

## spotlight ON OUR STUDENTS

Designed to provide hands-on experiential learning, the Mann Child Policy Externship gives selected undergraduate students a unique, practical opportunity to focus on child policy in the community context. The Schubert Center for Child Studies at Case Western Reserve University partners with Greater Cleveland public and non-profit community organizations to create a rigorous educational and civic experience. Working directly with professionals who design and implement policies that impact the lives of children and families, students engage in various planning, research, analysis, and/or advocacy activities for policy related to children and childhood. *Spotlight on Our Students* features the students who were selected as Mann Externs and placed in community agencies during the 2010 Spring and Summer semesters.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about The Schubert Center for Child Studies, the Mann Externship application process or how to become a Mann Extern host agency, please visit our website at <http://schubert.case.edu>.



CDPH'S PAM BRACKETT & DEVYN RIGGIO

### Devyn Riggio

SUMMER 2010

Devyn is a senior majoring in Medical Anthropology, with minors in French and Biology. Devyn first became interested in child health policy in her Child Policy course at Case Western Reserve University. Curious as to what the link between research, policy, and practice was, Devyn pursued the Mann Child Policy Externship experience and was placed at the **Cleveland Department of Public Health (CDPH)**. Over the course of the summer, Devyn and another intern researched and compiled a compendium of nutrition education programs, evidence based literature, and wellness policies of schools from around the country. This information provided background to inform potential changes to Cleveland Metropolitan School Districts nutrition and wellness policies. In addition to developing this report, Devyn attended community meetings and met with various groups, such as the Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition, the Healthy Cleveland Business Council, Cleveland's Food Cart Initiative, and the Core Research Project for the Case Western Prevention Research Center. Devyn also contributed to numerous newsletters and briefs for many of the CDPH's health promotion projects. After participating in the Mann Externship, she wishes to pursue a career in public health, with a focus on child nutrition.

*"My experience at the Cleveland Department of Public Health was everything I was looking for. I had been wondering for a long time what the bridge between research and policy was and I found my answer. I was able to see collaboration between universities and city departments and the results that come out of those relationships," says Devyn. "It was the kind of real world experience that you can only receive when you step out of the classroom. My work often would shift from doing research for my report to responding to a request, such as gathering nutrition and wellness information for a little girl who had written to the department asking for advice about what to eat to stay healthy. I felt I made a difference and learned life lessons even in the short amount of time I was there."*

**CLEVELAND DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH (CDPH)** is the local public health agency for the City of Cleveland. Formally established in 1910, the department is charged with improving the quality of life in the City of Cleveland by promoting healthy behavior, protecting the environment, preventing disease, and making the City a healthy place to live, work, and play. The Division of Health is designed to promote community health. Community health represents the intersection of public health, preventive medicine, school health, and self-care.

*"Interning at the Cleveland Department of Public Health allows the students a variety of educational opportunities to gain hands on experience and collaborate on meaningful projects," says Pam Brackett, Devyn's supervisor. "Devyn graciously took the ball and ran with it and added value to the Health Promotion team. She was led by her passion for public health and contributed a great deal in meetings ranging from healthy food access, nutrition education reform, and health literacy."*



## Summer Wiggins

SPRING 2010

Summer is a double major in psychology and pre-law and a childhood studies minor and plans to pursue a Master's degree in Social Work at the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences. She is also very interested in family and juvenile law and thought the Mann Externship practical experience in the child advocacy field would both inform her future career goals and enable her to make a valuable contribution to improving child well-being. In addition to her course work in child-related subjects, Summer worked as a Child Life Specialist volunteer at Rainbow Babies and Childrens Hospital and was particularly interested in understanding how public policy efforts could best address issues in mental health, juvenile justice and child welfare.

Summer was placed at **Voices for Ohio's Children**, a statewide collaborative that advocates for public policy that improves the well-being of children and their families. Her supervisor, Yvonne Hunnicutt, Director of Operations and Policy Associate, arranged to have Summer assist with Voices' youth development work and the Juvenile Justice Initiative (JJI). Part of her youth development work included coordinating advocacy trainings for young people in Cuyahoga County. The JJI is dedicated to ensuring a more equitable juvenile justice system that combines evidence-based treatment, a shift away from institutionalization, increased judicial discretion, and increased family involvement. In addition to participating in community meetings and assisting with logistics for various advocacy events, Summer visited a youth correc-

tional facility, attended a legislative briefing on child behavioral health policy, and drafted policy-related research articles (i.e. the link between the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, youth interactions with and perceptions of law enforcement, and education opportunities for incarcerated youth). During the course of her placement, Summer also assisted in grant applications and compiling various data, such as demographic and child-serving system statistics for each of the Voice's 88-County Profiles and candidate information on all of the Ohio Senate and House primary races.

