

SAF 2021 SUMMER INTERNSHIP ESSAYS

Audrey

**Long Island Progressive Coalition (LIPC)
Freeport Congregation**

My experience this past summer with the LIPC was one that taught me a lot about what it means to work towards meaningful change in line with UU principles. I attended several protests, press conferences and meetings with politicians on a variety of important topics. One act we fought for was the Clean Slate Act, which would clean ex-convicts' records after a certain period of time to end the cycle of perpetual punishment and allow people to re-enter society smoothly without the unfair lifelong barriers a criminal record brings, such as housing and work restrictions that can interfere with the lives of both that person and their community decades after completing a prison sentence. This act is in line with the 1st, 2nd, and 6th principles of Unitarian Universalism: the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity, and compassion in human relationships; and the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

We also fought for the For the People Act, which would protect and expand voting rights as well as reduce the influence of money and gerrymandering in politics. This is also in line with the 2nd and 6th principles, as well as the 5th principle; the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large. Another issue we worked on was fighting against a district bill to expand the rights of police officers as a protected class, which would restrict the rights of free speech against police brutality and put even peaceful protestors at risk of harassment charges. We succeeded in convincing the county executive to veto that bill before it was ratified, in line with the 2nd, 5th, and 6th principles.

Overall, working with LIPC this summer was an interesting experience that I learned a lot from, and I am very grateful for the SAF for allowing me to have this opportunity.

Benjamin

**South Nassau U.U. Congregation
The Mary Brennan INN (The INN)**

This summer, for the third consecutive year, I volunteered at The Mary Brennan INN in South Hempstead, Long Island, a soup kitchen directed under the not-for-profit agency known as The Interfaith Nutrition Network, commonly known as "The INN." The mission of The INN is to directly help to alleviate hunger and homelessness on Long Island, by serving guests of the public with their needs, such as providing food, shelter, showers, items, employment, and so much more.

This mission, and volunteering at the soup kitchen, directly aligns with my Unitarian Universalist values and our Principles, most notably the Sixth Principle, which is "*The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.*" There are so many things to do there on any given day, all of which can and does positively affect many people in our community. On some days when I come in, the managers have me cook hot meals.

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On other days, I could be making sandwiches, packing lunch bags, stocking the pantry, doing inventory, or even assisting donors with their donations. Regardless of what task(s) I am assigned for the day, everything I do and The INN does helps to make the hungry and homeless people in our neighborhoods, who are often turned away from and ignored, be more functioning members of our community and society.

I am very grateful for the Student Activity Fund for allowing me this terrific opportunity of volunteering here, and I highly recommend anyone who is thinking about doing so as well. I can't wait to go back!

Charlotte UUCSR Center for Environmental Education and Discovery

This past summer I interned for the Center for Environmental Education and Discovery (CEED), an organization devoted to fostering connection to nature through hands-on interaction with the natural world. I found participating in this organization quite fulfilling, particularly in light of the isolation from the outside world of the last year and a half. My work primarily consisted of maintaining the trails, clearing invasive species, and assisting in youth events. In doing so, I was exercising the seventh UU principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. I learned a great deal about local flora while I was volunteering and felt as though I was contributing to the maintenance of my local environment. The awareness of the climate catastrophe we are facing can erode awareness of the importance of small-scale effort and connection to your immediate environment, but I felt this summer helped me regain that knowledge. I am grateful to have had the chance to contribute to such an organization this summer.

Daniella UU Fellowship at Stony Brook Bethel Hobbs Community Farm

This was my third summer working at Hobbs Farm and I am so lucky to be able to return each year. I have been working with the same volunteer, Ali, for two years now. He is a great mentor and I always learn so much from him about farming, as well as civil engineering, which is my college major. Ali explains our tasks for the day, and we split the work between each other, harvesting, planting, and weeding.

This year, I was very actively thinking about the seventh principle, more than I have in past years, while gardening. I think that all UU principles are even more important now than ever, but working with the earth causes the seventh to be at the forefront of the mind. I definitely felt more connected to the interdependent web of life than I have in past years. Recently, I have been acutely aware of climate change and global warming and the effects they have on the planet. Although it may sound mundane, touching soil a few times a week made me feel more connected to the earth and more passionate about keeping it safe.

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I am always grateful to have a great community farm accessible to me where I can see my UU principles being put into action, and I will hopefully be back again next summer to visit and help out!

