When I think about my internship with City Furniture, I think not only about the rapid growth of this company and the exciting opportunities that it presents, but also my personal and professional growth throughout the course of the internship. My internship began with a dynamic two weeks of training filled with skill practices, computer training, interactive lectures, and hands-on experience in the showrooms. Through this training, led by executives in the company, I learned invaluable selling techniques and gained an extensive knowledge of the products and services that I was selling that became extremely useful as I began working in the showroom.

My experience in the showroom was incredible. The managers and other associates were extremely helpful and encouraging as I adjusted to the real situations that presented themselves. Working with customers on an individual level proved to be challenging, frustrating at times, but overall, extremely rewarding. It seemed to be that the key to being successful in this position was not only knowing the product, but building relationships with customers. Through my internship at City Furniture, I was able to enhance my communication, interpersonal, and problem-solving skills. I also learned how to keep myself and others motivated and focused in a competitive working environment. Most importantly, I was able to learn and be a part of the passion and excitement exuded from those working in this rapidly growing company.

BURDINES-MACY'S OFFERS EXPOSURE TO BUYING AND PLANNING

By Kira Sumner

Throughout my internship with Burdines-Macy*s, I have been exposed to the buying and planning offices. At the corporate headquarters, in the heart of downtown Miami, lives a strong company culture. The people are very young and vibrant, willing to extend a hand when needed. I chose an internship with Burdines-Macy*s because it was the avenue to exceptional education. The human resource department works extremely hard at continually creating the best programs and classes to offer. This company truly believes in the number one asset they own is their employees. Every Fortune 500 Company has annual goals, and the best one here is “The Best Place to Work in...”
SHOE LOVE IS TRUE LOVE FOR TWO "FAMOUS" INTERNS

by Bella Slavin and Jessica Fandre

“Look at those! Do you think she found ‘em at Famous?” Wherever we go, we can’t help but look at people’s shoes. That is the nature of the shoe industry. After our summer internship at the Corporate Headquarters of Famous Footwear, we have developed a passion for shoes!

As we learned how a 900+ store retail organization operates from the top down, they made our experience truly enjoyable. We were able to see how the company’s long-term goals drive everyday business decisions as we rotated through each functional area. We traveled with the Director of Visual Merchandising to understand his vision for the new store look surrounding a “chocolate and cherry” color scheme. The VP of Marketing showed us videos of focus groups that helped the company discover the target customer’s expectations. We saw how the buying team is focused on selecting the right shoes for her taste. We reviewed their travels to Europe where they shopped boutiques for the latest trends, giving them inspiration for the next season. Vendor meetings gave us a preview of the hottest looks for Fall 2004.

Famous Footwear has not been afraid to reinvent itself, and is moving forward with a balance of enthusiasm and discipline. We were excited to be a part of a new effort surrounding their outlet channel. By partnering with each department and reviewing market research, we developed a proposal on how to increase sales in this channel. Our assignment was challenging, but rewarding when we presented our ideas to the leadership team.

The President of Famous Footwear met with us to share his approach to heading the company. He understands that people are the company’s most important asset. He leads by giving direction, but allows freedom on how to get there. Famous Footwear believes that if people have potential but allows freedom on how to get there. Famous Footwear believes that if people have potential and the right attitude, their growth opportunities are limitless.

At Famous Footwear, it’s not a job to sell shoes, it’s a passion!

BURDINES continued

Retail. This at hand, Burdines-Macy’s implements finest business practices to best achieve its goals. One strategy deployed is having a monthly meeting for senior management to determine results against the annual goals, and decide how to improve the workplace.

As a summer merchant intern, I was exposed to the job responsibilities of a buyer and planner. While in the buying office, I was responsible for learning the computer systems. I used these systems to track shipping, update daily sales, check markdowns, enter purchase orders, and initiate price changes. Moreover, I had to speak in front of the division at several Best-Seller meetings, which gave me a broad overview of the business and trends. In the planning office, I developed “distros” (distribution) sheets to help the planner allocate units. I communicated with the vendors on the specificity of location issues and developed the prep worksheets for market. Market happens four times a year, so this is when a buyer and planner go to New York to buy the latest lines. The last week of the internship, all the interns had to present their own business driving projects in front of Tim Adams, the CEO, and other senior management.

