

MAKING THE Connection

TO
Career Technical Education



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CHANGING THE IMAGE

Female auto students challenge stereotypes

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When you take your car to the auto shop, how do you picture the mechanic that will be working on it? A lot of people will probably think of a big, strong man wearing overalls and covered in grease stains.

At South Lake High School, that image is challenged. If you bring your car to the school's auto shop, not only will the person working on it be a teenager, but there's a pretty good chance that the mechanic is also a girl.

The school has an exemplary automotive technology course that teaches students about car maintenance and shows them what it's like to be a mechanic. Students get hands on experience repairing real people's cars while running their own shop.

Usually the auto class, as well as the automotive field, attracts a lot of male students. And, like many other male dominated fields, the auto class has scared girls away in the past.

This year, however, the tides have turned. A large number of girls are in auto and they are excelling in the class.

Mr. Barton, the teacher of automotive technology, is very encouraged by the surge of girls who have become dedicated to the class. The reason, he says, is that the lack of girls in the field opens

up tremendous opportunities for the ones brave enough to enter it.

"[Having more girls] is definitely very encouraging," said Barton. "The reason for that is [auto] is a male dominated field where there are a lot of opportunities for girls. There are also lots of scholarships for young ladies, and there is a lack of young ladies in the field. It is also nice to have different perspectives in the field."

Some students believe the reason for the lack of females in the auto class is because of a gender bias that is present in the automotive field.

"I believe there very much is a gender bias in auto, because if I worked at a shop, customers would want a guy rather than a girl to work on their car," said senior auto student Hope Peck.

Donna Treakle, another senior girl in auto, agrees with Peck. However, she is hopeful this problem will be solved in the near future.

"I think that a lot of people in younger generations are going to overcome gender bias, and make things more unisex," said Treakle.

This anticipated change can already be seen in South Lake's auto course, especially since the high school students are a part of a younger, more liberal generation. The female students in auto are breaking gender norms by joining the class, and proving that women are able to be mechanics just as well as men.

"I have girls who have interest in auto who do just as much, if not, more, than the guys. The females probably challenge or raise the bar for the males," said Barton.

Barton thinks that a more gender diverse work environment benefits everyone, and even raises professionalism.

The guys in the class also seem to share this belief. They work alongside the girls every day, and see them as equals.

"Yes, I definitely see the girls in the auto classes as equal to men," says junior Frank King. "We all work well together and our relationship is very fun and full of sarcasm."

The girls agree that there is a good relationship between them and the boys in the class.

"The guys are really helpful, because if you need help with something, they're not gonna make fun of you because you're a girl; they're gonna help you with it," said Treakle.

The acceptance of the girls in the class signals a change of traditional gender roles in school. In fact, it fits right in with the feminist movement that is sweeping America, specifically among the younger generation.

However, Treakle recognizes that the problem is not overcome completely yet, and females still fear gender bias in the workplace.

"Girls are afraid of sexism in the United States, and it prevents



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From left to right, Seniors Nicole Periard, Hope Peck, and Destinee Anderson work together to inspect a car in the auto shop.

them from furthering their education in auto mechanics and things like that," said Treakle.

Treakle, though, does not conform to gender roles and signed up for a class to do something she enjoys. Like Treakle, Peck believes that taking auto as a female is important in advancing the fight for equality.

"If you want equality, you can't just go, 'hey, fix this car for me.' You should be able to at least know the basic stuff, which is like changing a tire, or doing an oil change, where you don't need to have that man there," said Peck.

The gender bias against auto can prevent girls from learning essential life skills. Barton and his students agree that knowing how to fix a car is extremely im-

portant in today's society.

"I think more girls should probably take auto, just for the simple fact that it is a life skill," said Barton. "Almost every single one of us around here, we don't have the option of public transportation, so we are either going to ride with someone or we are going to drive someone in a car daily. If it's something that you're dealing with on a daily basis, then you should have at least some knowledge of it to get yourself out of a predicament."

