

For Immediate Release:

May 15, 2008

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PDA and Spaulding High Special Ed students team up for Career Day
Students tour NHANG Fire Station, PSM Airfield and PDA Maintenance

(Portsmouth) The Pease Development Authority's Maintenance Department teamed up with the "Realizing Employment Potential" program at Spaulding High School in Rochester for its semi-annual career day on Monday, May 12th. This field trip is one of many the students in the school's Special Education Department take during the year to foster job exposure in different industries.



Twenty-four students began their day visiting the fire station at the NHANG base at Portsmouth International Airport (PSM). Staffers shared numerous pieces of equipment used when responding to airfield accidents on both the guard and civilian side of the airport including a new tanker capable of pumping 4,000 gallons of water. Just across the tarmac, the group toured the terminal at PSM. There, PDA Facilities Manager Joe McPherson gave students the chance to work behind a ticket counter and to learn about a screening check point for passengers. They also got a behind-the-scenes look at baggage handling operations.

The Maintenance Shop at Pease was the final stop on the tour. PDA workers rolled out a variety of vehicles for all seasons for the students to explore. Large and small capacity mowers, a de-icing truck and a massive runway plow proved to be the favorites. (See photo of plow above)

PDA Maintenance Manager Alan Weston helped organize the tour and the BBQ that followed. He participated in the last event held four years ago and looked forward to the 2008 visit. "We really enjoy hosting these kids," Weston said, "Our staff gets a lot out of the event too. Our department employs people with disabilities. We want to show these kids there are jobs out there for them."

Spaulding Special Education Job Coordinator Jeff Turgeon praised the PDA staff for their efforts with the students. "Our goal is to show our kids different job opportunities, but there's also an important social aspect of the field trips too. We encourage good manners and reinforce how to act correctly in public. Our students really respond well to both," he said.

"Realizing Employment Potential" is a program designed to serve students ages 14 to 21 with disabilities who are attending Spaulding High. The program consists of three parts including career awareness, work experience and transition planning. For more information, contact Jeff Turgeon at (603)332-0757 ext. 234 or turgeon.j@rochesterschools.com

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