

State of Illinois
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ICED NEWS

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ICED 2013 Internship Program

This issue of ICED NEWS is devoted to the Internship Program with articles about agencies and interns. All state agencies can benefit from planning to hire an intern in 2014. ICED would like to see the demand for interns with disabilities grow as a means to recruit talent for the State's workforce. The ICED Internship Program for Students with Disabilities was initiated in 2000 to provide much-needed work experience for people with disabilities and to demonstrate to state agencies the skills these individuals bring to the work place. Over the years, a variety of interns and agencies have participated in the program, and some of the interns have gained permanent state employment as a result of their experience.

2013 Internship Program

In 2013 three interns and agencies participated in the program, **Krystal Martinez** at the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) in Chicago, **Scherezade Espinoza** at the Department of Human Rights (DHR) in Chicago, and **Cordarryl Williams** at the Department of Transportation (DOT) in Schaumburg. Each of these agencies has participated in the Internship Program before, and the Departments of Human Rights and Transportation have offered placements multiple times. ICED wishes to thank **State Fire Marshal Larry Matkaitis**, **DOT Secretary Ann Schneider**, **DHR Director Rocco J. Claps**, **Mike Woods**, of DOT, Jodi Schrage, of OSFM, and **Yolanda Godwin**, of DHR, for supporting the program. Mike Woods is the DOT Personnel Manager, who consistently hires interns and employees with disabilities from the Successful Disability Opportunities program, and Yolanda Godwin, is a DHR Legal Division supervisor, who is always willing to offer her time to employees with disabilities, and Jodi Schrage is the OSFM EEO/AA officer, who advocates for minorities, women, and people with disabilities in the workplace.

The Interns

Two interns share their personal stories and tell about their internship experiences.

Krystal Martinez

Q. Would you please give a little background about yourself?

My name is Krystal Martinez and I am 26 years old. I attend DePaul University and I am currently a senior about to graduate in the summer of 2014 with my Bachelor's Degree. Prior to DePaul University, I attended Harold Washington Community College, where I attained an Associate's Degree. My ambition and goal is to become a lawyer; but, recently with all the controversy going on in the world I had the idea I would like to become president, after I reach my goal of becoming a lawyer.

I come from an impoverished background with a not so great childhood. I became a ward of the state at two years old; meaning I lived under DCFS care and had a very negative experience. I stayed in the system until I was 18 years old. At the age of 14 though, my life took a drastic turn. I was able-bodied my whole life until this year; I became disabled. I had an Arterial Venous Malformation (AVM); which caused severe hemorrhaging in my brain. I almost lost my life; but, God willing, I only ended up in a wheelchair. Transitioning from able-bodied to disabled was very difficult but not impossible. I re-learned what I had to and transformed difficulties into a new perspective of doing things. I now currently reside on my own on the Northside of Chicago, while all my family resides on the Southside of Chicago.

I currently am a student intern at the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal. Previously, I interned at the Illinois Finance Authority as well as the Illinois Department of Employment Security. I am involved with CMS [the Department of Central Management Services] as a hiring agency, and hope that intern opportunities are available to me in a rapid manner. CMS has a rule that an intern may only work in one state facility for up to six months in a year. For example, I began my internship in June 2013, so I may work until Dec. 2013. But, then I may be re-hired in Jan. 2014 until June 2014, since that is a whole new year. This is extremely important because I would like to attend Harvard Law School.

Q. Have you personally experienced barriers in obtaining education or employment opportunities?

Personally, I have experienced barriers in both attaining an education as well as employment opportunities. My first experience with a major barrier was in high-school. I attended Curie Metro on the south side of Chicago; juniors and seniors were allowed to

go off campus for lunch, but if you rode the yellow bus you could not go out. Pretty much all the students who rode the yellow bus were disabled, and thus I was really upset by this. Although, I could not change the school's policy, I began to ride CTA to show the school that I was just as capable as an able-bodied student; I also won the Markeeta Award for social justice and disability advocacy. Also, another barrier I experienced within my education was the presumed confinement to special ed classes. I'm not bashing special ed it is good for many students, but I am not one of them. This school assigned me to special ed classes based on the fact that I was in a wheelchair; also, I had recently transitioned from Spaulding School, which was primarily focused on the disabled individual. So, I fought against this notion and was put into regular ed classes.

As for employment barriers, well I am in a wheelchair and cannot just find any job like an able-bodied person; such as, flipping burgers or bagging groceries. Maybe some disabled individuals can but for others there are some physical impairments involved.

