

Green Industry' offers new job market for young people

PORTAGE PARK DISTRICT FOUNDATION

Amazingly, there are jobs for young people going unfilled in the "Green Industry." At Theodore Roosevelt High School in Kent we offer a two-year program that draws juniors and seniors from six different high schools called Forest and Landscape Management.

This comprehensive program prepares students for careers in Urban Forestry, Turf Management, Arboriculture, Landscape Design and Construction, and Nursery Management — fields that are looking for talented, educated future employees.

Students interested in working outdoors and learning about plants and "dirt" may find this an exciting opportunity for their future. In our program, students combine classroom study with a large dose of field work.

During the first year participants study three to five major areas such as plant identification and selection, landscape construction and design, environmental ecology, tree management, garden center and nursery operations, and turf management while in the second year they focus on one area along with spending three to four hours daily working in that area of interest.

From the program's inception in 1995, the Davey Tree Expert Co. saw the need and benefits of such a program. Their participation has been invaluable in providing guidance through training and recruitment. Currently, thanks to a close connection with Mark Noark, trainer and recruiter for Davey Tree, more than 20 of these graduates are now working for Davey.

Some secured their jobs right out of high school. Some have been able to work part-time as they pursue degrees in area two- or four-year universities, and many have received financial assistance from Davey Tree to pursue further education. In addition, they are constantly given opportunities for in-house training through the Davey Tree Institute.

Graduates of our program work in a variety of areas at Davey Tree. Some work in the diagnostic lab with the plant pathologist and entomologist while others are employed on Davey's managed golf course in turf management. One works

GREEN PORTAGE

Tom Franek



in tree research at the Davey Tree Institute. Many work in residential landscape maintenance while others climb, prune, and care for trees.

Although, Davey Tree is the largest local employer of these graduates, it is not the only local employer. Our alumni work for a great variety of other local "Green Industry"-related businesses including most area golf courses and landscape companies. Thanks to partnerships with Davey Tree and the other employers, students are presented with enormous opportunities for their future.

When students start the program in their junior year, they aren't really sure what they have signed up for. They join because they believe that they like to learn by doing and that they have a connection to the outdoors. Most have no idea where this will take them. They are introduced to activities that are immediately physically challenging and at the same time demand mental focus and the development of skills. They are introduced to a field of study that is often misunderstood and underappreciated. The results are simply growth and maturity.

As they approach graduation at the end of the second year, they are now confident and well-trained in a field that will provide a future, satisfying immediate employment or an avenue to a future college degree. They realize and appreciate the unique high school experience that they were given and the promise it provides for the future.

For further information, you can contact me by email at: ke.tfranek@kentschools.net, or by phone: 330-676-8829.

Tom Franek teaches the Forestry and Landscape Management Program alongside John Lang at Theodore Roosevelt High School in Kent. Green Portage is a monthly feature of the Record-Courier in cooperation with the Portage Park District.

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