



Corridor

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MASON CITY HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORES PARTICIPATE IN MOCK INTERVIEW PROJECT

LOCAL BUSINESSES & MASON CITY High School teamed up recently to give sophomores a chance to practice job interviews.

A project of Mason City CAN, the mock interviews connected approximately 50 business volunteers with over 250 students during one day in March. The volunteers, working in shifts, conducted 20-minute interviews with sophomores.

"Part of it is real interview questions, and the other half is having a conversation about opportunities that exist here in North Iowa," said Hunter Callanan, one of the organizers, from North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation. "This is just a huge project. Teachers put a lot of time into scheduling students for appointment times and getting them prepared."

Professionals volunteering to conduct the mock interviews represented a wide range of industries, including law enforcement, construction, banks, broadcasting, medical, social services, and more. Special education students and English language learners also participated, with the help of support staff and Spanish-speaking professionals.

Dan McGuire, Sr. Vice President, Human Resources, First Citizens Bank in Mason City who also is involved with Mason City CAN, volunteered part of his day to talk with students. "It's good to help, especially if it's something in your bailiwick, and your experience lends to that application," he said. "This experience helps students get prepared for the interview process."

McGuire said most students realize they have a responsibility to prepare for their future and that grades are tied to it. "I'm impressed by those who take it seriously and think about the next step, such as volunteering or getting involved in activities."

He stressed to young people that their interactions with adults around them right now may have an impact on their future. "I'm starting to see the same people looking for jobs that I knew from sports involvement six years ago," McGuire said.

Anne Boyer, project coordinator for MC CAN, agreed. "In the past two days of preparation with students, we talked about that first impression. Sometimes the person you meet, you don't realize will be on your path later on, so you should always put on your best."

Volunteer interviewers like McGuire also spoke with students about what is important to them and the many career paths waiting for them right here in their future.

"Our hope is to show that professionals in the community do value their educational path and also to showcase the many, many career opportunities in North Iowa. We want to encourage them to return some day," said Boyer. "We want to show the value of education and growth after high school. There are so many opportunities available here if they work on soft skills and on their career path."

Boyer was impressed with the number of volunteers who helped with the mock interviews. "It speaks volumes in terms of the professionals taking time from their days and sharing their own pathways," she said. "There are a lot of successful people sitting here today, wanting to support the development of our youth."

Mason City CAN, a team of local organizations and businesses, is collaborating to increase the education and skill level of North Iowans. The task force includes representatives from education, employment, government, workforce development groups, and social services agencies.

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