

Free materials shed light on job shadowing

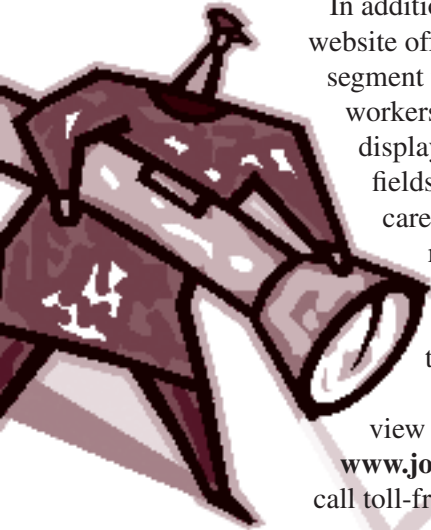
Groundhog Day isn't far off. People who are weary of winter will be hoping that Punxsutawney Phil doesn't see his shadow that day, but at least one group would like to see many shadows of a different kind.

The National Job Shadow Coalition plans to celebrate February 2 as Groundhog Job Shadow Day to kick off Job Shadowing 2005. This program will highlight the value of job shadowing—the process of observing workers on the job for a first-hand look at careers.

The coalition, of which the U.S. Department of Labor is a founding member, makes this type of career exploration easier. Free materials available from the coalition include how-to guides for students, teachers, and employers; lesson plans that tie shadowing to school subjects; and templates for press releases and other promotional materials. All can be downloaded from the coalition's website or ordered by telephone.

In addition to the free materials, the website offers a “virtual job shadowing” segment that allows students to shadow workers via the Internet. These videos display workers in different career fields, together with interviews and career facts. Among the virtual mentors are an automotive parts specialist, a fashion designer, a marine mammal trainer, and a U.S. Senator.

For more information or to view the materials, visit the website, www.jobshadow.org. You may also call toll-free, 1 (800) 373-3174.



Beware of scholarship scams

Millions of students rely on scholarships and other financial aid to help fund their education. But some offers of funding—or services to locate funding—are scams designed to take your money rather than to help you find it. Research and resources from the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the U.S. Department of Education can help you spot the frauds.

According to the FTC, websites and e-mails promoting scholarship searches remain major sources of deception. For the past few years, though, consulting services—such as phony financial-aid seminars—have sparked the most complaints. To avoid the crooks, be wary of offers that request financial information or upfront payment, give guarantees, or claim that you are a finalist or selectee for a scholarship.

Where can you get legitimate help? An abundance of free materials, much of it in both Spanish and English, is available from several Federal agencies. For example, at no charge, the U.S. Department of Education provides information on financial aid and on free scholarship searches. Call the Education Publications Center toll-free, 1 (877) 4-ED-PUBS (433-7827);

Get an internship, land a job

College students, there's a sure-fire way to improve your chances of having a job at graduation: get your foot in the office door while you're still in school.

Often when hiring new college grads, employers look first to their interns. In fact, according to a 2004 National Association of Colleges and Employers survey, internship programs are the most effective recruiting method that employers have. Cooperative assignments, or “co-ops”—long-term work assignments interspersed with college attendance—ranked a close second as a means of recruitment.

The prospect of a job offer isn't the only reason to get in on these programs, however. Internships and

co-ops provide valuable experience to strengthen a resume, bolster confidence, and help students to determine the types of work that they might like to do.

Finding and applying for an internship or co-op takes a little work, but the effort is rarely wasted. Researching and communicating with potential employers, completing applications, and creating resumes and cover letters are excellent ways to practice for a full-fledged job search.

To learn more about internship or



Suggestions welcome:

Do you have an item for the Grab Bag? Send it to Olivia Crosby, PSB 2135, 2 Massachusetts Avenue NE., Washington, DC 20212. Fax (202) 691-5745. E-mail: ooqinfo@bls.gov

write ED PUBS, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398; or check out the student-aid page online at www.studentaid.ed.gov/lisa. The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* also provides information about financial aid (online, see www.bls.gov/oco/oco20023.htm).

Other places to look for financial-aid and scholarship sources are school guidance offices and public libraries that have scholarship directories.

The FTC also provides free scholarship resources, along with information about scholarship scams. To learn more, call toll-free, 1 (877) FTC-HELP (382-4357); visit the Project Scholarscam Web page at www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/edcams/scholarship; or write the FTC's Consumer Response Center, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW., H-130, Washington, DC 20508.

The FTC and the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice issue an annual report on fraud and their efforts to combat it. The 2004 Annual Report to Congress on scholarship fraud is available by calling the FTC number above or by visiting its website, www.ftc.gov/os/2004/05/2004collegescholarshipfraudrpt.pdf.



co-op programs in your area of study, talk to your academic advisor. Many departments keep listings of available opportunities. Your school's career services office and library may also be good starting points for gathering information.

For more information about the National Association of Colleges and Employers or its 2004 Job Outlook survey, write the association at 62 Highland Avenue, Bethlehem, PA 18017-9085; call toll-free, 1 (800) 544-5272; or visit its website, www.nacweb.org.

Seeking a college degree?

Take high school math

Would-be mathematicians, engineers, and accountants usually take advanced math in high school. But so do many aspiring librarians, writers, and anyone else who wants to earn a college degree. In part, that's because people who take advanced math in high school are more likely to complete a college degree, according to data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

The data show that over 60 percent of students who took a trigonometry, precalculus, or calculus class in high school earned a bachelor's or higher degree. Even finishing lower levels of high school math increased students' odds of earning a degree, however—and the odds increased with each additional math class completed. For example, students who took high school math through Algebra 1 earned college degrees 10 percent of the time, more than twice the rate of those who didn't take algebra. Taking geometry in high school more than doubled the degree-completion rate (22 percent), and students whose highest math class was Algebra 2 nearly doubled that rate (40 percent). Taking trigonometry raised the degree-completion rate to 62 percent.

Not surprisingly, most students who studied calculus in high school went on to complete a bachelor's or higher degree. Students who stopped at precalculus earned college degrees 75 percent of the time; those who continued taking math through calculus had an 83-percent completion rate.

Data are from a September 2003 report, "Postsecondary Attainment, Attendance, Curriculum, and Performance: Selected Results From the NELS: 88/2000 Postsecondary Education Transcript Study, 2000." The report examines the high school and posthigh school transcripts for a group of 1992 high school graduates who attended postsecondary institutions between 1992 and 2000. The data were collected as part of a National Educational Longitudinal Study.

The full report is available online at nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/2003394.pdf. For more information, write the National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 K St. NW., Washington, DC 20006. Or call toll-free, 1 (877) 4-ED-PUBS (433-7827), or call (202) 502-7300.

