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Working with other teens helps with plotting future

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BY DEWARREN LANGLEY Under Construction crew

Working as a summer intern at the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce showed me aspects of Durham that cannot be seen via the Internet or any other source.

A partnership of more than 1,600 industries, businesses, professional firms and individuals, the chamber works to build a healthy economy and improve the quality of life in Durham.

Returning to the chamber for a second straight summer let me translate the things I learned in school to the workplace. My work with the "Youth Looking at the Future Today," a weeklong career exploration program for rising eighth-graders in Durham Public Schools, was the most memorable part of the job.

I briefly worked with YLFT during my first internship at the chamber, but this summer I was responsible for placing 68 students with 23 businesses, negotiating donations such as food and snacks, mailing information to employers and talking with the students about their experiences.

As I read applications, I was mindful of the profound insight that shadowing and interning provides and was careful in my placements. Throughout that week, I developed relationships with the students and stressed the importance of exploring career options at a young age.

As I learned more about each student, I grew to appreciate the opportunity of working with students like Rakita Henry, Kendrick Dowdy and Yiannis Karpathian to name a few.

At the celebration banquet, I made closing remarks that encouraged and challenged each student to seek other career exploration opportunities.

Upon the program's completion, I reflected on the week and realized that I made a difference in 68 students' lives and 136 parents' lives.

The program not only reflected my deep interest and passion for exposing youth to positive opportunities but represented the chamber's dedication to youth.

Through my experience at the chamber, I learned that my passion and ultimate career goal is to be involved with helping people. I am grateful to the staff of the chamber, its board of directors, and Leigh Bordley, program coordinator of Duke-Durham Partners for Youth for providing such an opportunity that would not have otherwise been available.

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