Career Day @ Puppet Labs

When: Thursday, Nov. 5, 2015
Check-in: 9:30 am to noon. **Sign in at 9:15 am.**
Industry: Technology, business
Careers: Software engineer, entrepreneur, IT manager, tech innovation
Note: Accepting up to 22 students. Open to juniors and seniors.

What is Puppet Labs, anyway? Do they make puppets? No! Puppet Labs is one of Portland's leading young tech companies. It's a software company that helps businesses and government agencies — including Intel, REI, NASA, Starbucks and Twitter — manage their huge computer networks. As more companies depend on complicated IT systems to run their operations, they rely on folks like Puppet Labs to work behind the scenes and pull the strings to make everything go. (Like puppeteers, if puppeteers were coding whizzes.)

How did it get started? Puppet Labs started 10 years ago under another name and moved to Portland in 2009. Last year, it moved into its new downtown headquarters -- a sophisticated space made playful with puppet-themed art and tech-hipster amenities. The company now has more than 300 employees, most of whom work in Portland.

What has Puppet Labs identified as one of its significant challenges? Hiring qualified software engineers fast enough to meet demand. The jobs pay very well, the amenities are remarkable, and Puppet has a reputation as an open, inclusive workplace – however, not enough young people in Portland (or nationally) have the skills and education for these specialized tech careers.

What does Puppet Labs' CEO say about being an entrepreneur in Portland? Founder and chief executive Luke Kanies was interviewed in the Portland Business Journal last year. He said: "Portland is a great place to live and work. In today's world, entrepreneurs can start a company virtually anywhere. When I moved the company to Portland, I was, and continue to be, attracted to the unique culture of Portland. Being headquartered here helps keep our employees happy because they can be committed to work but don't need to sacrifice everything else in their lives because of long commutes or high home prices. Being in Portland really helps us build a great company without having to give up so much outside of work."

What students will do: Tour Puppet Labs' headquarters; hear about Puppet's journey from small start-up to successful tech company; hear from software engineers and other professionals working in technology; learn about some of the decisions that Portland business entrepreneurs must make and the problems that software engineers must solve; get advice about how to start a career in technology.

About PWA: The nonprofit Portland Workforce Alliance works with employers and educators to create career-learning experiences for high school students. These opportunities include career days, mentorships and the annual NW Youth Careers Expo, which will be held Feb. 24, 2016. Learn more at www.portlandworkforcealliance.org/