

THE LOWDOWN

Sheriff Charles S. Blackwood

This month, three interns completed semester-long experiences with my office. I want to tell you about them and encourage other students to consider coming to learn and grow with us.

Kayla Kaminski had the most specialized experience of the three, coming to us with a strong interest in family services or assisting those experiencing domestic violence. As part of her degree requirements at Greensboro College, she worked with us four days a week, receiving four hours of academic credit.

Serving almost exclusively with our Crisis Unit, Kayla learned about electronically filing domestic violence protective orders. She assisted Amber Keith-Drowns with domestic violence court and direct service to those affected by intimate partner violence. She also observed the judicial process in action as Deputy Faircloth served orders on defendants. Required by her program to complete a project that would benefit the office after her internship concluded, Kayla worked with Investigator Woodlief to create a spreadsheet tracking the inventory of sexual assault kits and serving as a database for communication with survivors. Kayla worked two extra weeks with us because she didn't want to leave. She found "there was never a wrong question to ask," and she reported "There is a lot of passion and respect here for the people we serve."

Terrance Higgins-Keziah, also interned for course credit, working an average of 28 hours a week while also taking on-line courses before graduating with a BS in Criminal Justice and a minor in Russian Studies from East Carolina University. He wrote a summary of his experience in the form of a thank you note to Lieutenant Whitehurst, through whom Terrance arranged his internship. My favorite line of that letter was, "I truly believe there is something magical about your agency." What a compliment!

Terrance learned about the nuanced civil process laws, helped people with weapon permit applications and background checks, gained insight into domestic violence, observed some of the technology used by our evidence technicians, rode with patrol on night shift, observed a death investigation, and field tested an instruction manual Investigator Baldwin wrote for our 3D laser camera.

When asked if he had any advice for future interns with the office, Terrance said, "When I started, and this is applicable to life in general, I wish I knew to be more self-

initiating...a lot of what ended up being most valuable started with me asking. Reach out to people around you – everyone is here for your benefit.”

Our youngest intern, Moses King, 17, attended East Chapel Hill High School before receiving his GED. His goal is to become an officer in the United States Marine Corps.

I met Moses while we were in his neighborhood investigating a threat to public safety. This was shortly after George Floyd’s murder; Moses reports his parents “freaked” to hear he had an interaction with law enforcement. Moses’s father came to see me a few days later, and together we agreed Moses might benefit from an internship with my office. Frankly, Moses was not very happy about the arrangement! Moses now reports he didn’t think law enforcement officers were approachable – he thought they were almost robots. I am so gratified he learned, in his words, that we are “actual people who care about you.”

Moses became a valuable member of our team, helping answer inquiries at the front desk and fingerprinting people who needed that service. He had a particular interest in learning about patrol vehicles and the wireless technology involved with the lights and sirens. He therefore spent time working with Captain Fearington and visiting the motor pool.

In addition to exploring technology, meeting all sorts of people, and learning different perspectives, Moses found his experiences here were a catalyst for discussions with his friends, who generally had negative preconceived notions about law enforcement. Moses reports his friends have softened. He says when they see a deputy now, they think, “There go Moses’s people.”

Moses will have an internship with a police department in Rwanda this summer. When he returns to the states, he will attend the Citadel this fall. I can’t tell you how proud I am to be one of Moses’s people!

If you are considering an internship with our office, please explore our website and learn more about us. Of particular interest might be two videos you will find at www.ocsonc.com/video. If you think there is a place for you here, please contact me or Lt. Whitehurst. Let’s talk about whether we can design an experience to help you achieve your goals.