

# Reflections on my time with the County of Bucks

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During the past three weeks, I've had the opportunity to ditch normal high school and job shadow in three different Bucks County departments. This opportunity came from a program at my school, New Hope-Solebury, called APEX. APEX takes place during the last three weeks of high school and lets students have a hands-on education in any career of their choice. We all have a facilitator who monitors our hour requirements and plans what we do. I was lucky enough to be facilitated by Commissioner Harvie these past three weeks after meeting him at a job fair he attended at my school. He allowed me to shadow him and connect me with other departments I was interested in shadowing, including the Emergency Services Department and the Department of Workforce and Economic Development.

Having the opportunity to see the inside workings of these different careers really changed my perspective. For example, on Election Day, Commissioner Harvie took me to the Board of Elections wing and was able to see how much work went into securing the legitimacy of the election. There were real people, all of whom were government employees, who could have chosen to take the day off, but instead were dedicating their time to the election. They worked on processing mail-in ballots all-day Tuesday, while others worked on other aspects of the election past midnight. They double, triple, and quadruple-checked our votes to make sure everything was accurate. It's funny to think back and remember that I thought it was a machine that did all the work!

Commissioner Harvie allowed me to observe meetings and visit rooms of the courthouse that I would have never had the opportunity to see before, and most importantly, he made me feel welcomed. With what seemed like thousands of people that he spoke to a day, he never forgot to introduce me to them. His whole team and the people I worked with on the fifth floor were all so welcoming. It showed me what a healthy workplace should look like: people being kind to one another despite political differences and disagreements, and being respectful of one another, whether you're head of a department or just a high school student job shadowing.



I worked with Audrey Kenney for my second week of APEX. She is the head of Bucks County's Emergency Services, so she plays an extremely crucial role. Ms. Kenney designed a schedule where I'd be shadowing a different department of Emergency Services every day. I started by attending a leadership ceremony for law enforcement that Monday, on Tuesday I shadowed a park ranger, then had the opportunity to observe fire inspections with a fire marshal on Wednesday, followed by shadowing an EMT Thursday, and finally sitting in on calls with a 911 operator on Friday. It was a ton of information to process and overwhelming at times, but it ultimately boosted my appreciation for our Bucks County Emergency Services employees.

In the last week of my experience, I shadowed the Department of Workforce and Economic Development (WED). Dianna Kralle, the Assistant Director, told me it was a little-known but crucial part of the county, and from what I've learned about WED, it's true. The employees of this department all work tirelessly to aim toward helping people who need better jobs. They deal with managing grant money, creating new programs, hiring new employees, and more. They even help incarcerated individuals find jobs after serving their time and work with companies and businesses who'd like to hire them. It's work that makes our communities better and makes a difference.

I'm thankful for the last three weeks I've spent time with these county departments. Everyone has greeted me with open arms and has been more than willing to show me around their buildings, introduce me to other employees, and answer any of my questions. These passionate and dedicated people taught me the importance of doing something that you love in your future, and that's the best way that things get done in a team setting—with kindness, respect, and empathy. I'll take this experience with me to Clemson University, where I will be studying economics, and with me throughout the rest of my life.

