



# What We Observe

## Seeing your job through a child's eyes

BY WENDY VALENTINE

How many times have your children asked what you do at work? I remember going to work with my engineer father when he was managing drafters for a telecommunications firm. I spent the day sharpening everyone's pencils while he talked on the phone and looked at engineering plans. I went home thinking that he really didn't work at all. So when people asked me what my father did, I replied, "He spends all day talking on the phone to his friends!"

If you were to bring your child to work for the day, would they say the same thing? Do you spend most of the day on the phone with your "friends" and looking at maps?

When my daughter was still in high school (she's 23 now), I started bringing her into my office for the national "Bring Your Daughter and Son to Work Day." After a cursory walk through the office to meet the engineers and other right of way agents, she spent the day making labels and filing. She loved feeling like an adult and getting out of school for the day, but I don't think she really understood what we do in the right of way profession.

Last year, two of my coworkers, who are also IRWA members, brought in their children, Austin (son of Kerri Wittman, SR/WA) and Elizabeth (daughter of Erich Hertzog), for the same "Bring Your Daughter and Son to Work Day" event. In an effort to really get Austin and Elizabeth to understand what we do as right of way agents, they started the day looking at right of way plans.

They found the parcels they needed to look at and gathered information on the square footage of each property. Then they took those same plans into the field to locate any items on the ground. After finding everything they needed, they came back into the office and prepared a cost estimate. Now they're getting an idea of what we do!



Junior Right of Way Agents, Austin Wittman and Elizabeth Hertzog

After they finished the cost estimate, they spent the rest of the day getting to do planned activities with other children within the Public Works Department. Although Austin and Elizabeth may not have negotiated a parcel, when they go back to school they'll be able to tell their friends and teacher more than, "My mom/dad talks to their friends on the phone all day!"

The National Bring Your Child to Work Day is the fourth Tuesday in April. Now is the time to plan a day full of activities to teach your child about the right of way profession. For ideas, visit [www.daughtersandsonstowork.org](http://www.daughtersandsonstowork.org).



*Wendy Valentine is a Right of Way Agent for Pierce County Public Works & Utilities in Tacoma, WA.*