Q. Provide any additional information that would be helpful or interesting to others about your internship.

My motto is to live above the status quo. Although, society does it one way, you do it the better way. Be kind, courteous, and always smile no matter the hardship; and always remember to pray and keep God first.

Scherezade Espinoza

Q. Could you give a little background about yourself?

I'm a current student at Morton College in Cicero, IL. I have certificates in Medical Records and Data Entry. I'm pursuing a Human Service Degree. Any chance I get I enjoy being active in the community. Serving & giving back it's my way of letting God know how grateful I am for Him. I strive to keep a grateful heart in everything I do and for everything I have (family, opportunities, etc.).

Q. Have you personally experienced barriers in obtaining education or employment opportunities?

I don't recall having experienced a barrier in obtaining education. For employment I have encountered some barriers such as the place wasn't wheelchair accessible or because the job required some lifting.

Q. Have co-workers and your supervisor been welcoming and do they respond to any questions you have about the workplace?

Yes! blessed to work with such an amazing, caring team.

Q. Do you think this internship opportunity will assist you in gaining employment in the field of your choice?

Most definitely. I want to work with families and children, and assist them with resources that will help them live a better life. Through the Department of Human Rights I have learned how the agency works hard to protect the rights of families. And I think it's wonderful.

Q. Would you provide any additional information that would be helpful or interesting to others about your internship?

I am grateful to be back. Last year my internship with the Department got extended till the end of December, which was awesome. So I am hoping this time around it's the same or I find a permanent position (crossing fingers).

The Agencies

State Fire Marshal's Office

Q. How do you rate the interns who have been referred to your agency?

Interns have been highly motivated and strive to learn new skills and be productive in an office environment.

Q. Would you participate in the program again?

The OSFM would participate in the program again. The Fire Marshal is dedicated to a diverse work force and encourages opportunities for those with disabilities.

Q. What would you tell another agency that was considering participating in the program? The OSFM would encourage other agencies to participate in the program. ICED provides qualified interns and it is a rewarding experience for the agency to provide an opportunity to a person with a disability.

Q. Is there anything else you would like to say about the interns or the programs?

"In the time she's been with the Office of the State Fire Marshal, Krystal has been a tremendous help to all of our staff. She has proven herself as a quick learner who is willing to take on projects that keep our agency running smoothly." – Larry Matkaitis, State Fire Marshal

Department of Human Rights

Q. How do you rate the interns who have been referred to your agency?

Excellent and eager to learn.

Q. How have the interns functioned in your agency?

The intern has functioned at high level working on various projects for the Legal Division. The intern has excellent typing skills, computer literate and telephone etiquette is perfect.

Q. Would you participate in the program again?

Yes

Q. What would you tell another agency that was considering participating in the program?

The Interns are very reliable and passionate about performing well.

Q. Is there any difference in employing interns with disabilities compared with other interns? Not that I have observed.

Q. Is there anything else you would like to say about the interns or the programs?

The State should allow agencies to extend internships beyond 6 months.

The Internship Program in the Future

ICED is committed to the program and encourages agencies and interns to participate in 2014. For information contact Susan.Allen@Illinois.gov. You will be glad you did.

Other ICED Program Updates

On November 1, 2013, ICED hosted a webinar devoted to accessible parking issues. Co-Chair Rocco J. Claps opened the program by reading a proclamation by Governor Quinn designating November 2013 as Accessible Parking Awareness Month. Presentations on the topic were made by Michelle Harden, Disability Specialist, Office of the Attorney General, Judith Levitan, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General, and William Bogdan, Secretary of State's Disability Liaison.

Participants included libraries around the state, centers for independent living, state agencies, and local police agencies. Power Point presentations from the event are available from Susan.Allen@Illinois.gov.

ICED will hold a second webinar on March 25, 2014, dealing with employee rights.

Your ICED Members

Rocco J. Claps, Director, Department of Human Rights, ICED Co-Chair

Michelle R.B. Saddler, Secretary, Department of Human Services, ICED Co-Chair

Erica Borggren, Director, Department of Veterans' Affairs

Malcolm Weems, Director, Department of Central Management Services

Garrett FitzGerald, Chair, Civil Service Commission

Deborah Johnson-Small, Employee Member, Department of Human Services

Karl Moulton, Employee Member, Department of Employment Security

Catherine Collier, Department of Children and Family Services

Serving State Employees with Disabilities

222 S. College, Room 101, Springfield, IL 62704

(217) 785-5119 (Voice); (866) 740-3953 (TTY); (217) 785-5106 (Fax)

www.state.il.us/iced

Susan.Allen@Illinois.gov