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Summer Interns Experience Life in DC

Twenty-two summer interns arrived in Washington, DC, in late May to assume a variety of internships in government, nonprofit associations, and the private sector. But unlike most of the college interns who descend upon Washington on a regular basis, these 22 outstanding college scholars also happen to be foster youth or former foster youth without permanent families or homes. Selected by the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA) to participate in the OFA's summer internship program, the 22 students recently wrapped up 6 busy weeks in Washington that included their full-time internships, as well as weekly workshops in professional development and leadership and meetings with members of Congress and the media.

The OFA internship program began in 1994 as a way to provide real-world experience and prestigious internships to students who would otherwise be unable to afford such experiences. The OFA arranges the internships, provides scholarships for travel and living expenses, and offers workshops conducted by professionals who can help the students prepare for life after graduation. Over the years, students have interned in a variety of Washington workplaces, and this year's students were no different—staffing U.S. Senators' offices, The Nature Conservancy, Washington Hospital Center, law offices, and more.

"Our objective is to immerse these students in top-tier professional settings where they can gain invaluable workplace experience," says OFA National Events Director Annalisa Assaadi. "We tend to see a transformation as they become confident in an office environment and learn more about their strengths. They emerge from this program not only with a strong resume with which to launch their careers, but with confidence that they can and will succeed."

A new twist offered by OFA this year was the student intern blog on the OFA website. The blog includes photographs and interviews, as well as the interns' comments about their experiences. The following entry from Brittany James reflects the fresh perspective and enthusiasm of these students:

"At first, I was really nervous to start my internship at the National Association for the Education of Young Children. I wasn't sure what to expect, and didn't know if I would fit in. But once I got here, everyone was so friendly and welcoming, and I felt right at home! I've been fortunate enough to be assigned meaningful projects, too. . . Overall, my time in Washington, DC, has been amazing. I love the city, the people, and my job. I feel so blessed and fortunate to have had such a wonderful opportunity."

To read the OFA's student internship blog, visit:

www.orphan.org/blog/

To read more about the OFA and its programs for foster youth, visit the website:

www.orphan.org

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