



THE PROFESSIONALS.

Left: Ralston senior James Landhom listens intently to advice from Tim McGill of McGill Restoration. Below: Omaha South senior Gadiel Salinas takes notes during one of the meetings with professionals at MCC.



Professionals give Scholars insights on future careers

Senior Academy students in the process of narrowing down a career to pursue got the opportunity during a February event to receive valuable inside information when they met with career professionals on the MCC South campus.

“We designed a day where our students could engage in small group discussions with professionals in like-minded industries,” said Terry Fischer, Career Services Director. “We invited 27 Omaha professionals from across the city, that represented a wide variety of career fields.”

Students were given the opportunity to ask detailed questions of the professionals about what working in that industry is really like. Each student got to speak with and ask questions of two different professionals for 15 minutes each.

“We concluded the day with an informal mocktail hour, allowing our students to continue conversations with our guests, or debrief with each other,” Fischer said.

It was the first year ASF hosted “Career Consultations” in this format, where the students were allowed to meet with professionals in small groups and the students guided the discussions with their questions.

“Twice a year, we take our students on industry visits, but this was an opportunity to bring professionals

to our students in small group settings and allow them to have informal conversations about work,” Fischer said. “I know it was a valued experience for our students because when we announced that it was time to wrap up the interviews and enjoy some refreshments, our students continued to sit with our guests and engage in conversation.”

The students then included the information they gathered and discoveries they made from their interviews into their own personal Career Plans.

The professionals also enjoyed the day and the chance to meet young people excited about the potential to join their respective fields.

“I really enjoyed the activity. What a great group of students!” said Melissa Hennings, Site Director, Omaha Early Learning Center-Skinner.

“I thought the event was great and enjoyed talking with the kids. You guys did a great job!” said Tim McGill, President, McGill Restoration.

Other professions represented: interior design, automobile sales and service, business management, hotel management and services, culinary, dental assistance, early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, emergency medical services, information technology, criminal justice, police officer, firefighter, and communication.

Hughes brings police, military experience to role as new Career Talent Advisor

Michael Hughes came back to his hometown, Omaha, not because he was homesick but to have a chance “to reach kids before it’s too late.”

Hughes, an Omaha Central graduate, enlisted in the U.S. military after graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Nebraska-Omaha. He served a tour in Afghanistan and was a police officer in Savannah, Georgia.

Hughes, now a Career Talent Advisor for Avenue Scholars Foundation, is excited about the opportunity to “come back to Omaha and be pro-active with the youth.”

“As a police officer, I was reactive with youth,” Hughes said. “That made me uncomfortable. I felt a calling to improve their lives at an



earlier stage.”

In addition to his bachelor’s degree, Hughes obtained a master’s degree in Public Education from Columbia Southern University, a military school. Hughes’ experience also includes five years as a supervisor at UPS.

Hughes and his wife, Nicole, have two children — Michael, 4, and Meilani, 6 months. Hughes’ home base for his Career Talent Advisor duties is the Fort Omaha campus.

Hughes is also focused on advising the Omaha North Avenue Scholars.

Hughes said he likes Avenue Scholars because it’s “very intrusive. It’s hands-on, in their pocket, in their backyard. It’s an opportunity to guide them.”

Nasiatka, serving in substitute teacher role at Omaha Bryan, has counseling experience

With background experience in high school youth ministry, as a teen parent specialist for Lutheran Family Services and as a teacher at the Omaha Street School and Omaha Northwest, Aryka Nasiatka believes Avenue Scholars Foundation is a good fit for her career growth.

“I like working with, and teaching, at-risk and disadvantaged youth,” says Nasiatka, who will be Emily Christensen’s long-term substitute at Omaha Bryan High School. “I like the family atmosphere of Avenue Scholars.”

Nasiatka has a bachelor’s degree



in secondary education and master’s degree in urban schools education — both from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She was employed at Omaha Street School for four years and Lutheran Family Services for three years. Nasiatka, a mother of two children, has also worked as a volunteer for Young Life Ministry.

After shadowing Christensen for six to eight weeks, Nasiatka is prepared to teach the junior course, maintain a supportive role at Senior Academy, be an advocate for all students, and help monitor grades, attendance, part-time jobs and other needs.



