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Career Day lets students explore options for work

By Sonia Chopra

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COHOES — Laura Szaidybana, 17, was always fascinated by fabrics, colors and art. But she wasn't sure about a future in interior design until she met Denise Maurer, a self-employed interior decorator, at the third annual Career Day at Cohoes High School.

"I used to fix my room and paint stuff and sort of wondered how I could use it. Now I know I'm going to go into business," Szaidybana said.

The event held Thursday morning was used to match students' career interests with local adults who work in that career field. Geared toward at-risk students, the event was arranged as an informal seminar where the students and the adults interacted on a one-on-one basis.

"It is necessary to have career exposure and a definite goal in this program, that's one of the safety

valves to prevent dropping out," said Tom Mullins, who has run the alternative learning program at the school for seven years.

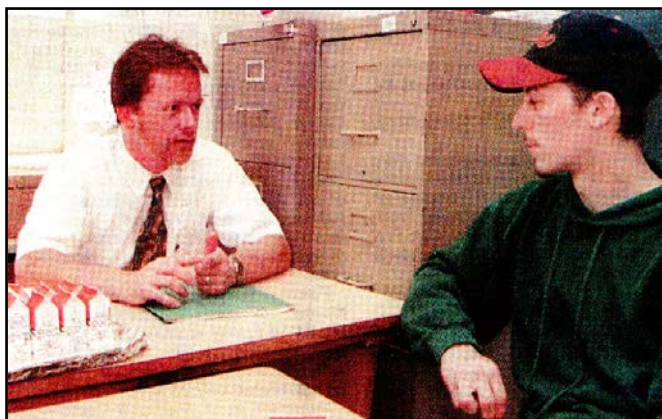
The program developed for at-risk students has kept more than 70 percent of the kids in school, Mullins said.

Co-sponsored by Education Transfer, a Delaware-based firm which specializes in large and small career days, this career day offered job options of auto mechanic, police officer, biologist, postal worker, coach and others.

Some teens already knew what they wanted to do.

Jake Scott, 18, said he wanted to be a postal worker because his elder brother, Aaron Scott, 20, is employed as one in Florida and always has a great time.

"Besides, it's a safe job to have — post offices never fold or lay off. Good, great benefits and you can



Mike McMahon/The Record

LOOKING AHEAD: Cohoes Postal Supervisor Kevin Flatley, left, talks Thursday with Jake Scott, a senior at Cohoes High School, during the school's yearly Career Day.

work your way up," Scott said.

And postal worker Kevin Flatley, who has had the job for 11 years, did point out weather hazards and stress during certain times of the year.

Scott remained undeterred.

But then that was the goal that the

teachers had wanted for their students.

"We wanted them to know the options, so that they could say that's my dream and just go for it," said Diane Sauter, special education teacher.