



CITY OF BUFFALO

Urban Fellows Intern Spring 2015

There is always something to celebrate in Buffalo. If interning, networking and developing your professional future isn't enough to throw your own celebration, start here to learn about our talented Urban Fellows Intern Class 2015. The City of Buffalo/Division of Citizen Services Urban Fellows Internship Program is designed to introduce our region's most talented college students and graduates to local government and public service, through hands-on practical learning experiences.

Yet this was really just the start of their collaboration. Before long, 5 students, Catherine Brooks, Juweria Dahir, Ebony Fripp, Ian Schwarzenberg and Amy Stanley ranging from sophomore to senior year, across Universities in Buffalo spent their spring semester interning at City Hall to work in the fast paced environment of the Division of Citizen Services. The division is comprised of a number of diverse ancillary programs which includes the following: Anti-Graffiti and Clean City, Buffalo Weed & Seed, Mayor's 311 Call & Resolution Center, Office of Citizen Participation & Information, Save Our Streets and the Quality of Life Programs. Each program has its own unique goals geared toward delivering services to the City of Buffalo residents.



Urban Fellow Interns Class of 2015

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By working closely with these programs, the Urban Fellows Interns acquired a valuable experience in the human service and governmental fields. In the quest to stop the exodus of young professionals leaving the region, the vision of this internship is to encourage current students to remain in the Western New York region by engaging them within the various programs that work to improve the quality of life within the City of Buffalo.

The Urban Fellows program is a unique opportunity for outstanding undergraduate and graduate students to interact with public policy leaders and coordinate individual projects with equally motivated peers. This process is replicated throughout the country, irrespective of location, across the full range of universities. When these stories are combined the result is economic growth, pushing the students who want to make a difference to create new and innovative programs in Buffalo, NY and initiatives for the Division of Citizen Services.



Special Points of Interest

- **Buffalo in the Know**
- **Clean Sweep**
- **DSSG**
- **Diversity Awareness**
- **Environmental Friendliness**
- **Millennial Council**
- **311**



Catherine Brooks

A wealth of knowledge

Participating in the Urban Fellows Internship Program has provided me with a wealth of knowledge and opened many doors for me. Working for the Division of Citizen Services has given me the type of exposure that I was looking to get when it came to working in government. During my time here I've participated in numerous citywide events. I saw the behind the scenes work that goes into preparing for a massive event like the Mayor's State of the City Address and the Mayor's Day of Service. Going out and "pounding the pavement" with Clean Sweeps allowed me to have direct interaction with city residents.

Cities all across America look to Buffalo to replicate a similar program in their own city because of its successful track record. To be a small part of that success was incredible. On a much more personal level, I also got to know the people who are the backbone of the office. One of my first experiences in Citizen Services was shadowing a call center operator. I listened to her interact with numerous residents who more often than not were disgruntled. The operators field hundreds of calls a day and do their best to make sure each concern is taken care of despite any discourteous individuals they may come across. Seeing the hard work and patience these workers demonstrate has greatly increased my respect and appreciation for them. In addition, during my time at Citizen Services I was given the opportunity to complete an original project. I designed an event with the hope of having it eventually be implemented in each of the City's Districts. Named "Buffalo In the Know: Connections for Education and Engagement" it's goals are to enhance citizens' governmental knowledge, expose citizens to resources available to them, enhance citizen participation in government, provide government with feedback from local residents and encourage volunteerism within the community.

Continued... The event involves a collaborative partnership between Mayor Byron W. Brown, Common Councilmembers, the Division of Citizen Services, various City of Buffalo Departments, local community organizations, and city residents. The main program would be a facilitated panel discussion and open Q & A session addressing the structure, challenges, and future of City Departments and offices as they relate to each of the districts. In addition, an information session would be running throughout the entire duration of the event. Residents would be able to interact with various community organizations to learn about resources and volunteer opportunities available to them. One day, I hope to see this event take place all



State at the City Address, at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center

“The State of the City is strong and continues to grow stronger, however we must keep the engine of opportunity going by building a city of opportunity for everyone,” said Mayor Brown.



Juweria Dahir

Multi-channel access to government services

I had the pleasure of serving as an Urban Fellow Intern for the Division of Citizens Services at City Hall, where I had a wonderful supervisor and gained invaluable experience working with the department to provide the public with multi-channel access to government services and information.. I attended several training and professional development sessions with my class of interns, where I built authentic connections with supervisors from almost every division within City Hall and many influential leaders in Buffalo.

