

Employers define what they want in an intern

SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX



One of the best writers I ever worked with was a 17-year-old intern. She was a Lake Oswego high school senior staying with her aunt over a summer in suburban New York City, where I edited a newspaper. Olivia wrote more stories a week than full-time staff — and the material sparkled. No wonder she won a Northwest Excellence Award for high school journalism that year.

Employers from throughout the North Coast are hoping to find that sparkle in their interns, and companies including Martin Hospitality, Lum's Auto Center, Providence Seaside Hospital and Fort George Brewing came together in September at the South Campus of Clatsop Community College in Seaside to learn more.

"School district leaders were saying we want to engage with their industry partners, and our industry partners were saying they want to engage more with the school district," Kevin Leahy of Clatsop Economic Development Resources, host of the event said. "It was a gap everybody voiced."

Project goals

Myronda Schiding, a curriculum coordinator with the Northwest Regional Education Service District, said the district visited Yamhill County, where she began conversations about internship programs and grant opportunities.

The goal is to develop an internship program for the county, Schiding said. "As we kept talking about it, we realized an internship project that is comprehensive and community-based like the McMinnville model would thrive here," Schiding said.

She was referring to the McMinnville Works Internship Program, developed by Jody Christensen, executive director of McMinnville Economic Development Partnership.

Christensen was invited to Clatsop County by a coalition of CEDR, industry partners, local school districts and the Northwest Regional Education Service District to share her experience.

McMinnville Works

In McMinnville, businesses were shutting down production facilities, Christensen said.

"Businesses were flying out of our community," Christensen said. "They were not filling positions for eight months. It was a problem, so we knew we had to have a grow-our-own work approach."

One of the items industry partners wanted to explore was internships, she said. "They wanted us to take the mystery out of it, the complexity and simplify it. So they came on board and we developed the McMinnville Works Program."

The program is in its sixth year, she said.

"Every community is looking at ways of attracting and retaining home-grown talent, and to take a grow-your-own workforce approach is the right thing to do," Christensen said. "While



Jody Christensen, Myronda Schiding and Kevin Leahy at the internship workshop in Seaside.

industry wants longer connections with the school districts in the academic world, the academic world wants stronger connections with industry, so they are putting resources to making those things happen."

Programs defined

Employers from Cannon Beach, Warrenton, Seaside and Astoria participated in hands-on exercises to define the intern's role.

Should internship opportunities be paid or unpaid? Part-time or full-time? What are the expectations of employers?

Well-delineated career path opportunities help interns learn "people and parts," Christensen said.

Clatsop County has an extraordinary opportunity, Christensen added.

"You already have people who are engaged in the conversation, you have a comprehensive support system, you have an industry and employers who want this program to be successful, so that's all you need," she said. "Today what we are doing is uncovering some of the elements to help make that happen."

A pilot launch

Project descriptions, age ranges, paid or unpaid programs are yet to be determined in the crafting of the program.

"This is going to be Clatsop County's internship program," Christensen said. "They can develop it to be all different shapes and sizes. Let's create the basic foundations and then build from there."

Internships were originally designed for students age 18 and older, Leahy said, but the program was expanded to include younger students.

How will the program's success be judged?

"This is considered a pilot launch," Christensen said. "I wouldn't judge it on numbers, I would judge it on year two, who returns ... and then you can start having your benchmarks."

The goal is to develop a framework for an ongoing internship program in the county, she said. The program could be tailored to individual communities.

Both students and employers need to be part of the conversation, Christensen said.

"They'll help develop the program where they can," she said.

Internships could span businesses large and small.

"Every industry in your community, every sector should be able to play in this space. They should be able to have an internship."

What a company's internship program looks like in a year or five years could be very different, Christensen said.

Students graduating internship programs can share their experiences with future participants.

"We want multiple touch points with industry, with families, with community members with young children, so they know that this internship model is something that they can grow into," Schiding said. "Part of this is marketing to local industry, to families, to the communities and growing that local workforce."

Retaining talent

The September workshop was the first step in reaching out to employers, Leahy said.

An employer-led steering committee meets with CEDR's core planning group monthly, he said. The steering committee plans to attend an upcoming meeting of Clatsop County school superintendents to review funding needs for a countywide internship coordinator to move the program forward.

"We want to have more exposure," Leahy said. "We want to the kids to know about us."

The program may offer opportunities who may not do the traditional four-year college route, he said, and it may draw graduates to jobs in Clatsop County.

"As a small rural county, we want to keep all of our talent," Leahy said.

Port of Astoria Executive Director Jim Knight said he planned involvement in the program. He proposed tasks in the Port's environmental programs such as collecting samples or stormwater testing. Interns could perform administrative tasks, security or marketing roles. "It really runs the gamut," Knight said.

As for my journalism intern from Lake Oswego, 10 years later, what is she doing now? Not in journalism, alas, but her career path hasn't been too shabby. She graduated from Stanford University and is now an analyst at a prestigious investment bank in New York City.

I like to think I've always been good at spotting new talent!



SUBMITTED PHOTO

At the Seaside Cove.

Encounter at the Cove

I was walking my little dog, Lucy, down in the Cove when the dog struck up an acquaintance with another little dog.

The man holding the other dog's leash engaged me in conversation. At first it was about our dogs and their pedigrees. Mine's a purebred min pin; his pup, who was adorable, was part Chihuahua and part something else, maybe Pomeranian. He said his dog was about a year-and-a-half old; he got him as an itty-bitty thing. He said when he got the dog, it fit in the palm of his hand. "He was the biggest one in his litter and they gave me the pick of the litter," he said. "He also was the only one that was independent and willing to separate himself from the pack."

