

# Internship Testimonials

## Homestead Recovery Center - Boone, NC

Kenna Sipe wrote... The mission of Homestead Recovery Center is to be a place where peer-led recovery is possible for everyone. This is made possible by creating a “welcoming, inclusive, and supportive” space where everyone can have an equal opportunity to engage in recovery. I have witnessed first hand that every staff member does everything in their power to ensure every client has everything they need to form an efficient recovery plan.

During my internship, I had the opportunity to work the front desk. I spent most of my time checking in clients and making small talk with them. I also answered the phone and logged calls into the digital call log. In addition to this, I “billed” clients in our system for things like laundry services, showers, and utilizing the peer living room, which is a space where our clients can relax, watch TV, and eat snacks. All of the services at Homestead Recovery are free of charge to our clients, so they do not actually receive a bill. Homestead is a branch of the MRJC, which is a nonprofit organization. Since we are a nonprofit, we keep track of how much each service costs us and we use it to track how much grant money is needed from the state.

I also worked in the peer living room organizing it and making sure everything was clean for our clients. I often restocked our mini fridge, as well as the snack counter. In addition to this, I also gathered basic supplies like clothes, hygiene products, and harm reduction supplies that clients asked for. We do have supply forms that clients can fill out. These forms have a list of all the supplies we have so they can choose from what they need.

There were many advantages to working on this site. All of the staff members are so amazing and kind. The work may seem overwhelming at first, but they provide an amazing support system and they understand it isn't always easy. It also just feels amazing to be able to help people. I genuinely felt like I was making a difference in people's lives and making their day a little better by helping them out. However, there were also a few disadvantages. One disadvantage is that clients often have very sad stories to tell about their lives. It can be a little hard to hear and it's even harder to respond to them. I always tried to be understanding, but at the same time, not putting myself in their shoes. I will never understand what they've gone through. Also, you will occasionally have clients who are rude and disrespectful. It doesn't happen very often, but when it does, staff members try to address the behavior so it doesn't continue.

One thing I learned while interning at Homestead Recovery is how needed mental health advocates are. A lot of our clients have or are currently suffering from mental illness, so it was really eye opening for me. This really made me think about my future plans and solidify that I want to be able to help those who are living with mental illness.

## Camp Girls on the Run - Boone, NC

Lucy Tax wrote... The mission of my site was to empower young girls and to teach them lessons to help them understand themselves and others through talking about emotions and conflict. The girls also got to participate in fun, educational activities as well as running and playing games. My experience was as a counselor/coach, and my job was to run the camp with two other counselors for eight hours Monday through Friday for two weeks in Boone, as well as for half days in Wilkes county for one week. We also planned all of the activities for the second part of the camp days in Boone, which meant reaching out to different educational departments, and having individuals from the nutrition and biology department come, as well as a UREC yoga instructor. The campers got to participate in a nursing simulation on campus, and tour the sustainability department as well as make crafts in the Makerspace.

I enjoyed my time at my site and found it to be very rewarding, although managing 25 campers all day for a full week was exhausting at times. I feel like one thing I gained from the internship that I didn't expect was a sense of leadership. Being responsible for so many people at once and trying to make sure things are running smoothly is always a hard task, and even more so with children. I had to consider so many factors when trying to plan the schedule for each day, which was extra crucial when it came to us getting on the bus back and forth from our field trips, as our only form of transportation was Appalcart.

I have always enjoyed working with kids because my mom is a primary school teacher, and have considered it as something I might specialize in in my studies or career. This experience has not changed that at all, and it has given me further insight into how it would be to work with different ages and different individuals' needs.

## TJ Maxx - Boone, NC

Jodi Gangwer wrote... My current internship site is at TJ Maxx. We serve customers and provide low prices for nice brands. Most of my internship was spent either learning more leadership competencies, becoming knowledgeable in certain administrative areas, and preparing for becoming a key carrier, and eventually an assistant store manager. I have made my five-year goal to work in the human resources department of TJ Maxx, and this internship has definitely given me additional knowledge that I need to be prepared for that role.

