

Kids go fishin' for careers

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GLENDALE - There're no days off and no taking breaks when the fish are running, a California fisherman told students at Roosevelt Middle School on Wednesday.

In a physical science class, Bob Phillips explained how he makes a living from the ocean - especially when there're plenty of fish to catch and he is logging 16-hour days.

"If it's really good, you just go," Phillips told the kids. "You go until it hurts. You go until you can't get up in the morning, and then you go again."

It was a glimpse into a different sort of life in a daylong lesson meant to show where the fish and produce the students eat and the silver jewelry they wear come from.

The California fisherman, a South Dakota rancher, and a farmer, firefighter and miner, each from Montana, taught students about their jobs as part of a nationwide, privately funded program called Provider Pals.

The goal is to bridge the gap between town and country, both for students and for the mainly rural workers who visit schools involved in the program.

Phillips explained that, as his own boss and as the owner of his own boat, he can also take off weeks at a time when the fish aren't running and be with family. He only goes out in good weather, which means sometimes he goes stretches when he only fishes twice a week.

The eighth-grade students in the class were all immigrants learning English. What they really wanted to hear was the tall fish tales - of the truthful variety. And Phillips, a 27-year veteran of the ocean, had plenty of those.

Phillips told of once grabbing a huge thresher shark by the tail and getting swatted around the boat before another crewman shot it in the head with a gun.

That shark was worth nearly \$1,000, Phillips said as the classroom's teacher shuffled around the room with a laptop, showing students a picture of a thresher shark.

Phillips also explained that when he fishes in the winter, he bundles up in three sweat shirts and a coat while piloting the boat, before taking off some layers to bring in traps.

"I don't know how he goes fishing in the winter, and I can't believe it, but it's really cool," student Nicole Kim, 13, said after the lesson.

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In the school library, Montana mine manager Clint Jensen handed out chunks of silver and gold and gave a slide show presentation about his mine.

In another class, Montana farmer Jill Lorang invited students to examine the head of wheat, sheep's wool and unprocessed honey that she brought. Lorang, a lifelong farmer, explained that an extract from sheep's wool called lanolin is used in some lotions.

Student Rozanna Azoumanian, 12, left the class holding a stick of honey, a head of wheat and a baggie filled with soy beans and lentils.

"It was interesting," she said. On the ranch, "one small dog gets to chase the cows, and it was interesting that we get food from them."

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