By: Melissa Evers

Over the summer, I was fortunate enough to get an internship at Camp OVAL, a girl scout camp in Maplewood, New Jersey. With the help of career services, I was able to turn a job I have worked before into a meaningful academic internship that I will be able to use in my goal of becoming an art therapist.

I was given the role of a unit leader, which meant that I was in charge of the group I was leading as well as the staff. Due to this position, I was able to sharpen my leadership skills as well as plenty of other life skills like communication, time management and conflict resolution. I also led specific activities such as arts and crafts for both the staff and the campers as well.

During this internship, I was tasked with leading groups of girls from ages 4 to 14 in various activities, while observing their behaviors and how they act in certain situations such as acting towards each other and other counselors including myself. I was also given the art programs the weeks they were available to strengthen my art skills as well as observation skills while children were developing stories and making their own comics.

The highlight of my internship was in my second week of working with the camp; I did my best and eventually was awarded Counselor of the Week for that week. It felt extremely rewarding after all of my hard work in planning a schedule and working with a group of campers that I liked working with. The campers were extremely happy for me, which also made me very happy as well.

I noticed many differences between each age group as I observed their behaviors, and I was able to notice specific behaviors that differed between each age group of kids. For example, the children going into kindergarten and first grade behaved extremely differently from the kids going into sixth, seventh and eighth grade. I also was able to narrow down an age group I want to work with, especially since I am still trying to solidify what kind of age group I want to work with. Overall, this was a very eye opening experience as opposed to my first two years working at this camp due to the work I was focusing a lot of my time on during this summer.

I am thankful to Saint Elizabeth University for helping me be able to find an internship that would help me in both my psychology major and my art minor which will eventually tie together in my goals of being an art therapist. It also helped strengthen which age group I would want to work with, because therapists tend to take on plenty of different clients of different ages. Noticing the behaviors of girls has given me an idea of how they act in specific situations, and how they behave in a camp setting. I would also like to thank Mr. Joe Pastino for guiding me through the process of being able to do an academic internship. Lastly, I would especially like to thank my boss during this internship, Kate Grenci, as well as the GSHNJ Council for allowing me to work at a place I enjoy working at for another summer, as well as guiding me through everything on the camp side of things.