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

Over the course of eight weeks I worked in community health where I held many responsibilities and tasks ranging from attending meetings to organizing events. The main project I worked on was coordinating and planning the third annual summer camp for inner city female youth, also known as Knox Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Initiative (KAPPI). KAPPI is a community coalition and is coordinated through the Knox County Health Department (KCHD), and is part of a state-wide effort to prevent adolescent pregnancy through a community wide collaborative effort that promotes abstinence, self-respect, and responsible decision making about sexuality and other health related issues. I also worked with Katie Larsen, my preceptor, on her program campaign Strong Baby Knox. The Strong Baby Knox project aims at improving the well-being of mothers, infants and children. My main responsibility was to write and deliver a letter to pediatricians around Knoxville to inform them of the information and additional programs that KCHD offers.

In addition to these two programs, I received plenty of educational credits and received exposure to other areas of the Health Department such as the WIC, DIS, restaurant inspection, and Nutrition. Furthermore, I received training in the following: ending child sexual abuse through Stewards of Children, CarFit, a program designed to help mature drivers find their safest fit and lastly, I attended a three-week education course on Diabetes Management.

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 believe I made a difference at the KAPPI camp. Once a week, for eight weeks I attended this camp and assisted as well as organized two activities myself. For one of the
weeks, I organized a tie-dyeing lesson to focus on self-love and acceptance. My responsibilities included organizing and planning this activity for 10-15 year old young women, successfully executing the activity, preparing the snacks and teaching a lesson. For another week, I planned a lesson and activity on STRESS. I taught the girls what stress is and how they can deal with stress (stand back, take a deep breath, relax, exercise, sleep and speak). In addition, we talked about what we can and should not do when we are stressed. In my professional and technical skills, I grew in that I learned how to manage a small group of people, organize, coordinate and plan activities.

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?

This internship was challenging for me because Public Health is not my passion, however, that being said, I learned, I grew and built relationships, as well as my communication skills. The main skill I took away from Sewanee is being open minded, hearted and listening. It was important for me to listen and observe and in the same manner I did at Sewanee for four years. One problem that arose during my time in Knox County is the stress-free lesson at KAPPI. My responsibility was to design and plan the lesson. My colleague whom is in charge of KAPPI was going to talk to the girls about stress because she was a teacher and she enjoys teaching and talking to the girls, however, she did not show up until an hour into the lesson and instead of waiting for her, I took initiative and I taught the lesson about stress. This helped me further develop my communication skills and presenting skills which had been constantly building for four years at Sewanee. In this, I learned a lesson that I cannot always just be the “fun” aspect. This particular week challenged me because I wanted to hang out with the girls and listen to the lesson, but instead I had to step up and act as the adult because no one else was present.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

My teamwork skills were strengthened every week working at KAPPI. I worked with 2-3 other people every week to organize and plan and coordinate an activity for the kids. Although ten girls may not sound like a lot, but when these kids come from nothing, it was a lot of work. These kids were so great, and they helped us all work together, but the teamwork was not just with my colleagues, it was with the girls. In order for the activity to be successful be it tie-dying or making a lava lamp, I had to learn to work with them as a team, as well as with my colleagues. One of the times that my teamwork skills were especially strengthened was during the STRESS week! That lesson was ironic, although we were talking about stress, that was the most stressful week with the girls, not because they were not great, but because my colleagues and I did not work together as well as we could have to plan it more successfully. This was challenging, but in the end, we worked together and we managed to move forward and have a good lesson after all.

How did your internship affect your career plans?

As for my career, this internship really helped me realize that I want to go to medical school and work with people and help people. I was exposed not only to the ways the Health Departments helps its county, but also to the problems that surround it such as drugs and diseases. The DIS ride along was really eye opening and sad. This exposure further instilled in me the importance of people like myself who want to help others. Coming from a rough childhood, I want to not only become a doctor, but I want to make a difference and this internship opened my eyes to how I can make a difference in the community when I am a doctor.
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?

I encountered people of different backgrounds from my own every single week. I worked with inner city youth. Every week I was challenged. The girls all came from different backgrounds and it was hard for me not to ask them everything about them. I had to challenge myself and act as an adult and a supervisor instead of a friend to them. As Sewanee has taught me, everyone comes from a different place and that makes them unique and special. These girls are special, and all very unique. I enjoyed spending 2-3 hours a day with them, teaching them, as well as learning from them. One of my favorite memories with these girls is when they put together a dancing show and wanted me to come watch. This was special to me because not only did this remind me of Dance Wise and PMO, but also, they were trusting me and opening up.

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

Be prepared to work in a cubical setting. As for housing, I lived on the STRIP (this is what UT calls this section), its right near UT (5-10-minute walk, depends how you are with really steep hills), 6-10-minute drive to the office at a great apartment called Evolve Apartments. I really enjoyed living here and interacting with college students. There is plenty to do in Knoxville, so go out and have fun! Market Square is really fun and they always have something fun going on during the summer, especially the markets on Saturday mornings and Wednesday afternoons. Don’t be afraid to make friends with your colleagues. There have been a few times that I have spent time outside of work with my colleagues and no, it is not awkward the next morning.

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

Thank you for funding this. This was an amazing opportunity for me this summer as I embark on my next journey (Medical School). This internship provided me with great insight to move along further with my career plans. Once again, thank you for making this a possibility.

Lastly, thank you Sewanee, Elizabeth, and Melissa for everything you have done for me over the last four years!! :) :)