

Program assists students into job world

ERIC FAUCHER
Contributing Writer

Even in the best circumstances, learning what it takes to become a productive member of society can be a struggle for even the most prepared youth.

For at-risk teens, the challenges can be overwhelming. Often, they face a host of barriers to success, ranging from an unstable home environment, drug and alcohol abuse issues to poor performance in school. Overcoming such barriers requires a unique program, which relies on partnership, trust, creativity and commitment.

The goal of The Vocational Options Program (VOP) located in Oregon City is designed to help troubled youths transition successfully into the working world.

Currently, the Program serves approximately 60 students a year. Of those, more than one-third are dropouts. Two-thirds are in school, but are experiencing barriers to

success such as poor attendance, low grades and behavior.

For these students, VOP provides a much-needed second chance for success. For 18 weeks, students work in an activity-based curriculum which emphasizes wellness, self-esteem and teamwork environment that encourages mutual respect.

Two instructors from CCC, Eric Faucher and Michele Michaels, and two ETBS personnel, Youth Employment Specialist Judy Dangerfield and Office Manager Bev Kennon make up the VOP staff. Clackamas County Mental Health provides a youth counselor, Joe Koziol, to assist with referrals to appropriate programs or services when needed.

The two components of the program are Work Readiness and Work Experience. Work Readiness focuses upon career assessment, work ethics, job-finding skills and career exploration. Activities include interest and ability surveys, teamwork exercises in problem solving and communica-

tion, job shadowing, and structured crew assignments in which issues of leadership and cooperation are explored in a real work setting. Students are placed in a work site with a paid position one day a week under the supervision of the youth specialist.

The Work Experience component of the program begins as soon as the students complete the requirements for Work Readiness. In this phase, the focus shifts to expanded paid training opportunities, job search skills, planning and independent living, and job club. Additionally, for students who are not in school, VOP offers a GED prep class three days a week to assist them in completing their high school education.

The program is designed to encourage personal accountability and to reinforce self-directed learning.

Students, not parents, must contact staff if they are late or absent and must be responsible for any makeup work.



BRENDA OLSEN / Clackamas Print

A Vocational Options Program student is advised on resumes by Michelle Michaels, advisor, and Bev Kennon, ETBS office manager.

Additionally, emphasis is placed upon maintaining a comfortable, positive environment. Healthy food is always available, appropriate new clothing for job interviews or training sites are provided if necessary and referrals to essential services, such as the Oregon Health Plan, are facilitated by the staff.

The success of VOP has been recognized recently by the Oregon Association of Vocational and

Special Needs Personnel (OAVSNP). Eric Faucher received Teacher of the Year awards for 1996, while Judy Dangerfield and Bev Kennon were awarded commendations for their outstanding work.

Perhaps the essence of the VOP experience is best summed up by a recent student's comment. "We work hard as a team, we get things done, and we get along. What else do you need?"

OMSI tackles issue of Y2K computer complications

JEREMY STALLWOOD
Feature Editor

Many people involved in the technical world of computers are thinking a lot these days about next year's "Y2K Bug crisis", wondering what will happen and if there is any reason to worry at

all.

One organization informing the public on the problem is, of course, the good old Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, OMSI. Their exhibit, "The Millenium Bug," is now on display.

One of the problems computerized organizations are facing,

according to a video shown at the exhibit, is the fact that most computers and calculators use a two-digit year system. They read 1999 as just 99, and the concern is the possibility that on January 1, 2000, computers will calculate data as if it were 1900.

Another display, "The Year

Calculator," illustrates a particular calculation problem. Say someone is born in 1978, which would make them 22 years old. Their age would be calculated by a two-digit computer system which reads the date next year as 1900, that would change the age of the person to -78 years old. Because such programs were not told to read a negative age, the number in the system will show as 78. In addition, the government is concerned that because their systems are completely computerized, social security checks will be sent to people who are far too young to receive them.

Another issue, addressed through OMSI's Millennium Bug website, is that not all the problems are expected on just Janu-

ary 1, 2000. The year 2000 will be a leap year and the date of concern is February 29, 2000, which would read in computers as 2/29/00. The oddity of these numbers may throw programs off. Another date, to occur this year will be September 9, 1999, reading as 9/9/99. According to the website, a series of nines represents a termination of program code. They're worried that these complications will cause major crashing.

Each month, The Tech Museum of Innovation in San Jose, Calif., reviews 10 of the best technology websites for teachers, students, families, and OMSI's Millennium Bug site was on their Top 10 for the month of January. Visit the site at:

<http://www.amz.org/omsi/home.html>.

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Divonna Ratliff, exhibit developer at OMSI, points out one of the latest projects, "The Millenium Bug," found in the multi-million dollar museum of science and industry.

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