I enjoyed being at my site because of how much I was able to learn in different areas. It wasn't just focused on one aspect of the store, it was cash handling, administrative tasks, human resources, and management training. I was able to learn how to properly process cash deposits, which is a great skill to add to my resume, especially since I am planning to stay in a retail environment post-graduation. I was also able to become knowledgeable in management procedures, how to effectively give out constructive criticism, conflict resolution, merchandising, and how to lead a conference call/team meeting.

I think the advantage of my site was that I can move up post-internship. I have already talked to the manager and district manager about fast tracking to be an assistant store manager and it seems like that may be my plan after graduation, which I am excited about. Being able to learn all these new things that I was never able to learn while being a coordinator is also an amazing piece to add to my resume for future positions. Though I would love to stay with the company, I am thankful for this opportunity to further my skill set in not only retail but also human resources. I think I liked working with the people at my store the most. Everyone was very receptive to me learning how to properly manage and the associates there also were very encouraging. My supervisor was also amazing throughout the whole process, she was always willing to help me with information I didn't understand and walked me through it step by step, explaining the what but also the why.

I think my favorite experience throughout my internship was being able to travel to Hendersonville for leadership and credit card training. It was an honor to be picked to travel there and be one of the trainers for my store regarding selling our credit cards and how to effectively motivate our front-end team. This meeting influenced my want to stay with the company and continue my career with TJ Maxx. Overall, I really enjoyed my experience at TJ Maxx and I am thankful for the knowledge that I have learned throughout the summer.

## Appalachian Regional Behavioral Health Hospital - Linville, NC

Sophia Varriale wrote... This summer I am interning at a short term psychiatric stabilization facility. This facility is in Linville, NC and is called Appalachian Regional Behavioral Health Hospital. Their mission is "a place for empowerment and healing. The Health Hospital offers stabilization for psychiatric emergencies through medication management and a wide array of therapeutic interventions. Art therapy, recreational therapy, illness understanding, anger management, drug abuse counseling and conflict resolution are all examples of interventions offered. The hospital also offers an Outpatient program as well offering medication management, therapy, testing and assessment and evaluation. They meet with families, adults and children while offering a sliding-scale payment plan.

For the most part, the experiences and opportunities at App Behavioral Health Hospital have been positive. Through this internship I have been able to shadow social workers, had interactions with patients on the unit, have called countless homeless shelters and post-hospital resources. I have also been able to make several collateral phone calls with patient's family members and have learned how to use Allscripts. However, the first month of my internship expectations and the extent of what I could do was not effectively communicated. Because of this, most of the knowledge listed previously has been obtained in the last couple of weeks.

The people that work at the hospital are very caring and hardworking. They all genuinely care about the patient's well-being and what the best outcome for everyone. While working as a social worker, an advantage is that you work 10- 4 hour shifts, so a 3-day weekend is taken. This is great because it allows for a mental break. However, most of the shift is spent in front of a computer and making phone calls which is something I dislike about the job. In a future job, I

have learned that I want to have more interaction with patients and be more on my feet. Through this experience, I have been able to apply what I have learned in the classroom into real-world situations. Overall, this internship has provided me with invaluable experience and has provided me a clearer insight into the job I want in the future.

## App State Psychology Clinic - Boone, NC

Camden Hutchinson wrote... The Appalachian State Psychology Clinic is a local provider of mental health services. It was opened in 2001 to provide comprehensive psychological services to the local community while training graduate students as clinicians. The mission is to provide high-quality psychological assessment and treatment services to community members, conduct research, train graduate students on evidence-based practices, and be sensitive to the effects of diversity-related issues. They see students from the university, but also community members not affiliated with the school at a more affordable rate. We see around 60 patients a year from all age ranges. The clinic offers full assessments as well as therapy.

