

Lee High School
students took some
time to think about
their futures at career
fair – with the help of
professionals in a
variety of fields



Zachary Sorrentino, highway and cemetery supervisor for Lee, right, and an associate talk with a student about the field of public works during Thursday's career fair at Lee High school.
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LEE — When Molly Carlotto attended a career fair years ago as a Lee High School junior, she wasn't familiar with Onyx Specialty Papers, the town's last remaining paper mill in Lee.

"I had no idea who they were, or what they did," she said, "But then I did a mock interview with them, and wound up interning for them."

After the internship ended, Carlotto went to college and later applied for a full-time position at Onyx. There were other applicants, but Carlotto thinks that the relationships she forged during her internship helped her get the job.

On Thursday, Carlotto was back in the same gym — on the other side of the table — as a lab application engineer for Onyx.

About 350 students in sixth through 12th grade had the chance to talk with professionals from 50 different employers during the Lee Youth Association College and Career Fair.

The students came into the fair in the gymnasium by grade, with the sixth and seventh grades the last to file through.

The idea, according to Lee Public Schools Superintendent Michael Richard, is to get students to start thinking about what comes after high school.

“It’s nice to be back after the pandemic once again with this opportunity for our students to think more about a better plan for their future,” he said.

Each vendor had a table, with the 50 tables arranged in a square. There was another two row of tables parallel to opposite ends of the square. The students visited various tables, checking in with employers they found interesting.

Clusters of students gathered around one conversation or another.

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The station for the Massachusetts State Police was frequently crowded.

“I am seeing that a lot of kids are interested in law enforcement,” said Trooper Deshawn Brown. “I’m not exactly sure why.”

He said he and his fellow trooper, Alejandra DelGado, were there to give the students a positive experience with the police, and engage them in conversation about their future.

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DelGado noted that most of the students were asking why they became police officers and wondered whether they like their jobs.

“We told them that we do this because we like helping people, and we want to make a difference,” she said.

“And there are lots of avenues for different career paths in law enforcement,” Brown added.

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There were representatives from 13 colleges, five U.S. military branches, first responder agencies from Lee and Becket, and a wide range of businesses and public service agencies.

The Lee Department of Public Works was represented by Zachary Sorrentino, highway and cemetery supervisor. He said there were a number of students interested in a career path that doesn't involve college, that involves operating heavy equipment and working with their hands.

“There were some 11th and 12th graders who weren't necessarily interested in a college diploma,” Sorrentino said. “We need more of them to go into the trades. There's a shortage right now.”

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After that fair ended, several employers stayed behind to conduct mock interviews to give students the experience and ability to hone their interviewing skills.

The vendors were giving away pens, balloons, brochures, bags and any number of other promotional items.

Kira Johnson, a junior, said she “learned a lot about the field that interests me, and I checked in with a few that don’t interest me, and I found them interesting too.”

Kira said she is looking at a career in engineering.

Meet Nicolas Resca, a Lee teen who is helping the town rewrite its master plan

Another Junior, Allen Ni, is interested in aerospace engineering, and found some illuminating information about that career path. “I did get some ideas today,” he said.

Lee High School guidance counselor Dan Korte helped coordinate the career fair. He said this is the 10th career fair the school has hosted in the past 12 years.

“We try to make it fun,” he said, “and the students get some great exposure to information they may not have had before.”

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