community-Based Learning Coordinator. He will help to develop, support, and coordinate community-based learning models in schools throughout Chittenden County. Geoffrey will be working with schools, employers, post-secondary institutions, and community partners

regarding job-shadowing opportunities, student internships, and the Ready, Set, Work! program.

Geoffrey came to LLL after serving for one and a half years as an AmeriCorps*VISTA with the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity's Micro Business Development Program. He graduated in 1997 from

Middlebury College and also holds a Masters of Arts from Michigan State University. Geoffrey has experience as a teacher and program coordinator and is looking forward to the challenges and rewards that will come with working in his new role.

If you have any questions or comments call Geoffrey at 951-8848 or e-mail him at gpippeng@bsdvt.org.



Geoffrey in his new office!

Linking Learning to Life gets results:

"According to LLL stakeholders, more Burlington youth are choosing to stay in school and are equipped with the tools necessary to make the transition to post-secondary education and the world of work specifically because of LLL specific programs and activities. Programs offered by LLL are considered to be important and necessary. As evidenced by the extensive survey comments, teachers and employers from the Burlington community believe strongly that LLL initiatives should be continued and expanded..."

Overall, evaluation indicators suggest that Linking Learning to Life has had a profound impact on the Burlington community over the past five years. Each program supported by or developed by Linking Learning to Life (including Mentoring, College Connections, Career Development, and the Vermont Employer Teacher Internship Program) was referred to by stakeholders as important and resulting in positive academic and vocational outcomes for youth. In addition, teachers and employers reported significant personal and professional benefits as a result of participation in LLL and lend their unequivocal support for continuation and expansion of Linking Learning to Life school-to-work initiatives."

—**Summary, Linking Learning to Life Final Evaluation Report, January 2003,**
Rebecca Gajda, Ph.D., University of Vermont

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