Over the summer I had the pleasure of interning with YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee. I began my internship at the end of May and within the first week of being there I knew it would be an exciting summer. On my first day the environment of the office was chaos - exhilarating. Some may say that chaotic work environments may be overwhelming, however I saw this as opportunity. My nerves were certainly kicked in for I was a little shaky and my palms became sweaty with every hand that I shook, but I was ready to dive in. That Thursday I arrived at the Bridgestone Arena in downtown Nashville at 6:45am and began the preparations for the annual MEND Experience. I helped to set up the event area to accommodate roughly 500 guests and was live tweeting throughout the event off Vanderbilt University basketball legend, Shan Foster’s personal twitter account (he is also a co-worker of mine at the YW). This event was focused around exposing and educating the public on the MEND mission; men educating young boys on how to be good men and end domestic violence. Speakers at this event included, Shan Foster, Dana Ford, Sean Henry, Tony Majors, Derek Mason, and David Williams.

After a wild first week at the YWCA my supervisor, Michelle Mowery Johnson, Director of Communications, created a structured schedule for me. I learned how to properly format and write press releases. I wrote one on the Family Literacy Center’s (FLC) graduation which was published in the Tennessee Tribune. I also submitted our new board members to local business magazines and was successfully featured in the Tennessee Ledger.

When I began to write this report I revisited what I wrote in my funding proposal. I talked about how I was excited to see the woman I would become working for a non-profit that is focused on empowering women. Although, I was initially more excited to delve into the field of
PR. After my experience here at the YW I can easily say I have become a better person and I have an inspired new outlook on life. I was surrounded by passionate coworkers that made me feel safe and comfortable to speak my mind and to listen to their perspectives. This summer was very difficult for many of us at the YW with everything going on in Orlando, Dallas, Baton Rouge, Turkey, Paris, and several other tragedies. At the YW anyone and everyone is here - all walks of life - and we treat everyone with equal respect and love. This work environment has shown me that working together on the same mission (to end domestic violence and to ensure racial justice), allows for a stronger work ethic. I want to communicate as well as I can to the public about the importance of our work through the use of my newly learnt PR skills because I am passionate about this mission. I find that because I learned so much about what it means to be a human that loves and respects all other humans, my work is vastly more efficient. A large part of my internship was revolved around the events that the YW throws annually. I sent out invitations for the Past President’s Luncheon and helped with all of the preparations. I set up the event, was in attendance, and helped with the aftermath. This event was especially powerful for me. One of the high school students that is a member of Girls Inc. Nashville spoke about her difficult journey life has thrown her way and how the work we do at the YW has changed her life. This is just one example of how what I did this summer has impacted the lives of others.

My internship at YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee was more and more rewarding each day. I know now that I want to pursue a career in PR because of the guidance I was given by my supervisor, Michelle. Michelle is well connected in the Nashville community and was able to set up a job shadow for me one day at the MP&F PR agency. MP&F does pro bono work for the YW and I visited the office multiple times for meetings on events and media relations.
My goal this summer was to get as much PR exposure as possible and I was blown away with how helpful and knowledgable my supervisor was.

I was also in attendance at the gender equity press conference at the Nashville City Hall. I met the CEO of DVL Seigenthaler PR firm, Jack White, Mayor Barry, and the board members. This experience left me giddy hearing the speeches of the influential people before me and how passionate they are to achieve equality in our society.

The following week I attended the annual Academy for Women of Achievement (AWA) Honoree announcement party. This celebration acknowledged the hard work and success of women of the Nashville community. I was fortunate enough to be in the presence of Mayor Megan Barry, the first female to be mayor in Nashville, Katherine Brown, president and founder of Learn CPR America, Marilyn Dubree, Executive chief officer at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Claire Gulmi, CFO of AmSurg, Cordia Harrington, founder and CEO of The Bakery Cos., Sharon Hurt, founder and CEO of Jefferson St. United Merchants Partnership, Beverly Keel, professor and department chairwoman at Middle Tennessee State University, and Aleta Trauger, U.S. District Court judge for the Middle District of Tennessee, and first hand heard of their accomplishments. At the end of this event I could not help but feel this emotional rush consume me. I shared the company of women with profound achievements. My internship has allowed me the exposure to explore my dream career field, discover how personally rewarding hard work can feel and how it touches the lives of others, including my own. My summer would not have been possible without the incredible school we all love, Sewanee. Thank you so much for your generosity. My career adventure I experience this summer in Nashville is one to stick with me for years to come.