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11th Grade

Change Inc. Westminster, Maryland

Intern at Change Inc

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First Page- "Briefly state where you interned, what your duties were at your internship, why you chose this internship, and what your initial expectations were before you started."

I interned with Change Inc. in Westminster, Maryland to observe how to work with people with disabilities and help the staff during group outings and activities. Initially, I thought I would be working more hands-on with higher functioning clients. This past summer I volunteered with Camp Echoing Hills in Ohio, and I assumed my internship would be much like this. I assumed the people could talk and interact and I could build relationships. This was not the case at Change. Most of the people could not speak or interact besides moving their eyes to show they were paying attention. At Echoing Hills I would help people with their individual needs, but at Change my job was mostly to observe how the staff members worked with the clients to get a better idea of how to work with such people. While I was not expecting this to be fun necessarily, I could not have anticipated the stress and sadness I felt for the clients. This was a totally new experience for me that really opened my eyes to the incredible need of these people in our community. I chose this internship because I have always had the desire to help people, and I believe this group of people is often overlooked. Too many people have no idea how to speak or interact with those with disabilities and I wanted to learn how to work with people with special needs. It is wrong to ostracize those in need from their community. As Christians we especially need to be open and loving as Christ loves, no matter the person. I truly desire to love this group of people more, and show them the God who created them has a plan and future for them and this internship better equipped me to do that. As new and startling as this internship was, I learned so much and I want to continue to pursue ways to help this community of people.

Journal Entry #1 – “What were your first impressions of this work? (The atmosphere, people, tasks, schedule, transportation, etc.) What tasks did you like? What did you dislike?”

This environment was naturally stressful, especially for my first day. There are many roadblocks in this field, ranging from a lack of verbal skills to the fact that most clients have the mental age of three- months to two-years-old. As unprepared for this as I was, the staff introduced me to people and showed me how to best fulfill their needs when interacting. Those who work in special needs areas have a lot of compassion and sympathy and I felt that immediately. The client’s day is structured, giving them opportunities to get exercise, go on outings in the community, interact with each other, and take part of goal-based activities, such as cleaning or crafts. While the day is thoroughly planned, Change places a stress on individual choice, allowing the clients to choose their activities which strengthens their learning skills and encourages them to become more independent. In the morning, I attended a meeting focused on helping young adults with special needs graduating from high school. The main concern involved helping the families transition the kids into a new environment in a day-center such as Change, and learning about the individual’s desires and skills to help them find work in a new environment. I really enjoyed learning more about the problems those with special needs face and how to solve them. After the meeting, I spent time with the clients, which I did not enjoy as much. I found the experience overwhelming; I was unable able to help the clients physically because I do not have proper training, and verbally it was difficult to communicate and form bonds. However, it was interesting to see how the staff members worked around the verbal

boundaries and found other ways to work with people. While it was not my favorite part of the day, I did find it useful and enjoyed the learning experience.

Journal Entry #2 – “What skills, education, and other training are required for this position? Are any unique character qualities or personality traits required? What would your strengths and weaknesses be? Interview your internship supervisor or another employee and then describe the path he/she took to reach this career.”

Educationally, most of the people I had the opportunity to interview had a Bachelor's or Associate's Degree, though a few managers had a Master's degree. There are several suggested fields of study for this line of work, including social work, human resources, social services, and psychology. While no special character qualities were discussed, I found certain traits that everyone possessed and used at the center. The staff members are not only very compassionate, but they have an extreme amount of patience and love. Even in high-stress situations and violent confrontations, they remained calm, forceful, and patiently repeated their expectations clearly to solve the situation. For those who worked one-on-one with clients, they were very open and comforting; not only did they welcome their specific client and other individuals, but they especially strived to help me and check on my progress throughout the week. One client in particular had severe behavioral issues and needed to constantly walk around the building, both outside and inside. No matter the weather, he was welcome to walk outside and the staff member with him showed attention and love despite exhaustion. Everyone expressed an overwhelming love, for the clients and a passion for helping each client express themselves and grow to become healthier and more independent. One of my strengths is compassion, and I have a lot of patience for those with special needs. However, I am not sure how well I would do in high-stress, confrontational situations. Usually, I try to avoid such interactions, and I would have to learn

how to best deal with contentious situations. I spoke with my supervisor and she explained her love for this population since before middle school. She began volunteering in elementary school and continued through high school to work with those with disabilities. From there, she really knew that she wanted to work with those with special needs and proceeded to go to college for her Bachelor's Degree in human sciences. Originally, she worked with children with disabilities, before taking a leave of absence from working to raise her children. She really became interested in Change when the organization started to focus on clients as individuals.

Journal Entry #3 – “As a Christian, how could you glorify God in this type of occupation? Are there specific opportunities to advance His kingdom? Would there be specific challenges to your faith?”

