

Youth Corps program offers opportunity for students

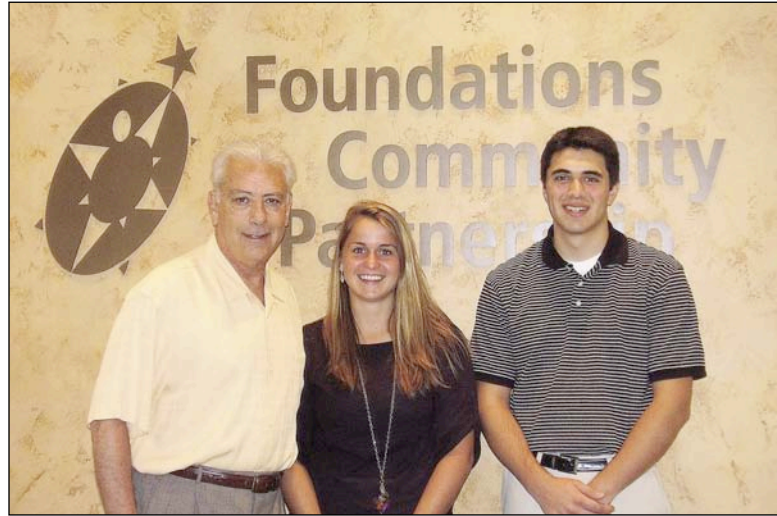
Matt FitzPatrick

The Summer Youth Corps, a program run by Foundations Community Partnership (FCP), provides paid internships in human services for college students in the Bucks County area.

Interns are grouped with nonprofit human service organizations and participate in a 10-week, 400-hour “service learning” program. The internship offers three college credits through Bucks County Community College. Credits may also be available through various colleges or universities.

Ron Bernstein, executive director of Foundations Community Partnership, said, “We wanted to create a dynamic program to give Bucks County students the opportunity to gain some very practical experience in the summer. The kids spend 32 hours a week on site with a host agency, and they spend eight hours a week with us (FCP) in educational workshops doing didactic training and some independent research. We also hire a graduate intern who goes out and visits the kids every week at their sites to make sure things are going well and that they are having a really focused experience.”

This is the third year that the Summer Youth Corps has taken place. The program has increased from 10 student interns three years ago to 14 this year. Not only are the interns presented with a unique opportunity but, “The nonprofit agencies love having these wonder-



From left, Ron Bernstein, executive director of Foundations Community Partnership, Kelsey Detweiler and Gabe Hurtado.

fully bright kids around to help get things done,” noted Bernstein.

Some interns work with young kids directly, while other students work in offices.

“Being a human service organization, you would expect many students to be psychology students or social work students, but they’re not,” said Dan Weldon, senior consultant for Program and Educational Services.

The Summer Youth Corps works with students from many different majors. “All of the agencies that we work with provide students with human services of some kind to children, youth and families, with a focus on special needs kids,” said Weldon.

In order for students to get

involved in the program, they have to go through a selective process. FCP gives one scholarship to every public high school in Bucks County to see if the students are interested.

FCP also receives recommendations and referrals from organizations or schools that the students have been involved with.

“We get a pretty good feel for who we think are great kids. Then we try to facilitate a matching process with a host agency that we feel would be a good fit for them,” said Bernstein.

The interns also go through a very thorough background check to ensure that they have the proper credentials they need when working with an agency.

There’s a 40-hour orientation



Gabe Hurtado works with the Pearl S. Buck International.

where the interns gain all the credentials that they need before they even begin at their site. All participants must submit two journal entries a week during a self-evaluation period along with a paper and presentation that they are required to give at the conclusion of the program to representatives of their academic institutions, host agencies and family members.

Gabe Hurtado, a student at Muhlenberg, works with Pearl S. Buck International. He usually helps with the adoption service they provide and event planning responsibilities.

When asked about the influence that this program has had on him, he said, “I know a lot of my friends are looking for jobs and things like that.

To have FCP sponsor us, put us in these internships, and also offer college credit is kind of remarkable. We’re pretty lucky.”

Kelsey Detweiler, a Penn State University journalism major, works with the Network of Victim Assistance (NOVA). Detweiler said that she is involved by working under the Director of Development to help further NOVA in a different way by doing things like networking and advertising.

“The college credit is a huge deal. If I wasn’t doing this, I’d probably be sitting at home doing nothing,” she said. “Going into an office, making relationships and connections is great. It’s in Bucks County too, so it’s really nice to have something to do.”