Danielle
Shelter Rock Congregation
NOSH at North Shore Soup Kitchen

Working at Nosh was an extremely enriching and eye-opening experience. For me, it highlighted the high socioeconomic disparities in a community just five minutes away from my own. One of the most fitting principles to my work, was “Justice, equity and compassion”. Delivering Nosh bags (non-perishable groceries), and helping with the adjoined food pantry, I quickly learned the importance of compassion. Helping and interacting with clients exposed me to more diverse and needy parts of the community. I was able to gain insight into a clients’ life and build compassion for their situation and others. Additionally, by facilitating food deliveries and creating a food pantry, Nosh strives to eliminate food insecurity, working towards holistic justice and equity for all.

Another principle that ties into my time at Nosh, is “improving the global community”. On a small scale, Nosh works to lessen food insecurity in the Long Island area. They contribute to a global push to eliminate food insecurity and famine. Food or the lack thereof leads to broader implications of class disparities. By guaranteeing that someone’s basic needs are met, one can go on to focus on education and more personal life goals. I believe a world with more education is a better world altogether and certainly improves the global community. As I wrap up my interning experience, I will continue to think critically about small ways I can help my community, that can translate on a global scale.

Fiona
Multicultural Solidarity on Long Island
Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock

Due to the pandemic, finding a job for the summer was very difficult for me. In some cases this may seem like a fallback, but instead it gave me the opportunity to become familiar with *Multicultural Solidarity on Long Island*.

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Their main focus is to represent Long Islanders of all religions, cultures, abilities and disabilities as well as support LGBTQIA. Even though they are located in Suffolk County, I was still able to work closely with the founder Joel Diamond through my computer and phone. During my work with Joel I have been able to educate myself further on the second Unitarian Universalist principle "Justice, equity and compassion in human relations." I feel that this principle describes the work I did better than the First principle, "the inherent worth and dignity of every person" as it is also about the connection of people. *Multicultural Solidarity on Long Island* brings all people together by providing Diversity Friendship and Listening Circles, as well as a growing community on their facebook page and a monthly newsletter. The work they do goes beyond education and creates real human connection between a diverse group of people (more than I have seen with any other group I am a part of). I am so grateful for the work I was able to do with Multicultural Solidarity and glad I was able to feel connected to my Unitarian Universalist faith through the SAF program.

Hannah

Walt Whitman Birthplace Org

Huntington UU

This past summer I volunteered at the Walt Whitman Birthplace, a nonprofit located in Huntington NY. This place puts off UU values by the use of the 3rd "we're free to learn together" and the 4th "to search for what is true." This place represents these principles because it's considered a historical site and we put forth knowledge and since I was a tour guide, I as well as the other tour guides educated the visitors that came to learn. This place puts forth the 4th principle as well because people came to learn the truth about who Walt Whitman was and what made him who he is. During this internship over the summer, I was a tour guide. As a tour guide, I led people around the informative area inside as well as the actual house that he was born in. I also took photos for the gift shop to update their current website. I had a very enjoyable experience volunteering over the summer through the SAF program. I am very grateful to have this opportunity.

Helen Mauro

Old Bethpage Restoration Village

Huntington UU

Spending the summer at Old Bethpage was an incredible experience, and I found that many of the 7 principles were reoccurring presences in my time there. Of course, the second principle is a must for any job that requires interacting with and hosting others. There were definitely a couple of times where I was tempted to snap at rude guests, but I was able to ground myself and be patient. Most of the time, they seemed to do the same, and any possible conflict was avoided. It also helped me get in touch with nature, and by association, the seventh principle. I looked forward to each weekend, where I would walk to work through peaceful fields, and spend my lunch breaks petting the sheep and listening to birds. At first I was very nervous to be so disconnected from technology, as having music or a podcast to listen to helps with my anxiety.

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But I was able to distract myself by catching frogs and listening to the breeze, and proved to myself that I was capable of managing my anxiety on my own. The third principle was also present in the more educational aspects of the position. Staff members and volunteers were not only teaching guests, but teaching each other about history, cooking, trades, and anything else we could find the time to talk about. On a particularly stormy day, a group of volunteers gathered in the schoolhouse and all shared different stories about myths, science, and pop culture. It was an environment of constant learning. While I usually enjoy volunteering, Bethpage felt especially important to me. I not only enjoyed my time but I learned a lot, and plan on returning when I visit home over school breaks.

