

Classroom on the MALL

By: Kimberly Creamer

It is not often that you would find parents encouraging their kids to get to the mall – and not to be late! However, in the case of Classroom on the Mall, parents are indeed doing just that!

Classroom on the Mall is a 3-credit elective offered to juniors and seniors in Virginia Beach City Public Schools. Starting its 18th year, Classroom on the Mall proves to be a winning combination of education and business partnership. Located at Pembroke Mall, the classroom faces the ever growing Town Center of Virginia Beach where students can watch the growth of retail and business right from their classroom door. The classroom is a stylish classroom that would rival most high school learning environments. It is a place where students learn the real concept of professionalism and what it takes to be successful as they watch and learn from the businesses as they conduct their daily operations.

Students who are interested in the class apply through an application process, are interviewed and selected to participate in this very innovative and exciting class. The only off-site course offered at the Advanced Technology Center in Virginia Beach, students travel from their home schools everyday to take part in a variety of lessons and labs at Pembroke Mall. There are many lessons taught and learned at Classroom on the Mall. Marketing

lessons, business lessons and what Ms. Creamer, the instructor, likes to call Life lessons - lessons that all students can take with them regardless of the vocation they choose.

The program offers two courses that operate for the entire school year. The first is Marketing Operations which allows students to explore the various skills and areas needed to be successful in the business world today. Topics of study include, but are not limited to: Customer Service, Marketing Research, Loss Prevention, Advertising and Promotion, Communication, and Selling to name a few. The classroom setting

provides the stage for the theory that needs to be delivered and the mall provides the hands-on learning that takes place when merchants and students team together to tackle projects or challenges! For example, students take part in creating ads, displays, and operate their very own gift wrap business in the mall!

The advanced class, Marketing Management, is a course designed to offer students the opportunity to obtain leadership and management skills. The management students work with the mall management team on special projects or events. The students have a project board that they create and rely on to plan, organize, prioritize and implement their work. It is evident that these students understand the principles of marketing and they are enthusiastic to put their knowledge to use.

Among their many accomplishments, students are also certified in the areas of Professional Customer Service and Sales. The National Retail Federation offers these certifications to students who successfully pass the exams in the spring.



Classroom on the Mall students Ben Tonsberg, Alina Thompson, Katelyn Taylor, and Alan Deadwyler proudly displaying their accomplishments.

Classroom on the Mall students also have a 100% membership roster in the co-curricular club DECA. DECA is a high school marketing club that offers marketing students many opportunities to work with community, visit with leaders, enjoy social networking and explore college and careers. Students at Classroom on the Mall are quick to register for the DECA competitions. These competitions are on a District, State and National level and test the student's knowledge through such events as role-plays, written research or virtual businesses. At the state level in March, students proudly brought home the Annual Report Trophy which symbolized the years' work that they did as a team. Last April, a team of two traveled to Anaheim, CA to compete against students from around the nation in the event of Virtual Business Retail Challenge. These two students finished 1st in the state of Virginia and 5th in the nation! It is experiences like these which speak volumes for these young men and women.

As the instructor for Classroom on the Mall, Ms. Creamer looks forward to another exciting year as she helps to bring these students to a clear understanding of what she calls "the professional package." The gratitude and growth she sees in each of her students is what keeps her motivated and adoring the career she has been in for 25 years.

If success is a journey, then these students have clearly chosen a path that will advance them in the right direction. **T**



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