

Benjamin
The Mary Brennan INN (part of The INN)
South Nassau U.U. Congregation

This past summer, for the second consecutive summer, I interned at The Mary Brennan INN soup kitchen in Hempstead, which is part of the Interfaith Nutrition Network (The INN) organization. Due to the global pandemic, my experience volunteering this time was very different from that of last summer. However, it was still very enjoyable and worthwhile. When volunteering, the main tasks to which I was assigned were making sandwiches and assembling bagged lunches for the guests there. While doing this, we exercised the second principle of Unitarian Universalism— *justice, equity and compassion in human relations*. We made items available for each and every guest who came to the soup kitchen, not just those who we or the managers felt needed them. When providing these items, which also included toiletries, diapers, and other types of clothing, we helped a great number of hungry and homeless people on Long Island live through these very troubling times.

I am very thankful for the Student Activity Fund for giving me the opportunity to come back to the soup kitchen. I will be back!

Amanda, UUSSR
Multi-Cultural Solidarity Summer 2020

I had the honor of interning this Summer for Multi-Cultural Solidarity on Long Island. UU principle number 1: “The Inherent worth and dignity of every person;” comes to mind when I think of this organization, its values and mission. Multi-Cultural Solidarity represents Long Islanders of all abilities and disabilities, diversity (black, white, Latina, Native American, Asian LBGTQIA,) and religions (Islam, Hindu, Christian, Judaism, Baha’i and many more).

MCS’s main purpose is to fight systemic racism, build awareness and to overcome barriers in befriending people of other races.

My major responsibilities were outreach via email and social media to individuals and social justice organizations such as Long Island Wins, (an immigration organization) and Young Long Island for Justice (YLIG), updating our database and reaching out to our network about diversity circles and a webinar for Shinnecock and other Native Americans.

While preparing for our Webinar, I was shocked about what I learned regarding the details of Shinnecock tribes ongoing struggle to claim their own land. While the Shinnecock tribe had received Federal recognition in 2010, they continue to struggle. Many are living in near poverty, and their efforts to bring in income by building a

casino have been slowed down. Some of the Shinnecocks feel that the residents of Southhampton do not even acknowledge the fact that they exist and this is very degrading to them. Even now, they need to pay to go the very beach where their ancestors fished and on land that should belong to them.

I have learned that MCS is planning and organizing to change public attitudes and policies.

I would like to thank the Unitarian Church and Multi-Cultural Solidarity for this wonderful opportunity.

Amy
SEPA Mujer

SEPA Mujer aligned with my personal values since it was about empowering and working side-by-side with the Latin community. I enjoyed doing Outreach and giving back to the community while also providing very important information to those that need it and also may not understand the importance behind it. I also enjoyed the opportunity that I had to advocate for the excluded workers and those that did not have a voice while we attended the excluded workers' caravan. The excluded workers caravan was in late August and we started off in Wyandanch and we got to decorate our cars which were a wonderful experience with the youth. After we finish decorating our cars, we then got in line to follow the specific route that we had pre-determined. It was extremely difficult to stay together in the line and it was a lot of fun honking and everyone staring at her car because of how much decorations we had but we did end up getting lost. It was okay though, I ended up finding my way back once again and I was able to make it in time for the press conference in Brentwood. The press conference was an amazing experience, there were many news outlets like news 12, Univision, Telemundo, and many many more. I was finally able to see an event where the Latin community was finally beginning to unite as one. I am grateful that I was able to attend this event and be part of SEPA Mujer for this unique time in my life. The internship was very enlightening and taught me many more issues that the Latin community is affected by especially during this pandemic.

Cayla
Choice for All

This summer I interned with Choice for All located in Roosevelt, NY. While working for Choice for All I created excel sheets to collect Census self-response rates from towns that had low rates. With each town that I collected data from, I had the opportunity to meet with a person from that town and discover what the Census means to them and how it can help their community. I also met with people of color that had careers in law enforcement, government, and humanitarian work. Having the opportunity to meet with people that looked like me and have or had a career I was interested in made me believe I can do the same.

