



CAMP UMOJA INTERN



INTRODUCTION

For my practicum project, I interned at **Camp Umoja**. Camp Umoja is a summer camp for children that live in the **public, subsidized housing developments of Baltimore City**. The purpose of the camp is the same as any other, with the goal of keeping children happy in the summer when they do not have school.

We as counselors taught them academics, gave swim lessons, provided arts and crafts activity time, free time in the gym with the athletic facility equipment, and free swim at the end of the day.

I wanted my practicum to outline the “global change” aspect of my scholars program, **Science and Global Change**. I believe with Camp Umoja, I did just that.



Pictured: Two counselors, Cate and Meg, during free swim time with their camper!

CHALLENGES

- Many of these kids would tell counselors or interns **details about their home lives**, some of which were **very difficult** to hear about and treat the child the same way
 - Part of our job is to **be able to handle this** and make camp the best experience for them as it can be
 - Some of the ways we can do that is by **paying extra attention** to them and playing with them, or even giving them **extra snacks** to take home with them if they want.



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Pictured: Me and my camper during my first year of volunteering at Umoja!

IMPACT

- Most of the children that come to camp have never had the opportunity to learn how to swim. **Swim lessons have become an integral aspect of Camp Umoja.**
 - Many children begin the week completely terrified of the pool, and by the end they are able to float on their backs and even tread water!
- Breakfast and lunch time** at camp are very important as well
- Providing small academic lessons incorporated into the day gave the children a more enriching experience than any other summer camp
- Not only does camp impact the lives of the kids, but each year I notice more and more counselors who keep coming back. We truly make a difference in the world at Camp Umoja.

SITE INFORMATION

Notre Dame Preparatory School
815 Hampton Lane, Towson, Maryland

Site Mission Statement: “I believe Camp Umoja exists to provide safe weekend and summer enrichment for children who live in Baltimore’s public housing. The “unity” aspect is key- Umoja brings together different populations in a still-deeply segregated city, with mentorship at the core of our volunteer model.” -
Steve Pomplon, Site Supervisor, 2026

MY ROLE

- I have been interning at Camp Umoja for 3 years, so my role has looked different throughout. My first year, I was a volunteer, which means I was matched up in a one-to-one relationship with a camper.
 - Every year he came back to camp he would run off the bus and give me a hug. He always remembered me, and I will always remember him.
- The next two years of my time at Umoja, I was given a paid position to **oversee camp and make sure things were running as smoothly as possible.**

My **site supervisor**, Steve Pomplon, trusted me and another seasoned intern to make sure that camp maintained its mission with each new year.



Pictured: Me during activity time helping a camper write on the white board!

FUTURE WORK

- I continue to search for ways to **serve my community** every day
- Since joining the University community, I have joined the **Best Buddies club**, where I have made friendships that I will never forget
- I would love to see the implementation of a program like Umoja at the University of Maryland in the future!

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