

Career reality program at Lovett edges students ahead

By Cathy Johnson Neighbor Newspapers Staff
Writer

Like most youngsters, Bryan Stickney, a senior at The Lovett School, showed a strong interest in sports and played them year round. But now he's at the time in his life to plan for college and focus on a future career.

Bryan got a clearer picture of integrating his love of sports with a real world career by participating in Lovett's week-long Career Reality Experience class in July.

Lovett partnered with Brookhaven-based Sherpani Partners, a nonprofit and educational organization, to give students the confidence and self-knowledge to better describe themselves in admission forms and to focus them on career planning.

"Our goal was to help students discover who they are and start exploring their options early," said Susan Solomon, a Lovett parent who was instrumental in bringing the program to the school. "Many people discover after college what they want to do, but feel it is too late to change careers."

Marsha Little, academic dean of upper school affairs, added, "We don't do much in the way of career counseling, even though we have a robust college counseling program here."

Stickney said he liked the afternoon he spent job shadowing a sports agent to be the most helpful.

Stickney said the agent received an undergraduate degree in business and then got a law degree. "Right now I'm looking at colleges where I can major in business and I never really focused on that before."

"I found out a law degree really helps him with his career," said Stickney, who now wants to major in sports marketing at Auburn University, the University of Alabama or the University of South Carolina.

The program focused on small group workshops, personal skills inventories and job shadowing.

During the mornings, students took the Strong Interest Inventory and Ability Tests to identify strengths, natural interests and abilities that would fit the college courses and careers

available. They also role-played interviews and practiced business communications skills.

"The tests helped me understand my interests and what work environment I want," said Morgan Moody, a junior at Lovett. "I've always wanted to act and I saw how that interest can translate into a media or law career."

During the afternoons, students visited different companies to job shadow and conduct informational interviews.

"I didn't have a chance to go into a company before I began my career," said Abigail Smith, account director for What's up Interactive, a Dunwoody-based interactive marketing agency.

Ms. Smith said the Lovett student who came was involved in team meetings about client needs and interactions with clients via e-mail and telephone.

"She was interested in graphic design, so I set up time with our creative director," she said.

Other companies that hosted job shadows were Cousins Properties, Atlanta Woman magazine, The Coca-Cola Co., SunTrust, ProFiles Sports, Georgia Tech, CBS 46 TV, Woodruff Arts Center and Emory University Alumni Association.

"It gave my son more confidence to look ahead," said Margaret Stickney, Bryan's mother. "He talked to professionals and shook hands with professionals."

This was the first summer Lovett offered the career program. Five students were part of the initial class, but the program "far exceeded expectations", said Ms. Little, so plans are to offer it again this summer. Program details for summer 2009 will be announced in February. The program is open to any rising junior or senior in the metro Atlanta area.

Information: (404) 262- 3032 or visit www.lovett.org.

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