TRAINING AT PETSMART IS ABOVE PAR

By: Lily Kender

My internship at PetSmart was very beneficial to my future. I learned a variety of skills that have prepared me for a successful career in retail. I was able to work with an innovative company whose view on customer service is above retail standards. The amount of training to become a qualified employee was extensive. PetSmart wants each employee to be fully knowledgeable of their products in order to provide superior service to all of their customers. The most rewarding part of my job was building successful relationships with customers. By providing helpful and accurate information to each customer, I was able to gain their trust and their business.

As a manager at PetSmart, you must be trained in each department, not only in each pet department but also in grooming and pet training. In the beginning of my internship, I learned in-depth information for all of the products we sold for each pet. For instance, I compared the habitats of several kinds of fish and also which fish could or could not live together. There was a lot to learn since PetSmart carries a wide variety of fish. Cross-training in each department was very valuable to me since it allowed me to solve any customer service problem that may have arisen during my internship.

OUR UNFORGETTABLE SUMMER WITH BEALLS

By: Shar’Day Gregory and Nicole Vega

My name is Shar’Day Gregory and I am a senior majoring in advertising. This summer I had the wonderful opportunity to intern with BEALLS Department Stores at their corporate headquarters in Bradenton, Florida. From the first step in the main door of the lobby through my whole twelve weeks, I learned so much more than I ever thought I could. I worked in the Advertising Media Buying and Planning department where I was treated with the utmost respect and as a promising individual. My supervisor Melissa Niewold, the Media Manager made me feel right at home.

The first two weeks of my internship, I had the chance to sit with at least one person within each division of the advertising department and was able to shadow them. I sat with a newspaper, radio, and television media buyer, an art director, the creative director, a copywriter, the promotions director, a website analyst, a website designer, a creative designer and so many others. I even got to attend an actual photo shoot where I sat behind the scenes, saw the entire process, and even helped pick out photos to be used for an ad event. It was so neat to see how an advertising insert goes through the transition of actually being printed and placed into the newspaper.

My individual project was to research online media and present my findings to the President, VP of
“IT’S ALL INSIDE”
By: Karina Marulanda

Karina Marulanda was one of 13 interns selected from Universities across the nation to experience an internship at JCPenney Headquarters.

This summer I interned at JCPenney’s corporate office in Plano, TX. I truly enjoyed this experience as it gave me a great insight into the retail industry. I worked in the Procurement department and learned about the sourcing of not-for-resale items utilized by the company. In addition, I was given the opportunity to learn about the JCPenney Company in its entirety through the

“WINNING TOGETHER Wednesday” program designed to expose interns to all aspects of the company. Each week we focused on one facet of the company, from Logistics to Branding, and everything in between. I, along with the twelve other Home Office interns, met top executives of the company and was even lucky enough to have breakfast with Mike Ullman, JCPenney CEO and Ken Hicks, Chief Merchandising Officer, just to name a few. My internship was a truly eye-opening experience. Retail is very versatile and encompasses many of my interests. I have always been interested in the retail industry but my experience this summer solidified for me the fact that I would like to work in this exciting industry.

THE GRAPEVINE GROUP: AN EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME!
By: Jazmin D. Crayton

To learn the particulars of retail recruiting, marketing towards retailers, and the operations of a small business, I chose to intern with a great company, The Grapevine Group. The Grapevine Group is an ambitious executive search firm located in Atlanta, Georgia. This company specializes in recruiting for retailers and pharmaceutical companies. They have an array of divisions within the company which gave me a diverse experience. For the first five weeks of the program, I learned what it takes to successfully recruit for a retailer. I learned how to source resumes, select resumes, check references and screen potential candidates. These skills allowed me to place my very first candidate with one of Grapevine’s retail clients. The last five weeks of my internship was tailored to my specific interest in marketing. This opportunity taught me how to market towards retail clients. I worked on many projects such as learning and operating a new software, creating a start-up newsletter, sending out company advertisements, conducting marketing research and much more. Grapevine really listens and support their clients...as well as their students! If you are looking for an opportunity to make a difference, learn a tremendous amount of valuable “out of classroom” information and meet great people, then make sure you talk with The Grapevine Group!
Live from New York… it’s Summer with Walgreen’s! And now, our host… all the way from sunny Florida, it’s Kevin Bacon!! All theatrics aside, when I went looking for summer work, I wanted real management experience with a leading company in New York City. One of Walgreen’s recruiters made me realize how much I admired the company growing up and sold me on the idea of working for the Walgreens Company this summer. It turned out to be one of the best experiences I’ve had, and it dramatically steered my career path towards the field of Retail Management.