The objective of the Division of Citizens Services was to implement, and sustain a centralized call system capable of resolving non-emergency service requests with faster response times and higher rate of resolution than previous systems. I was tasked with researching the rate at which the division can produce a solution with effectiveness, which speaks to the quality of the solution from the users ends perspective. Through many meeting with Director Oswaldo Mestre and Professor Varun Chandola from University at Buffalo, we were able to put together a proposal for submission to The University of Chicago’s Data Science For Social Good. They will help analyze 311 data; and predict when and where graffiti, potholes, and other problems are likely to occur. This is a massive stepping stone for the Division, and I am honored to be part of this initiative that will build analytic models that would eventually be used to prevent problems and deliver City services more proactively. With the help of the DSSG to create an advanced method to compile the data from 311’s centralized computer system, we will be able to translate higher efficiency to quicker problem solve, but also navigate better through our strategic challenges. Also in the spirit of improving Buffalo, under the duty of Urban Fellow, my research and co-authorship of “Millennial Council: Effectively bridging or diminishing the gap between young professionals and local government,” was a life time opportunity.

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There were several highlights during the course of my internship at City Hall. Every morning, I got to drive by the Niagara Medical Campus on my morning commute. In fact, on one occasion I saw Matthew Enstice, the President & CEO of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus exiting the front entrance of the campus. I then got to meet him a few weeks later during the 43North competition launch day. A competition worth \$5million in prizes, to attract entrepreneurs with the best ideas for starting a new business in the Buffalo Niagara region.

In all, this experience gave us all a sense of the opportunities available to us outside of our specific assignments. Working for City Hall was a wonderful experience, and I encourage all students interested in government and policy to definitely apply to become an Urban Fellow Intern when thinking about internships.



Group project planning

Innovating college students to get more involved with government sectors.

Transferable skills in the Public Sector



Ebony Fripp

Being selected to be an Urban Fellow intern is an opportunity that I definitely do not take for granted. I have learned so much being inside of the Mayor's 311 Call and Resolution Center and have met so many amazing people along the way. Being given the opportunity to work hands on with the planning and execution of different events conducted by the office has allowed me to gain transferable skills that I can take out into the work place and use to grow and further my career as a potential public sector worker. During my time here I got to participate in, and attend, many city wide events, and more importantly, the meetings preparing for these events. I got to be in on the deep planning of affairs like the Black History Event, the Mayor's Day of Service and Clean Sweeps Kickoff. I was able to experience first-hand the inner workings of City Hall and all its wonders, which I consider a blessing. The workers that I have met while at this internship are determined and sincere in wanting to make Buffalo a better city. They are a huge part of why Buffalo is transforming from a failing city to a buzzing city that people are looking to replicate. Although I am not a native Buffalonian, I consider Buffalo to be my home and I am honored to be a part of the shift towards a better Buffalo. As a Fellow I was given the opportunity to conduct an individual project based on a topic of my own interest. Being so, I chose to work off the topic of Diversity Awareness. Growing up in New York City diversity was everywhere. I was surrounded daily by so many different cultures and ethnicities, and as people we embraced it. There are an abundance of different cultures and ethnicities represented in Buffalo, but that sense of inclusion and awareness, to me, is missing.

Continued... I wanted to help fix this. So for my project I presented a proposal for a Social Media Diversity Awareness Campaign which would take place through the social media apps YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This campaign's goal is to build from the Mayor's online pledge for diversity and inclusion in the attempt to build ONE Buffalo. The campaign will be run by a selected group, who will serve as campaign members, and will have access and full control of the campaign's social media pages.



They will also be in charge of planning and executing a series of events that serve to promote diversity awareness throughout Buffalo. This project is dear to me, and I hope that it can help bridge the gap between the many cultures of Buffalo so that we can really be the City of Good Neighbors.

Improving quality of life through volunteerism

Two major reasons why I did this internship were to supplement my studies in Environmental Design, a subfield of Urban Planning, and to gain a better knowledge of the City of Buffalo as a whole, and how it functions. Since Environmental Design and Urban Planning combine many disciplines together such as politics and social sciences, this internship proved to be a great opportunity for me.