Jasmine

Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock

Agency: Level Up Volleyball

This summer I had the wonderful opportunity to intern at Level Up Volleyball. It was nice to be a part of something new and different. My tasks as an intern consisted of making T-shirts, general office management and handling reservations. It was a great experience and I would easily recommend Level Up Volleyball to anyone looking to intern for a warm, inviting community.

There was one specific experience I had that made me rethink my UU values in a new perspective. One day, I sat in for one of the practices. Level Up caters to all ages and I was able to see everyone doing drills and practicing their bumps, sets and techniques at work. Everyone was so engaged in their activities, laughing and having fun. If someone missed the ball, or didn't hit it quite right, there was always another person helping them up, or giving them words of encouragement. It made me think about our 6th principle: the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all. With emphasis on "peace", Level Up executes this goal of community. We all have our outlets from the stressors of life. For many participants in the program, volleyball is their outlet – their peace. Level Up executes this goal of community through peace. Our 7th principle also came to mind: respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. The atmosphere at Level Up is very respectful and so accepting. It is truly a judgement-free environment, no matter what level you are.

Overall, I truly enjoyed my time at Level Up. I would definitely be an intern for them again, and would highly recommend this agency. This experience has helped me look at our principles in a new light and I'm grateful for the opportunity to do so.

Kayla

UU Congregation at Shelter Rock

Level Up Volleyball

I had the pleasure of working with Level Up Volleyball for my summer internship. Level Up Volleyball is a mentorship and an educational community program, that mentor's youth and adults in the game of volleyball. Part of their mission statement is to help players "level up" with emotional and mental support and physical fitness.

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They provide classes for all ages to enjoy the sport, while also learning fundamentals and advanced movements. They cater to all skill levels, and help participants overcome physical and mental blocks.

Since this organization is just starting, I helped with different areas in the agency. For example, I did my best to handle social media and take high-quality pictures to attract more people to participate in the agency. One of my other responsibilities were to make t-shirts for volleyball teams and help during volleyball tournaments for the community. The last tournament stuck with me the most. It felt so fulfilling to be there and to do whatever I could to be of any help.

During the tournament, it brought me back to the principles of Unitarian Universalism. The first principle, the inherent worth and dignity of every person, was one of the first things I remembered when seeing everyone participating. The second being, respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. I saw people of so many different backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures. No one was excluded, and everyone respected each other no matter what. There was even a level of appreciation and admiration for each other's skill sets.

Everyone was there to just enjoy volleyball with their team. It was such an encouraging and positive environment, and although I was in the background, I still had fun. There was no judgement or criticism on who should be there, and who should not. Everyone was welcome and deserving of playing. The experience of working with Level Up Volleyball was rewarding and enjoyable. I'm happy that I was a part of something that helps uplift and service people that come from all walks of life.

Kevin

**Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Central Nassau
Tourette Association of America**

Over the summer of 2021, I took an internship at the Tourette Association of America (TAA) in Bayside, New York. The organization's mission is to raise awareness for, foster social acceptance of, and educate professionals on Tourette Syndrome (TS), and to provide support to patients and their communities. I worked at the TAA's national headquarters, which coordinates a series of local chapters and support groups across the country, allocates grants for researchers, hosts a national conference, and more.

Specifically, I was tasked with creating a system that allows for communication and resource sharing between local support groups and chapters. This was a significant responsibility they trusted me with. In the process of creating this application, I learned how they operate, and I gave my coworkers tips, instructions, and other valuable information.

The TAA's mission is closely related to the first UU principle, "The inherent worth and dignity of every person." Unfortunately, Tourette Syndrome is merely a punchline to many, and TS patients frequently experience discrimination. A significant portion of the outreach done by the TAA and its chapters is to educate and correct misconceptions, which often lead to disrespect for TS patients, in addition to other ways of promoting the dignity of people with TS.

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At the beginning of my internship, I completed training, which educated me on these misconceptions, the basic science of TS, and generally how to understand and work with people with TS. Prior to this, I had myself thought some of these negative stereotypes to be true. This was eye-opening for me and set me on a path for success in my work at the organization. I am glad to have helped out with the organization and to have learned so much about Tourette Syndrome and the struggles that come with it.

