

This summer I interned with the Victim Witness Assistance Program in Bedford, Virginia. The Victim Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) deals directly with the individuals that have had any involvement in a case. The purpose of VWAP is to assist prosecutors, judges, and all other law enforcement and judiciary officials so that trials may be executed with the utmost efficiency. Their casework spans across all judicial proceedings in the juvenile and domestic courts, general district court, and circuit court.

My formal internship included the observation of formal trial proceedings, as well as being charged with the responsibility of filling out domestic violence reports, and also collecting and filing warrants. I also had the responsibility of contacting victims and witnesses by phone, mail, and in person to inform them of their upcoming court proceedings. This was an essential part of the process as VWAP is responsible for making sure that all parties are present at their proceedings, as well as informing them of their responsibilities as witnesses and victims before, during, and after the case. In addition, I was able to create and organize a file system that ensured contact information was up to date and also kept the cases organized and confidential. I also had the opportunity to interact with judicial personnel, law enforcement, and multiple types of courthouse employees as their help was invaluable to me during the internship.

During the Summer of 2015, I interned with the office of the Commonwealth Attorney, and I learned about the prosecution side of judicial proceedings. During that internship I was able to see how important the role VWAP played in the judicial process and how they were able to assist those who were affected by the case. The opportunity to work with VWAP this summer allowed me to expand my experiences in the field that I wish to pursue after graduation, as it provided a different clientele from my previous

internship and different responsibilities to perform with this clientele. I quickly learned that this organization is essential to all aspects of the trial proceedings, but is unique in how it contributes, as it strictly focuses on those who have been affected by the circumstances of the trial. This understanding allowed me to appreciate how important other actors are, rather than just the prosecutor and defense attorney, and to realize that these victims and witnesses would have no representation without this organization.

The experiences from this summer taught me many things about the judicial process and about how much time and effort goes into each and every case, and how being very meticulous in detail work pays large dividends in the long run. However, the most important thing I learned was that I have the ability to assist others and the difference that you can make in an individual's life (despite how small you think the task may be) could actually be making an unbelievable impact on someone else's life.

I feel as if I have always had a passion for helping others, but my opportunity this summer gave me a new perspective on what it truly means to help someone in need. The clientele that I had the privilege of working with were those at one of the lowest points in their lives due in large part to someone else's actions, yet they would have no one to assist them if it were not for the organization that I worked with. In having the ability to visibly see someone have relief through their situation no matter how large or small, helped me realize how fortunate I am to have the opportunities that I have, and how especially fortunate I am to have never had to be in their situation. Going to Sewanee and growing up in a small town sometimes makes it is easy to forget about the big picture in the world around you, however this internship opened my eyes and

allowed me to realize how imperative it is to always help those in need. As I continue to move towards my ultimate goal of attending law school, the experiences of my last two summers will certainly not be forgotten and would not have been possible without the generosity of the Tonya Public Affairs fund.

Overall, these experiences allowed me to continue to gain knowledge about the legal process and proper trial preparation strategies, as well as improve in other valuable traits such as interpersonal skills and organization. This internship also allowed me to experience the many aspects that go into preparing cases, while not only improving on the skills I was introduced to last summer but also gaining a more intricate knowledge of the behind the scenes work for cases. This experience is one that was educational as well as important to my career path as I continue to look into law as a career.