*"My experience at Voices for Ohio's Children was one of the most educational of my undergraduate career," says Summer. "While this may sound cliché, it is no less true – learning is much more effective when one is out in the world, immersed in real-life applications of the lesson. Voices was exactly that for me; the time I spent there allowed me to be part of something important, and it allowed me to see first-hand the things I have been learning about in various classrooms."*

**VOICES FOR OHIO'S CHILDREN** is a statewide organization with a vision to ensure that every child is safe, educated, healthy, connected and employable. With hundreds of collaborative partners, Voices seeks to impact the systemic and public policy changes that improve the lives of Ohio's children and their families.

*"We strive to ensure that the Mann externs have an opportunity to engage in an enriching experience consisting of research, policy drafting, legislative activities and field work," says supervisor Yvonne Hunnicutt. "Summer's thorough research and composition of the findings on really challenging and difficult topics was very helpful to our work during her externship."*

## Andrea Wojtowicz

SPRING 2010

A psychology major with a childhood studies minor, Andrea's studies at CWRU include clinical research with low birth weight toddlers under Dr. Maureen Hack and research about children with attention disorders under Dr. Elizabeth Short, as well as child policy and child development coursework. With a future interest in clinical psychology and a concern about education and health policy, Andrea pursued a Mann Externship in order to better understand the linkage between practice and policy.

Andrea was placed at **groundWork**, a coalition of early care and education stakeholders promoting state investments and policies to address the needs of Ohio's children ages birth to six. Under the supervision of Director Katie Kelly and Campaign Coordinator Susan Blasko, Andrea focused on research and public education related to early childhood programs and policies. During the course of her placement she visited early learning centers, met with legislators, attended meetings with various community partners, participated in policy planning conference calls, compiled candidate lists and updated the legislative database, developed campaign-related social media tools including a Facebook page and an educational blog, stayed current on state legislative activity, updated news clips on the agency website, and researched implications of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's "Transformation Plan." Moreover, Andrea conducted more in-depth research and drafted policy briefs in two policy areas: full-day kindergarten and early childhood mental health. Using the most recent Ohio Department of Mental Health annual report, the latter paper highlighted outcomes on early childhood mental health programs and research supporting early intervention and treatment.

JUDGE KRISTIN SWEENEY  
AND NADRA WILLIAMS



*"I went into this experience with a few skills that I wanted to fine tune," says Andrea, "but beyond that I really was not sure what to expect. From this experience, I gained knowledge in policy, advocacy, and the world of politics. I learned more in these short four months than I could have bargained for."*

*Defining what is meant by "advocacy" was among Andrea's learning goals; at the end of her time at groundWork she describes it this way: "Advocacy is a great way to raise public awareness about your cause, build a network of supportive individuals, and shape laws and policies by educating legislators about what to invest in."*

**GROUNDWORK** is a coalition of early care and education leaders, parents, service professionals, business leaders, and organizations across the state who have come together to promote state investments and policies that will address the needs of Ohio's youngest children. The campaign is working to ensure that every parent has the tools they need to provide a safe, healthy, and enriching environment for their children during the first six years of life.

*"Andrea became a valuable member of the groundWork team and helped with many projects, primarily research-based, that support our advocacy with state legislators and other policymakers statewide. This work took a great deal of patience and understanding of the issues," says supervisor Susan Blasko. "We see a strong advocate for children in Andrea and hope that she uses her passion to continue to improve the well-being of children in our community."*

## Nadra Williams

SUMMER 2010

Nadra, majoring in Sociology with a concentration in Social Inequality, developed a passion for justice through this academic track. Being an aspiring lawyer coupled with her love for children, Nadra became interested in the child policy courses offered at Case Western Reserve University. Her child policy research focused in the area of juvenile justice, with special attention to the experience of girls in the system. Through her child policy courses Nadra was introduced to the Schubert Center for Child Studies and the Mann Child Policy Externship and decided to pursue this experiential learning opportunity.

