

# Welcome to the Real World

*Thiel interns gain valuable work experience right down the road at St. Paul's.*

In today's job market, college graduates are in an uphill battle. Even armed with a quality degree, it's hard to get a job without experience, but it's hard to get experience without a job. Graduates need to prove that they can "hit the ground running," and internships are often the best way to gain experience that can translate into a job. Thiel College students have an advantage over other college graduates—they can start interning the second semester of their first year at the College. That could equal to nearly four years of experience!



Thanks to Dr. James Shaffer, professor of psychology, Thiel students can also take advantage of Joining Generations, a four-year-old program that promotes meaningful learning experiences between Thiel students and the residents of St. Paul's, a Greenville continuing care community that provides all levels of care to its residents. An outstanding benefit of this program is the variety of service and academic opportunities—including internships—that it has created.

During spring 2009, 10 Thiel students took internships among St. Paul's 16 departments. From marketing to physical therapy to information technology, these students, with the help and guidance of a mentor, gained not only valuable work experience that can be applied to graduate school and the workplace, but also insight into themselves, members of another generation and what their futures could hold.

**By Amber D. Young '09**

## AMBER D. YOUNG

An intern in St. Paul's Marketing Department, senior Amber Young, of Petrolia, Pa., is a communication studies and psychology major who is attending graduate school in the fall.

As a marketing intern, Young assisted with facility tours, developed and updated databases, and worked with Dr. Laurie Moroco's group processing class from Thiel. She worked with St. Paul's staff to coordinate resources and schedules for the students in the class and assisted those students in planning projects—she had taken the class herself and was already familiar with the residents' likes and dislikes.

Young, who interviewed all the other interns for this story, worked with department heads to develop guidelines in order to update information about internship opportunities for Thiel College students. She found that she liked speaking with the different department heads at St. Paul's because it gave her a broader view of what the organization offers.

Her other projects included taking pictures at special events, editing pictures and interacting with key staff. She also contacted other continuing care facilities and compiled their information in order to provide board members with knowledge of pricing, fees and services that are being offered elsewhere. Young feels that her internship helped to better develop her interpersonal, group processing and writing skills.

"Working with different people and getting to interact with the residents was a good experience. It allowed me to take what I have learned in my classes and apply it to the workplace," said Young. "Everyone was really nice and helpful, and [St. Paul's] seemed like a wonderful place to work. I really did love my internship, and it was a nice change from regular class."



## CATIE SIEBER

Senior Catie Sieber, of Glenshaw, Pa., spent the semester interning in St. Paul's Information Technology Department. She is a business communication major and plans to get her master's degree in marketing. Sieber interned at St. Paul's in order to apply what she learned in the classroom to real life experiences—with the added benefit of getting used to having a "real job."

Sieber worked on "Video Care Plans," which are PowerPoint presentations that include information on medical issues, needs and likes/dislikes for each patient. Sieber would collect information forms from St. Paul's nurses and develop each Video Care Plan, personalizing each two- to three-minute presentation with pictures and music chosen by the residents. These care plans allow the nurses and doctors to better know each patient in St. Paul's facilities.

The independence of her internship and the opportunity to interact with the residents were the best parts of her experience, according to Sieber. She said she appreciated the focus that the St. Paul's staff puts on the pasts, presents and futures of its residents.

"What I did [in my internship] was worthwhile because it reassures family members that their loved ones are being taken care of," said Sieber.

## DORRAN COLEY

An accounting major from Kingston, Jamaica, senior Dorran Coley interned in St. Paul's Accounting Department. He decided to intern at St. Paul's in order to get more familiar with spreadsheets and better understand taxes and the ways nonprofit organizations work.

"[The work I did] tied in nicely with what I had been learning in the classroom," says Coley, who at press time was considering attending graduate school after graduation.

Dorran's responsibilities were data entry for personnel updates, payroll deductions and rate changes. He reviewed and monitored time punches in order to ensure that employee hours were matching up. Over the course of the semester he learned about billing procedures, generating checks, check processing, generating reports and account balancing.

