

Cardinal Connections helps high school students find jobs

By Olivia Alveshere
Staff Writer

Coon Rapids High School, in partnership with the MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce, is seeking to connect high school students with paying jobs.

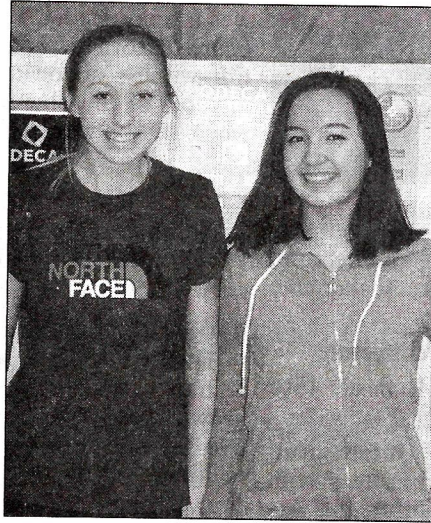
DECA officers Julia Beczkalo, a senior, and Brynn Nguyen, a sophomore, were selected to lead the Cardinal Connections program in its inaugural year. The program launched in December.

Beczkalo and Nguyen work with peers to connect them with employers in surrounding communities who are hiring.

There are a range of employment opportunities available to teens in many settings, everywhere from a senior living facility to a trampoline park.

Teenagers ages 15-18 are the "hardest demographics to reach" for employers, according to Lori Higgins, president of MetroNorth. "They don't job search using traditional methods."

Beczkalo and Nguyen are both employed themselves – Beczkalo at Willy McCoys in Champlin and Nguyen at Lettermen Sports in Blaine. Their added experience with DECA has given them even more business savvy. DECA is a program that seeks to prepare emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for careers in marketing,



Coon Rapids High School senior Julia Beczkalo, left, and sophomore Brynn Nguyen run the Cardinal Connections program, helping fellow students secure paying jobs.

Photo by
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finance, hospitality and management.

The ladies work with students to find job opportunities that are a good fit and offer to help them with the application process and subsequent steps often required before starting work.

"We can work with them on interviews, teach them the dos and don'ts," Nguyen said.

So far, the program has assisted about 15 students.

"We've even had parents get in contact with us for their kids," Beczkalo said.

Beczkalo and Nguyen think this will be a learning year, but are hopeful they will find success and watch the program grow outside of Coon Rapids High School walls.

"We could branch out" to other schools, Nguyen said. "I could definitely see this growing to be

something larger."

Employers are excited about the program, too.

Tim Ness, general manager at Andover Pizza Ranch, a 1977 Coon Rapids High School alumnus himself, believes this will be a valuable program.

"I would hope that they would include us in this," he said, noting the shortage of high school-aged workers.

Beczkalo and Nguyen believe one student has already secured employment there.

The ladies plan to use their experience with Cardinal Connections in DECA competition, writing a 30-page paper about the program and presenting on the topic in competition this spring.

To learn more about the program, contact cardinalconnections11@gmail.com.

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