Ballard fills in at Papillion

Demetria Ballard, a former basketball star at Omaha North High School, taught elementary school for 10 years in the Omaha Public Schools system. She also taught sixth grade at Lemay Elementary in Bellevue for two years.

“I have been subbing for the past one-and-a-half years,” Ballard said. “I was looking to apply for a full-time position. It’s my goal to get a full-time position with Avenue Scholars.”

Through some connections with ASF faculty, Ballard was made aware of some openings for substitute teaching.

“I heard great things about Avenue Scholars. It did not work out at the time [at the beginning of the school year], but ...” Ballard said.

“[In October I received] an email about the long-term openings. I applied, and here I am.”

Ballard will substitute for Ashley Knott at Papillion-LaVista High School and Papillion-LaVista South High School through the end of this school year.

A mother of three children, Ballard is a graduate of Iowa Western Community College, where she played basketball.

She earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 2000, and an administrative degree in education from Concordia University in 2012.



Scholar surprised with 'new' chariot

For Avenue Scholar Angie Green, Monday, March 14, was in one word — WILD. As she emerged from a dinner at Hog Wild Bar-B-Q, Green was presented with a gift beyond her wildest dreams: a 2010 Chrysler 300.

"I am overwhelmed and very appreciative," she said.

The car, donated by a military family, was gifted to Green through "Chariots4hope," a charitable organization.

Green, a graduate of Omaha Northwest High School, obtained her CNA and has been working full time as a Certified Nursing Assistant for the last six months at Nebraska Skilled Nursing.

Avenue Scholars Foundation contacted Chariots4hope with Green's name as worthy beneficiary of the organization's mission.

"Avenue Scholars has been like a second family for me," Green said. "They have helped me through a lot."



CHARIOTS4HOPE. COUNTERCLOCKWISE/STARTING ABOVE: Avenue Scholar Angie Green, poses with Tony Mongello, General Manager of Hog Wild Bar-B-Q; Green gets in the driver's seat of her 'new' car; Green with Chariots4Hope board members, Jason Hurt, Greg Westbrook, Mimi Hannor, Michelle Hurt, Bob Bymers and Dan Tucker; Green with ASF personnel: CEO Ken Bird, Annie Bird, Terry Fischer, Kelly Bernadt, Kristin Walsh

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"Our mission is to ensure careers for students of hope and need through education and supportive relationships."

Scholars get hands-on lessons at Lexus store

Avenue Scholars participating in a career exploration field trip to Lexus of Omaha Feb. 4 received an unexpected benefit.

"When transportation services were 45 minutes behind in the morning getting our students there, the Lexus management arranged for our students to all be driven back to school in Lexus vehicles," said Terry Fischer, Career Services Director.

The 20 students who attended all have an interest in Automotive Technology as a potential career path. The students received a tour of the Lexus facility and then worked hands-on with technicians throughout the day, rotating to different stations.

Mickey Anderson and Angie Quinn, co-owners and siblings, set up the field trip; Anderson arranged the day, and Quinn hosted the event. Managers Larry Ortgren and Curtis Smith facilitated the day.

"It was an eventful day; we enjoyed the day," Smith said. "I think all who participated got a lot out of it."



HANDS-ON. Benson Scholar Kyle Rudolph (foreground) and Ralston Scholar Austin Kephart (top) take advantage of learning from a technician at a Lexus service center.

Senior Scholars embark on MCC scavenger hunt



ON THE TRAIL. Left: Veronica Grano and Jessica Yopez (in front) lead a group of senior Scholars to the next station during a Jan. 8 scavenger hunt at MCC south campus. Below: Other groups make their way through a connecting hallway, discovering more details of the MCC campus.



Above: Xochitl Rincon checks off another required finding during the scavenger hunt as a fellow Scholar looks on. Right: A group of Scholars poses for their selfie beside the sculpture outside the ITC building.



Above: Senior Scholars use one of the commons walls to fill in another check point on the scavenger hunt form. Left: Scholars posing for a required selfie: John Good from Ralston, Alycia Reed from Millard South, Leah Watkins from Millard South, and Karla Martinez from Omaha Bryan.