

CHS hosts healthcare event

School hosts first-ever Health Careers Expo/Fair

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COVENTRY — Coventry High School held a Health Careers Expo and Fair yesterday, and numerous high schools from Rhode Island attended to learn about opportunities in the Healthcare industry.

Coventry's school based coordinator, Donna Hutson explained that the high school has held career fairs in prior years but that this was the first fair to which other schools were invited.

Students from 11 different high schools — Ponganset, The Cranston Area Career Center, Cranston West, Exeter- West Greenwich, The Met, Mount Pleasant, Juanita Sanchez Educational Complex, Rogers, Burrillville, Cumberland, and Central — were in attendance.

The event was coordinated by the attending schools' various school based coordinators.

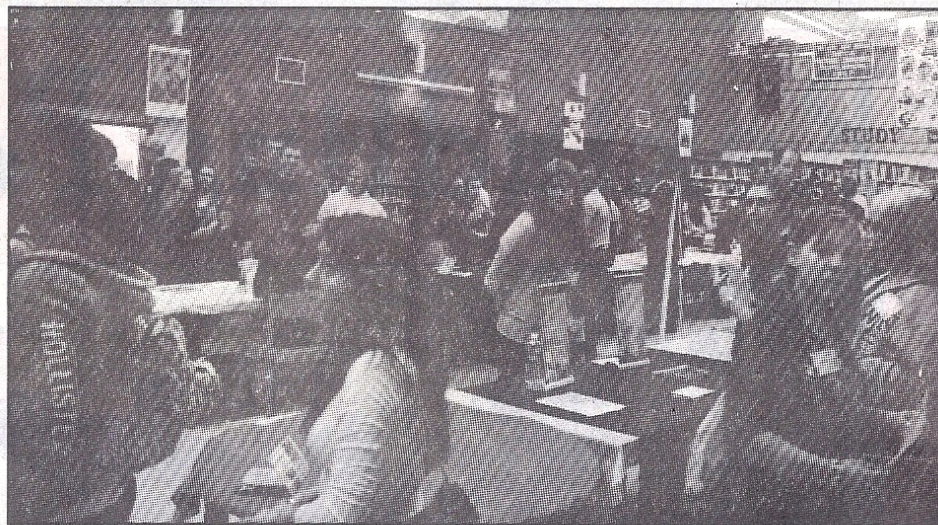
"Donna Hutson was instrumental in coordinating this huge event as was Gail Farrell, Health Instructor; Amy Siemao, Guidance Counselor; and Dolores O'Rourke, Library Media Specialist," said Lori Ferguson, Director at the Regional Career and Technical Center at Coventry High. "All of our Senior and Junior Health Career students also played a role in today's event. This was the first of its kind and we were the first to kick it off."

The students in attendance began the expo and fair at 8:30 a.m., when they met in the Media Center to view and explore the many exhibits throughout the room.

Various colleges such as MTTI, New England Tech, Lincoln Tech, the University of Rhode Island, Salve Regina, the Community College of Rhode Island, and Rhode Island College handed out brochures and information for the students interested in healthcare.

Representatives from Kent County Hospital, Podiatrists, West Bay Physical Therapy and Job Corps attended the exhibition as well to provide the students with information about careers.

"It was exciting to see the interest of high school students looking at the health



Jessica Boisclair/Daily Times

Students from 11 Rhode Island high schools packed Coventry High yesterday, where the school hosted the first-ever Health Careers Expo and Fair to inform students about careers in healthcare.

career field," said Farrell. "There are so many opportunities in this state for students to pursue health careers. It is vital to our economic development. We are proud to have hosted this opportunity in allowing students in our state to explore this field."

Students then gathered in the auditorium at 9:30 a.m. to hear from two keynote speakers about their "Opportunities of the Future".

Aimee Brissette, Executive Director of Stepping Up R.I. explained that the program is available to provide Rhode Islanders with the chance to climb the ladder from entry-level jobs in the healthcare industry to high-growth, high-demand jobs.

Angela Gasparri, a respiratory therapist at R.I. Hospital involved in the Stepping Up R.I. program, explained to the students that more than 50,000 people in Rhode Island work in the healthcare industry.

"I know some of you know what you want to go into regarding healthcare but some of you don't and that's what we're here for, to help you explore opportunities of the future," she said.

Gasparri went on to explain the top five

reasons for students to become involved in the healthcare industry; these include: job growth, opportunity to help others, jobs available for all education levels, competitive wages, and various types of jobs within this field.

Students in attendance from the various high schools then volunteered and explained to Gasparri that they were interested in healthcare positions such as, registered nurses, pharmacy and medical assistants.

She said that many new technologies that are being invented will give students new opportunities in the healthcare industry. She explained that robotic surgery is being used in Rhode Island hospitals, in which doctors control robots to conduct the surgery for them.

Brissette explained that in today's world there is some disconnect between the educational system and the workforce.

He said that Stepping Up R.I. is currently working with CCRI to try and make some of the courses more relevant to the workforce.

Both speakers quizzed the students at the end of the presentation and four students received gift certificate prizes.