

Fairfax County Youth Leadership Alumni News

Youth Leadership Program and Our Alumni: Ongoing Success in Our Third Year

Volume 4, Issue 1
November 2008

The Fairfax County Youth Leadership program continues to show evidence of its long-term impact and importance. The Fairfax County Government continues to provide opportunities for high school and college interns. The alumni portion of the YLP program is in its third year and it provides clear evidence of the long term impact and importance of YLP. The viability and sustainability of the YLP program is apparent in the work accomplished by our college interns.

There were an impressive number of applications for the college level county internships for summer, 2008. Internships were awarded to

Bailee Barfield, Kelly Ebert; Laura Fresco, Agatha Kang, Deborah Lee, Celesta Palmer, Kelly Phelan, Nina Ruhter and Brian Stebner. Laura Fresco is a recent college graduate and the remaining alumni interns are current college students. In several cases, their internships related directly to their career aspirations. The alumni serving in summer internships provided valuable services to the county. *Their accounts of their internships appear elsewhere in this newsletter.*

These college interns met with the high school YLP interns during the July meeting and shared lunch and experiences with them. They compared

high school internships with current YLP students and discussed college life and the college internships.

It is the aspiration of those involved in the Youth Leadership Program to continue to engender and encourage an active role in local government for all its participants, past and present. The goal of the alumni portion of YLP is to provide a forum in which to exchange opportunities, connections, goals and aspirations. To that end, we encourage you to share your news and ideas with us in the near future. Please contact Cynthia Szwajkowski with your updates at:

Cynthia.Szwajkowski@fcps.edu

We encourage our college alumni to apply for next summer's internships. Applications are available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fclyp.htm and are due by February 15, 2009.

Inside this issue:

YLP: Our Ongoing Success	1
Summer 2008 Alumni Internships	1-2
YLP Alumni Updates	2-4

Summer 2008 FCYLP Alumni Internships: Nina Ruhter and Kelly Ebert

Many of the college interns reported about their experiences.

This summer, interns Nina Ruhter and Kelly Ebert, working for the Fairfax County Department of Transportation, saw an opportunity in their jobs to reach out to fellow county interns while making the planet just a little greener.

On July 11, Kelly and Nina sponsored "Go Green Friday," and challenged fellow YLP members to get to work without driving alone. They investigated the quickest bus and metro routes and planned safe bike routes, thanks to the county's new bike map. "Go Green Friday" participants

commuted via bike, bus, Metrorail, carpool and combinations thereof all around the county that day.

Metro reported setting a record high for ridership that Friday. "Officials attributed the increase to a Washington Nationals baseball game, a Women of Faith Conference at the Verizon Center and tourists visiting the city," wrote the Washington Times, July 15. They seem to have forgotten to mention the Fairfax County Youth Leadership Program's "Go Green Friday."

Kelly and Nina hope that "Go Green Friday" made participants more aware of alternative forms of

transportation available to them and that others will follow the example set by the county's youth this summer.

NINA RUHTER **(YLP Class of 2006)**

Jeb Stuart High School

Internship: Department of Transportation

In her work at the Fairfax County Department of Transportation, Nina Ruhter enjoyed learning to use GIS and doing field work. "I learned a lot about the bus system and transportation. My supervisor was out for two

weeks but he had a lot of meetings and field visits with others planned for me so I felt like I really got to know what FCDOT does. I did like the freedom I had, however, to do my own projects like "Go Green Friday."

She advised next year's college level interns to get to know co-workers as quickly as possible. Through friendships she made on the job, Nina was invited to play on the softball team and she "got to spend my day with some really great people".

Nina wrote that she was so glad that YLP started the alumni program. "Few of my friends from school got jobs that were as helpful in determining a career."

(Continued on page 2)

Summer 2008 College Level Internships

KELLY EBERT (YLP Class of 2006)

Fairfax High School

Internship: Department of Transportation

Kelly Ebert worked closely with both the Bicycle and Pedestrian coordinators in the County to update website information, perform field work duties, and plan for greater outreach.

She wrote: "While this position is often designed for an engineer major, I slowly learned the differences between GIS and GPS and how the County utilizes this technology. One of my major projects as a bicycle intern was to collaborate with a County citizen to create a historical bicycle map of the Civil War areas in the Sully District. Through informal meetings and test bike rides along the planned trail, we were able to begin drafting the actual map. The County historians also sat in on meetings to provide their insight. I also worked closely with the Funding Division Coordinators for the Department of Transportation to understand the process of how to receive a grant for such a project.

