

CAREERS

Minding the Business of the USDA Forest Service

Contracting officer Stevonne Fuller manages contracting agreements and logistics for the Gifford Pinchot National Forest

By Christen McCurdy
Of The Skanner News

Stevonne Fuller majored in business and initially considered a career in finance before a chance encounter with a recruiter from the USDA Forest Service changed her mind.

Originally from Englewood, New Jersey, Fuller attended Florida A & M University and graduated from its five-year master of business administration program, which grants students a combined bachelor's degree and MBA after five years of study. She considered careers at financial services firms like Ernst & Young, but then attended a career fair held by the university and met a Forest Service recruiter who was also a FAMU graduate.

"She explained the type of work that they did and what the mission of the Forest Service was, and how the job of the contracting officer helps support that. She pretty much sold me on it. I wanted to make sure I did a job that was helping people, and she definitely showed me that this position does do that," Fuller told *The Skanner*.

Fuller works out of the Forest Service's Vancouver, Washington office, managing internal and external contracts that help the Forest Service do its work. That includes both non-emergent infrastructure projects – like repairing a bridge on Forest Service land that needs to be updated for public access – as well as managing contracts during emergencies like forest fires. This can mean bringing outside contractors in where necessary, contracting with caterers to make sure firefighters at base camp are fed, lodged and have access to fire, and other tasks that accompany assembling a base camp.

Fuller recommends young people who are interested in doing similar work to pursue an MBA, which is required for some allocation certificates she needs to do her job. She said her work requires a high degree of flexibility and open-mindedness. A self-described "city girl," she had never spent much time in the outdoors before taking her current job, and attention to detail and customer service are needed.

"It really is a fun job.

I think one of the most important things for me is when I get a chance to see the finished project and that actually, the contract is complete," Fuller said. "Now I can see that this bridge has been constructed, and it's going to help the public be able to access some of the areas that are very popular."

Fuller has worked out of the same office since 2009, but it's common for Forest Service employees to move to different agencies and divisions, and often it's encouraged since seeing how different regional offices work can help employees grow. She's also required to take 80 hours of continuing education every two years to keep her certifications current. Typically she takes courses that are specific to her role – for example, contracting law or ethics in contracting.

Forest Service spokesperson Shandra Terry said anyone interested in finance, accounting or contracting should consider a career path like Fuller's.

"I think it's super important for [readers] to know what's attainable," Terry said. "In the



Stevonne Fuller is a contracting officer for the USDA Forest Service.

sense of discipline and education and career track, we need more of, we need our little girls to know that it is attainable – that you become a success and that and that you can start off here, but you never know where you'll end up with that education and that inspiration."

DA's Office Participates in Career Planning with POIC + RAHS Students

Multnomah County
District Attorney Office

Recently, members of the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office participated in an event that gave students from Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center (POIC) and Rosemary Anderson High School (RAHS) the opportunity to connect with professionals working in our community.

The meet and greet, which included tacos

for lunch, gave students a chance to ask questions about career opportunities in a variety of fields. The Multnomah County District Attorney's Office had multiple representatives at the event including Senior Deputy District Attorney Glen Banfield; Deputy District Attorneys Shannon Erskine, Mariel Mota and Anna Fuller; Victim Advocates Malia Bruni and Chanel Thomas and Investigator Joshua Johnson. There were also representatives from the Portland Police Bureau, Portland Fire & Rescue, Adidas, Nike and Daimler Trucks North America.

Multnomah County Deputy District Attorney Shannon Erskine meets with a student to talk about career planning.

Multnomah County Deputy District Attorney Shannon Erskine meets with a high school student to talk about career planning.

"It was great interacting with the students and hearing about their dreams for the future," Victim Advocate Chanel Thomas said. "Some of the students we talked with didn't know the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office had a Victim Assistance Program. It was fun for Malia and me to show them that there are other careers in the DA's Office besides being a prosecutor."

The event started with an icebreaker so the students and guests got to know each other on a personal level.

"Honestly, I was a bit

nervous going into the lunch because it felt like I was going back to high school, an experience I did not really enjoy," said Deputy District Attorney Shannon Erskine. "Once we sat down and started talking over lunch, it was great telling the students about what we do here at the DA's Office. The students were full of stories about their lives and future plans. I'm really glad I could be a part of this event."

Many of the students had a clear vision of what they wanted to do after graduation.

One young woman talked about her desire to become a homicide detective. Another student talked about touring the courthouse and meeting with judges. At the same time, the students opened up about the hardships they face, such as graduating, finding a job, dealing with money, and pregnancy.

"This was an opportunity to show the next generation of career professionals that we all have stories to tell," Thomas said.

"Many of the students were excited to see the relatability we share. We've all had struggles to get where we are in our careers and the students recognized that."

POIC and RAHS are committed to the future success of at-risk youth through the age of 25. POIC connects youth affected by poverty, family instability and homelessness with education through Rosemary Anderson High School and career training and development.



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