I fully believe that anytime one can improve the life of another or show the love spoken of in John 13:34, they are bringing glory to God and following His second command to love one another as they would desire to be loved. These people’s dignity is often taken away. They are put in corners and forgotten and allowed to be quietly ignored. No one deserves to be overlooked or brushed over, yet this population is often neglected, not only by the community but by the church as well, though it is a Christian's’ job to love those who are rejected by others. The next verse, John 13:35, says “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” The best way we can further Christ’s kingdom is by boldly loving others so the world may see to whom we belong. While sharing the gospel verbally to the clients would be very difficult, as many are low-functioning and would not understand, parents and guardians can be reached through a love and compassion for these individuals. Many of these people faced tremendous horrors, especially the older individuals who lived in institutions as children. They were hurt and forgotten by the people who were supposed to love them and sent away by people who should have given them the caring home they deserved. It is extremely difficult to see God’s hand in such wrongdoing. These people were abandoned when they should have been cared for and even as a Christian it is hard to accept that a loving God could allow this. Those with special needs have faced so much ostracism and have been so unloved throughout history that it is hard to see God when hearing about the terrible things they went through. To me, it would be a

challenge to see such undeserved pain every day and still trust that God is in control and Lord and King over the evil committed against these people.

Journal Entry #4 – “What is the starting salary for this kind of employment? What is the future salary potential? What other benefits does this job include (tangible or intangible)? What motivates employees to work here?”

From research I found, most program managers for nonprofit organizations for people with special needs make roughly forty-five thousand dollars a year as a starting salary. This salary may grow to as much as sixty-thousand, but it is rare for it to be any greater. My supervisor was especially passionate about her staff and the clients. One of the greatest benefits was getting to see the everyday and small progression of her clients, and she especially loves finding the victories in the little things. Even though improvement is not as noticeable, my supervisor takes joy in being part of the steady growth of others. One of the most beneficial parts of her job is advocating for clients and fighting for people who would normally be ignored or pushed away by others. She believes that the voiceless should be given a voice, and it is her desire to be that voice for others. Her staff's ease and peace of mind motivate her to work harder to provide them with a better work environment. One of her main struggles is the workload. My supervisor wants to be able to give every area of her work more attention, but she is currently facing a lot of turnover in staff that puts many duties on her for which she would not normally be responsible. Having spoken to other employees, I have found that the most motivating part of their job is the clients. One employee spoke of the institutions that several clients were put in at a young age. This employee expressed that he knew of the horrors these individuals faced as children, and he wanted to provide a happier and safer future for them. The staff want to see a community that includes individuals with all types of needs and are striving to create that environment. Each staff

member has a very personal love for the individuals and is motivated to help provide a better life for people normally ignored.

"Program Manager, Non-Profit Organization Salary." Program Manager, Non-Profit

Organization Salary. PayScale Inc, 2016. Web. 10 Nov. 2016.

<http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Program_Manager,_Non-Profit_Organization/Salary>.

Journal Entry #5 – “Summarize your internship experience. What did you learn about this type of work or about yourself? Would you like to pursue this kind of employment in the future? Why or why not? If you were working here, what unbiblical values and assumptions would you face? Would your Christian worldview be welcomed in this workplace?”

I loved my internship experience, even as nervous as I was going in on the first day. I quickly realized this work is not for the faint of heart or the impatient. Such a field requires joy, love, and patience with all types of people. This internship showed me that I am more equipped than I thought to help such people. I am still unsure if working with those with disabilities is something I will do, but this week has shown me that I am able, at the very least, to work with them, and that is really exciting for me. I was also reminded through this internship that a willing heart is all God truly asks for, and He will take care of the rest. Several of the staff members suggested I come and volunteer over the summer, saying I had a gift for helping people and working with this group of individuals, and that was extremely encouraging. This field has really been forefront in my mind for the past year because I truly enjoy aiding others and I have found that these people are usually forgotten by the church and community. If God leads me to this line of work, I would be overjoyed. However, being in such a stressful work environment without brothers and sisters in Christ would be difficult as the Christlike encouragement and fellowship that builds me up would be severely lacking. No matter what though, I know that if God called me to this line of work He would provide the fellowship and encouragement I would need to serve. One of the lessons I have learned while working with those with special needs is that God does not call us to a situation that He has not promised to lead us through.

Spiritual Application Page - "Select a verse or passage from the Bible and discuss an attitude or character trait that is necessary for your internship work experience."

The first passage to come to mind is 1 Corinthians 13, a passage that tells of love and all that love means. Verses 4-7 distinctly remind me of the staff at Change. I think of verse five, saying, "It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking...". Too often those with disabilities are forgotten or treated as incompetent children. Too often they are dishonored and looked down upon and avoided, even by the church. The staff members of Change treat each client as a person and love that person individually. They are each an individual just as much as the rest of the world and the staff seek to highlight their personal likes and desires. Individuals at Change services are often considered only by their disabilities - they are referred to as disabled people, or retarded. The staff never once called someone disabled or defined them by their special need. There is more to each person than their needs. Not only that, but most of these workers are not paid a lot, and yet they come every day and serve happily and selflessly. For them, it is not about the paycheck, but rather about giving someone who would otherwise be disregarded a good day and a better life. Love like this reminds me of Christ's selfless, sacrificial love for us. I have nothing but admiration for these people who work for others and whose happiness comes from giving others joy. Though I do not believe many of these people are Christians, they personify love in a way that I believe many Christians fall short. Christ never said to love people who are like ourselves, and yet we do that far too often. This line of work asks Christians to be a bit more like Christ, to sacrifice their own desires every day so that another person may have joy. I was

really challenged by the selfless love I saw over this week and my prayer is that I may love those with special needs with the same love Christ has shown for me.

“I wrote and mailed a thank you note to my internship supervisor on this date: 11/28/16.”