I worked for a very unusual Walgreen’s store in a business hub of Manhattan. Our store had up to 2,500 customers a day. It wouldn’t be uncommon to see two or three people shopping in every single aisle. One of the things I learned quickly is you have to cater your product mix and services to your market. Since we were in a very densely populated, all pedestrian traffic, young professional area, we catered our product offering by having lots of quick snack and drink items. We had to cut items like toys and beach supplies that didn’t sell in an urban area.

Working alongside the management team, I made daily decisions with regard to keeping our shelves stocked, merchandising our products, and taking care of our customers. I also had to keep track of and direct our store’s support staff. I made sure they took their breaks and made sure they got their work done. I attended meetings with our Regional Vice President and District Managers, as well as toured a distribution center in New Jersey. I completed special projects like competitive shops where I compared prices with our local competitors.

As a senior economics major and leadership minor, I have always held myself to the highest academic standards achieving a 3.8 G.P.A. I plan to work part time with Walgreen’s during my last year and I am seriously considering taking an offer to work for Walgreen’s full time after graduation. I plan on getting a Masters of Business Administration after a few years in the workforce. I also plan on being a Store Manager by 25 and a district manager by 33. I hope to be a senior executive for a Fortune 250 firm by 45. One day, I hope to look back and measure my success not by the dollars I earned, but by the number of people I was able to promote and the number of important events in my children’s lives that I didn’t have to miss.

BUILD-A-BEAR WORKSHOP

By: Stacy-Ann Henry

I went to the Spring 2006 Career Fair with one major focus, attaining the Build-A-Bear internship. Despite being a first year student, I was determined to impress the recruiters. My interest in this company is due to the fact that they highly value leadership and innovation in the workplace. Most importantly, I was anxious to learn what Build-A-Bear Workshop does to keep its reputation of great customer service and high guest satisfaction. By the end of my internship, I had experienced many positive aspects of retailing that are sometimes overlooked.

I began by learning the ‘Art of Bear Building.’ Bear builders don’t just stuff bears as many may assume. They create a unique experience for each guest by encouraging creativity, inspiring laughter, and even doing a heart ceremony to “bring the bear to life.” Once I mastered this art, I began learning how to be ‘A Manager’ vs. ‘The Manager.’ This may seem simple but it actually requires a serious evaluation of distinguishing between doing something because you have to vs. doing something because you love it and have the best interest of the company in mind. For instance, I can coach employees because I’m asked to as a job requirement or I can coach employees because I want guests to have the best experience possible.

In addition, I was taught how to “wear many hats” without getting overwhelmed. Build-A-Bear Managers are trained to cope with change and handle management responsibilities in an orderly manner. At the end of my internship, as a supplementary incentive, the District Bear Leader sent me to Palm Beach Gardens where I got to assist in training upcoming managers for a new store opening. I learned so much in eleven weeks! I started missing the internship before it was even over! When I turned in my final project on improving Build-A-Bear Parties, I felt a great sense of satisfaction. The very moment I said my goodbyes, I knew I was walking away with an unforgettable, irreplaceable experience.
My internship with NPD was a taste of working in the real world. NPD is a research organization that helps retailers improve their merchandising and promotion activities. I worked on various projects throughout the summer. Most mornings I would run PowerView (where NPD stores their POS and Consumer Data) for Lord & Taylor or I would run Solution Folders (another program that stores POS and Consumer Data) for Federated. This really gave me an opportunity to feel like I was not an intern, but I was working with important data for important retailers as part of the full time research team! My co-workers valued me which made me very comfortable in this new environment. I obtained intense one-on-one training and had the support of the team when I needed it throughout the summer when I had questions.

Not only was I given the opportunity to work with PowerView and Solution folders, two proprietary programs, I was able to participate in various training sessions that NPD offered. Here, I saw how NPD cares about their employees. One training session I attended was about selling. This two day training session, showed how valuable psychology is when selling a product. It helped me understand how people should sell and it also taught me how to apply these new skills to my everyday life.

