

Youth Day at Positive Energy Outdoors

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On a beautiful summer day, twenty students and seven staff members from the NE MN Office of Job Training attended a training day on June 5, 2018, at Positive Energy Outdoors near Fredenberg Lake north of Duluth. Students from Wrenshall, Cromwell, Proctor, Saginaw, and Virginia traveled to Positive Energy Outdoors to participate in numerous outdoor activities such as driving a team of horses, climbing a rock wall, and canoeing across the lake. While enjoying the day outdoors, students had the opportunity to learn about the value of safety, teamwork, communication, and accountability and responsibility through their own personal experiences and the Positive Energy Outdoor leadership team's activity discussions.

The day started with the group of twenty breaking into smaller teams through an activity where they had to find someone with a headband/buff similar to their own. Teams of 7-9 people were formed from this activity. These teams then stayed together for the entire day and had the opportunity to get to know one another. Teams worked together encouraging and supporting each other in the various outdoor activities.

These teams are very much like the teams at work today. Each person brings different strengths and needs, but everyone works together for the betterment of the team.



For those students who really enjoy working with animals, the draft horses were a big hit. Students learned about the horses and were able to drive the two-horse team through the woods. Some of the students even helped with the feeding and watering of the horses as well, thus seeing accountability and responsibility come to life in the real world. The horses count on people to care for them and meet their needs, and failing to do so could bring disaster for the horses.

Students could see that we all need to be accountable and responsible for our actions and assigned tasks.

One of the horses, Sid, is a retired Canal Park carriage horse, and Sid's teammate, Ice, is from an Amish farm. Both horses have been together since the fall of 2011. Sid and Ice are very gentle, flexible, and easy going horses, and get along very well with each other and people.

One of the most challenging activities of the day was the climbing of the twenty foot rock wall. Some students and counselors eagerly jumped into the challenge, others ventured out with more hesitation and needed a little encouragement, and some went with much trepidation. But whatever the situation, all students and participants were part of a team, and each played a role in the rock climbing event. Students and counselors participated in the event by climbing, operating the belay device, or providing an extra set of hands and eyes during the decent.



This complete engagement in the team process is much like our work teams today. Everyone has a role to play. Everyone needs to do their part, no matter how small or large.

Safety at work is a high priority and the rock climbing event was a good example of the necessity and importance of safety.

Students learned how to be safe while climbing by using the proper harness equipment and making sure they were using it properly. Students were encouraged to ask questions if they were not sure of how to do something. Students used a belay device which is used to create friction in order to help climbers. Students learned the proper protocols for the climber to initiate and end the climb. Participants had to call "belay on or belay off." The "belay off" is called to confirm the belay has been removed from the

climbing rope. “Belay on” is called to confirm the belay has been (re)applied to the climbing rope. Each climber must respond to the belay on or off call, so that everyone knows what is happening.

This lesson really emphasized the need for clear and accurate communication. Again, much like our work teams today. If we are not clear or conscious of what and how we need to communicate, this lack of strong communication could mean lost productivity, confusion, errors, and unfortunate events or disaster. Good communication is so essential.



A third activity was canoeing across Fredenberg Lake. At first glance, one might think that this was probably one of the easiest activities. But like tasks and responsibilities at work, team work and communication were part of this activity. The lake was serene and the views beautiful. But before canoers could begin, they had to learn the proper technique for handling the paddle

and getting the most out of their paddling. They had to learn the best way to enter the canoe to ensure that all members could get safely seated. Teams had to learn to synchronize their paddling efforts while in a large, voyageur canoe.

Again the safety, coordination, and teamwork necessary for this activity relate to tasks and responsibilities at work. Practicing these key elements result in great rewards.

The day at Positive Energy Outdoors was a great way to enjoy all that northern Minnesota’s natural environment has to offer, plus learn a little about oneself, teammates, nature, and the work values that are so important today. The serene lake, beautiful loons, and lush foliage were amazing.

What a great way to begin the summer work experience!