

College, career expo draws thousands of students

By **RODD CAYTON** The Daily News | **Posted: Thursday, March 5, 2015 12:27 am**

FORT MOHAVE — The future looks bright, not only for the thousands of high school students who attended Wednesday's CRUHSD College and Career Expo, but for the event itself.

“A lot of dedication and hard work went into it,” said Pat Young, assistant superintendent of the Colorado River Union High School District, which put on the event. “It's been unbelievably successful.”

The event was designed to show students the variety of options available to them after high school.

Students from the CRUHSD's three schools and from campuses in Kingman, Needles and Lake Havasu City met representatives of more than 100 vendors, including colleges and universities, government agencies, private-sector businesses, utilities and the military.

Many of the booths had people on site to answer questions and pass out information, but there were also a few hands-on activities and simulators the students could try. Those included welding, flying a military aircraft or standing in the shoes of a law enforcement officer deciding whether to fire a weapon.

Not only did Arizona's three major universities each have a presence at the event, Young said, but so did several out-of-state colleges including UNLV and Utah's Dixie State University.

Mohave Community College was well-represented, with 33 programs present at the expo, said Jason Gee, associate dean for career and technical education.

Gee said many of the MCC booths were staffed with teaching faculty and the college also had staff on site to discuss financial aid with the preps.

“Many students aren't aware,” he said, “and that becomes a major roadblock to them thinking they can afford college.”

Mohave High School freshman Mica Candelaria said she wants to be an orthodontist or work elsewhere in the medical field. She said she was pleased with the information she could find, especially since Grand Canyon University, at which she hopes to study, had someone present.

Candelaria said she also enjoyed putting on a lineman's uniform at the Mohave Electric Cooperative booth.

River Valley High School sophomore Amber Castillo said she had a nice experience talking to colleges and employers, though she would have liked to see more government entities represented.

One surprise, she said, was talking to the Bullhead City Fire Department.

“It wasn’t one of my (top) careers,” she said, “but I’m interested in it now.”

Young said organizers are already planning to make the 2016 expo bigger and better. He said other school districts plan to bring more students next year.

“We had three buses from Kingman, and they plan to at least double it,” he said. “Needles has one bus and they plan to bring their whole school.”

Diane Beardsley is the Gear Up coordinator at River Valley. She said this year’s expo was born after plans were hatched for job fairs at RVHS and Mohave, and organizers decided to combine the events.

“We had a vision from the beginning,” she said. “We ran with it and made it happen. The community’s response was overwhelming.”

CRUHSD Supt. Riley Frei estimated that 2,500 students and a couple hundred adults filled the Mojave Crossing Event Center.

RVHS guidance counselor Christine Williams said it was important to show the students the local careers that are available.

“So they know they can stay here and have a family or go off to college and come back,” she said.

Blaise Militello, a junior at RVHS, said he found a lot of good information, and was pleased to see both the military and BNSF Railway at the expo — he’s considering a career in each of those fields.

However, Militello hasn’t ruled out auto repair after talking to a booth staffer about salaries in that occupation.

“I don’t remember (the amount), but it’s a lot,” he said.