

At Boeing, the Shadow Knows

Boeing Participates in Job Shadow Day

When it comes to understanding what the people of Boeing do each and every day, the shadow knows.

Every year for the past six years, Boeing has participated in a formal program to bring in children of all ages to "shadow" adults in the work place. With events such as Career Day, Family Day, Take Your Daughter to Work Day and now Job Shadow Day, Boeing has built a partnership with the educational community that is certain to shed light on the world of work.

The Boeing Company's Puget Sound-area sites participated in National Groundhog Job Shadow Day on March 13.

Job Shadow Day is an educational opportunity with specific learning objectives for students involved in Junior Achievement and for children and relatives of Boeing employees. But probably the best way to explain Job Shadow Day is to discuss what it isn't. For example:

- It isn't an excuse to get out of school for a day.
- It isn't an opportunity to avoid paying for day-care.
- It isn't a field trip to the zoo. And,
- It isn't a "Bring Your Baby to Work Day."

"Boeing is an active supporter of K-12 education," said Bob Watt, vice president of Government and Community Relations for Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "Involvement in a structured Job Shadow Day program provides clear links between education and career choices for high school children nationwide, benefiting all who participate."

The Boeing Company and Junior Achievement partner early on to ensure the event is a success. Employee involvement specialists at Boeing sites determine the number of students each site can host to maximize the benefit for students and minimize disruption in the work place. Boeing shares this information with Junior Achievement, which then selects students throughout outlying and inner-city schools.

"Boeing has established partnerships with 27 school districts in the Puget Sound region alone," said Joyce Walters, Community Investment manager for Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "Without this partnership, the Job Shadow program wouldn't work."

On National Groundhog Job Shadow Day in Everett, Wash., Boeing employee Benjamin Nimmergut, foreground, shows students Tesir Al-Hussaini and Kyle Mingo what it's like to work as a Video Installation Engineer on the Boeing 777 airplane program.

Maintaining the educational integrity of the event is important. Boeing works together with the Junior Achievement organization to develop detailed, structured curricula for participating students. Students are assigned work packages in advance of the shadow event to help understand what they'll be doing and what's expected of them. In those packages are assignments they must complete prior, during and after the job shadow event, and information on what to expect when they visit work sites. Teachers and Boeing hosts also receive assistance from a job shadow guide.

"Hosting Job Shadow Day events at Boeing really helps break down the fallacy that all adults do at work is have meetings or talk on the phone," Walters said. "Showing students how we use technology, communication skills, teaming and data-collection skills makes a difference in the way high-schoolers view their futures and what it means to have a career. It also helps them understand how relevant their course studies are when they enter the work force."

And the benefits are tangible - for the students and for Boeing. Students who participate in the Job Shadow program often forge positive relationships with their hosts, corresponding with them years later. When the students return to their classrooms and share what they learned "on the job," the benefits are compounded as other students become interested in Junior Achievement and life at Boeing.

"The students who participate in Job Shadow Day at Boeing often ask very difficult, insightful questions of their hosts," Walters said. "They forge positive relationships, and the program often gives them guidance they may not get at home or in a classroom setting."

Boeing employees who host students on Job Shadow Day also benefit. The satisfaction derived from volunteering time for the betterment of their communities is one aspect often cited by hosts. Hosts say the program gives them an enhanced respect for the importance of education and the challenges high-school-aged children face regularly.

"That's why we bring the students to Boeing," Walters said. "Together, we can make a difference -- this year over 600 Boeing employees hosted children on Job Shadow Day."

Once the event is over, feedback Boeing collects from its job shadow hosts and that which Junior Achievement collects from teachers and students are used to improve the next year's event.

"Boeing is committed to helping students make a positive transition from school to work," Watt said. "Participation in Job Shadow Day is just one small part of a larger plan to improve the communities where we live and work. And it builds a better future for the next generation of Boeing employees."

For more on National Groundhog Job Shadow Day, visit the Job Shadow Web site.

For more information on Boeing and its products, visit the Web site.

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