I was extremely happy about the decision to spend my summer with this wonderful company. If you are even slightly interested in retail, take the time to research Burdines-Macy’s. This internship has given me the skills needed to begin a dynamic career in retail.
During my internship at Save-A-Lot, I learned so much about management skills. I learned everything from balancing tills correctly, time management, safety issues with large pallet displays, merchandising products around the store, target locations in the store, ordering products, scheduling and most importantly how to communicate effectively with people of all ages and backgrounds.

Management is centered on people and any hardworking hands-on individual with the enthusiasm to motivate others will be extremely successful. Going into my internship at Save-A-Lot, I knew I would learn new things and how to approach situations at different angles, but what I did not realize was how well employees work together as a team. This was the forefront of my education growing up – to find a company that values teamwork, knowing how much more productive day to day they can be with it, made me feel great as a new employee.

The most exciting part of my internship was actually getting to merchandise products around the store. I got a chance to observe several customers to see where they actually purchase from the most. It is such a great feeling to accomplish a task, then look back on the project and realize how outstanding everything looks and sometimes may be what you need to change or get better at. In addition, I enjoyed visiting the corporate office in St. Louis, Missouri. Several managers from around the country got together to discuss and educate themselves about management issues. Not only was I educated on management issues during this time, I also met people who were actually caring individuals and from that moment on I realized how important Save-A-Lot values having excellent people running their stores.

Before I even began my interview at Wal-Mart, I learned from meeting my future manager that independent thinking would be highly stressed. He indicated that nothing would be forced or pushed on me and that every intern would have the same opportunities available. How I chose to utilize them would be entirely up to me.

My internship was structured by a ten week outline broken down into three parts; the first two weeks focused on People, weeks three through six centered around Operations, and the final four weeks pertained to Merchandising.

The People section mainly involved shadowing the store's personnel manager which led me through the entire process of coordinating both future and existing associates. During that time I learned how to create and manage associate schedules as well as review employment applications for possible interviews. Following that, I was able to conduct actual interviews after running the applicant's background check.

My Operations sections outlined my involvement with various departments of the store as front end cashiers. In addition, I spent two days as a Customer Service Manager assisting the front end when problems such as change shortages or merchandise returns arose. During our stockroom operations rotation I participated in unloading warehouse trucks and checking in vendors using a scanner.

Throughout the entire experience all interns were required to read Sam Walton's “Made in America” in which he tells the story of his first retail venture. His drive that resulted from business failures is inspiring and through his book it is easy to see that Wal-Mart is still moving in the same direction as his corporation always has; Everyday Low Prices and Satisfaction Guaranteed.

On each associate's name badge is printed “Our People Make A Difference.” This is reflected in everything I was exposed to during my internship with Wal-Mart. From our highly energized morning meetings with the “Wal-Mart Cheer” to our Open Door policy, the most important lesson learned here is to respect the individual.
From Tiki Huts to Palm trees, working for Bealls has been as wonderful as a summer breeze. I knew the instant I met my interviewer that this was the company I wanted to intern with. Their strong commitment to customer service and employee relations, along with the fast-paced environment, provided a fun opportunity to learn about retailing. Not only was I given the chance to work in one of the stores day to day, I also traveled to other stores and visited their corporate offices frequently. On one of these corporate excursions, the Bealls interns were given a new challenge, our corporate project – the Coastal Home Store – Bealls' new concept store.

Coastal Home by Bealls was developed out of their successful home department. After the introduction of their Palm Island collections, Bealls knew they had found an untouched market for Florida home décor. Bealls expanded their merchandise to include furniture and other décor to appeal to the Florida lifestyle. The bright colors and sophisticated Florida style are enjoyed by tourists, seasonal residents and Florida natives. The challenge lies in marketing this new concept.

Bealls interns were given the challenge to analyze Coastal Home’s merchandise mix, operational plans, and its marketing strategies. With three stores in Naples, Osprey, and Melbourne already in progress and interns spread all over Florida, it took some coordination to accomplish the project. Each of us split into teams to work on one of the three objectives. We developed a good merchandise mix plan by removing some elements that we felt were not uniquely Florida and adding some new ideas. We found new ways around overstock and developed operational standards for each store to follow. We also came up with new promotional and marketing ideas to get the Coastal Home concept acknowledged.