As the dogs continued sniffing each other and tangling their leashes, the man and I continued talking. He seemed to be in his 30s. He was neat and clean. Before very long he brought up work saying he'd been a job trainer at a national fast food chain. He told me he'd come to the Coast to work as a cook at Camp Rilea, but they'd recently cut him loose, saying there was less work this time of year. He said he had been out of work for two weeks and he was starting to worry.

I asked him if he liked this area and if he intended to stay. I guessed he was probably living in a pet-friendly month-to-month rental, but if he ran out of money, he would have to leave. Having come here myself a few years ago as a renter with pets, I know the difficulty of finding affordable housing period, let alone housing that accepts pets.

He told me he'd come to Oregon via Oklahoma. He was originally from the South. I could detect a slight Southern accent. I asked if he liked to surf and he said he had a wetsuit but the water here was too cold for him. He was also, I thought wisely, wary of the current. I asked him if he's spent a winter yet in Seaside and he said, "No, ma'am, but I hear it's rainy and cold and I'm a person more used to warm weather."

I mentioned I'd seen help wanted signs at McDonald's. I mentioned other local restaurants that might be looking for a cook. He said a lot of places were hiring but only part time and that he would have to work two or more jobs to get the hours he needed to sustain himself and his dog. As he spoke, I thought about all the people I'd met since moving here who are working two or more jobs that don't offer health insurance and how the line between who has enough and who doesn't grows thinner by the moment. This man wanted to work. He was sober and his clothes were clean. He had wheels. He wasn't looking for a handout.

I repeated the places where I'd seen help wanted signs. I suggested he read the classified ads in the Signal and The Daily Astorian, both of which he could find at the public library in Seaside. I suggested maybe he could get work in a hotel.

It was time to move on. I said goodbye and good luck. Directing his gaze to the cross that hangs around my neck, my new acquaintance said, very sincerely, "Thank you, ma'am. Please pray for me."

That was more than a week ago. I keep on walking in the Cove, but I haven't seen him or the dog since. This morning as I was hanging laundry on the line — and really what has been more glorious than this Indian summer weather? — I thought of the man and his dog. And yes, I did pray for him.

VIEW FROM
THE PORCH
EVE MARX



LETTERS

A yes vote protects property rights

I read Mayor Matt Brown's letter with sadness ("What Gearhart repeal means," The Daily Astorian, Sept. 22). Yes, I own a "political firm out of California." But my wife, Sharon, grew up in Portland, spent her summers in this area, and has been coming to Gearhart for 60 years. We have owned a house in Gearhart for 17 years now, been part of the Homeowner's Association, and support the volunteer fire department. We have paid more than \$200,000 in property taxes. We have known Matt for many years and consider him a friend, so this is not personal.

And yes, we use our home as a short-term rental — about 90 days a year. Why does the mayor make us out to be "outsiders"? What else isn't being said?

The mayor is not telling you that our measure ensures that all septic and safety measures that already apply to every home in Gearhart will apply to vacation rentals, as well. He didn't tell you that only 84 families will be able to rent their homes as a short-term rental — ever.

He didn't tell you that your property values are being affected. One day you may want to sell your home and the buyer could say, "I can afford to buy this property only if I can rent it out occasionally." But current law prevents a buyer from doing that. So in order to sell your house you lower the price ... a lot. Is this the mayor's plan to provide more affordable housing in Gearhart, by lowering your property values?

Vacation rentals have always been a part of Gearhart. They are not a threat to our "quiet residential

community," nor are they "high commercial use," as the mayor claims — they are unoccupied much of the year.

These are distortions, like claiming that my wife and I are "outsiders." The mayor has unfortunately proven that "the first casualty in war and politics is the truth."

David Townsend
Gearhart

Save Gearhart, vote no

Faced with a crisis in housing availability that affects the economy of the entire county, and advised by the county manager that "the 'vacation rental industry' will continue to grow for the foreseeable future" ("Clatsop County ready to tackle vacation rentals," The Daily Astorian, Sept. 26), the Clatsop

County Commission is choosing, paradoxically, not to limit, but merely to regulate, short-term rentals — with full knowledge that the conversion of a growing number of dwellings into vacation rentals is a major source of frustration, not just for prospective employees desperate for a place to buy or rent, but for their potential employers, as well.

The city of Gearhart would seem to have a better grasp of the connection between vacation rentals and the housing crisis. By enacting legislation aimed at keeping short-term rentals to a minimum, it has taken a major step toward alleviating the shortage of homes to buy or rent long-term. In Gearhart, existing vacation rentals, recognized as illegal commercial activities in residential zones, have been grandfathered (at least until they

are sold), while no new short-term rental conversions are permitted.

Over time, the recent explosion of short-term rentals will be reduced by attrition; prospective residents are already finding more Gearhart dwellings available to buy or rent on a long-term (over 30 days) basis. The permanent and seasonal community of Gearhart has been rescued from the onslaught of vacation rental agencies that use the Internet and direct mailings to attract customers; thanks to the 2016 city ordinance, the community will be able to preserve, after all, its traditional integrity and stability. Failing their attempt with the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals to find flaws in Gearhart's law upholding the zoning ordinance and limiting short-term rentals, absentee

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