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Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy
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The Brooklyn Bridge Park is a not-for-profit corporation that is in charge of the daily maintenance and management of the park. This 1.3-mile section of the Brooklyn waterfront is rich with history. In the 19th century, it was a formidable wall of industrial warehouses and shipping ports. However, the New Jersey Port Authority ended cargo ship operations in the early 1980s and left various decrepit warehouses and piers on the waterfront. The Brooklyn Bridge Park completely revitalized this 85-acre area by developing six modern, self-sustaining piers with ample, and necessary, green space among the park. In addition to being a location for Brooklyn locals to engage in recreation and relaxation, it has also become a top tourist destination in New York for people from all over the globe. The Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy, my employer, is a non-profit organization that is in charge of managing and running, mostly free, events and activities at the park. Majority of its funds are created through donations, sponsorships, and membership fees.

Being in the in the park for the first time was an aesthetically pleasing experience. I remember sitting on the lawn of pier one, overlooking downtown Manhattan, and feeling as if I was no longer in a city environment. As a kid growing up in North Carolina, I was spoiled by a surplus of fields and forested environments. Being an employee made me realize how essential a park system with well-maintained green areas is in a densely populated urban center. The ability of the Brooklyn Bridge Park and the

Conservancy to deliver green space and events associated with nature is what makes the park so special.

During my tenure as an intern, I engaged in the help of assembling and managing assembling of over 30 events at the Brooklyn Bridge Park. We would work as a team with the set-up, management, and break down of various events at the park and then move on wherever we were needed. However, the majority of my time during the week was spent on the water as a kayak instructor for the summer kayak camp. This involved receiving a group of ten to twenty kids from a New York City school or day camp who then would participate in a two-hour instructional kayak session. Many of the kids that participate in this program are not familiar with water and almost all of them have never been on any sort of boat before. As a result, the bulk of the kids were fairly nervous before they embarked on their time on the East River. However, the transformation in the attitudes of the majority of the kids from the beginning of the session to the end was pretty remarkable. This was particularly apparent during “Water Week”, which was when we had the same group of kids for three days straight. On the last day of this week, we did a significant trek to Red Hook, on the southern end of Brooklyn, and the progress these kids made was awesome. Seeing these kids become so comfortable in the water and excited by the world around them was extremely rewarding. Partaking in this program helped me develop better communications skills, as I had to clearly pass down instruction to my students. Additionally, I gained considerable leadership skills through teaching these classes to up to 20 students and chaperones.

The Movies with a View Series and Pier Kids were two events that I consistently contributed to setting up and organizing. Movies with a View started on July 7th and ran every Thursday I was there, when the weather permitted it. This event is easily the most popular event the Conservancy puts on, with sometimes thousands of people in attendance. It entails the showing of a movie on a large inflatable screen on the lawn of pier 1, overlooking Manhattan. Setting up this event was an exceptional display of teamwork by all the summer associates and senior conservancy employees. Everyone knew his or her role and we were able to set up efficiently every Thursday. Along with setting up the tents and concessions, I was responsible for managing the line to the “Journey to the Stars” event, a free opportunity for the public to observe various planets through the amateur astrologists association. The ability to watch a great movie, observe planets and see an amazing view always made these nights entertaining. Furthermore, Working the Movies with a View series taught me how important it is to be organized when completing a task as one unit.

Pier Kids was held every Sunday at the lawn at the end of Pier 6. This event is a kid’s paradise, with the opportunity to learn chess, engage in arts and crafts, get lost in a great children’s book, play soccer and volleyball, or be entertained by our weekly performance. While the set-up of this event could be frustrating, we were always able to keep a good attitude, buckle down, and run it smoothly. My personal duties included managing the volleyball clinic or running fun soccer drills for the kids. Participation in this event is where I developed my management skills because we had to gauge what materials to bring out depending on the popularity of an event the week before, the

weather, or the performance that week. Other than these main events, my time was mostly spent surveying visitors of the park, to measure the demographic of people entering the park, and office work. Office work involved making spreadsheets or scanning documents.

Similarly to kayak camp, I would occasionally help out the environmental education center. This entailed demonstrating and instructing a class in seining, which is a form of fishing with a large net. The kids would actually get the opportunity to put on waders, enter the water and be exposed to an environment that is out of their comfort zone. This program certainly peaked their interest of the marine life in the river, they were in awe of the fish we would catch. In today's urban centers, the youth generally find entertainment in apps on their phones or social media. This is why the Brooklyn Bridge Park is so important; it gets kids, who do not have access to many outdoor activities, acquainted with the natural world around them. Working at the Conservancy really helped me realize how vital environmental education of the youth is in building a sustainable future. Through the environmental education center, and other outdoor events, the BBPC is doing its job to foster sustainability.

Places like the Brooklyn Bridge Park are essential for an urban center to prosper by preventing it from feeling too claustrophobic and promoting an environmental mindset amongst its visitors. While surveying guests to the park, I noticed that everyone I talked to was generally in a good mood. I think this has something to say about the effect that a beautiful green space in a city environment has on its residents. I know that I will apply what I have learned this summer to my upcoming classes at Sewanee and in my future

career. My internship has demonstrated to me that instilling urban sustainable infrastructure, in a city, that offers fun, intriguing events to its residents is crucial to community development and aiding the environment.