This internship has given me not only the insight and skills needed to run and manage a Bealls store, but it has given me the ability to analyze and articulate a concept into a practice. Working for Bealls has made my summer very exciting. Every morning I woke up looking forward to what the day might bring.

Over the summer, I worked as a management intern at a J.C. Penney store in Brandon, Florida. I worked in the Women’s Department and developed valuable skills that I know I can apply anywhere. During the ten week program, I studied human resources, how to read, analyze, and respond to sales reports, loss prevention, pricing, the importance of visual merchandising, and so much more. While the program is very structured and intense, I enjoyed it because it allows for creativity when working on projects and is heavily based on what you bring into the program.

During the course of my internship, I really felt like I was a part of their management team and was encouraged to help lead in my area of responsibility. In a short amount of time, I attended and participated in many of the management meetings, I helped set the sales floor to the Company guidelines, and I helped to promote the Company philosophy of providing superior customer service.
What could be better than spending a summer working in New York City? How about working in the World's Largest Department Store, Macy's East, with their Merchant Internship Program. We had the opportunity to spend our days working for one of the most prestigious retail companies in the world, while spending the evenings enjoying the finest things New York City has to offer.

Macy’s provided us with a ten-week training program that is similar to the training that takes place for their assistant buyers. We were taught using a mix of classroom training, buying office exposure, planning office exposure, field trips to the Jersey City Lifestyle Store, and a picnic in Central Park, to add a little fun to our hard working days.

We each gained a great deal in terms of our knowledge of the business and of our potential future job positions as the weeks progressed. We were given the opportunity to work closely with a buying team consisting of an assistant buyer, an associate buyer, a buyer, Divisional Merchandising Manager and the General Merchandising Manager as well as other executive management in Macy’s East, including Ron Klein, chairman of Macy’s East.

We were able to learn hands-on and be involved in almost every aspect of the day-to-day activities concerning the buying office. We ran Monday morning reports, met with advertisers to work on the direct mailers, developed vendor relations, and interpreted and processed our department’s facts and figures.

At the conclusion of the internship we were evaluated based on a group project about developing a new department for Macy’s. This involved a deep understanding of the business and knowledge that we had acquired over the past ten weeks. Macy’s has left each one of us with a great appreciation for the retail industry. The company has allowed us to grow into better businesswomen and ultimately becoming better retailers. Macy’s truly is a “way to shop!”

This summer I joined one of the world’s most successful corporations: Walgreens. Intimidating? Yes, quite. Amazing? Absolutely. After several stressful interviews, I was lucky enough to be offered a Retail Management Internship with Walgreens. I was enthused knowing that I would be joining such an amazing team. From school and personal encounters, I knew it was a strong corporation with flawless ethics and a compelling solidarity. After living the Walgreens experience, my opinion of the retail pharmacy chain has only soared higher.

I was a bit nervous when I entered the organized, clean store for my first day. As energized as I was about the position, I also realized that I would be given a great deal of responsibility in the store and that scared me! My fears quickly faded and my confidence rapidly grew. When placed in such an encouraging and open environment, it’s difficult to stay anxious for long. I learned so much this summer ranging from leadership training to handling enormous amounts of cash. The managers trusted me with the keys to the register and safe and allowed me to catch customer calls – I felt like a real assistant manager. My favorite part of the internship was definitely helping customers on the floor. Walgreens’ customers are the best! There is nothing more rewarding than the praise of a grateful shopper. Of course, the internship wasn’t always happy greetings of appreciation. I made mistakes, and I learned from them. My managers and the staff were very patient (especially when I struggled with opening the pharmacy door)! My manager was very open to answering my questions and truly cared about my success within the internship. The encouragement and advice I was given will stay with me forever.

During the internship I answered many questions about myself and where I want to be after graduation. Although I am still deciding on an exact career path, I know one thing for certain: the experience I gained this summer will definitely help guide me in the future. So my advice to up and coming interns is to be patient, determined, and positive!

As for my final impression of Walgreens, I can simply say it’s in the business of making the best better.
If you are looking for a company that provides you with great opportunity for growth, respects and rewards you and prides itself in providing the best for their customers, then you better be at Nordstrom.