Working in the Bicycle Program offered many opportunities to learn outdoors. "Cycle The Sites" or the Sully District's Historical Bike Map was my major focus during the internship. One aspect of the project was to secure a VDOT enhancement grant for the 2010 fiscal year to help provide the finances necessary to actually print the map, install informational kiosks, generate awareness, and sign the particular trails and roads involved in the route."

Kelly said that she learned from a meeting early on that creating an aesthetically pleasing application was crucial to its approval.

In May, the Bicycle Program released their first edition for Fairfax County's Bike Map. Kelly was able to use this as her base resource in finding suitable roads and trails for a connecting route. By working off the Sully District's Historical Site Inventory list, she was able to place areas that had been identified and researched by County historians on the map and find paths between them. With assistance from her boss, she was able to take her hand-drawn sketch for a possible double loop and trace it on GIS maps. These maps, in turn, were taken to meetings with the County Historian, Preservationist, Park Authority, and active citizens to seek their opinions and suggestions. Kelly then conducted field checks of the proposed loops. Kelly designed the two loops with mini loops interlocking

them to appeal to families and bicycle enthusiasts alike. She provided shorter, children-friendly routes to allow kids a hands-on experience of bicycling through history in a more relaxed and welcoming environment. The loops all have connection paths between them so that the more advanced bicyclists can cover the entire set of historical trails in one setting.

After reading through county historical reports of the inventoried sites, Kelly created a draft brochure to accompany the map. The brochure explains the historical significance of each site and shows a small image to help riders identify what they are viewing when bicycling.

Kelly's advice to next year's College level interns: "Don't be afraid to talk to your supervisor to get tasks that are more appealing to you. When I explained that I had an interest in Civil War and local history it opened the door for me to begin working on the Sully District Historical Map. I loved researching and talking to historians about the artifacts in the County. While I found myself often lost when it came to the GIS and other technology programs necessary to draw maps, I was able to learn the basics and help in other ways.



**Kelly Ebert (YLP Class of 2006),
Fairfax High School**

CELESTA PALMER

(YLP Class of 2006)

Lee High School

Internship: Department of Community and Recreation Services

Celesta inventoried groups in Fairfax County to facilitate creation of a youth-led group that allows for teen representatives to be actively engaged in policy and program



**Celesta Palmer (Class of 2006),
Lee High School**

development that efficiently addresses youth issues. Celesta gathered contact information for area/interest specific youth groups and compiled information about agencies serving youth, specifically faith-based groups. The end goal of the new program which will result from Celesta's information is to create not just another youth advocacy and presentation group but one which will provide the tools and support for active and diverse teen leadership roles and regional work in schools and communities. The youth in the new program will work closely with Fairfax County employees, youth planners and regional leaders.

Youth Leadership Program (YLP) Alumni Updates

Alumni Abroad

JOYCE MENG (YLP Class of 2003)

Thomas Jefferson High School

I recall my YLP days very fondly. As an update, I'm currently at Oxford (Balliol College) reading for a MSc in Economics for Development under a Rhodes Scholarship. I've been involved in a lot of development work, and have founded two non-profits, which I currently run:



Joyce Meng

Givology: <https://www.givology.org/>
YouthBank: www.youth-bank.org

I have a web-site which contains a little bit more information on what I've been up to. <http://www.joycemeng.com/experiences/>

AISHA TOOR (YLP Class of 2005)

West Springfield High School

I am in Oxford, England right now, on a study abroad venture, studying Philosophy, Government and International Affairs at Hertford College, at the University of Oxford. I spent two undergrad years at George Mason University, and depending on whether Oxford will give me credit I may finish out my degree from Oxford. I have been involved in politics and international affairs at Mason, and I am looking into politics as a future career choice. I am volunteering with the Oxford Center for Islamic Studies, researching the role of Islam in British Politics and the rise of terrorism on British Muslim Youth. I want to join the Peace Corps after I graduate and then apply to law school. As for the internship, I would love to have the opportunity to intern again.



Other Alumni News

LUKE STEWART

(YLP Class of 2007)

McLean High School

I'm currently attending the University of Texas at Arlington and enjoying college life very much. I've decided to major in Political Science, and while I don't yet know where it will take me, I am excited at the opportunities this major will afford me.

After finishing YLP, I went on to participate in an internship with the Desktop Management branch of the Fairfax County Public Schools IT department. The internship began in February 2008, and continued into the Summer. I worked with thousands of FCPS computers on a day-to-day basis, and I learned a great deal about how IT professionals do their jobs. I completed this internship just a week before I left for college in August of this year.

