

Students shadow 'Great Women to Know'

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On Feb. 1, Great Women to Know and the Esperanza Academy School of Hope in Lawrence teamed up for a third annual Shadow Day. The goal for the day is to provide the all-girl middle schools' 80 students an opportunity to learn about a wide range of careers, in part by experiencing jobs first hand. Esperanza Academy is a private, tuition-free middle school for socio-economically disadvantaged girls in Lawrence.

The morning began with professionals from all around the Merrimack Valley converging on the school to hold sessions for the fifth- through seventh-grade girls. Veterinarian Jessica Clay and Kathy McFadden from Andover Animal Hospital spoke to the girls about what it is like to work with and care for animals. Professor Diane Sullivan from the Massachusetts School of Law in Andover spoke to the girls about how she developed the law school's unique Animal Law program and how being a lawyer allows her to pursue one of her passions, finding justice for animals. The morning sessions were filled with representatives from other professions such as Andover resident Andrea Carlin speaking about being a banker. The girls also spoke to realtors, acupuncturists, financial planners, architects, neuropsychologist, small business owners, and public relations director Jane Carpenter from PAN Communications. In the afternoon the seventh grade girls "shadowed" these professionals at their respective offices.

The eighth grade girls had a full day of shadowing an attorney, nurse educator, a pediatrician, a chiropractor, and small business owners. Paula Colby-Clements, a professor and director of admissions at the Massachusetts School of Law, took three girls to meet with attorneys and view proceedings at the Lowell Juvenile Court and the Lawrence Probate and Family Court. The girls also spent time at the Andover law school, touring the building, learning about admissions and recruitment and maneuvering the ins and outs of the law library. Two of the eighth-graders spent the day at Phillips Academy in Andover with Leslie Godo-Solo, an educator and recruiter there. Two more of the girls spent the day at Lahey Clinic with Debbie Lowry, a nurse educator in the cardiac department.

GWTK is a dynamic group of women from diverse backgrounds and professions from throughout the Merrimack Valley and the North Shore. The organizations' members are current and former executives, physicians, lawyers, writers, designers, financial advisors and business owners. As part of its mission, Great Women to Know draws on its members' diverse talents to benefit young women in need in the community. Through the partnership with Esperanza Academy, GWTK members are involved in mentoring, skills-sharing, job shadowing and community outreach to help Esperanza's girls and their beloved school flourish.

Laurie Bottinger, head of school at Esperanza, has said, "Great Women To Know is an exciting opportunity for our Esperanza girls as well as for us as women. We truly believe that with support, our girls will be able to break out of the cycle of poverty through education. In order to succeed at Esperanza, we need the help of many community members and I am thrilled to know that a powerful group of women are encouraging, supporting and mentoring our girls. These relationships will show them that their futures are full of opportunities."

Anyone interesting in being involved in next year's Shadow Day, joining GWTK or helping Esperanza can contact President Susan Wilson directly at susan_wilson@ml.com. For more information about Great Women to Know visit www.greatwomentoknow.org or info@greatwomentoknow.org.

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