

Life After High School: College and Career Fair

*Pulaski High School
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

Thanks to a massive college and career fair, Pulaski High School students are looking toward a brighter future. The Life after High School: College and Career Fair brought representatives from 70 colleges, universities, the military services, non-profit organizations and local businesses together to prove to students that staying in school would pay off.

The idea for the event began three years ago when members of the school's Action Team for Partnership (ATP) wanted to do more to improve the school's graduation rate. Only about forty percent of the students in the Milwaukee Public Schools graduate from high school on time. School administrators said that too few students think about life after high school until just before graduation. ATP members wanted to change that by introducing Pulaski's students to postsecondary possibilities earlier in their high school careers. They created the Life after High School: College and Career Fair for student in grades 10, 11, and 12.

ATP leaders recruited local businesses and colleges to set up booths. School administrators advertised the fair in a special guidance office newsletter sent home with students at the beginning of the year. Promotion continued with fliers and automated phone messages sent to the families of eligible students.

On a Tuesday afternoon in late November, 550 students came to the fair. Nearly 180 members of the community participated with good information. Booths advertised careers in healthcare, firefighting, law enforcement, the military, and in other fields. Two-year and four-year colleges and technical schools from the area presented their offerings, including engineering, graphic arts and design, aviation technology, and more.

"Students were able to get time out of the classroom and talk directly with representatives from organizations around Milwaukee, as well as many based in other areas of Wiscon-

sin," said an organizer. "In having this fair, Pulaski is hoping to gently push students to stay in high school and get their diplomas."

Many of the exhibitors donated items for raffles. To help ease the overcrowding in the school's parking lot, the Milwaukee Police Department waved the two-hour parking restriction on streets around the school.

"I was impressed by the number of local organizations that participated," a volunteer said. "We will definitely be back next year," a college representative promised.

Thanks to in-kind donations from area businesses, the event cost the school less than \$200—to rent tables and chairs and provide light refreshments.

The fair has become an annual fall event at Pulaski. This is, in fact, the largest career fair in the Milwaukee Public Schools. Next year, the school intends to invite parents to help them help their teens make decisions about life after high school. The fair benefits parents in another way: "This fair could help them gather information to further their education and follow their career aspirations as well," said an organizer. "A larger parent turnout would be fantastic!"

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