My final assignment, obtaining POS data and consumer data for Lord & Taylor, gave me the opportunity to act as an account manager. Upon completion, I presented this project to the senior account manager who used the data and the slides that I created in her final presentation to Lord & Taylor.

My internship at The NPD Group enhanced my knowledge of market research. It gave me a chance to work with retailer’s information without working with the actual retailer. I gained insight in regard to how retailers gather information which is used to help them see where they can have potential growth opportunity.

The Macy's Merchant Development Internship gave us the opportunity to see first hand the daily aspects of a buyer in America's Department Store. As an intern, we were exposed to vendor markets, advertising meetings, planning and operations. During our 10 weeks, we went to vendor showrooms to see the new merchandise for the upcoming seasons. Macy’s gave us extensive training in their Federated applications to help track sale trends, best sellers and by location sell throughs. As well as the much-offered office training, we were also introduced to executives in upper level management, advertising, fashion office, and Macy’s Merchandising Group. The program offered us well-rounded experience in the many different facets of the retail industry. We left this summer more educated in retail math, and more confident in our abilities to be successful in this industry.

Not only did they give me extensive training that is useful in any walk of a professional career, but they gave me the confidence I needed to succeed. What I thought was amazing, was that they also hired based on skill sets rather than whether they were a junior or a senior -- try that with most other companies!

The Internship started out with a full 10 days of training. You eat, sleep, and breathe City furniture for these two weeks. This is where I was taught everything from the computer systems they used, to processing orders, to fabric protection plans.

For the rest of the summer, I worked in the Wellington Greens showroom near West Palm Beach under store general manager Steve Lendl. Steve had been with the company for many years where he started in sales, owing to City’s corporate culture of
SEARS HOLDINGS - CREATING TERRIFIC EXPERIENCES

By: KaJuan Speights

KaJuan Speights learned the importance of a great customer experience while she worked in management with Sears Holdings.

My summer at Sears in Tallahassee, FL was very beneficial and allowed me to broaden my horizon when it comes to retail. I worked in every department in the store—Hardlines, Softlines, Loss Prevention, Automotives, Operations, and I worked with my Store General Manager. Some of my tasks included writing tickets for car service and learning how to determine if tires needed replacing on a car, working in a cash wrap, helping customers find items, making sure signage was correct for ads, and building a wall for display.

I would have to say the most beneficial task I was given throughout my internship was being the Customer Experience Manager (CEM). This duty entails walking the entire store greeting customers and associates, making sure customers were finding what they needed, lending a helping hand in the cash wrap when needed, and motivating associates in various ways. I have to say, though, when I was first asked to fulfill this duty, I was a little timid and did not see the significance in doing it, but I’ve learned that, in retailing, the customer is the most important aspect, especially at Sears. Customer importance comes from our company’s mission which is to “build customer relationships, make more money, and improve everyday.” Our mission can never be fulfilled if the customer is not the number one priority. Being the CEM also gave me a chance to practice and improve my leadership and communication skills.

I also enjoyed the time when Sears brought all interns to the corporate office in Chicago, IL for a two day conference. Here, presentations were given by the Chairman, the President/CEO, and various other top level executives in the company.

Overall, my experience was one I enjoyed and will never regret. My experience allowed me to understand why people say retailing is challenging, rewarding, and fun!

CITY FURNITURE

Continued from page 4

By: Lindzie Henson

City Furniture is a great company and a great opportunity. I would strongly encourage students to pursue this company for a career. Hey, what else could be better than a company run by a fellow Gator?

