

Katie enthusiastically offers advice to other college students who might be considering similar internship opportunities. "Go for it! It's the best way to get your foot in the door," she said. Once inside, she recommends taking advantage of the learning opportunity. "Never be afraid to ask questions, to admit that you

don't know something or to think outside your skill set."

That's good advice for all employees, whether temporary or permanent, rookie or seasoned.

—Ellen Beilstein

OPEN MEADOW INTERNS OPEN DOORS

Computer Operations Supervisor John Carrington was already familiar with The Standard's partnership with Portland's Open Meadow Alternative Schools when Les Taylor, assistant vice president of Information Processing Services, approached him in July 2002 with the idea of starting an internship program for Open Meadow high school students. "I considered it to be a win-win situation for the company and the school," John said.

The Standard had adopted Open Meadow last year as part of the Portland School District's School Partnership Program. Now, with support for the internship idea in place, John opened the doors of the Data Center to a tour for 10 Open Meadow students. The students impressed John with their interest, politeness and energy level. "Being around these students was very invigorating," he said.

Seniors Zinette Pratcher and Crystal Wealand were on the tour. Although both were amazed by the computer equipment, the unfamiliar acronyms and the overall operations, they liked what they saw enough to pursue internships. Zinette, who previously interned at a school and a hospital, wanted to get some high-tech experience, while Crystal wanted to gain work experience in a professional or business-type setting.

After completing screenings, job applications and interviews, Zinette and Crystal joined John's team as computer operators last October. "They were like a breath of fresh air — enthusiastic and ready to learn," John said. To get them started, he developed a training program that identified specific sets of skills they needed to master. "This required us to rethink our regular training program from the ground up. We had to go back to the very basics and design the training to meet the needs of inexperienced employees," he said.

Working with Crystal and Zinette that first week also helped John recall the anxiety many people face when they start their first job. To make them comfortable, John and his team quickly integrated Crystal and Zinette into the team, assigning them tasks and orienting them

to our operations. "We treated them just like any other new employee, reviewing procedures, taking them to coffee, making them feel welcome," John said.

Crystal and Zinette work part-time during the school week, mounting cartridge tapes, operating laser printers and supporting production operations in the Data

Center. But the two young women say they have learned much more than how to load tapes and operate the mainframe computers.

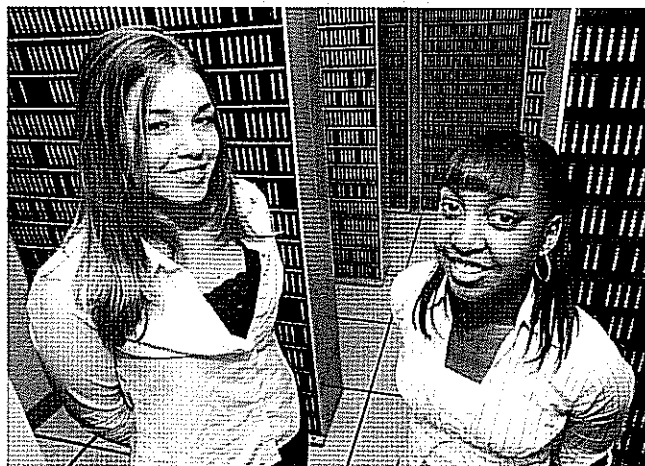
"I now understand how important my job is to others and to the

company. It motivates me to get my job done," Zinette said. The internship has helped Crystal realize all the opportunities that are available to her as she plans her future. "It really opened my eyes to the possibilities," she said.

Both girls graduate in June and already have their summer plans in place. "I thought they would want to take time off after graduation," John said. "Instead, they both plan to be on the job with us the very next day and will work full-time through August."

And after that? Both are considering attending college locally in the fall. "This experience has made me want to learn more," Zinette said. "The more I have learned, the more my enthusiasm for learning has grown." A willingness to open up one's self to new experiences is a lesson Crystal highlights. "You should never close yourself up. Keep your options open and learn as much as you can." These positive attitudes will inspire both of them, no matter what career door they open.

—Ellen Beilstein



Open Meadow Alternative School seniors Crystal Wealand (left) and Zinette Pratcher are the first two IT interns from the high school. The Standard adopted Open Meadow last year as its partner in the Portland School District's School Partnership Program.