Through this internship, I discovered many principles of Unitarian Universalism. The principle of the inherent worth and dignity of every person was prevalent in this internship. Collecting data can be a process that people often look at numbers then looking at the actual people behind the numbers. This internship reminded me that the numbers I was collecting are people that live in a community that needs to be heard. Having meetings with

people from those communities as well helped me with giving every person inherent worth and dignity. I couldn't see every person I collected the data from but I could remember to realize that they are people who deserve the inherent dignity and worth.

The Unitarian Universalist principle of acceptance of one another and encouragement was also very prevalent in this internship. I met with professionals of color who accepted me and encouraged me to continue my education and my career. These professionals gave advice on how to handle an interview, key components of getting a job, and giving me opportunities in their field of work. Talking to people that have a career that you are interested in and they accept you and encourage you to chase that dream is motivating. Interning with Choice For All, many of the Unitarian Universalism principles were prevalent and assisted me in my future goals.

Daniella

UU Fellowship at Stony Brook Bethel Hobbs Community Farm

This summer, I was able to work at Hobbs Farm for a second year. I was lucky in that COVID-19 did not affect much in how the farm operated. This year, I worked mostly with Ali, a retired civil engineer (which is my major right now!) in the education garden. This year, I really felt like a part of the team. I was deciding what to plant where, and I did not receive as much direction in how to plant, harvest, and tend beds. I felt much more connected to the farm and the workers this year, and I found many connections between my work and my UU principles.

The second principle, justice, equity, and compassion in human relations, was very prevalent in my summer. I fostered as many connections as I could, talking with Ali and any other volunteers who came in for a day. I also got to see the inner workings of how the farm operates, and how people must put the second principle into action in order to keep everything running smoothly, while also listening to all of the input from workers.

Of course, the seventh principle, respect for the interdependent web of life, was constantly being woven throughout my days. The food grown at Hobbs goes to soup kitchens, food pantries and donation spots, and is also used for a CSA (Community-Supported Agriculture) program. One of the many moments where the connection was tangible was when I went to drop off food at a small Episcopal church near my home. I noticed a lot of produce on the table and my mom asked where it came from. The man setting up said, "a farm in Centereach," and I said, "Oh, Hobbs?" He said yes, and we began to

talk about the food and the workers at the farm. He thanked me for working there, and I felt a sense of gratitude because I saw exactly where the vegetables I had harvested were going.

I thoroughly enjoyed my experience this year, and I learned so much from everyone at the farm. Hopefully, I will be right back there next year!

Elizabeth
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Huntington
Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth

This summer I had the honor of interning at the Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth (UUMFE) which is a faith based environmental justice nonprofit grounded in the Unitarian Universalist 7 principles as well as the proposed 8th principle (dismantling racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions). UUMFE supports a just transition framework to a more regenerative world including ideas such as climate justice, Indigenous rights and anti-racist agendas. As an intern at UUMFE I feel valued and respected. UUMFE runs as a sociocracy where everyone's ideas are taken into consideration and consent from everyone is needed to form a decision.

Throughout my time here I have learned so much about environmental justice, Indigenous rights and leadership for environmental justice as well as the key role that the UU principles play when engaging in activism. I read the book *Justice of Earth* by Manish Mishra-Marzetti and Jennifer Nordstrom which delves into the necessity for faith based activism. It showed me the importance of acknowledging the intersections of race, class, and the environment. Before I joined UUMFE these concepts didn't occur to me, I didn't stop to realize that people of color are more likely to live near fossil fuel corporations or be affected by factory pollution than white individuals. Hyper focusing on one issue (such as climate change) isn't going to be as effective as a collaborative effort. When we recognize that all these major issues are interconnected we can make some real, systematic change. As Unitarian Universalists we have a duty to speak up about the injustices that we see and act upon them.

One of my tasks as an intern is to communicate with UU congregations who are interested in co-hosting a Condor and Eagle film screening event. This fantastic documentary offers a glimpse into a developing spiritual renaissance as the film's protagonists learn from each other's long legacy of resistance to colonialism and its extractive economy. This film has opened my eyes to the struggles frontline communities experience when living near a fossil fuel pipeline, specifically environmental damage and disturbance, pollution, and health problems. The film aligns with the 7th UU principle: respect for the interdependent web of life; and discusses the deep connection Native people have with their land and nature. It's greatly upsetting to hear firsthand accounts of people's lives being destroyed and disrespected by major corporations. UUMFE does a great job of conveying these injustices to the public and doing their part to help.

