

Career Life programs celebrate 20 years

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More than 200,000 students, 3,800 employers, 1,400 events and uncountable job shadow days.

Those are some of the statistics the Central Okanagan School District's Career Life programs department are bandying about on its 20th anniversary.

"When we started out in 1989, it was small and we were the only school district really doing it in the province," said career co-ordinator Marilyn Block.

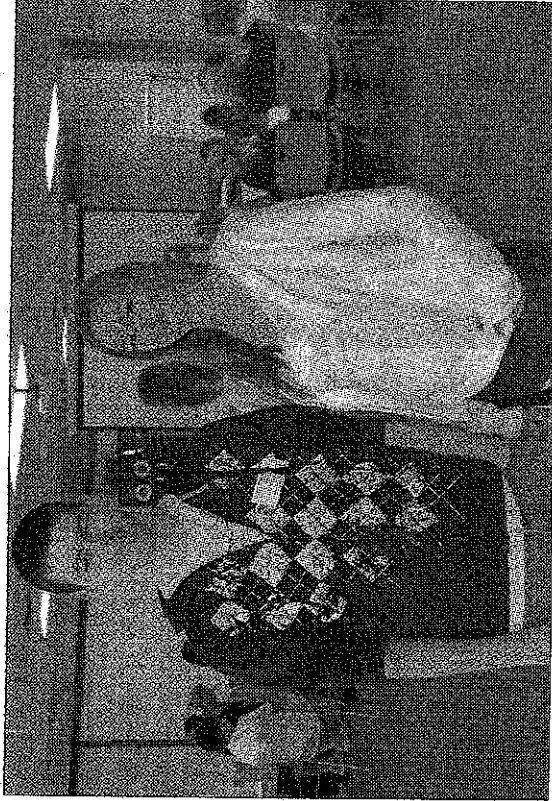
"Schools had career counsellors, but we wanted to do more to get students out into the business community and bring the business community into schools."

That was the start of two decades of career conferences, profession spotlight sessions, career preparation programs, students job shadowing workers and secondary school apprenticeship offerings.

"We'd have about 10,000 students a year involved," said Block.

"That quickly adds up to 200,000 students over 20 years."

Add up all the district-wide youth conferences and workshops and the career spotlights individual high schools have with a businessperson, and the annual event count hits 70. Multiply that by 20 and makes 1,400 events since the



Daily Courier file photo

At the Science and Technology conference earlier this year are Rutland Secondary School students Dylan Whiteside, left, and Makenzy Stoodley — two of the 200,000 local students that have attended Central Okanagan School District Career Life programs over the past 20 years.

program's inception.

Over that time, Career Life has also built up a database of 3,800 employers and organizations that have helped with conferences, provided guest speakers and hosted students for a day of job shadowing.

Five years into the Central Okanagan's Career Life initiative, the province took notice, and the district ran a B.C. demonstration site 1995-96.

"That really led to career programs being instituted in every

high school in the province," said Block.

The Career Life department also oversees the district's dual-credit secondary school apprenticeship programs that are run in conjunction with Okanagan College and the British Columbia Institute of Technology.

Junior Achievement's programs of bringing businesspeople into classrooms for career talks, money management and understanding investments sessions also falls under

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Career co-ordinator
Marilyn Block

Career Life.

To celebrate the 20-year milestone, Career Life held a reception for staff and employers who have been involved for years at the Rotary Centre for the Arts.

Guest speaker Mark Scharenbroich from Minnesota was brought in for a motivational talk.

"I pointed out that high school can be a defining point for most youth," said Scharenbroich.

"It's adults' job to encourage youth to be the leaders that can create a stronger school culture, rekindle their curiosity to learn and be a part of the community and give more than they take away."