

New Haven Investigative "I" Team Interviews DCMA APO Pratt & Whitney

By Mr. Ralph A. Rodriguez, DCMA APO Pratt & Whitney,
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Ever wonder what it would be like to be interviewed by an investigative news team? Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) Aircraft Propulsion Operations (APO) Pratt & Whitney (P & W) employees, East Hartford, Conn., learned firsthand when a group of local high school students interviewed them for a special career segment to be aired on their school's network news.

Students from the New Haven, Conn., James Hillhouse High School Career Investigative Team (CIT) interviewed a variety of employees at DCMA P & W to include the commander, a quality assurance specialist, a Keystone

Program intern, an engineer, an equal employment opportunity (EEO) specialist and a program integration specialist.

"I wanted the students to get the idea that when you graduate, do not put off working for the federal government as all boring or

not accessible," said Mr. Ralph Rodriguez, who arranged the tour and interviews for the CIT and DCMA. Mr. Rodriguez's daughter Kimberly is a member of the CIT and has visited DCMA APO P & W previously during Take Your Child to Work Day programs. "My father, Ralph Rodriguez, worked for DCMA for over 20 years, and I have been participating in Take Your Child to Work since I was 10 years old. My favorite part of the tour was the layout of all the engines," said Ms. Rodriguez.

Students from the James Hillhouse High School CIT develop, produce and air their own "Virtual Career Fair" show every week via closed-circuit television. This program is the brainchild of Ms. Bonnie Cofield, director of Hillhouse career services, and is produced by Mr. Tyberiusz Skarzynski, broadcast technology teacher. While most teens work part-time jobs for extra money, these students are using skills such as preparing scripts, conducting interviews and doing voiceovers for their news segments. According to Ms. Cofield, this is a winning situation for everyone. Not only do students learn all the

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(Above) Ms. Nesshyra Davis (foreground), a member of the CIT, ensures the camera angle is perfect for the videotaping of the interviews. (Photo by Mr. Ralph Rodriguez, DCMA Pratt & Whitney)

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aspects of video production, but they have the opportunity to explore all the careers they might want to pursue in the future and share the information they have gathered with the rest of the school population (approximately 1,100 students). "I am hoping the kids realize how many careers are out there," said Ms.

Cofield. "There are a lot of times when you see successful people and you have no idea what they do."

Both students and DCMA employees learned from this experience and exchanged valuable information. "The students found it very interesting how many different programs are available for training DCMA employees to help them in their jobs [and] also programs like the Keystone and Student Career Exchange Program [SCEP] for

new employees who may not have enough experience," said Mr. Rodriguez.

According to the students, DCMA is an interesting place to work. "My favorite

part of the interviews was learning all the different opportunities for employment that DCMA has to offer, including the training," said Mr. Steve Blaize. "The most exciting person we interviewed was the engineer, Christopher Popolizo. He told me more about engines, which we high school students would be interested in." For student Ms. Adja Washington, "The interviews were my favorite part of the day because I got to meet with different people and got to learn about their different careers." Ms. Neeshyra Davis added, "The whole experience of going to DCMA Pratt & Whitney and seeing all of the engines and learning all of the opportunities of working for DCMA was cool."

The students interviewed various professionals who work at DCMA APO P & W, including Air Force Lt. Col. Douglas Humerick, commander; Air Force Capt. Garrett Fisher, program integrator; Mr. Patrick Cassidy, quality assurance, Keystone Program; Mr. Christopher Popolizo, team leader and aeronautical engineer; Ms. Claudia Wells, administrative contracting officer and EEO representative; Ms.



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(Top) From left: Lt. Col. Douglas Humerick, DCMA APO P & W commander, chats with Ms. Adja Washington, CIT, while Ms. Kimberly Rodriguez, CIT, checks the recording equipment. (Photo by Mr. Ralph Rodriguez, DCMA Pratt & Whitney)

(Above) CIT member Mr. Steven Blaize prepares to videotape the interviews with DCMA employees. (Photo by Mr. Ralph Rodriguez, DCMA Pratt & Whitney)

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Shirley Zachery, management analyst; and Mr. Ralph Rodriguez, quality assurance specialist.

“I was really impressed with the students and their advisors. Many times today we hear negative stories and things about young people,” said Ms. Shirley Zachery. “This is a fine group of young people who work hard in school and are focused on making good decisions about their future. I was honored to participate in the interviews.”

Defense contracting may be a complex subject for the students, but they did not leave with



(Top Left) From left: Lt. Col. Douglas Humerick, DCMA APO P & W commander, prepares for an interview with CIT members Ms. Kimberly Rodriguez and Ms. Adja Washington. (Photo by Mr. Ralph Rodriguez, DCMA Pratt & Whitney)

(Top Right) Ms. Kimberly Rodriguez, CIT, checks the production equipment prior to filming the interviews. (Photo by Mr. Ralph Rodriguez, DCMA Pratt & Whitney)

(Above) From left: Ms. Kimberly Rodriguez, CIT; Lt. Col. Douglas Humerick, DCMA APO P & W commander; Ms. Adja Washington, CIT; Mr. Steven Blaize, CIT; and Mr. James Hillhouse High School broadcast technology teacher. (Photo by Mr. Ralph Rodriguez, DCMA Pratt & Whitney)



any questions unanswered. “They found it hard to understand that we don’t work for the contractor,” said Ms. Wells. “I could see that the interviewer wasn’t 100 percent sure what a contract was, so you had to explain and try to keep it real simple.”

From quality assurance, to engineering, to how an actual jet engine works, DCMA APO P & W employees ensured the students left with a complete understanding of DCMA for their career program. And what was the one thing DCMA wanted students to take away? “I wanted them to understand how much pride there can be in being a public servant,” said Ms. Zachery. They may have been successful, as Ms. Rodriguez summed up the students’ thoughts on their visit to DCMA APO P & W as, “Everyone was very nice, very informative and very cool.”

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