

John Carroll University

The Poverty and Solidarity Program

The John Carroll University Poverty and Solidarity Program

focuses on the complexity of poverty. The McGregor Foundation provided funding for an eight week summer internship program for students interested in learning more about poverty. In summer of 2007, seven students were selected as participants for the summer internship. Students met one day a week to visit different agencies in Cleveland that address poverty issues. The remaining four days a week were on-site at the internship placement. Students worked in community development, organizations supporting women, a policy think tank that focuses on economic issues in Ohio, working with refugees, and in a health care clinic in the city of Cleveland. When classes resumed in August, students participated in a symposium sharing their experience. In summer 2008, eleven students will be selected to participate in the second year of the summer internship.

social problems in Cleveland was the perfect opportunity. Seven students were accepted into the internship program. I would spend four days a week at Detroit Shoreway Development Organization, while my classmates completed their internships at various other organizations in the Cleveland area. We would meet on Mondays, visit each other's internship sites, and engage in a class discussion about our experiences.

Our Social Problems

After several months I am still trying to untangle my diverse experiences. I met countless area leaders and residents, and became familiar with neighborhoods, groups, and programs that I never knew existed. I attended zoning meetings, worked on the landscape of a community park, surveyed riders at the transit station, found ways to advertise local business, and wrote a newspaper article, just to name a few. A large part of my job was becoming familiar with environmental theory, and I soon learned and embraced the ways that sustainable development can alleviate some of our social problems.

Interdependent Problems for Many

But I also learned about my classmates' jobs. Together we analyzed how poor health care can be both a cause and a consequence of poverty; how sexism, racism, and poverty are connected; how certain policies make it difficult for people to escape the cycle of poverty. We had all been working in different areas—health care, gender issues, public policy, immigration, and community development—but our final analyses were the same: all of these problems are interdependent. The solutions are even more complicated.

Change Is Possible

I think this was an important lesson of the internship program. We need people in all different fields and areas to be aware of and concerned about the social problems we face. Oftentimes we think that a strong politician will change everything, and we blame our leaders for the failure, but one person cannot maneuver through the process alone. With proper cooperation and awareness, we can build a social movement that includes people in all sectors and groups, and together can we be a part of progress and change. ■

My Internship A Valuable Work Experience

by Sarah Stroney

WHEN I received a notice last spring about the new Poverty and Solidarity Summer Internship, it seemed to be just what I was waiting for. Since my career interests lie in the public policy field, valuable work experience in an agency that dealt with

JCU student Sarah Stroney works outside on the landscape of a community park. This type of activity, part of her internship in the Poverty and Solidarity program, is an example of the ways in which this program merges practical application with academic studies.