Nadra was placed at the **Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas Juvenile Division (Juvenile Court)** where she was able to gain first-hand experience through a variety of activities, such as courtroom and detention center observation, shadowing legal professionals, and in-depth interviews with court-involved stakeholders. During the course of her placement, Nadra observed some of the ways in which children are served by a public system and how public policy impacts both the young people and key system players, such as judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers and other administrative staff. Under the supervision of the Honorable Judge Kristin Sweeney, Nadra conducted a research project on juvenile cases involving domestic violence and unruly conduct. This research project was formed to better understand the connection between similar behaviors of children charged with domestic violence and unruly conduct and how the system responds to these youth. As a

part of her research, Nadra had the opportunity to interview public defenders, prosecutors, magistrates, and probation officers. She also conducted a case file review and analysis, creating a fact sheet for Judge Sweeney that summarized this quantitative data. In addition, Nadra engaged in various court-related activities, such as assisting the intake office with determining whether children were eligible for diversion programs.

*"The Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court was the best placement for me," says Nadra. "I was able to receive a panoramic view of juvenile law through interaction with various actors within the juvenile justice system. This externship has enhanced my knowledge of how the juvenile court operates and issues related to juvenile justice policy and practice, as well as informed my future career goals."*

The mission of the **CUYAHOGA COUNTY JUVENILE COURT** is: "To administer justice, rehabilitate juveniles, support and strengthen families, and promote public safety." The court lives out this mission in part by connecting youth and families involved in the juvenile justice system to community and residential services designed to help them learn how to live successfully and safely in society.

*"I truly benefited from having Nadra this summer. It was fascinating to see the court through Nadra's eyes. Having a researcher and a fresh perspective is extremely invaluable in such an insular system. I'm hopeful that Nadra will join us someday in juvenile justice. My collaboration with the Schubert Center allotted me the opportunity to join them in the development of our future leaders." Honorable Judge Kristin Sweeney*

*"My experience as an extern at CFC provided me with an invaluable learning experience that carries through aspects of my personal and professional development," says Mallory. "In actively working under a supervisor and as part of a team, I was exposed to a relationship dynamic that I had not experienced before. The externship allowed me to explore personal and professional boundaries, exposed me to a novel body of research, and provided introduction into a field that I am interested in pursuing. I am thankful for the eye-opening experience that the Mann externship provided for me. It allowed me to see the challenges our community is facing, as well as the multitude of opportunities available for passionate and educated people to become involved in making a difference in their community."*

## Mallory Zehe

SPRING 2010

A senior majoring in psychology and cognitive science with a minor in childhood studies, Mallory became interested in the Mann Externship as a result of her involvement with the Schubert Center for Child Studies throughout the course of her undergraduate career. In addition to coursework in child development and family dynamics, Mallory assisted in administering the "Youth Risk Behavior Survey" to high school students and volunteered as a Child Life Specialist at Rainbow Babies and Children Hospital. Policies regarding children's mental health and well-being, and how these relate to direct services, are among Mallory's interests and she plans to pursue a career in clinical psychology.

Mallory was placed at the **Center for Families and Children (CFC)** as the first Government Relations extern at the agency, under the direction of Alesha Washington, Manager of Government and Community Relations. Mallory was involved in work with CFC's youth development strategy and conducted various research projects, including exploring a pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade program model, looking more closely at the specifics surrounding an early learning center collaboration between CFC and Citizen's Academy, a Cleveland charter school, and collecting statistical data on Cuyahoga County demographics. In addition, Mallory assisted in preparing grant applications, gathered information on current relevant legislation, and participated in numerous meetings, conferences, seminars and field visits that related to her interests.

**The CENTER FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN (CFC)** is a non-profit agency that supports nearly 12,400 clients annually in the core areas of Behavioral Health, Early Learning, and Youth and Family Services. "Changing lives and communities through client service, advocacy and collective action" is CFC's mission, which includes a focus on "effective, practical strategic advocacy to remove societal barriers, achieve broader systems change and ensure adequate community investment in our client service areas." CFC's Government Affairs team actively advocates for public policies that strengthen families and support those most at risk in our community.

*"Mallory greatly contributed to the various research needs of our agency's governmental relations department, often quickly stepping in and preparing projects in a timely fashion," says Government Affairs supervisor Alesha Washington. "We are excited about the prospect of working with Mann child policy externs in the future and value this partnership with the Schubert Center."*

If you are interested in applying for a Mann Externship or learning more about the process, please see our website at <http://schubert.case.edu> under *Education for Externships & Experiential Learning* or contact the Schubert Center Director of Child Policy, Gabriella Celeste, at [mgc36@case.edu](mailto:mgc36@case.edu). Applications are accepted until the end of October for the following spring externship and until the end of March for the subsequent summer and fall externships.

**THE SCHUBERT CENTER FOR CHILD STUDIES** in the College of Arts and Sciences at Case Western Reserve University bridges research, practice, policy and education for the well-being of children and adolescents. Our focus is on children from infancy through adolescence in local, national, international and global settings.

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