

Students participate in Techsploration program

A group of Grade 8 students from St. John Bosco School in St. John's had a first hand experience in marine safety this past March when they visited the Offshore Safety and Survival Center in Foxtrap during Education Week. The students were participants in the first St. John's-based Techsploration program.

Techsploration provides young women with an opportunity to explore trades, technical and technology-related occupations, while creating an awareness about the critical role of work in their lives. It also helps them understand the significance of high school math and science for their future career. The program is intended for young women in Grades 9 and 10, but it can be modified for other grade levels.

The primary goal of Techsploration is to increase the number of women working in trades, technical and technology-related occupations by assisting high school age girls to explore a wide range of career options in these fields. The program is intended to be inclusive of all girls, including those at various levels of academic achievement, from diverse cultural backgrounds, and girls with special needs.

Joan Sharpe, Learning Resource Teacher at St. John Bosco, and Moderator of Techsploration, said this experience was resource-based learning at its finest. Students spent an entire day with Krista Parsons, a very successful female role model in a non-traditional job and experienced firsthand the sights and sounds of the world of offshore safety and survival. "Being able to observe firefighters in training and to actually don the firefighting gear and extinguish their own fire was very exciting for

them," said Ms. Sharpe. "Escaping from a simulated oil-rig safety exit chute into an awaiting life craft was also an incredible experience. It is truly one they will never forget. It certainly opened their eyes to the fact that they could do anything they want to do, and be anything they wanted to be, regardless of their gender."

The students also learned about rescue equipment (including wearing survival suits and a trip inside a life craft), they watched firefighters in training, and put out their own fires while dressed in full firefighting gear. They also had the experience of exiting a vessel from an oilrig safety chute into life crafts while wearing flotation devices.

One student, Monika Norman, who had always wanted to pursue a career in teaching dance, was totally amazed as she watched firefighters practice scaling a tower with ropes. Ms. Sharpe said she'll always remember the look of amazement and fascination on Monika's face as she said, "You know, Miss, I could do that too, couldn't I?"

"You sure can, Monika. You can do anything you want to do," replied Ms. Sharpe.

An exploration of learning

"Education Week is a great way to explore different kinds of learning," says Jack Jardine, Guidance Counsellor at the Newfoundland School for the Deaf in St. John's. This year, the Intermediate Department at the School for the Deaf participated in a "factoid" Scavenger Hunt. Each team of three was given a list of 20 questions, and 90 minutes to use any of the resources in the school to find and document the answers. The questions ranged from finding the name of the largest lake in North America, to discovering Leonardo Fibonacci, to researching specific authors. It was a great learning experience as well as a fun way for students to learn.



St. John Bosco students pose in front of a fire truck following a fire extinguishing exercise. l-r (on truck): Lois Bragg, Monika Norman, Amanda Oakley, Samantha Hennessey (seated), Dana Hennessey, and Samantha Fowler; l-r (standing): Krista Parsons (Offshore Safety and Survival Center), and Joan Sharpe (Learning Resource Teacher).



l-r: School for the Deaf students Joshua Upshall, Renee Pardy, and Joseph Antle, search the Internet for information on Leonardo Fibonacci.