I'm thankful for my time here and am thrilled to continue my internship in the fall. I have a lot of respect for the work that UUMFE does to create a more just world and I love being a part of an organization that uses Unitarian Universalist beliefs and principles to fuel their activism.

Helen, UUFH
Sweetbriar Nature Preserve

Visiting Sweetbriar Nature Preserve is always a learning experience in some way, and working there is no exception. Kindness is a requirement at Sweetbriar, and being in such an open minded environment allows you to learn from others and gain new perspectives (second principle).

We taught kids games, respect for the environment, and animal facts, and they in return would teach us songs they listened to and tell us what adventures they had gone on the weekend before. While counselors like myself had more responsibilities, everyone was treated equally. There was no talking down to campers, and a freedom to ask questions (first principal).

Of course my favorite part of Sweetbriar is the animals. The preserve does their best to keep the web of life intact, and part of that mission is animal rescue. While medical volunteers do their best to rehabilitate animals and send them back into the wild, some become permanent residents at Sweetbriar. I've spent countless summers sitting with Ricky the squirrel, Marguerite the bluejay, Winter the rabbit, and Pearl the snake. Though they may not talk, animals can teach you patience, observantness, and kindness (seventh principal).

Though spending your last summer before college covered in bug spray and enduring 95 degree heat may sound odd, Sweetbriar has taught me that the hard work is worth it.

Katie (2 Internships) UUCSR
The Book Fairies
Young LI for Justice

Despite the unpredictable nature of this summer, I was still able to engage in meaningful and educational work through the SAF grant. I divided my time between The Book Fairies and Young Long Island for Justice. While both internships varied greatly, they each opened my eyes to the same institutionalized racism and poverty that is prevalent on Long Island. The Book Fairies is a non-profit based in Freeport, which provides free books to high needs school districts. Donations are collected through independent book fairs or by ordinary people cleaning their homes. Once dropped off, volunteers sort the books based on age and quality for boxing. Teachers, and other community members from group homes, food banks, or homeless shelters request several boxes to collect and distribute. To date, The Book Fairies have donated over 2,000,000 books.

My responsibilities at the organization mainly consisted of sorting and boxing books. Despite being hands on physical work, I was still able to be a part in a social justice initiative. Access to books is access to knowledge. No one can live up to their full potential without the necessary skills to expand their thinking. This internship taught me that not all social justice requires community organizing or event planning; there are ways to make a difference that are bigger than they seem. In my time at The Book Fairies, I sorted and packed close to a thousand boxes. This means that I was directly involved in

connecting thousands more people with entertainment, learning, and creativity. I am proud of the work my whole team was able to do with limited resources.

My second internship was with Young Long Island for Justice or YLIJ. YLIJ is a new community organizing program dedicated to connecting young people with local government. Most people in the program were ages 13-25. The program consisted of two parts: informative guest speakers, and actively working with a local political campaign. Guest speakers were young people in government who encouraged interns to run for local offices at all levels. In addition to the inspiration and empowerment the speakers provided, they also opened my eyes to various issues plaguing Long Island, including affordable housing, sewage systems, and the erasure of youth voices.

YLIJ also matched me to the State senator Todd Kaminsky office. For this internship aspect, I conducted daily phone banking to gauge the most important issues to constituents. In the process, I became more confident in communicating over the phone and gained valuable political experience. Phone banking also allowed me to understand the economic needs of my district better, and to listen to constituent concerns about COVID-19. Overall, I was able to live my UU values of social justice, interconnectedness, and the democratic process. I feel closer to my community and my faith.

Mina, UUFBSB

SUNY Plattsburgh Community student farm

This summer I had the opportunity to work at the SUNY Plattsburgh Community student farm, a small local community student-led farm located on the campus of SUNY Plattsburgh. I found this organization to be very in line with my Unitarian Universalist values and principles, especially the seventh principle, “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are all a part of”. I found that both my work on the farm, the working with the earth, and also the aspect of giving back to my community, both really helped connect me to these principles.