Kira
Hobbs Farm
Freeport UU

During my internship over the summer I learned many important skills and was able to further develop my interpersonal connection to Unitarian Universalism. The Non-Profit I was able to work with this summer was Hobbs Farm located in Centereach. Hobbs Farm is a local, community based farm that grows and harvests vegetables, legumes, fruit, and other crops to give to food pantries for people in need. Everyone who works on the farm volunteers their time and energy to nourish the farm and keep it running and organized. My responsibilities as a younger volunteer were to plant seeds, water plants, harvest plants, keep track of seeds and label them, and bring a positive attitude to work. I genuinely enjoyed being a part of this organization and working with people who love to do good for the community. All of the volunteers were extremely helpful with training me and super friendly. I looked forward to being able to work and spend time with my fellow volunteers every day even though none of them were my age. Being able to be friends with people who were 2 or 3 times my age resonated with my UU self and the UU way of being accepting and open to everyone. Growing up in a UU congregation really shaped me to be able to have these kinds of relations and be able to be personable with all types and ages of people. I also was able to live through the 7th UU principle; Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. Working in nature with many plants helped connect my soul to nature and brought out my high respect for the earth. I loved to tend to the plants and watch them grow over the summer. The kind of labor I did on the farm when I volunteered was very hard and intense. All of the volunteers were out there for hours and hours on end in 90 degree weather on most days while also doing hard manual labor. This discomfort I endured taught me to appreciate having the privilege of being in an adjustable environment such as under a roof with air conditioning. I highly recommend this organization to anyone who is willing to do the work and wants to further develop their UU identity. Overall, this was a great experience with amazing people and I was so lucky to be able to give back to the community in such a hands-on way!

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Maya

UU Congregation at Shelter Rock

Center for Environmental Education and Discovery (CEED)

This summer, I had the privilege of working for CEED, an environmental education center located in Brookhaven. The grounds include over a mile of wooded trail, passing right next to a creek, as well as a lawn with several large flowerbeds. All this nature provided me an excellent opportunity to practice and really understand the 7th UU principle, respect for the interdependent web of life of which we are all a part.

Over the course of the summer I did many things for CEED, including a significant amount of cleaning, maintenance, and organizing inside Washington Lodge, the main headquarters of the organization. However, my largest and favorite project was implementing a program called “Buffer in a Bag”. Funded by New York state, this program gave us groups of native seedlings designed to act as a buffer along a shoreline, either to stop erosion or to promote native plant growth. The other intern, who happened to be my sister, and I were set the task of planting these seedlings in a plot of land along the creek. We were planting them to shade out the Phragmites, an invasive reed that has almost completely taken over the wetlands in Brookhaven, and replace them with native flora. The Phragmites could not be pulled up, as their roots stop the riverbed from eroding, so the first step was cutting the tall reeds down. It was an extremely difficult job, and my sister and I spent several hard days cutting before the planting could even begin. After the plot was cleared, we had to dig out enough Phragmite roots to plant the native flora, and then continue to care for those new plants. It was a months-long project.

Working on the “Buffer in a Bag” project allowed me to understand and practice the 7th principle in a concrete way. Even though it was on a small scale, with a plot of land that was likely under 40ft by 40ft, we were able to help the environment heal by bringing in new life that belongs there, rather than invasive species. I could enjoy the woods around me – bask in the shade of the trees, eat wild blueberries straight from the bush – then turn around and give back to that land. The giving back was not easy; it was hard labor under a hot sun, while being bitten by all manner of insects. Still it was worth it for the connection I felt to the world around me, and the accomplishment I felt when the job was completed.

I am so grateful for the opportunity I was given this summer. The Center for Environmental Education and Discovery is a wonderful place, and they taught me so much about the environment around me, in addition to how an organization is run. I will remember what I learned there for a long time to come.

Mina

SUNY Plattsburgh Community student farm

UU Stony Brook

This summer I had the wonderful opportunity to return to work at the SUNY Plattsburgh Community student farm, a local community student-led farm located on the campus of SUNY Plattsburgh.

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I found this organization to fall in line with my Unitarian Universalist principles, especially the seventh principle, "Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are all a part of". I found that both my work on the farm, harvesting and donating primarily, and also the aspect of giving back to my community, both really helped connect me to these principles.