Learning about something you use every day is important, and so is making a difference in society. The girls who joined South Lake's automotive technology class are doing both of these things, and they are still just in high school.

Meet Chef Shepherd

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Since coming to South Lake, Chef Darrel Shepherd, affectionately known as Chef by his students, has transformed the school's culinary arts program. While the school restaurant, The Lakefront Bistro, existed before Chef was in charge, he brought a new life to it by greatly increasing the relationship between it and the community.

It is because of his exemplary work with the program over the past few years that Chef has been named Teacher of the Year for South Lake High School, as well as for the District of South Lake, by his administrators and peers.

"[Chef] has done a lot for the culinary program, he's built it - there's more kids in the culinary program now than when he first took over, and kids love him," says principal Robert Beato.

Beato also cited Chef's involvement in the community as part of the reason for his nomination.

He has been able to help eliminate preconceived notions about the school and showcase the talented, hard-working students of South Lake through the bistro, as well as other commu-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Chef Shepherd

nity events that he has led the students in catering.

Not only has Chef's enthusiasm for his job been acknowledged by the school, but he was also named Better Made Teacher of the Month by the Macomb Daily after being nominated by senior culinary student Holly Salome.

Chef has shown his dedication to the school and to helping his students succeed and continues to be a positive figure in the South Lake community.

Banking on South Lake

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Staff Writer

One unique feature of South Lake that can go unnoticed if you're not looking for it is the Michigan First Credit Union, located in junior hall.

Run by six alternating students throughout the day and one supervisor, it is a small, yet successful, branch of the credit union.

In order to be eligible to work at the credit union, a student must be entering their senior year and apply by writing an essay, undergoing a formal interview, and participating in a job orientation.

Additionally, all employees must take marketing class as an elective.

Calil Hall, Madison Olstyn, and Mack Transit are three of the six employees of the credit union, and they all must follow a strict set of rules each time they work, as mistakes can be costly when dealing with money.

"It's like a procedure, because you're dealing with money for a real credit union so you have to actually follow every single one of their rules and do everything a certain way," says Olstyn, who works at the credit union during fourth hour.

The students' main task at the credit union is essentially to be a teller and handle the money of the members that come in.

"You buy and sell your drawer, deal with transactions and getting accounts," explains Transit, whose shift is during seventh hour.

Being able to work at the Michigan First Credit Union has provided students with a chance to dive head-first into the workforce, and each of the credit union's employees have said that they would recommend other students apply for this job when they get to be seniors.

Employees often compete with each other for who can acquire the most member accounts.

For teenagers, the idea of earning money themselves is often very enticing, and this is what attracted these students to the credit union job in the first place.

Though while it was mentioned as everyone's favorite part of the job, the student tellers have grown to appreciate the bank as more than just a bi-weekly paycheck.

"I do like working at the bank because it's fun and I have a fun coworker. As long as you don't goof off, the job goes pretty smoothly," says Hall, who is one of the few employees that works during the lunch hour.

As with any job, however, there are aspects of it that aren't always appealing.

One of the most cited inconveniences that comes with the credit union job is the relatively few members that actually come in during school. However this varies according to what shift people have.

"Seventh hour is kind of a slow hour, but other hours during lunch are busier," says

Transit. Despite the occasional lull in business, the employees all agreed that being able to earn a salary and get work experience outweigh the times when there is little to do.

Being able to work at a credit union while still in high school is a rare opportunity, and all of the students that work there feel that, in one way or another, this job is key in helping them to prepare for future work.

"[The bank] helps me because I'm used to working with people now. Different people come into the bank, and I know how to deal with them," says Olstyn.

Hall agrees that the job helps, but in a different way. "The hiring process [was beneficial]," he adds.

While it may seem daunting at first, being able to work at the Michigan First Credit Union has provided students with a chance to dive head-first into the workforce, and each of the credit union's employees have said that they would recommend other students apply for this job when they get to be seniors.

"It's an enriching experience," says Hall. "And it's fun."

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