

Published March 23rd, 2016

Acalanes Reaches for the Stars at Career Day

By Cathy Tyson



From left: Nicole O'Connor, Maddie Guzaitais and Rebecca Kauffman

their top four choices, and most everyone got into their top two requested sessions. Seniors got first dibs.

An amazing collection of over 50 authorities from a wide range of professions shared with students on Career Day how to get into their line of work and what their job entails. The group included experts in graphic arts, sciences, engineering, technology, commercial real estate, astro-biology, pharmacology, psychology, the military, fashion design, and even a professional rock climber and a scuba dive master (surprisingly presented by Silvestri).

Under the direction of College and Career Center Advisor Joan Karr, along with the help of a Google survey by volunteer Barry McQuain, the day was hectic but rewarding. "There were a lot of moving parts - but it was surprisingly successful," says Karr, adding, "It wouldn't be possible without our very supportive staff."

Not only did Karr have to round up the presenters, she then had to assign them classrooms that would accommodate the number of students that signed up for that particular topic.

The most popular session was with a Senior Investigator with the FBI, who asked to remain nameless; so many students signed up, his talk occurred at the Performing Arts Center auditorium. For security purposes, they were asked to leave their backpacks in the lobby. He described his job as, "'Foreign counter intelligence' which is really a fancy way of saying 'spy stuff.'"

His casual chat, accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation, spelled out what it takes to get into the FBI, skills required, how competitive it is and qualifications. Out of 100,000 applicants each year, the FBI accepts only 1,000. Topping the list of requirements is a college degree and a minimum of three years of professional work experience, and the ability to work in any of the Bureau's 57 offices. In addition, applicants have to pass a drug test, a polygraph test, psychological testing and a background check.

Parents may be pleased to hear about the necessary skills to become an agent, which could apply

For the past seven years, all of Acalanes' approximately 1,200 students have had the chance to follow their dreams, however briefly, with a pair of unique presentations they selected from real live people with actual jobs in their chosen fields.

"Please share your stories today about how you got to where you are," advised Acalanes High School Principal Allison Silvestri to the many presenters gathered in the College and Career Center for Career Day before heading out to enlighten students. "You are giving kids the opportunity to check out career pathways - the possibilities for our students are endless."

The entire student body took a break from their regular classes to rotate through their choice of two presentations occurring in classrooms all over campus. Students were asked via a survey to select

to many other careers: ability to write and communicate well, be an effective listener, ability to read people and to have confidence in your own judgement. Once the screening process is complete, would-be FBI agents go through the Academy, which the presenter characterized as "20 weeks of hell."

Across campus in room 509, Lisa Schreiber, who is a group vice president at Oracle, provided an overview of a variety of careers in high tech and computer science. Her advice: don't take the easy path, be curious, learn to communicate well and remember that, "you are relevant - you're ability to be agile learners makes the difference."

Karr reflects that many teenagers don't have specific ideas about the career they will ultimately find, but do have a general feeling for science or the arts, and that Career Day offers them a great way to investigate potential avenues to pursue. She feels all of the stories provide a great experience for the students, who learn that career paths are not always logical or linear.

Graduates from past career days have reported that the sessions guided them to what is now their profession, as well as ruled out a particular field that may not have been a good fit.

This was Karr's last Career Day, she'll be retiring at the end of the school year. Hopefully her replacement can continue the tradition.



Manuel Trejo and Max Thrasher Photos C. Tyson

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA