

Career Expo Shows Youth Their Unlimited Future

BY MATTHEW ANTON

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“Whaddya wanna be when ya grow up?” students are constantly asked. So why not create an event where young people could meet with professionals to discuss their career goals? It seemed a natural to match up youth seeking their way in life with adults established in their chosen professions.

What began as this simple idea grew over six months into the New York joint territories’ first career expo for junior high school, high school and first-year college students.

During preparations for the three-hour event, titled Future Unlimited! the professionals were encouraged to be flexible, open, positive and honest, so the young people would feel free to ask questions and leave with the feeling that their future was indeed unlimited.

“The career expo was the greatest idea for everyone in junior high, high school and college,” Delano Davidson, 14, said. “It was very educational; we should do this every year or whenever we can.”

The day began with small groups talking about SGI President Ikeda’s recent dialogue on work (March 28 *World Tribune*). Students were asked if they had worries about the future and what their hopes and dreams were. Charles Horton, 17, said his group talked about what they saw themselves doing in the next 10 years. It helped him focus on the causes he’s making now in his life.

After the discussions, the 160 students and their friends were free to roam the six floors of the New York Culture Center and talk with more than 90 professionals. Physicians, attorneys, teachers, filmmakers, architects, engineers, nurses, bankers, business owners, sculptors, musicians, fashion designers, dancers, actors, a chef, a pilot and many others took part in the fun.

“In speaking to a police officer, I really felt my dream of going into the FBI was right for me,” Himyo Green, 17, said. Aspiring musicians could strum a few chords with jazz guitarist Larry Coryell.

The legal division presented a mock trial, which allowed active student participation, presided over by Stanley L. Sklar, justice of the New York Supreme Court. “I was an attorney for a day,” Chris Gagliardi, 16, said. “I really felt the passion that goes with defending your client — and I wanted to appeal!”

A room with school counselors and advisors was devoted to students with no specific career in mind. There they could complete a personal profile to determine their strengths and interests, an exercise that proved so popular that many adults also wanted to complete one. Experts in financial aid, high school and college admissions were on hand.

After the event, planners reviewed the students’ exit questionnaires and considered holding a similar event annually and inviting more students from nearby schools next time.

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