

Ernest Hooper, Metro Columnist  
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When Breonni Sawyer returns to King High for her senior year, she will be able to regale her fellow students with tales of waltzing through the monuments in Washington, D.C. Yet Sawyer's biggest trip this summer may be a personal journey of self-discovery.

As one of five Hillsborough County interns in Bank of America's Neighborhood Excellence Initiative program, Sawyer spent eight weeks working at the Brandon Boys & Girls Club. The Brandon resident helped guide Club Tech, a Tampa Bay Technology Forum Foundation program that teaches kids the ins and outs of starting a business.

Sawyer said the real breakthrough, however, came during her work with a student who has shown signs of autism.

"We had one autistic child, and I felt like he touched me because I worked with him one-on-one," said Sawyer, 17. "He listened to me and responded to me because I had the patience to deal with him.

"He knew I wasn't going to try and get him in trouble every time he does something. Working with him kind of opened my eyes to working with kids with disabilities."

Sawyer said the experience inspired her to redirect her college plans. A member of King High's International Baccalaureate program, she already had designs on majoring in public administration with a focus on children. Now she specifically wants to work with kids with disabilities such as autism.

"Working at the Boys and Girls Club, I've learned so much about myself and about kids and people in need," Sawyer said.

**Akil Craig, 18, echoed Sawyer's sentiments. The Jesuit High grad, who will attend the University of Miami and walk on the football team this fall, spent his internship at the Jackson Springs Boys & Girls Club. The experience left him with a greater appreciation for his mom and dad.**

**"My parents always say, 'You'll find out what it's like when you have your own kids,' " Craig explained. "(At the club), I learned what it's like to have 119 kids. It was crazy. I figured this is what my parents meant when they said 'You're not listening.'**

**"But it was just fun hanging out with the kids."**

Three other students participated in the program. Mallika Dubey, a recent Tampa Prep graduate, also interned at a Boys & Girls Club, while Tampa residents Amanda Bowen and Ting Cho Lau, rising seniors at Robinson High School, spent their eight weeks at the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center.

"I'm on the board at the performing arts center, and when I went to a board meeting Amanda and Ting were sitting right there," said Bill Goede, Bank of America market president for Hillsborough County. "That's the great thing about our partners. The interns aren't just making photo copies. They're getting involved."

The interns also traveled to Washington for a week-long Student Leadership Seminar. Not only did they see the sights, but they also enjoyed seminars on such topics as financial literacy, business etiquette and leadership.

"I learned a lot of things about myself and my leadership abilities and capabilities," Sawyer said. "I feel that I haven't been putting them to their best use. I feel like in my community, I can do so much more."

If you ask me, the journey is just starting for these five future leaders.

That's all I'm saying.