The psychology clinic is a wonderful and immersive learning experience. I gained so much knowledge very quickly. As an intern, you assist with many daily tasks to help out the graduate student clinicians and the office. There are administrative tasks such as making copies, faxing, filing, and other similar responsibilities. You also get the opportunity to conduct phone screens with potential clients. You ask people what services they seek and get some general information while providing them with the clinic procedures. You gain experience in scoring assessments and working with electronic health records. You sometimes get the opportunity to act as a practice patient where the graduate students practice administering a standardized test with you. A couple of times, I was included in therapy sessions as a confederate for exposure therapy. An important part of the job is conducting literature reviews and other research to gather resources and the latest information available. This research is typically applied directly to a current case, so you get to really practice and observe the process of evidence-based practice.

The Appalachian State Psychology Clinic was very organized with clear procedures. This has advantages because there is a predictable flow and there are always answers to questions. On the other hand, that makes it a little difficult to adapt to. There is a lot to learn, so it takes some time to feel helpful in the office. I was new to the professional environment, so that was an adjustment. I think it was an incredibly unique and valuable learning experience. Everyone working at the clinic had plenty of knowledge to share, so there was plenty to soak up.

I learned a lot in team meetings when we discussed cases and talked through conceptualization and treatment. I learned about how to cater services to each individual and be mindful of cultural influences. I also gained more awareness about the importance of practicing in an underserved area. This experience influenced my future plans, as I am attending Grad School at App. I will be a clinician eventually, so it was great to get adjusted to the clinic environment. I was able to observe part of the training process and ask questions, so I know there is a lot of effort dedicated to providing the best education possible.

## Creative Living Day Program, Autism Society of NC - Raleigh, NC

Brynn O'Connor wrote... My internship is at the Creative Living Day Program with the Autism Society of NC (ASNC). The main mission of Creative Living is to help adults on the autism spectrum to become more self-sufficient and develop meaningful connections. They do this by developing and improving communication skills, cultivating social skills, and building community relationships. This program provides Day Support program and community living skills assistance.

As a Direct Support Provider (DSP) I was able to work 1:1 with a participant in the program. Each participant has a list of goals they are working on. Every day we work together to make progress on these long-term goals. Most of them involve successful interactions in the community and working on self-help skills to be safe in the home. I was able to go with my participant to many community events like pool days, outings to the fire station, shopping, visiting museums, bowling, and attending music and movement classes. We also worked on many skills while at the day program through cooking classes, art classes, and completing chores.

I think the set up at Creative Living is ideal for providing a variety of activities to participants. It is in an office type building with many areas for relaxation, computer work, crafts and even has a little library and video room. One of the biggest advantages is having other participants and staff there to work with on goals. Our program director is on site and available for on-the-fly questions and suggestions. The only frustrating thing I found is that I don't believe the staff are compensated enough for the work they do.

One thing I learned in terms of my career goals is that I could be a program director or an activities director with a bachelor's degree. I was thinking I needed a master's to work in any position like that so it was nice to find out I could work in those positions while pursuing a masters if I wanted to.

The very best thing about working at Creative Living is building relationships with people who are so often overlooked. I felt so appreciated and welcome by every participant there and hope I was able to make them feel important and seen and cared for.

## Behavior Consultation and Psychological Services - Boone, NC

Behavior Consultation and Psychological Services, or BCPS, is a clinic that uses the science of Applied Behavior Analysis therapy, or ABA, to help children on the autism spectrum play, learn, and grow. The clients are dropped off between 8 and 9 in the morning and are picked up by 4:30. We do direct, one on one sessions to ensure our client has our full attention. Throughout the day Behavior Technicians, or BTs, focus on different forms of educational play all while using ABA techniques to meet the client's goals. The mission at BCPS is to provide the best care to each and every client - whenever, whatever, wherever it takes. My first few weeks at BCPS, I was completing 40 hour RBT (Registered Behavior Technician) training modules on Central

