

Summer Internship Report 2017

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Hometown: Richmond, Virginia



**Ronald McDonald House
Houston, Texas**

Provide an overview of the organization/research project and a summary of your responsibilities, tasks, and/or projects.

Ronald McDonald House Houston is a non-profit organization that is a home away from home for families whose children are being treated at the Texas Medical Center. They provide an inexpensive place to stay for families, as well as meals, activities, and shuttles that run to and from the hospitals to the main Holcombe House, as well as to the grocery store. This summer I worked in the Advancement Department with the Marketing Coordinator, Special Events Coordinator, Advancement Coordinator, and Grant Writer. The internship was a mix of mostly Marketing and Special Events. I had many various projects throughout the summer, much of which was office work, (i.e. scanning documents and organizing spreadsheets). I also worked on social media posts, made Press Kits for two of the upcoming fundraising events, interviewed families, and wrote a few family stories for the website in order to hopefully gain support from community members. I also hosted an Art Day for some of the kids (patients and siblings) staying in the Holcombe House in order to gain some art to hopefully choose from for the Holiday Cards that are sold each year to benefit the House. I brainstormed ideas for the theme of the 2018 Gala with the Felicia, the Special Events Coordinator, and I toured a potential venue for the event as well.

During your internship, what did you accomplish or how did you make a difference? In what ways did you grow in your professional and technical skills?

During my internship I helped with the publicity of two of the upcoming events for the house. The press kits that I made for each of the events will help to get the word of the events out into the public through media sources. The Art Day that I planned was a success in finding a piece of artwork to use for the holiday cards. The family stories that I wrote will also be featured on the website, and one will be in a newsletter in September. My skills in working with Excel and Powerpoint were definitely improved. I also learned how to Mail Merge, and how to operate the program Raiser's Edge. I learned

how to operate the graphic design program, Canva. I made a number of donor thank-you calls, which improved my phone skills. I also had mock in-person and phone interviews at the end of my time at Ronald McDonald House Houston, which will certainly add to my professional skills.

Describe a problem that you helped to solve at your internship. What skills or knowledge from your education at Sewanee helped you address the problem?

During the time that I was working at RMH Houston, they were undergoing some major changes in the organization. A new CEO came on board right as I was beginning my internship, and they were beginning a large addition to the Holcombe House, resulting in a permanent move to a new location for the Advancement Department. The department is not going to be moved to the new location until November, but the majority of the construction on the addition was going on right outside the windows of the Advancement Department Office. So, for the majority of the summer we were working through the sound of jack hammers, and various other tools and machinery outside of our window. There were many days that the room would be shaking due to the work outside. The air conditioning also did not circulate through the building the way it was supposed to during the construction, so our office would get incredibly hot. These were obviously not ideal working conditions, but I made the best out of the situation. I tried not to let these things disrupt my work, and used the work ethic and ability to block out distractions that I have learned at Sewanee to help me deal with these problems. I have been taught by all of my professors how important it is to do your best work, and even in these work conditions that were far from ideal, I tried to do my work as well as I would without the distractions.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

I worked on a lot of solo projects this summer, which really made me appreciate the importance of team work, and how much I personally value and enjoy it. Although I did not participate in many team projects, Ronald McDonald House Houston was in the midst of wrapping up a capital campaign this summer, so there was a lot of work to be done in the department that did not necessarily have to do with each of the specific positions within Advancement. The first day of my job, I learned that working in non-profit means that you aren't always doing a task that falls under your job title, because everyone helps one another out, and things that aren't always categorized under a specific job title still need to get done. Especially with a small staff, teamwork is a must. On my first day I sat on the floor with the Special Events Coordinator and sorted through over 200 items of clothing that had been donated by a pro-shop at a country club that Ronald McDonald House Houston partners with for one of their events. I basically set up camp on the floor, and folded, sorted, and took inventory of various items for the majority of the day. At the end of the day, I got even more of an experience with this when the Chief Advancement Officer, Lisa, asked everyone if they would please help to fold, stuff, and seal envelopes with newsletters for the capital campaign that had to be out by the end of the day. Each person had a role in the assembly line, and we got all of the letters out in time. Even though these seemingly random and insignificant tasks did not fall under the job descriptions of the people doing them, they were extremely critical, and could have only been accomplished if everyone pitched in.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

It showed me that I would definitely have an interest in non-profit work, and it me exposed to a line of work that is in close relation to the medical field, that I think I would be very interested in. I definitely think that I could be very interested in working in non-profits, however I am not sure that I would want to do marketing in that field. The graphic design aspect of the marketing work was not really something that I can see myself doing as a career, but I could potentially see myself working in

Special Events. I think my internship gave me more of a direction in terms of what I might like to do, whereas before my internship I did not really have any idea.

In what ways did your internship cause you to encounter people of different backgrounds from your own? What steps did you take to communicate effectively with such persons? What did you learn from such persons' perspectives?

It became clear to me that when working in non-profit you encounter people of different lifestyles and backgrounds all the time. There are hundreds of volunteers that do various things for Ronald McDonald House Houston, and there were many people that came through the house who I did not have a lot in common with. I also interviewed some families who were very different from myself, but I had to find ways in which we could relate so that they would feel comfortable opening up to me. I think it is best to have a positive attitude when working with people who are different from yourself, and to find something that you and that person have in common, even if it is small. In situations where I had to interview people, I often found that there were answers that I was either expecting or hoping for, but because the families were so different from myself and had such different perspective, I often found that their responses to my questions exceeded my expectations.

Words of advice for future interns (housing, transportation, etc.)?

Having a car is incredibly helpful if you can, because public transit in Houston is not great. Try to find housing near Rice or in the Montrose neighborhood, because both are very close to Holcombe House.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

Thank you so much for the opportunity to do this internship. I learned so much about myself and about this line of work. I really loved the organization, as well as the people that I worked with, and I am so grateful for the opportunity to have worked at Ronald McDonald House Houston.