At the beginning of my internship, I did things such as help out with Mayor Brown's 2015 State of the City Address. Through this, I learned a lot about how Buffalo is changing in big ways, the goals Buffalo has accomplished so far, and the goals the city still needs to accomplish. This helped give me a broader view of the things happening in Buffalo, and how they are affecting Buffalo's residents. I also worked with the other interns on various group projects, such as helping plan out the annual Mayor's Day of Service. Through this, I learned how important volunteerism is to improving quality of life in a city, and how a city government can help encourage its residents to volunteer.

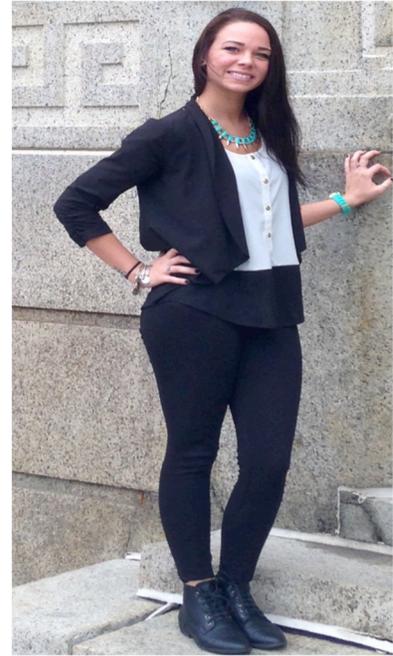
We also helped with planning out and running the Clean Sweeps program. Through this, I learned a lot about the Clean Sweeps program, and how much impact can be made when focusing on fixing the problems and helping the citizens of specific, smaller areas of a city. In general, the other interns and I got very familiar with the various programs the Division of Citizen Services does. We looked at residents' concerns, and what Citizen Services is doing to improve these programs. This greatly helped me learn about what Buffalo's government does to help out its citizens, and the example other American cities can follow. I also worked with the other interns on a group project where we had to create a Young Adult Citizen's Council for Buffalo. The aim of this was to encourage political participation among the city's youth. Through this, I learned about how many American cities such as Buffalo are motivating their youth to participate in

Jan Schwarzenberg

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I also worked on an Individual Project about creating an annual city event aimed at teaching and showing Buffalo's citizens more environmentally friendly ways of living. During the internship, I saw how many of the Buffalo government's big programs have originated from the ideas of one person or a small group of people. This showed me how the ideas of one or a few can have a big impact on any city.

Throughout my internship, I learned valuable skills that will undoubtedly help me in future internships and jobs, such as multitasking, leadership skills, and communication skills, just to name some examples. I also learned a lot about issues that affect quality of life in not just Buffalo, but in American cities in general, and how governments such as Buffalo's are dealing with them. It was without a doubt a great supplement to my studies in Environmental Design, as the internship gave me real-world experience with seeing how governments help fix issues that their citizens deal with.



Serving as a voice in Buffalo's Government

Amy Stanley

I applied to be in the Urban Fellows Intern program in November 2014 and was fortunate enough to become part of the team in January 2015. Throughout the internship I have greatly benefitted from the overall first-hand exposure within a public sector. Communicating with professionals, peers, and partners on a daily basis, I feel as though this internship has tailored my vision of successful and shaped me as a young professional.

Working as a student intern at two organizations and maintaining my employment has given me a wealth of drive and determination to be successful. Being apart of the Urban Fellows internship program has been an honor. Having the opportunity to work with the directors, call staff, and fellow interns has been an overall pleasure. I have been fortunate enough to not only have found several mentors within the office but, also friendship with my fellows. I feel that the relationships I have obtained from this internship are of those I will cherish for my lifetime.

Throughout the term we were assigned several projects as a group to build and design together. Several of these projects involved; creating a young professional council, maintaining a social media presence, involvement in city events, and promoting national service. We worked exclusively with event planning and coordination for several City Hall functions. Some including; State of the City Address, Mayor's Day of Recognition for National Service, Landlord Training, and Operation Clean Sweep.

I decided to direct my efforts into marketing events and evolving the group proposal for a young professional council. I decided that the proposal for a young professional council was imperative because this council would serve as a voice in Buffalo's government within my age group. This project proposal quickly transformed into the Millennial Council which objectives focus on social empowerment, economic flourishing, and diminishing inequalities. I have high expectations that the Urban Fellow Interns of Spring 2015 set up a strong foundation for this council to takeoff in the near future.