The SUNY Plattsburgh Community student farm is a local farm that is led by students and other volunteers like community members. It is a rotational farm, meaning we try to maximize the use of our small space by rotating our crops. We do this so that we constantly have a wide variety of different types of fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers. The farm is dedicated to giving back to community members, through means of donating all of our produce to local organizations. These organizations include the community center, the interfaith food shelter, and a school for low income children. The farm also helps to serve as a green space where the community can gather, which is a great experience. People walking their dogs and paying sorts stop by and wander around, and we try to answer any questions they have. Other community members stop by and bring us donations of seed, flowers and sprouts and even sometimes food they've made us with food they harvested from the garden!

My work at the farm mainly consisted of doing farm work. A lot of the time this summer I was watering all the plants and plots, harvesting and donating from our abundant produce. I was also able to help answer questions people had when they stopped by the farm about our produce and mission statement. School groups would also come by and walk around, so being able to contribute to their education in this way was a good experience. It felt great knowing the work I was doing would be helping someone, and giving back to my small community, and that I was working with like minded people. People remarked that they had the opportunity to have fresh fruit for the first time in years when going to donate, so it was great knowing I was able to have this impact on people.

Working with this organization helped me connect to my Unitarian Universalist values, and principles again this summer. Especially during this time when going to fellowship services is not possible except over Zoom, and it's hard to have an in person connection to people in this way right now, this time at the farm was really special to me to be able to connect to my principles. In connection to the seventh principle especially, I found that working at the farm helped me gain a unique appreciation for the natural environment. Along with this I was able to connect and give back to the people in my community that serve as my personal interconnected web. Through working at the farm I was able to more deeply appreciate the impact we each have on our environment. Also the value of being able to give back to people in the community in a meaningful way such as providing food, especially during the time of Covid when it is so needed. This organization has been such a joy to work with again this summer! The people are wonderful, the farm is a wonderful natural place to be in, and it feels so good knowing the work you're doing is helping people.

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Miranda

**Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Shelter Rock
Friends of Garvies Point Museum and Preserve**

This summer was not my first time volunteering at the Friends of Garvies Point Preserve, and it won't be my last, as I gain an enriching, new experience every time I step foot onto the grounds. Through this organization, I was to assist in enriching every student's ability to learn about the environment we live in through different types of media such as mini lessons, arts and crafts and even walking through the preserve and pointing out the different aspects of living things. As I am studying to become a teacher, working with kids have always been a brightening moment of my life. Each student brings a different perspective to not only what we teach them, but to how they see the world as a whole.

This year, one student I worked with--let's call him Nate for privacy reasons--has been labeled as particularly "difficult" to work with. He came to us, as we were told that he was "kicked out" of a previous camp. Of course, hearing this, we welcomed him in, however, a bit apprehensive as we were given no context on what had happened. The first day with Nate was difficult; from going outside, to doing arts and crafts, to even sitting and watching a movie, there was always screaming and tossing of objects around the area we were in. As we were in a group setting, it was difficult for him and other kids to learn and have fun. This is where I'd imagine, the previous camp could have potentially "kicked" Nate out. Nevertheless, tomorrow was a new day and with that, came a new strategy. We realized Nate does well on his own; a group setting was hard for him. And every person has their own worth and dignity and deserves to be given this opportunity to learn (principle no.1). So, we decided that I would act as Nate's one on one. This, of course did not mean we would isolate him from the group, as we didn't want him to feel left out. More so, it was like he and I were buddies. Wherever he went, I went. If needed, I would pull him aside to quietly calm him down, and practice deep breaths. But all the kids (including Nate), would experience the same things, see the same animals on our nature walks, and practice the same crafts. In my college education classes, we have talked about things like this: one on ones. And we have crossed the debate whether this "special treatment" is fair for every student. And the fact of the matter is that it's all about equity. We were giving Nate the tools he needed to experience and learn the same things as the other students who were better self-regulated. All people deserve justice, equity and compassion (principle no. 2). With Nate, that meant he needed a buddy. He was able to explore on his own as well, make discoveries and continue to be proud of himself (I cheered him on too of course). He was able to realize we could learn and have fun, rather than being kicked out (principle no. 4).