ALLIE VANDIVIER

(YLP Class of 2007)

Centreville High School

I'm at the University of Virginia and absolutely loving it! My contact info is the same, allie.vandivier@yahoo.com. I'm taking Spanish, Western Religions, Astronomy, and Global Media. All classes have been extremely interesting, but I'm still looking for a major, so hopefully I'll find something I absolutely love very soon! I am a copy editor for the Cavalier Daily, I play on Virginia's Club Volleyball Team, and I've been working on a few community service projects, such as Pancakes for Parkinson's, a school-wide function where the group makes thousands of free pancakes and distributes them on the Lawn while asking for donations. It was so much fun, it felt like the entire Charlottesville community was there.

I loved the YLP program. It was such a good experience.

KAT REACH (YLP Class of 2007)

Annandale High School

Right now I am at George Mason University living on campus taking about 16 credits. My internship for YLP was at the Department of Public Safety

Communications, the 911 center during the summer of 2007. That internship has had a VERY drastic impact on my life. I went into school as a film major and just recently decided to change it to Administration of Justice, a fancy name for Criminal Justice. I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have changed my major had I not been a part of the Youth Leadership Program. I still keep in touch with my old co-workers at DPSC, even with someone who switched jobs and now works for another County agency. YLP really had a profound effect on me. How many people my age can say they sat down with one of our County supervisors? Or that they have a picture with the man who is now running for Congress?



OLIVIA MILLER (YLP Class of 2007)

Hayfield Secondary

I guess to update you on my life since YLP, I could start by saying I ended up accepting my offer of admission to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill after receiving the Pogue Scholarship which covers my tuition, fees, room and board! Chapel Hill is absolutely beautiful!

Since I've been at UNC, I've joined the Marching Band and a few clubs on campus such as Invisible Children, Public Service Scholars, and Jackson Ambassadors (which is a branch of the office of multicultural affairs which helps run programs for prospective minority students). Band can be a little time consuming. We have rehearsal two-three times a week for two hours. Game day is usually an all-day event. But even though it takes up a lot of time it is definitely a good break from all of the reading and other school work, so I enjoy it!

I plan to major in International Studies with a minor in Spanish and I hope to study abroad in Spain or South America at some point over the next four years. Any country will do as long as I can speak Spanish and experience something new!

Youth Leadership Program Alumni Updates

KRISTEN WASILKO

(YLP Class of 2003)

Langley High School

I graduated from Miami University (the one that was already a university when Florida was still owned by Spain) with a B.S. in Family Studies and a minor in marketing. Langley provided me with a solid foundation for college and looking back, I'm very grateful for that. I'm currently working full-time for CrossRoads Center in Reston, VA as a Neuro-Cognitive Program Coach. We provide visual-based therapies through brain training. I work mostly with children; many of whom have disabilities. It keeps me very busy (and exhausted), but I really enjoy the position. I hope this finds the other alumni well and I'm looking forward to seeing what the others are up to now.

ELAINE FILADELPHO

(YLP Class of 2001)

Annandale High School

I wanted to let you know what I'm up to now, because it relates very directly to my YLP College Internship, as I just learned! I'm currently working for Google (#1 Company to Work For, 2 years in a row!) in Silicon Valley, in their Communications and Public Affairs department, doing a mix of PR, government affairs, and communications strategy. I specifically work with our Geo products (Google Earth, Maps, etc) - and my boss (who also interviewed me) recently turned over a product to me, Google Transit - which provides directions from getting from place to place using only public transportation. I was really excited that I was getting ownership of an entire product,

especially one that is really interesting and doing good things - and then she said to me "yeah, we haven't had anyone to put on this, then when I interviewed you and saw you had worked for a transportation agency, I knew I had to hire you!" So, thanks to the great YLP internship, I now have a great "real" job!

LINDSEY JIAO

(YLP Class of 2007)

Herndon High School

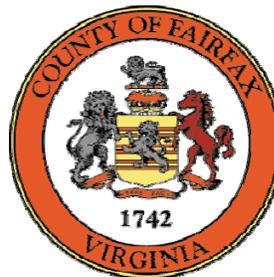
University of Mary Washington is wonderful and I am just loving college! Obama and Biden are actually coming to the campus tomorrow. It's very exciting! I can be reached by e-mail at: Ljiao@umw.edu

YLP College Internship Information

The Youth Leadership Program offers a competitive, college-level internship program, open only to YLP graduates from previous years. The summer internships will give several YLP graduates another opportunity to become involved with Fairfax County and gain valuable work experience. We encourage our college alumni to apply for next summer's internships. Applications are available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fclyp.htm and are due by February 15, 2009.

Fairfax County Department of Management and Budget
12000 Government Center Parkway
Suite 561
Fairfax, Virginia 22035
Phone: 703-324-2391
Fax: 703-324-3940

A County of Fairfax, Virginia Publication



<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/FCYLP.htm>