The SUNY Plattsburgh Community student farm is a small farm that is completely led by students and other volunteers. It is a rotational farm, meaning we maximize the use of our small space by rotating our crops so that we constantly have a turnaround of different produce. The farm is dedicated to giving back to the community, through means of donating all of our produce to other local organizations. The farm also helps to serve as a green space where the community can gather, which is a wonderful experience. People walking their dogs stop by and wander around and we answer any questions they have, and others stop by and bring us donations of seed and sprouts and even sometimes food they've made us!

My work at the farm mainly consisted of basic farm work. A lot of the time, I was weeding in the plots, watering all the plants, or harvesting from our abundant produce. I was also able to help answer any questions people had when they stopped by the farm. It felt wonderful knowing the work I was doing would be helping someone and giving back to my small community.

Working with this organization really helped me connect to my Unitarian Universalist values, and principles. Especially during this time when going to Services is not possible except online, and it's hard to have a connection to people in this way right now, this time was really special to me to be able to connect to my principles in this way. In connection to the seventh principle especially, I found that working at the farm helped me gain a unique appreciation for the natural world, and the people in my community that serve as my interconnected web. Through working at the farm I was able to more deeply appreciate the impact we can have on our ecosystem, and also the value of being able to give back to people in a meaningful way such as providing food, especially during the time when it is so needed. This organization has been such a joy to work with, the people are wonderful, the farm is like a paradise, and it feels good knowing the work you're doing is helping people.

Sierra, UUSCR Multi-Cultural Solidarity

In May 2020, while I was researching possible internships I could have in the summer, I came across Multicultural Solidarity in an email from my SAF director, Karyn O'Beirne. The summary sparked my interest- defying racism and celebrating diversity is something that I seek importance in throughout my daily life. I soon contacted Joel Diamond, one of the founding members of this small, Long Island organization, and days later, I received a call from him. Soon enough, I was already working on my computer, weaving my way through obstacles on Excel spreadsheets, challenging myself by texting hundreds of members, and spending my evenings speaking on phone calls and Zoom sessions with those who were trying to change our society for the better.

When I first started interning, I definitely wasn't that enthusiastic about having to be on my computer for another 2 months (you could say I was pretty done with "online", after being enrolled in "Zoom High School" for the end of my senior year. At the time, my primary goal was finding an internship where I could work outside (for an environmental organization) where it was safe enough to do so given social distancing rules.

However, as the weeks went by, I ended up loving my internship. I was able to make my own hours that would accommodate my busy schedule, while gaining a deeper understanding of systemic racism and ways to combat social behaviors. Recently, I was able to find a connection between the Multicultural Solidarity's mission and one of the 7 principles of Unitarian Universalism. The 6th principle states "The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all." "Liberty and justice for all" is a phrase that recently hasn't sat well with me- when the pledge is said in school and ends on those words, I often think "but not everyone has the right to

liberty in this country, nor does everyone have the right to justice in this country.” It is confusing as to why we say these words as if it is true for each United States citizen. When things like this are difficult to understand, I lean on Unitarian Universalism and organizations like Multicultural solidarity- places that I know are fighting for this country to, in fact, have liberty and justice for all.

Having the opportunity to intern with Multicultural Solidarity for the past two months has truly been such an honor. I am so grateful that I am not only able to be a member of such an important organization with even more important goals, but moreso, to intern at the forefront (and continue to be throughout my freshman year of college) of a cultural and social upbringing.

Sierra, UUSCR Vermont Dance Alliance

Throughout my internship with Vermont Dance Alliance, I have learned and experienced many things pertaining to dance, arts administration, and the fundamentals of Unitarian Universalism. I was able to develop my skills and passion for video production, while working on outreach and communicating with members and other social justice organizations in Vermont.

Out of the seven Unitarian Universalist Principles, the one that most strongly reminds me of my internship experience is the third: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations. Though I interned remotely with VDA, I witnessed true acceptance of all types of dancers and participants from the eyes of current members including my mentor Hanna (the founder of Vermont Dance Alliance). Accepting a client, regardless of their gender identity, dance ability, ethnic background, etc, allows for growth within the person, both emotionally and mentally. Furthermore, doing so through dance only creates a more comfortable, friendly environment. Though I only interned for a month and a half, I am beyond grateful for my crucial experience with Vermont Dance Alliance, and I even plan on resuming this internship in the summer.