Reach Institute. This training is required to be completed before working directly with any clients. While working on these modules, I was either creating materials for clients or observing the motor room, which is a space for our clients to play, climb, swing, and develop motor skills. Upon completion, I began training with clients for direct therapy sessions. Once myself and my supervisor felt comfortable, I began doing direct sessions myself. I have enjoyed working with the people at BCPS because I could tell from the beginning that they wanted me to learn as much as possible from this experience. Everybody has always been eager to answer my questions and teach me something new about techniques or methods. Another advantage about this site is that they are very flexible about my schedule. I told them the days and times that I am available and they made the best schedule that works for me. Before finding BCPS, I had never heard of ABA therapy before. Now that I have experienced the amazing work that these people do and the amazing clients that they work with, it has made me question if I should change my career path. Originally I wanted to go into school psychology but now I might study to become a BCBA (board certified behavior analysis).

## Hospitality House - Boone, NC

Hannah Thoman wrote... The Hospitality House of North-West North Carolina's mission is to "rebuild lives and strengthen community by providing a safe, nurturing, healthy environment in which individuals and families experiencing homelessness and poverty-related crises are equipped to become self-sufficient and productive." They provide housing services such as night by night shelter, day services (3 meals a day, laundry, showers, first aid, etc.), family housing, emergency housing, permanent supportive housing, scattered site housing, domestic violence transitional housing and rapid rehousing programs. They also offer food services such as our Bread of Life Community Kitchen, food pantry, organic gardens and remote food lockers. They also offer much more than "bed and bread" through other supportive systems and a supportive community that helps self-worth be reclaimed and passions be rediscovered.

Some of the experiences I had while interning here were working the front desk, working the kitchen/food pantry, and creating individual projects. The front desk duties consist of answering phone calls, helping clients with anything they need, client pre screening forms, accepting donations, and more. In the kitchen I helped make the meals for that day, help food pantry customers and organize/clean the pantry. As a Psychology major I also worked personally with the on-site therapist and received a basic certification in the NeuroOptimal program. I also worked with another intern to start a mural that clients could help paint and set up painting classes. The Hospitality House highly encourages and provides interns with a space to create their own projects and spend their time interning doing things they like to do.

Some advantages I noticed was the organization within the staff. Each director/coordinator/manager had specific duties and programs they oversee, so when someone called or came in asking for a specific thing, I easily knew who to direct them too. A disadvantage I noticed was that the waitlist for people seeking emergency housing was very long and hard to tell someone a wait time. This is because it is a case-by-case list and all of the sites are

constantly full so it is hard to receive help sometimes, or let clients know how long it would be before they would be contacted.

Something I learned at the Hospitality House is working on-site at the shelter, creating relationships with clients and helping others is not for the faint hearted. It can be very challenging, discouraging and even heartbreaking, yet it opened up new passions I didn't know I had. I am now thinking about getting my Masters in Social Work next year, or look into mental health counseling at places like the Hospitality House. Witnessing the impact I had on people and helping change their lives made all the hard work worth it.

## Western Youth Network - Watauga, Ashe, Avery, & Alleghany Counties, NC

Lanie Vanchoff wrote... This semester I had the opportunity to intern at Western Youth Network (WYN), this organization offers five programs currently, and I worked with the Mentor Program. The biggest goal of this particular program is to help youth ages 6 to 17 who need extra encouragement and guidance; most kids involved in the program have dealt with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). These are traumatic experiences that occur to someone before they turn 18. The students that are referred to our program are set up with a mentor who is there to help guide them and give them that extra encouragement they need. While at WYN, I helped recruit new mentors, help with interviews and training, go on home visits, call references, contact people in the community about mentoring opportunities, and do some office work. WYN is a fantastic organization because it reaches out to many people and tackles various issues within each program. Currently, WYN is working on expanding to a new facility to reach even more people than they are now; this means more people can join the programs, and more people will have the help they need. One of my favorite things about working here was seeing how important this program is to these kids. As I mentioned, many of them have dealt with difficult things throughout their lives, and having someone be there for them makes a huge difference. In addition, they want to employ an on-site mental health counselor who is necessary for some youth in our programs; they would be able to help the kids begin to heal from their trauma and work through anything else they are dealing with.

