

Summer 2004

Trying Their Wings: Interns Gain Experience at Museum

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Recommended Citation

Mileham, Mardi and Linfield Magazine Staff (2004) "Trying Their Wings: Interns Gain Experience at Museum," *Linfield Magazine*: Vol. 1 : No. 1 , Article 8.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol1/iss1/8

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Amy Heidrick '04, Amber Stoner '04, Kristin Russell '03, Katherine (Pitman) Huit '88, and Katie Ray '05 are just a few of the Linfield students and graduates who have worked or are now working at the Evergreen Aviation Museum and The Captain Michael King Smith Educational Institute, home of Howard Hughes' famed "Spruce Goose."

Trying their wings

Interns gain experience at museum

Kristin Russell '03 was looking for an internship and found a career.

Russell is one of about 10 Linfield students in the last three years to get an early launch of her career at the Evergreen Aviation Museum and The Captain Michael King Smith Educational Institute in McMinnville.

Russell is now director of special events at the museum, where she first completed an internship as a sophomore at Linfield. A year later, while looking for a part-time job, she was hired as a special events assistant and had landed the director's job by the time she completed her communication degree.

Now she spends her days coordinating public and private events, including speakers, corporate dinners,

group tours, special ceremonies and even weddings, including the wedding reception of Katie Harmon, former Miss Oregon and Miss America.

"I was looking for an internship and a way to get a foot in the door for a job," Russell said. "The internship was really valuable. I was able to use the skills I was learning in school and see how they applied in the real world." Now she finds herself in a mentoring role to Katie Ray '05, who spends half her time at the museum on special events and the other half on marketing and communication.

Ray, a mass communication major, helps Russell plan tours for the numerous groups that visit Evergreen and recently helped plan the museum's first Easter egg hunt.

"It was nice to be able to take part in the planning,

offer ideas and be a part of helping plan a successful event,” Ray said. She’s getting exposed to the public relations profession by writing press releases and updating the hundreds of media contacts the museum tracks throughout the region.

“This is definitely improving my people skills,” Ray said, admitting that dealing with disgruntled customers can sometimes be difficult. “Working with other people is a huge learning experience and something I can apply in the work force. The people I work with are all enthusiastic about their jobs. They all have great ideas and are there to improve the museum. It’s been wonderful to be a part of that.”

Evergreen has been very open to providing internships to Linfield students, at the museum and throughout the company, according to Kristi Mackay ‘91, program coordinator in the Career Center.

“The museum has been very open to trying to fit a student into the area in which they want to work,” she said. “We have students in public relations, marketing, event planning, education and archives. This spring the museum has really tried to find the right person that fits well with the company and then make sure that individual gets a good fit in the work place. That’s really remarkable.”

Another Linfield intern, Reide Baxter ‘05, got a chance to fuel his interest in aviation and learn how a museum collections department works, from acquisition to display. One of his first projects was helping organize the archives, which included expanding the collection storage area. He was also involved in the production of the museum’s documentary *Dream to Fly: Howard Hughes and the Flying Boat*, narrated by Walter Cronkite and written and produced by Katherine (Pitman) Huit ‘88, director of collections at the museum. Baxter, a history major, checked history facts for the film and helped on the set, which also included meeting and assisting Cronkite.

“I think there was one day when I was on the flight deck of the Spruce Goose for 10 hours straight,” he said, adding that it was one of the best experiences of his internship.

“I think (the internship) gave me a good taste of professionalism before I enter the job market,” he added. “I have a basic sense of how museums work, how they function and what positions I would apply for.”

Huit has had at least six Linfield interns including history and anthropology majors. She’s enthusiastic about offering internships to Linfield students because of her own internship at the Northrup Library as a student.

“It helped me define history as a real career field,” she said. “I can pass my enthusiasm on to them and show them that history is a medium in which to launch a career.”

Huit’s interns are getting a well-rounded experience in the detailed world of museum collections from donations of artifacts to exhibit development, organization and reports. They do everything from helping with correspondence and processing new donations to researching artifacts and sometimes solving mysteries. For example, a woman brought in an arm band thought to be from the Nazi era in Germany and they were able to authenticate it.

The highlight for two of the interns, Meredith Lowe ‘06 and Baxter, was the opportunity to help film the documentary, Huit said.

“Reide benefited from that experience and attended the premiere in December,” she said. “I feel really good about giving them that opportunity.”

“I am able to give back to the college by helping kids with their careers,” she said. “I think it is really important to involve students in career opportunities and to give them hands-on experience. Knowing you like something before going into it is really important.”

– Mardi Mileham

Linfield student named Oregon Student Employee of the Year



Eri Imanaka ‘04

Eri Imanaka ‘04 of Kyoto, Japan, has been named the Oregon Student Employee of the Year.

She was nominated for the state award after being named Linfield’s Student Employee of the Year and competed against students from across the state.

Imanaka, who received her degree in Spanish, is fluent in Japanese, Spanish and English. As a clerical assistant in the International

Programs Office she helped exchange students from Kanto Gakuin University make the transition to Linfield. She put her language skills to many other uses including serving as a translator for foreign students at the Student Health Center, as a Japanese tutor for the Modern Languages Department and helping children from Spanish-speaking families with homework and reading at Columbus Elementary School.