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Deborah Olsen Public Service Essay

Sierra Miller
Linfield University

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Deborah Olsen Public Service Essay

Interning at Awaken this summer has given me a chance to deeply reflect on what direction I will be taking upon graduation. Awaken is a non-profit organization in Reno, Nevada whose mission is to increase awareness and education surrounding the issue of commercial sexual exploitation and to provide housing and restoration for its victims. As an intern, I was able to not only learn more about the pressing issue of human trafficking in my hometown, but also expand my interpersonal skills through making connections with clients. Through this opportunity, I was able to get hands-on experience with social work and the logistics of a non-profit.

During this internship, I interacted with clients every day. There are multiple sections of clientele at Awaken: youth, adult, and adult housing. Within the youth program, I was able to assist in outdoor activities for the girls. By taking them on hikes and other physical activities, these girls were able to learn healthier coping mechanisms and lifestyle choices. Physical activity was a great way to relieve stress and find an activity that gave these girls a sense of peace. Within the adult programs, I was able to help at the drop-in center. In this area of Awaken, women were able to have a safe space where they could relax, get and/or make food, and if they chose to do so they could reach out to a social worker. Helping organize food donations and assisting in activities for these women was very enriching. Within the adult housing program, I became very close to these women. I spent the majority of my time here assisting in taking the women to and from their appointments and activities. Some of these women were close in age to me, making it easier to become personal and connect with them. I would also assist with certain

in-home exercises such as classes on the efficiency of using a computer to eventually make a resume and get a job.

This internship was a wonderful experience. I was able to not only further learn about my interest in non-profit work, but I was also able to experience something I had not thought of before, casework. I was very lucky to be able to keep my internship and work with people during this unprecedented time of COVID-19. I am also very grateful for the Deborah Olsen scholarship. Without it, I would not have been able to put in as many hours due to personal finances. This experience has made me realize how much I enjoy working with people and that non-profit work is definitely the path I would like to take. What had most impressed me during this time was being able to connect with these women. Being able to have meaningful conversations and know that I am involved in something life-changing for these women was so rewarding. I was able to connect with people who I would not have, if not for this internship. I was able to build my interpersonal skills and develop a deeper sense of passion for my field of study.

Reflecting on my experience, I realize that I have grown more professionally and as a person. I have become more prepared for a career in non-profit work and have expanded my potential. Being able to impact someone's life in even the smallest ways will continue to motivate me. Awaken is a wonderful program for these women who have been through so much. I am glad to have had this opportunity and look forward to furthering my career in non-profit work.