My time with this organization has shown me a considerable need for mental health services for kids. That's not to say that there are no services available around here, they are just minimal, and some people have to wait a long time or they cannot afford to get help. Healing from trauma is not easy, and having those skills at a young age can make a lasting impact on a person. I want to pursue a career that would allow me to work with children who have experienced trauma and help them through that. I had second-guessed myself before this experience and if I could go into that line of work. This internship has made me realize that I can do this, and while some days it will not be easy, it is worth it in the end. If anyone is interested in becoming a mentor, I highly recommend it. It makes such a difference in these kids' lives and will also help you; it is so rewarding to see someone grow as a person. It is worth every minute of your time!

## Hospitality House - Boone, NC

Suzie Dau wrote... The mission of Hospitality House is to rebuild lives and strengthen the community by providing a safe, nurturing, healthy environment in which individuals and families experiencing homelessness and poverty-related crises are equipped to become self-sufficient and productive. Services include housing, hunger relief, and crisis assistance.

This internship at the Hospitality House has allowed me to help others in the county in ways I have never been able to before. Preparing food boxes for them and speaking with them about various topics of their choice as well as working with the therapists has been a pleasure. I thoroughly enjoyed being an intern here. All staff is kind and considerate towards others, fellow staff, and residents. It feels like one large family at the Hospitality House. I enjoy the fact that everyone is so friendly, however, a major disadvantage is that the site is sometimes not safe. Occasionally, there will be hostility between residents and legal action needs to be taken. I understand that this is common but it causes some anxiety in making sure doors are locked at all times, de-escalating situations, and contacting law enforcement if need be. Despite these situations being frightening, I still like being an intern at my site. I trust in my supervisors and other staff to do what is necessary to keep everyone safe.

I had considered doing crisis counseling and social work-related counseling as a career, but working at this site has made me realize that I may not want to do social work at all. I enjoyed being in the quiet of the therapy office. I can more easily help clients feel comfortable in this type of area rather than in the constant noise and commotion happening in the main shelter. On a brighter note, I may want to consider working with more non-profit organizations that better the community. Other than working with the therapists, I love working in the food pantry making people's weeks better by giving them the comfort of being able to have meals for the week. It makes me want to do more to help others than just provide counseling. While handing out food boxes, I often converse with the clients and it is fascinating hearing their stories. I will consider expanding my career options and think about how I can incorporate it into other areas.

## Wine to Water - Boone, NC

Jordan Kelley wrote... Wine To Water is a global non-profit organization aimed at providing water sanitation and clean water access to communities to improve the health and overall quality of life of people around the globe. In my specific role, I have been a part of the development team. On this team, we do program development, philanthropy, filter build coordinations, and marketing. I am specifically a part of the philanthropy team, where I predominantly do donor relations. This includes calling donors to thank them for donations, emailing donors to invite them to events, sending out envelopes to donors, and more. Along with this, I have also had the opportunity to do program development research alongside the other interns at WTW for the head of the development team to begin to implement new programs for the company. I have had the opportunity to email donors to invite them to WTW's feature at the Boone Bigfoots game, as well as to be at a table at the game to talk to people from the Boone community about Wine To Water's mission. Working here was really great, and



my team was amazing. There were some slower times, where there was not as much to do in terms of donor relations. However, this allowed me the opportunity to work at the warehouse to help with quality control and a volunteer program day. I greatly enjoy working with my team and it was so awesome to be around so many passionate people! I really think that learning more about nonprofits and the mission of Wine To Water in general impacted me greatly. It got me interested in the possibility of working for a non-profit one day, especially after seeing what a big impact one person can make. Interning with Wine To Water was an experience that I will never forget, and I know it will continue to influence me as I go throughout my life. I hope to go on one of their international trips one day, as well. I just feel so blessed to have had the opportunity to work towards such an amazing cause and do my part in the fight for clean water.