Learning things outside of the classroom in a hands-on style helped Coley gain a better understanding of the accounting field. He feels that his on-the-job experience will help him to become a more experienced and better accountant in the long run.

"It was fun," said Coley of his internship. "The people at St. Paul's were really nice and laid back. I had no complaints!"

*Pictured at left: Amber D. Young, Dorran Coley and Catie Sieber.*

## SEYOON PARK

Seyoon Park came a long way to intern at St. Paul's—all the way from Seoul, Korea. Park is an international student studying at Thiel for one year before returning home. She studied English literature and international business, and interned in St. Paul's Marketing Department.

Her internship was among Park's favorite experiences while at Thiel—despite the challenge of having to wait four weeks for a social security number before being able to start the internship.

Park originally thought that her internship would be mostly computer work, but soon found herself out and about the campus. She had the opportunity to meet many different types of people, develop a database, perform computer work and help with planning and implementing activities, including playing games with the residents. Her internship helped her realize that she wants to find a job related to art as her favorite part of the experience was making “picture boards,” a project that allowed her the freedom to exercise her creativity and decision-making.

“I have learned many life values from volunteer work,” said Park. “It is different from studying; it makes a purpose for life and has goals.”

Park returned to Korea in May and has another year of school before she graduates. She would like to do more volunteer work and keep working on her English. She feels that her experience in America has made her more open-minded.

“My internship challenged me in other areas of my life,” says Park. “I was once very conservative, but I have learned to broaden my perspective.”

## KARIM AGHAZADEH

A native of Germany, where his parents are stationed at Kaiserslautern Air Force Base, Karim Aghazadeh is a business administration major who will graduate in December. He interned in St. Paul's Administration Department. He plans on working as a Department of Defense employee or a business administrator one day. He also hopes to stay in the Greenville area for a few years after graduation.

Aghazadeh's internship experience consisted of job shadowing, learning how to communicate with employees and becoming familiar with codes of ethics. He had the opportunity to work on a project in which he analyzed surveys and made graphs that were presented at board meetings. He also attended courtroom hearings, such as a debt collection proceeding. He also was involved in setting up a dental suite, new ventures and employee appreciation programs. Aghazadeh feels that his interpersonal skills improved and that he learned how to implement what he had learned from Professor Dave Miller in Thiel's Business Administration Department into a real office setting. He had the opportunity to interact with different types of people and gained a new appreciation for them.

“Interning at St. Paul's was a lot of fun,” said Aghazadeh. “It was a new and interesting experience for me.”



## SARA FARLEY

Senior Sara Farley was very busy during the spring semester. The communications sciences and disorders major interned at St. Paul's in the Speech Language Department and at the Mercer County Children's Center.

Farley, of Linesville, Pa., plans to attend Edinboro University this fall to pursue a master's degree in speech-language pathology. Farley's goal at St. Paul's was to gain a better understanding about the geriatric population that will provide her with valuable information to use throughout her career as a speech pathologist.

Her internship was intended to give her a general working knowledge of speech therapy, cognitive impairments, dysphasia and swallowing issues. She spent her time job shadowing and observing cognition treatments and meal assistance.

She also attended therapy meetings with residents and observed the documentation process for charting, records and reports. She often assisted with the residents' breakfast and observed a speech pathologist at lunch where she learned the cognitive exercises used by residents.

“[My internship] was mostly job shadowing and observation. It allowed me to see how a speech pathologist works with the residents,” said Farley. “This was a really good experience for me and I would recommend it to other undergraduate students. It opens your eyes to what you can be or what you want to be.”

*Pictured at left: Karim Aghazadeh, Sara Farley and Seyoon Park.*

*Pictured opposite page top: Samantha Holbrook, Michelle George and Amber Bodrick.*

*Pictured opposite page bottom: Sarah Meader.*



### AMBER BODRICK

Amber Bodrick, of Boardman, Ohio, is a senior business administration major and accounting minor who plans to work in human resources or management. Her internship was in the Information Technology Department at St. Paul's.

