

NTC Youth Apprenticeship Program Partners with Peoples State Bank to Build Future Financial Leaders

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Northcentral Technical College (NTC) continues to strengthen its commitment to workforce development through its Youth Apprenticeship (YA) program. Peoples State Bank has long been a strong supporter of the YA program, mentoring high school students in the finance field for nearly 20 years.

The YA program connects high school students with local businesses to bridge the gap between education and employment. By working directly with professionals, students develop technical skills, workplace confidence and a deeper understanding of industry expectations, all while gaining academic credit and getting paid. At Peoples State Bank, YA students gain hands-on training in the financial industry, preparing them for potential careers in banking and finance.



Izzy Vardon, Marathon High School, Marathon Branch

Vicki Mauritz is the Customer Service Representative (CSR) Area Manager for Peoples State Bank and often mentors the YA students.

“It’s a great opportunity for students to feel what it’ll be like in the real world,” she said. “They get an early glimpse of the real world at a part-time level so they’re not just jumping in with both feet at once.”

Izzy Vardon, a senior at Marathon High School, has worked as a CSR at the Peoples State Bank branch in Marathon for the past two years. She first heard about the YA program as a young child, when her brother was a YA student at Peoples State Bank.

“When my brother was doing it, I was obsessed with the idea of working at a bank and handling money,” she said. “When this opportunity arose for me, I took it, and now it’s set me on my path for the future.”

YA students at Peoples State Bank gain firsthand exposure to banking practices, customer engagement and financial literacy. These experiences help students develop an understanding of banking fundamentals, including transactions and account management.



Sam Dassow, D.C. Everest Senior High School, Rib Mountain Branch

Sam Dassow, a junior at D.C. Everest Senior High School, has been working at the Peoples State Bank in Rib Mountain for the past eight months, and he said the job provides a unique opportunity compared to most jobs that are available to students still in high school.

“I’ve developed skills in customer service and built a connection with [the customers] because it’s the same people you’re working with over and over,” he said. “You’re learning good skills to have, especially when you’re not sure what you’re going to do when you grow up.”

By learning directly from industry experts, students gain technical expertise and develop skills such as communication, problem solving and teamwork.

“I’m proud of how I’ve grown through the seven months I’ve been here,” said Ella Hildebrandt, a student at the D.C. Everest IDEA School who works at the Eastside branch. “It’s been an experience I’ll never forget and keep with me my entire career.”



Ella Hildebrandt, D.C. Everest IDEA School, Wausau-Eastside Branch

Scott Staszak is the Talent Acquisition Manager for Peoples State Bank and works to recruit and hire YA students to work at the various branches. He also discovered his interest in the banking industry through a school-to-work program similar to YA when he was in high school.

“Hopefully they discover they like a career in banking, but at the very least they get the experience to work with customers, which is something you’ll do in almost any field you go

into,” he said. “It also gives them exposure to learn how to handle finances, which is a huge plus because they’re young and learning.”

The staff at the bank are there for students when they have questions and need help.

“Everyone is really helpful,” said Devin Alves, a junior from D.C. Everest Senior High School who recently began working at Peoples State Bank. “If I ever have a question, they always know what to do.”



Devin Alves, D.C. Everest Senior High School, Weston Branch

The YA program helps students put learning into practice. Most of the students currently working for Peoples State Bank have or are taking classes through their high schools related to finance, such as personal finance, economics, intro to business, accounting, and financial math, but the YA program gives them the unique opportunity to see it in action in the real world.

“School can teach you a lot of stuff, but it’s completely different when you have to apply it and you see it being applied every day in the real world,” Sam said.

The YA program also emphasizes the importance of professionalism and workplace readiness. Students are encouraged to develop time management skills, maintain a strong work ethic and understand the expectations of a professional setting.

Sarika Lee, a junior at D.C. Everest Senior High School, began working as a CSR through the YA program at the Weston branch of Peoples State Bank this past fall.

“I love the professional work environment,” Sarika said. “Through working here, I have really developed the ability to multitask. I’ve really enjoyed the hands-on learning experience.”



Sarika Lee, D.C. Everest Senior High School, Weston Branch

By the time they complete the program and graduate high school, they are well prepared to transition into full-time employment or further their education with a strong foundation of knowledge and experience.

“Being a part of the YA program puts you a step ahead of all your peers,” Izzy said. “There’s really no other experience like this. Having that experience puts you on a path to success in the future.”

While the YA program is beneficial for the students, it is also beneficial for the businesses.

“We are here to help teach them and help them get their feet into the real world, but we also rely on them just as much,” Vicki said. “They are employees, and we need them and love having them here.”

Students do a variety of jobs at the bank to assist customers, jumping in wherever they are needed each day, which helps them to learn more about the process and gives them the opportunity to work with a lot of people on a more personal level.

“I am bilingual and speak Hmong,” Sarika said. “It’s really nice to be able to help those customers who don’t speak English as their primary language and make sure they feel helped and included.”

By fostering strong industry partnerships, NTC works to help foster skilled, career ready individuals with a competitive edge in the job market.

“YA has created a bridge between the businesses and the schools,” Scott said. “They get to talk to the students, and students have the chance to figure out industries and job opportunities that are out there.”

The success of this program highlights the importance of collaboration between educational institutions and businesses in preparing students for the workforce.

“It creates a healthier community,” Scott said. “A community is only as strong as its people, and if people are leaving, you’re not going to grow. The goal is to create a pipeline of talent that stays in the community.”

Over the years, Peoples State Bank has hired a number of high school students who went through the YA program to work at the bank full time after graduating. Several of the students currently in the program are planning a future in finance, largely due to their experience through the bank.

For those interested in getting involved, whether as a high school student seeking career exploration or a business looking to support workforce development, NTC provides resources and support to facilitate these valuable partnerships. For more information on how to get involved in NTC’s YA program, visit: www.ntc.edu/academics-training/youth-apprenticeships.