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Summer 2015

### **Internship Report: Mustang Island**

My internship with the Diocese of West Texas has been an incredible experience. This internship was based on Mustang Island in the Southwest portion of Texas. The responsibilities of this internship varied from preparing food in the kitchen, setting up the beach for activities and interacting with the visiting families. As the environmental intern, I was also responsible for leading activities that made families more aware of the environment around them.

As an environmental intern, my goal was to make families more aware of the environment. One activity that brought awareness were garbage pick-ups. When families found beach trash, there was a designated bag for the trash. Families could not believe some of the things that would wash ashore. One day we could find a shoe covered with barnacles and the next day find a massive water jug. With each piece of trash we found, we could see how the environment made an impact on it; some pieces of trash would have algae and barnacles growing on it. We would have also find trash that had bite marks from sea turtles that thought it was food. By simply picking up trash, families were able to see the impact that it had on the environment. Another activity that raised awareness were touch tanks. By collecting items on the beach and putting them in a shallow tank, kids and parents were able to see all the different creatures that inhabited the beach around them. Each week the families and I discovered something new whether it was a seahorse, an unrecognizable fish or unique shell.

There were two challenges that I faced when coming up with environmental education activities. One difficulty was coming up with activities that taught children as well as adults. Another challenge was the fact that all activities were optional, so there was never a guarantee that anyone would participate in what I was preparing. In order to successfully educate the visiting families, I used their curiosity in order to teach them. I would start the touch tank myself, and over the course of the day, children would gather to see what I was up to. When they saw the sand dollars and hermit crabs that I was collecting, they wanted to learn more about them and find them themselves! When parents saw kids and staff gathered, they would come over to investigate what was going on too. In addition, if people saw something unusual washed ashore, they would always ask questions. The ocean acts as a great catalyst for learning about the environment. Each day the ocean presents a new surprise that allows for each person's curiosity and knowledge to grow.

One of the lowest points for me occurred when I first arrived in Texas. I landed in the Houston airport and my flight to Corpus Christi had a 6-hour delay. During my time at the airport, I had quite a bit of time to think; that was when I realized that I was in this place I have never been before not knowing anyone. I did not even know the other Sewanee intern! I was leaving behind my single mom, all my friends and my home to be in this new place with people I did not know. By the end of my internship, my low point became my high point. I learned that I am willing to step out of my comfort zone. By not settling, I have been able to fall in love with a new place and become part of a community that embraced me and pushed me to grow more as a person. People become comfortable where they are

and decide not to challenge themselves; they have a hard time leaving their own bubble. I have learned that by being able to get out of my comfort zone, I am able to learn more about myself. Not only do I learn more about myself but I also grow as a human being and gain new perspectives. In Sewanee, I find myself sticking with my usual group of friends and keeping a routine. This summer, I learned to break my usual routine of life and have been able to put myself out there. I am eager to go back to school and see how I am able to challenge my usual routine. I will be able to learn more about myself be able to connect with people who I would not usually interact with on a regular basis.

I learned a lot about myself during the course of this internship. This internship has been not just a career internship, but also a spiritual internship. Since this is an Episcopal family camp, there is a large focus on prayer and learning about God. At the beginning of this internship, I was trying to figure out my relationship with God. I am still trying to figure out my relationship with God but I now know how I can learn more about him and myself. The theme for this year's family camp was "call to serve," so each evening prayer/ teaching consisted of service and what it is. By being able to learn how to be a servant leader, I have been able to grow as a person. By being able to better understand myself, I am able to learn how I can better serve the people around me.

This internship opportunity enlightened me. It made me realize that I am in fact majoring in something that is not only meaningful to me but brings me joy. This internship also brought me to a new place. I have never been to Texas until this internship. After living in this wonderful place for three months, I can certainly say that I could see myself living

here in the future. Not only have I fallen in love with the environmental work, but I have also been able to fall in love with a new place and the people that live there.