Bodrick enjoyed using what she has learned in the classroom during her internship. Like Catie Sieber, Bodrick's main project was develop Video Care Plans for the residents, which are two- to three-minute PowerPoint presentations that are used by nurses and other staff members to get to know the residents better on a more personal level.

During her internship, Bodrick found that she enjoyed doing a variety of tasks, and not just focusing on one main project. To put together a plan, Bodrick had to rely on the nurses to get the information from the residents. She found it to be discouraging when she finally put together a plan, only to find that the resident had died just as the presentation was finished. In the end, the internship gave Bodrick the opportunity to perfect her PowerPoint skills.

Bodrick's goals for her internship were to gain a more realistic understanding of how business is conducted.

"This internship allowed me to use the knowledge I gained during my years as a student and apply it to real world situations," says Bodrick. "I am more prepared for the challenges that I will face after graduation."

### MICHELLE GEORGE

Biology major Michelle George, a Windber, Pa., native who plans on becoming a physician's assistant, completed a nursing internship at St. Paul's.

She was very excited about her internship because she was involved in activities with the residents and was able to practice her communication skills. In fact, George's interpersonal skills received a big boost the day she visited the rooms of some residents to perform wheelchair audits. She soon found it increasingly easier to talk with them. More importantly, her internship helped her to determine what she wants to do with her Thiel degree.

George shadowed an LPN, RN and an orthopedic surgeon. As an intern, she went on rounds with the wound care team and learned about behavior management and pharmacy.

She enjoyed interacting with residents from all different backgrounds, but her favorite people to work with were the Alzheimer's patients. She had no previous experience with Alzheimer's, and found it interesting to interact with them and learn about the disease.

"This was a great experience. I think everyone should at least attempt an internship," said George. "You have to expose yourself to different areas to figure out what you want to do, especially for biology/nursing because it is so broad."

### SAMANTHA HOLBROOK

A biology major from Stow, Ohio, senior Samantha Holbrook was a physical therapy intern. She plans to work for a few years after graduation to gain experience in the physical therapy field before attending graduate school. Ultimately, she would like to work in a facility that includes a variety of patients, in age and therapy type.

During her internship, which consisted mainly of job shadowing, Holbrook observed the treatment and therapy sessions of patients and attended therapy meetings. She also learned about the processes of charting, records and reports. With every patient, Holbrook's mentor would explain his or her background and health. She learned what drills the patient would perform and what part of the body the drill would help. Holbrook sometimes threw balls to the residents as a part of therapy sessions, but mostly, she was strictly an observer.

"I liked [my internship], but it made me realize that I do not want to work with strictly geriatrics," said Holbrook. "I am glad that St. Paul's helped me realize that I want to work with all age groups."

### SARAH MEADER

Senior Sarah Meader is a psychology major from Meadville, Pa., who plans on going to graduate school for clinical psychology or social work. Her internship in recreational therapy/activities was "laid back," allowed her to develop her creativity and helped her improve her communication and interpersonal skills. Her responsibilities included paperwork, charting activities of other staff members and charting activities for doctors' orders.

Meader said that pushing wheel chairs around was a lot harder than she had expected and that she learned how to properly use a wheel chair thanks to her internship. Meader participated in activities such as puzzles and coloring pictures with residents, exposing her to a variety of residents from those that are in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease and to those that have heart failure, multiple sclerosis and have suffered strokes. Meader says it was sometimes hard to deal with the "generation gap"; she often had to remind herself to treat the residents like adults. She feels that her creativity was allowed to develop at St. Paul's and she was given an increasing amount of responsibility. Meader found that the downside of the job was when residents with whom she had developed personal relationships became sick or died.

"When you look at the bright side, this is a really great job," says Meader. "It's a fun job."

