

My Experience with the FOSC Summer High School Internship

As someone who has a genuine fascination with the environment around us, I knew that joining the Friends of Sausal Creek internship would be a perfect way to spend the month of July. I've always had an interest in environmental science, but I really started to become passionate about it last school year and decided to get more involved. I met a few people through my school at Oakland Tech's Green Club who had interned for Friends of Sausal Creek and all of them had positive things to say about the program. I decided to go ahead and apply, and it turned out to be a great choice for me. I met so many passionate, like-minded people, learned a lot about the local environment, and now have an entirely new perspective on the world around us.



Each day of the internship was seven hours packed with informative facts about things such as plant identification, nonnative species, the watershed, and so much more. Our project leaders, Jill Flaningam Miller and Bette La, had intriguing and creative methods of getting this information across through activities such as matching games, salmon roleplaying, and plant identification. We interns were expected to learn much of the information on our own by piecing together our prior knowledge to come to logical conclusions, such as with identifying the difference between Himalayan and California blackberry through comparing their physical traits.

Every day we had some type of restoration project around the watershed, either at Joaquin Miller or Dimond Park. The projects ranged from picking up trash down Fruitvale Avenue to rolling up ivy on a steep hill covered in poison oak. The work was definitely challenging, but at the same time incredibly fulfilling as we got to see the impact we had on Sausal Creek and gained so much knowledge about the watershed and the plants within it.

I agree with my fellow intern, Lauren Carothers-Liske, who said, "Through the hands-on work and restoration projects I have completed with FOSC, I feel as if my sense of respect for the local environment has deepened. Because of the knowledge I have gained from this internship, I am now connected to my surroundings in a meaningful way and feel a responsibility and duty to protect the watershed I have come to love and appreciate."

Aside from learning about the environment, we also learned valuable leadership skills that we can all use in the future. Each day one of us was assigned the role of a project leader and was expected to lead the group through discussions and restoration projects. This gave each of us the opportunity to gain experience leading a group and allowed us to practice our communication skills with our peers. We also had a day where the eight of us split into pairs and led a group of students from Upward Bound through a restoration project. This was one of my favorite activities because I loved being able to interact with other high school students and share some of the knowledge I learned from the internship. It was a chance for me to step out of my comfort zone and take on the role of a leader as I guided them through the logistics of Cape ivy removal and kept them intrigued for the two and a half hours I was with them. My fellow intern



Laurel Hennen Vigil thought about how leading the group of students helped her gain valuable skills by noting, “Leading a group of our peers in restoration projects was a great experience for other leadership roles we might encounter in school or in extracurriculars.” This activity was a great experience for us, and I know that we will all be taking the skills we’ve learned throughout this internship with us to future jobs.

--Lia DeVecchio

