

Summer Internship Report 2017

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Hometown: Atlanta, Georgia



Monteagle Sunday School Assembly Monteagle, Tennessee

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

The Monteagle Sunday School Assembly (MSSA) is a Christian community where families come to spend their summer. The MSSA provides eight weeks of daily activities for all ages, especially youth. I was a member of the youth staff and had the titles of both Hummingbird and Craft Director. My responsibilities as Hummingbird Director included developing my own daily lesson plan for children ages three to five, directing a staff of four assistants, and implementing a safe, engaging environment for the children. My responsibilities as Craft Director included coming up with engaging, age appropriate crafts for the "Eaglets", aged six to eight, and "Eagles", aged nine to eleven. In addition to my two positions, I also had to attend a number of activities hosted by the youth staff for children and their families.

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?

I made a difference by providing new ideas and events to the MSSA program. It was my impression that my position had always previously been held by people who had grown up summering in Monteagle. They went through the youth programs themselves and eventually worked on staff. For this reason, most events and activities remained the same, and followed the tradition. I did not have any background knowledge on the way things had been with Hummingbirds and Crafts, and brought my own spin to everything I did. One example of me altering the status quo were the themed Hummingbird parties thrown each month for the kids. Summer after summer, the Hummingbirds would have Halloween in both June and July. They would meet at a destination and go trick or treating at participating houses. I, however, revamped the theme and created a variety of Halloween stations in an open field. Instead of trick or treating at homes, the children had to complete each station in order to get their candy. In addition to this, there was food and drinks available for parents

to stay and watch, making it more of a family-fun event for the community. I was initially nervous to see how my boss and families would react to this change, but found that they believed it worked much more efficiently! I would also say that I made a difference every time I made a child smile, laugh, or wonder. Days often began with tears, but would (almost) always end with smiles and endless giggles. I made it my mission to make every child feel valued and understood no matter what.

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?

A very important part of being a member of the youth staff is to behave appropriately, both in actions as well as with our words. Since we worked directly with children all day, we made it our mission to preserve their innocence to the best of our abilities. There was an instance where one of my assistants was caught behaving inappropriately, and it was brought to my boss' attention. She explained to me that it was my responsibility to discuss the incident with her. I have never been in a position where I had to both discipline as well as offer mentorship to someone before this opportunity. For this conversation, I drew my inspiration from my cross country coach, who is a prime example of a compassionate and just leader.

In what way were your teamwork skills strengthened?

When it comes to teamwork, I have almost always chosen the path of helper/follower. Before this opportunity, I had never held a direct leadership position, and definitely learned valuable life skills with regards to leading a team. In the beginning I was timid and opted for doing the work myself instead of delegating tasks. It wasn't until we got together as a team to evaluate our team, that I realized it is ok to delegate. I have always been a people pleaser, and this opportunity was necessary for me to understand that giving clear instruction will not upset the team!

How did your internship affect your career plans?

Coming into this internship, I had doubts about my ability to interact with children. Don't get me wrong, I had prior experience with kids, but nothing this long term. After successfully delivering my lesson plans and engaging with children on a daily basis, I can confidently say that I have what it takes to work with children! This internship gave me the confidence to find my voice, and to realize that I absolutely love interacting with kids.

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?

To be completely honest, this internship offered slim diversity. If anything, I learned to work with people of different ages. My assistants were younger than me, the youngest being eight years my junior. I learned to be extremely clear with what goals needed to be met that day, and tasks that needed completing. If I did not explicitly delegate tasks, my assistants would not do them. This definitely taught me the importance of delegation as well as communication. Not everyone will intuitively pick up on what is meant to be done, communication is everything!

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

Go for it! Being an intern with the MSSA provides many benefits like providing housing, meals, and funding. It can be nerve-racking being an outsider to the MSSA, but you find your routine fairly easily (and Sewanee is always a short drive away!) While there were some difficult moments, I wouldn't trade them for the valuable life skills I learned!

Words of thanks to your internship funding donors:

I truly cannot thank you enough for funding my internship opportunity! Because of your generosity, I was able to learn valuable life skills while better discerning my future path. This internship allowed me to discover the confidence necessary for leading a class full of children.