Job Shadow with Jeanne Lipe-Michigan Department of Agriculture

My job shadow experience involved a trip to a building just down the sidewalk from the State Capitol, the Michigan Department of Agriculture. After presenting my driver’s license to the security guard, I was escorted to the office of the MDA by Ms. Jeanne Lipe.

As I sat with Jeanne and discussed the aspects of her job, I saw a similar job opportunity that Jody presented me with at the Michigan Corn Growers Association. However, this job focused on many different areas. For example, on the morning that I met with Jeanne, I sat in on a teleconference with the use of a smart board. The groups involved in this “satellite conference” were members of the Michigan Wine Commission. They discussed different options for vineyards and ways to enhance marketing options within the state. After I left, I knew that Jeanne would switch gears and begin designing a display for different commodities including the Michigan Potato Commission for a conference later in the week.

Ms. Lipe’s responsibilities as the communications/marketing director include working for the “Select Michigan” campaign that promotes Michigan food businesses. She is also working on the promotion of agricultural tourism within the state. Jeanne has the general duty of special events planning. An aspect of her job that I found particularly interesting is that she works closely with the Governor’s office. For instance, Jeanne will write speeches and then have someone present them to different senators. I also learned that much of the publication that she writes must first be approved by the Governor’s communication office before being printed. This is to assure that the values of the Michigan Government and the MDA are congruent.

In order to juggle all of these responsibilities, Jeanne has put her Bachelor Degrees of both Agricultural and Natural Resource Communications and Animal Science to work each and every day. Jeanne shared a word of advice with me as I go through college, “To be successful
you will need to have a wide-range of skills with the computer, speaking skills, and everything in between. It’s better to be familiar and willing to learn many different skills in the communications world.” Jeanne explained to me that each day she comes to work; she is doing something completely different from the day before, from presenting to kids to speaking with legislators.

As I entered the office of the MDA, I was immediately captivated by the layout and space of the office. The office layout is quite expansive and elaborate with offices and cubicles that are neatly labeled. Although Jeanne does work in a cubicle, it seems as if through her organization skills she has made it her own and enjoys her work space. As Jeanne introduced me to many of her co-workers, I realized that the employees rely on one another and must be a strong team each day in order to accomplish their tasks.

Beyond the fact that Jeanne works with a variety of different agricultural sectors and their own stories, she explained a challenge facing the job stability; the funding of their projects is a bridge that they are continually working to cross. As I watched Jeanne describe the different aspects of her work, I could see the positive outlook that she has for her job. With a mixture of activities happening every day, she never gets bored.

After shaking Jeanne’s hand and thanking her for a wonderful visit, I felt excitement rush through me as I stepped out of the door. Jeanne’s job at the MDA is similar to my future career goals.