During my time with Nate, there was another student, who judged him. A couple students actually, but this one in particular--we'll call him Sam for privacy--said some pretty mean words to him. Nate was told not to sit with the others. Rather than simply yelling or punishing Sam and the other students, I asked "why?" They were confused at first. But I said, "why can't Nate sit with you all?" Of course, they responded as 7-year-olds do with "because he's a loser, he's stupid, etc." But then I asked the same question: "Why? Why do you think that?" This led to a conversation about how the students have never seen Nate use his "smarts" during camp. But I've seen him make some remarkable discoveries about the

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environment we live in during our one-on-one time. So, I had Nate share what he told me, how birds have different flight patterns, minerals which are the ingredients to rocks, have various “hardnesses” (and that diamond is level 10), etc. So, I continued talking to the students to emphasize that Nate never was given a chance for him to feel comfortable sharing his knowledge. Sam and the others realized this, and they all sat together during movie time. Now this is a small, but significant example of the acceptance of one another and widening of perspectives in order to grow (principle no. 3). This also harps on principle no. 5, as we used a more democratic strategy to fix this problem, rather than a more legalistic approach.

We want all students to feel heard, to be seen. And this particular experience emphasized this ideology. Nate was able to realize his capabilities, as the students (including Sam) were able to also, resulting in a peaceful community and justice for all (principle no. 6). This also allowed the students to gain a wider perspective in the lens of other people, such as Nate. To not judge solely off of what they know and instead, be open to what they don’t know. And although we may not know everything about a person, every person deserves respect: respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part, says principle no. 7).

Sierra

UUCSR

Multicultural Solidarity

As I wrap up my second year interning with Multicultural Solidarity, I reflect on the power of this non-profit organization as well as it’s impact it has had on myself. Within the board’s incredible dedication and diversity, MCS strives to achieve an anti-racist community while fulfilling its continuous pledge of cultural connectedness.

Interning with this organization has been a true honor. Joel, my mentor, is extremely passionate about MCS, and quite frankly, his is contagious- I find myself looking forward to taking notes for the monthly board meetings, attending the Zoom Diversity Circles, and tending to the Facebook group.

Multicultural Solidarity directly works towards the 6th UU principle: “The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.” Through its popular monthly diversity circles, participants focus on creating a safe, comfortable environment where significant discussions (such as racism, stereotypes, privilege, etc) are confidential yet important.

It is needless to say that my experience with Multicultural Solidarity has kept me interested in pursuing a human-rights related career. This non-profit will always have a special place in my heart, as I organically learned the impact I wish to have on others as a human being.

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Sierra
UUCSR
Orkestai Farm

When I first visited Orkestai Farm on May 18th, 2021, I immediately knew it was a very unique place. Chickens running around freely, lush wildflowers in bloom, and fields of fruits and veggies welcomed me. I was already so grateful to have found an internship (not to mention, a farm on Long Island!) that related to one of my passions. Little did I know this experience would lead me to discovering an entirely new interest of mine.

Orkestai has a program called the “Organic Grower’s Course,” where students with learning differences come to the farm weekly and learn to organically farm, harvest, and care for the growing crops. I assisted many students, but I formed a very close relationship with one of the girls, Emma.

Mondays and Wednesdays were Emma’s days to come to the farm. She consistently greeted me with a smile on her face. She never complained, even when it was about 95 degrees in the field- she was simply just a happy person. As we fed the chickens, or pulled up turnips, Emma and I would talk about our shared hobby: music. She always wanted to hear about my cello, and I would tell her which pieces I was working on, my favorite composers, etc. When it was her turn, she would then tell me about her violin. We even realized that we were both in the same youth orchestra at one point!

Emma would come to the farm with her supervisor, Kaitlyn. I would carefully observe the way Kaitlyn and Emma interacted- they had a close bond. I was able to easily tell that Kaitlyn supported and helped Emma, and in hand Emma felt comfortable with her. Just from assisting Emma with some tasks at the farm felt rewarding- and I wanted to help more. I talked to Kaitlyn, who graciously opened up to me about her experience in social work, counseling, and the agency where she got paired to help Emma. I was so excited after this conversation, so I went home and registered for a Special Education course for the Fall semester, titled: Issues Affecting People with Disabilities.

When I think about my time at Orkestai, the second UU principle comes to mind: Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. My relationship with Emma included all three of these and more. She will always be a special person to me, as she helped me realize that I want to help others as my career. On my last day of interning, Emma and I celebrated by performing “The Stars and Stripes Forever” on our instruments. It was a wholesome closure that I will always cherish deeply.