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CitySprouts Internship Report  
Summer 2016

Looking for an opportunity to explore agriculture and sustainability in an urban atmosphere, I decided to intern at CitySprouts. CitySprouts, a non-profit organization based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, works with twenty-three public elementary and middle schools in Cambridge and Boston in order to educate children about the benefits of gardening and healthy eating. During the internship, I was introduced to many of the routines and problems that non-profits deal with on a regular basis. By working from both an office and a middle school, I received a unique perspective on how these organizations work to achieve their goals. Additionally, I helped with the regular maintenance and upkeep of the different gardens, further providing a comprehensive view of CitySprouts' operations.

CitySprouts works with five summer fellows to help lead their summer internship program, which is a four-week daily program held at four different schools that helps local middle school students discover and foster interests in STEM fields, food justice, and gardening. Though the four other summer fellows spent their eight weeks working solely in the garden with middle schoolers throughout two sessions, I was given the opportunity to spend the first session working in the office. Here, I learned about the behind the scenes work that makes CitySprouts successful. For example, an important part about the summer program included cooking with the middle school student interns, which aimed to introduce the children to vegetables that may be unfamiliar to them. In order to identify which crops are unfamiliar, CitySprouts has the middle schoolers fill out surveys on the first day of the program that asks about different vegetables regularly grown in the gardens. Part of my job included creating a data input on Excel to identify

vegetables that are most and least familiar to the students, as well as pointing out any other trends found in the data. This data would be compared to a post survey with the exact same questions, aiming to confirm whether or not our program effectively made certain vegetables more familiar. In addition to recording the results and interpretations of the pre-survey data, I also learned many valuable skills on Excel that made comparing data extremely easy. By spending time in the office, I oversaw how the organization works to improve education in Cambridge and Eastern Massachusetts. My work will help CitySprouts evaluate how effective their summer program engages their students with the variety of vegetables found in the garden.

Perhaps my favorite part of my fellowship came in the last four weeks of the internship. For the second session, I worked alongside another summer fellow and a garden coordinator, a CitySprouts employee in charge of leading the programs in the summer and in the school year, helping to lead one of the program's sites at Rindge Avenue Upper School. Originally, I found myself quite nervous about the idea of working with middle schoolers. I've never been in charge of kids before, so this part of the internship allowed to me to determine whether or not I enjoyed working with children, specifically middle school students. Although some issues arose with active listening and participation, I found that I really loved working with the kids. The students loved learning specifically about where their food came from, and how workers earned money by producing food. One lesson I helped lead, named Life of a Tomato, illustrated various scenarios in which a tomato went from a farm to a consumer. One simulation in this activity explained how workers in the United States often earned more than their South American counterparts for similar work. Many of our youth raised questions about the fairness of this, which led to great discussion on ideas about food justice. I am blown away by how

knowledgeable the kids at my site were, considering I knew nothing about social inequality when I was going into sixth grade. Another activity we planned involved researching and reporting on various people of color within the food justice movement. The students gave excellent reports at the end of the program, and some of them even shared other related information on food justice groups currently operating in the greater Boston area. The most rewarding part of this internship was seeing how many ideas and interests I had in common with the middle-school students.

A particularly difficult part of the internship dealt with learning and working around different cultural differences between the staff and the middle-schoolers. While my two other co-workers and I either attend or attended small liberal arts colleges, the majority of the students have lived in urban settings like Cambridge or Boston. Additionally, while all of the students were of either Southeast Asian or Latino descent, the garden coordinator, myself, and the other summer fellows were all white. Though these differences exist, and, at times were quite obvious, they became a learning experience for us all. We all held different perspectives on what social justice and food justice meant in our life, and these differences helped to create lively discussions. This served as a great reminder of how much you can learn from people of different backgrounds.

Though my internship has ended, I have learned so much in terms of what I want to look for in future internships in jobs. Prior to this opportunity, I never really thought that I would enjoy a career in education. This experience now has me looking at potential careers, working either in a traditional school setting, or a program similar to CitySprouts. Additionally, I learned a lot about sustainability and gardening that I hope to utilize when I come back to Sewanee in the

fall. Overall, this internship taught me about so many different career fields that I hope to explore more during my next three years at Sewanee.