

The Herald-Sun

Career exploration internships more than just a summer job

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This summer, Janeta Cherry, a graduate of Achievement Academy of Durham now studying special education at Stanley College, was an intern at North Carolina Central University's Student Health and Counseling Services. Cherry came to her internship with a plan -- she wanted to improve her public speaking, marketing and computer skills.

She tackled tasks like collecting and processing specimens, producing marketing materials and managing a theater production about healthy decision-making. Each task helped her improve her skills and prepare for her future career.

To make sure her internship put her on the right track to succeed, Cherry's supervisors helped her set one-year and five-year career goals. One supervisor, Ruth Gilliam Phillips, promised to stay in touch and follow up on Cherry's progress. "I saw the biggest improvement in Janeta's confidence level," said Gilliam Phillips. "She really overcame her shyness."

According to Meredythe Holmes, executive director of Made in Durham, "good jobs are available in our community, but Durham youth are often passed over for those jobs. Youth need training, skills and experience that match the needs of employers."

Made in Durham partners, including leaders in business, education, government and community organizations, have come together to find new ways to ensure that Durham youth attain a post-secondary credential and a rewarding career by age 25.

"These internships are more than just a summer job," said Holmes. "They are part of an education-to-career strategy." Interns had the opportunity to attend job-readiness training, get career counseling, make summer learning plans, participate in field trips and give presentations, as well as work on assignments that helped them reach their learning goals.

Interns at Duke University Health Systems worked in many departments, but came together every two weeks for reflection sessions and field trips. One trip was to the Duke Surgical Education and Activities Lab where they got to practice surgery on life-like manikins with simulated life-signs.

For Jsane King, visiting the lab increased her confidence and commitment to a medical career. "Actually visiting the lab helped me understand how important it is to understand

the patients and be knowledgeable,” said King. “I now know that I could definitely handle the challenges that may arise in medical school.”

In addition to NCCU and Duke, many other employers opened their doors to youth this summer. According to Kevin Dick, executive director of the Durham Workforce Development Board and NCWorks Durham, “Our partnership with Made in Durham was integral to the success of this program and contributed to the increase in internships this year.”

More than 480 youth interns were employed this summer through the Durham Youthwork Internship Program. All had the opportunity to hone job skills and learn what it takes to succeed in the workplace.

Be sure to check out The Herald-Sun’s Durham Herald section on the third Sunday of the month. We will be telling more stories of how the Made in Durham partners, by changing the way they work together, are increasing the number of students achieving post-secondary credentials and meaningful careers.

Laura Wendell is the employer engagement coordinator for Made in Durham. For more information about the organization, visit <http://www.mdcinc.org/projects/made-durham>.