Nordstrom is exceptional in the excellent service they provide their customers and employees. It feels like a family environment in the workplace. Their means of showing customer appreciation is second to none from the common practice of sending thank you cards to the customers, to providing excellent customer service through their no return policy to going out of their way to make sure that every shopping visit is an experience you will not forget, Nordstrom truly exemplifies the epitome of customer service.

I went through intensive training that included orientation and classes to educate me about the company's policies and culture. I was assigned to a selling department and worked with the department manager, learning about product knowledge, scheduling, how to read reports, what it takes to drive the business, merchandising the floor and tracking volume and sales. With all the knowledge I gained, I was trained to assume the role of a manager and was assigned many responsibilities that the job description entails. I also had the opportunity to work in the different support departments which include human resources, visual merchandise, customer service, communications, store information, loss prevention, and alterations. By working in these departments, I was able to appreciate how important the support team was to the daily function of the store.

The interns ran a mini-department called the “poncho shop.” We made up the schematics of the department, the scheduling, sales promotions, and tracking the results of the business. The “poncho shop” was an invaluable learning experience because we were challenged with running a department independent of managers. The project was a success and we ended up selling 500 ponchos and making over $30,000 within two weeks!

Working at Nordstrom was truly a wonderful experience. I was able to see the retail industry in another light and all the opportunities for growth it has to offer. One of the most important things I learned was the value of customer service. If you give your customer the best you can, you will build a loyal customer base that will keep you business growing stronger and stronger.

Resolving customer problems, settling employee disputes, properly setting merchandise and handling unpredictable daily agendas are just a few components involved in the retail industry. This summer was an excellent learning experience where I daily faced new challenges. Although my past experiences with retail were filled with professional knowledge, I now have a completely different outlook of retail from a manager’s perspective. I also have respect and appreciation for what it takes to successfully run an Office Depot store.

I began my internship with exposure to basic training on the company’s values and their emphasis on providing fanatical customer service. Once I became familiarized with the store merchandise and the services they provided, I began taking on the roles and responsibilities of a manager. I found that the hardest part of being a manager is that there is no rulebook with a detailed explanation of how to solve the unpredictable dilemmas that managers face. With observation as well as trial and error, I learned how to find the best solution to please the customer as well as continue the success of such a great company.

Within my ten week experience I was involved in a variety of projects. I participated in the technology remerchandising where I adjusted to working overnight shifts. Also, I was involved in projects with the operational and merchandising manager. I completed my internship with a project involving the back to school promotion and the stores within our district. Not only did I enjoy the responsibility, but also appreciated how eager each employee of the company was to help alleviate any problems I encountered. I now am fascinated by the retail industry and am most intrigued by the intense competition between retailers. I can't stress enough how beneficial this experience has been to me and how much more prepared I am to take on the challenges of retail business.
When seeking Southern hospitality and invaluable experience for the summer, I went to a little place called Atlanta, Georgia. There I found an amazing internship opportunity at a steadily growing recruiting and research firm called the Grapevine Group. Fondly termed “Grapevine,” the company recruits for the pharmaceutical and retail industries, among many others. I was immediately included in weekly work-in-progress meetings, project updates, and important business decisions. My supervisor guided me through two hires for one of our clients. I completed all of the resume selections, pre-screenings, and preliminary interviews. I also worked closely with our client’s Human Resource departments to schedule face-to-face interviews. It is an accomplished feeling to know that in one summer as an intern I helped many people find exciting new careers. Since Grapevine is still growing and looking for expansion in other markets, I was also responsible for marketing research on how we could stimulate business by identifying what companies needed our assistance. Though Grapevine is a smaller firm with only about 50 employees, they have big ambitions. I worked daily with the very visible CEO and Vice President. They are focused enough to see the company’s potential and are continuously motivating their employees to work together for the greater good of Grapevine.

SEE THE HUMAN RESOURCE EXPERIENCE WITH THE GRAPEVINE GROUP
by Michelle Meyer

When seeking Southern hospitality and invaluable experience for the summer, I went to a little place called Atlanta, Georgia. There I found an amazing internship opportunity at a steadily growing recruiting and research firm called the Grapevine Group. Fondly termed “Grapevine,” the company recruits for the pharmaceutical and retail industries, among many others. I was immediately included in weekly work-in-progress meetings, project updates, and important business decisions. My supervisor guided me through two hires for one of our clients. I completed all of the resume selections, pre-screenings, and preliminary interviews. I also worked closely with our client’s Human Resource departments to schedule face-to-face interviews. It is an accomplished feeling to know that in one summer as an intern I helped many people find exciting new careers. Since Grapevine is still growing and looking for expansion in other markets, I was also responsible for marketing research on how we could stimulate business by identifying what companies needed our assistance. Though Grapevine is a smaller firm with only about 50 employees, they have big ambitions. I worked daily with the very visible CEO and Vice President. They are focused enough to see the company’s potential and are continuously motivating their employees to work together for the greater good of Grapevine.

