

Career direction

Plymouth students are exploring working world

By LIZ FORAN

Tribune Staff Writer

PLYMOUTH — Businesses are scrambling to find qualified employees in a rosy economy, and Jeff Garriotte knows he could have his pick of computer-related jobs after college.

But the Plymouth High School senior wants to make sure that he likes the work before investing three or four years of college into a career he might not want.

So after school, he dons a pale blue mechanic's work shirt at Sherwood Tire and gets underneath the hoods of cranky cars to find out what's troubling them. To assist him, he uses a \$53,000 diagnostic computer with tentacles connected to every visible part of the open engine.

"I'm interested in electronics," he said. "I work on the computer systems in vehicles."

Garriotte is one of several Plymouth High students in the Education to Careers program that allows students to shadow a local employer for some direction for a career.

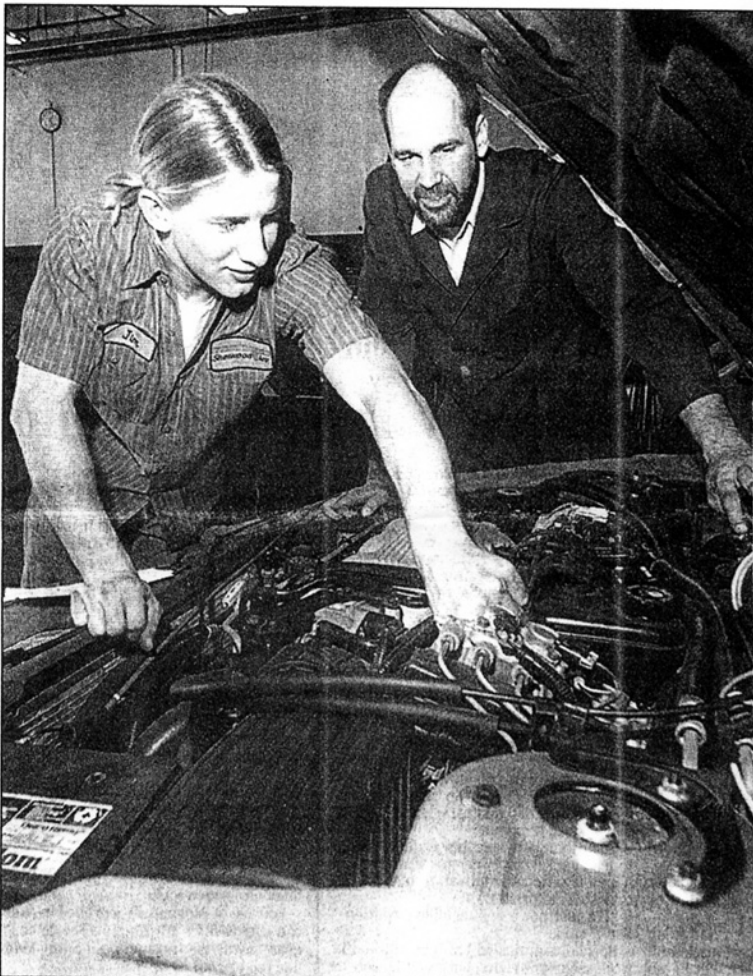
"I've learned a lot about computer systems," Garriotte said. He has done some electrical engineering and will attend a Purdue extension next semester. Although he is unsure if he will pursue a career in the auto industry.

Garriotte's experience is exactly what school administrators were hoping for when they created the Education to Careers program two years ago. Wilson, assistant principal at Plymouth High School, said.

Some students, like Garriotte, will discover that they would prefer a different kind of career or work atmosphere. Others, like junior Paula Manson, find a true passion for a career in just a few short hours.

Manson began working in the training room last year taping up injured fingers and ankles. She now holds a portfolio several inches thick with joint diagrams and medical forms she has been studying on her own to become a physical therapist.

She spends two hours a day in the school's training room working with athletic trainer Kim Riddle. Next year, she will intern with a physical therapist at St. Joseph Regional Medical Center-Plymouth.



Tribune Photo/PAUL RANKIN

Plymouth High School student Jeff Garriotte adjusts the wires of diagnostic equipment under the supervision of Sherwood Tire shop manager Rod Dawson. Garriotte participates in the school's Education to Careers program, allowing him to work for a local employer to get ideas about his career.

experience, Wilson said. Through grants, the program offers internships, job shadowing and career-related field trips.

Students doing internships and job shadowing do not earn class credit, but may be paid for their work.

Education to Careers program. The interdisciplinary cooperative education (ICE) program has stricter requirements, Wilson explained, because it involves more hours and participants must actually be hired and paid by their employer. ICE has

cannot leave school can arrange internships for after school.

"It's really something that is going to build steam," he said. "Business involvement has been excellent."

The intern and job shadowing