THE J.C. PENNEY EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE EYES OF A CORPORATE INTERN
by Daniel Donovan

During my time at J.C. Penney, I went through the Procurement Process and got a deeper understanding of how it works. This included seeing different options within the procurement process such as the use of online auctions, face to face negotiations, and bid packets.

My project was to bid out janitorial services for fifteen of our Store Support Centers and Catalog Logistic Centers utilizing the Procurement Process Wheel. The Procurement Process Wheel consists of ten steps designed to be used as a guide through the course of a project. During my internship, I was able to complete five of these ten steps. This entailed contacting internal clients, current suppliers, and potential national suppliers. Next, after all of the phone calls, emails and faxes had been completed and the information gathered I began compiling the bid packet. Finally, this packet was sent to all suppliers in hopes of leveraging company spending. In addition to my main project I was given several smaller projects to help out the department, this involved working on CCTV repairs, plywood for the Custom Decorating department, and TV/DVD combos for stores.

Aside from my projects I was allowed to take tours of various facilities and departments to understand what different departments do and how it related to my department. This led to a clearer picture of the company’s overall operations. I was also allowed to speak with heads of various departments to see if I would potentially find working in that department more enjoyable.

During my internship I was able to contribute to the company while taking in enormous amounts of information. This allowed me to expand my thinking beyond what has been taught in the classroom. J.C. Penney took the time to educate and foster growth while I was learning about operations and gave continuous encouragement along the way.
A TEAM EFFORT AT SEARS
by John Pan and Erika Simon

Just imagine: You are walking through a department store looking for an item you saw in this week's ad. You find that the item is exactly where it should be, has the correct price tag, and is in stock and ready to go. A smiling face awaits you at the checkout counter, and you leave the store satisfied. This level of service and convenience is what we have come to expect from big name retailers such as Sears. Sometimes, customers take this service for granted. I know we did. However, after our internship with Sears in Ocala, FL, we realized that there are many hardworking people that work on the sales floor and behind the scenes to make the shopping experience as pleasant and convenient for customers as possible.

The store manager, Allen Crabtree, who we have come to know not just as our manager but also as our mentor, facilitated our 12-week internship with Sears. Our rotations in the store consisted of selling areas such as soft-lines and hard-lines, along with non-selling areas such as in-store marketing and operations. Each of the department managers fully involved us in hiring and coaching associates, deciphering reports to find additional opportunity dollars, and making sure that the sales floor is “ready-all-day.” We worked closely with associates in each department as they performed their everyday duties. We helped unload trucks, implemented marketing strategies, and answered calls of customers who needed assistance with the merchandise customer assist team. All the concepts that we learned in our business courses were finally applied as we sat in on the weekly staff meetings, in which managers discussed sales and profit strategies as well as upcoming events.

Halfway through our internship, Sears flew us up to the company home office in Hoffman Estates, IL for a 3-day conference. From the moment we stepped off of the plane, we were treated like executives. From the limo ride out of the airport to the catered meals we ate everyday, we felt like superstars. At the conference, the interns participated in team-building activities as well as formal leadership evaluations. The chairman and CEO of Sears, Alan Lacy, addressed the interns, and afterwards, he answered some of the questions that we had. When we returned to the store, we had a better understanding of the company’s vision for the future.

This internship has surpassed our expectations by far, and it gave us a great in-depth and hands-on feel of what it’s like to be a retail manager. We learned quickly that, in retail, you never know what to expect from day to day. This internship experience has taught us to think on our feet and embrace change. This wonderful experience would not have been possible without the help of the management team of Sears in Ocala and the college recruitment team in Hoffman Estates. The next time you have a great shopping experience in a department store, make sure you thank the hardworking managers and associates that make that experience possible.