BROWN SHOE TEACHES RETAIL AND WHOLESALE

By: Lindzie Henson

Brown Shoe Footwear were shown every area of the company and we spent time in a store. We were given the overall big picture of how Famous Footwear works. It was something that I had never seen before and was extremely excited to learn about. At the Brown Shoe headquarters I was assigned to the Naturalizer brand. Within Naturalizer I was able to speak with mostly everyone that makes the Naturalizer brand successful. I never stopped learning during this internship. With the Naturalizer brand I was able to go to the WSA shoe show in Las Vegas and see what selling shoes is all about. It was exhilarating and at the same time informative. Brown Shoe is a company that cares about its people. While at this internship I was able to sit and speak with the president and vice-president of both Famous Footwear and Brown Shoe. Not many companies allow an intern to speak candidly with the head of the company. Our overall project presentation was given in front of many executives and they liked our ideas. It was such a rewarding experience because I felt like I learned a lot, especially about my strengths and weaknesses, and that I was able to make a difference in the company. I just can’t say enough about Brown Shoe Co and this wonderful opportunity.
After becoming a certified employee, I then learned what it takes to be a manager. Before my internship with PetSmart, I did not realize how much effort is required to maintain the store. I was shown how to process the payroll, schedule employees, navigate through the SAP retail software, create and price displays, hire and train new employees and a wide variety of other tasks. By the end of my internship, I was able to open and close the store all by myself.

After all of my training was complete, I utilized all the skills I had attained. I was given full responsibility as a manager. This really boosted my confidence as a leader. I was able to attend the weekly management meeting and give my input as to how to improve the everyday store operations. Through my experience as a PetSmart manager I learned the skills to communicate as an effective leader in retail. I was very impressed at the amount of training PetSmart gave to me during my ten-week internship. I loved the experience that I had working with the PetSmart team! 

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My name is Nicole Vega and this summer I accepted an internship with Bealls Department Stores as an assistant buyer. Before this internship, I didn’t know very much about buying and wasn’t sure if retail was what I really wanted to do after graduation. At the end of the twelve weeks I was amazed by how great of an experience it truly was and how much I had learned.

My internship was with gifts in the home department. (Christmas started in May!) There were Christmas trees, ornaments, giant stuffed animals, and wonderful smelling candles. Excitement overwhelmed me as I realized how lucky I was. Over the course of the summer I was exposed to many different parts of the company. I was able to explore the business cycle of planning, buying and selling through special projects, class room training and cross training. My special projects consisted of analyzing sales reports, vendor profitability reports, and vendor analysis reports. I learned buying basics and built a foundation of what a buyer does before purchasing products. I was responsible for buying the Colonial and Yankee Candle programs. It was a great experience and really tested my new obtained knowledge. I drew purchasing plans for all stores and built relationships with the candle vendors. At first I was a little nervous and frightened that I wouldn’t know what to do or how to act, but after a few phone calls and meetings I was very comfortable. Vendors are a great asset to a buyer team. The classroom training opened my eyes to more involved buying techniques and strategies. I was able to sit in on the management training classes that are in the process of actually becoming a buyer. It was an amazing opportunity to learn from so many individuals with such great experience behind them.

Bealls is a wonderful company to work for and allows their interns a large amount of hands on training. Besides working in the corporate office I was able to travel with the buying department to Jacksonville and Daytona to shop 8 of our stores and competitor stores. While at our own stores, they showed me the importance of visual merchandising and shop concepts. They walked me through how the stores were set up and showed me both good and bad things that we need to be aware of as a buyer. While at the competitor stores they showed me what to look for and how to get ideas to keep a competitive advantage.

All Bealls interns work on a summer project together. This summer, we evaluated the existing brand mission statements and compared them to the information we gathered to formulate brand profiles and to revamp the mission statements. We developed brand mission packets that contained our findings that showed the different lifestyles and personalities of each brand. We presented our powerful project to the President, management, key buyers, designers and advertising departments of Bealls. This project was extremely interesting and a great experience in a retail company. It was remarkable to see how private brands are put together in a corporate business and to see why they are important to the company. 

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into the program, I had customers that only came shopping when I was scheduled! Knowing that I made a customer’s shopping experience so wonderful that they only shop when I was scheduled is a feeling of utter happiness and fulfillment.

Nordstrom’s internships also offer training sessions, opportunities to attend manager meetings, and insights into the support departments, which they dubbed Developmental Mondays. Every Monday, I rotated about different support areas and learned what they did on a typical day and how they upheld the Nordstrom philosophy without even coming in contact with the customer. These included Visual, Loss Prevention, Human Resources, Alterations, Communication and Store Information Management, and Customer Service.

Nordstrom is a company that stands firmly on their philosophy of offering the customer the best possible service, selection, quality and value; a philosophy that has not changed since its establishment in 1901.

I became familiar with Nordstrom when they opened their Coral Gables’s store at the Village of Merrick Park in 2002. After shopping there, Nordstrom became my second home. The employees knew what brands were my favorites. I soon realized the Nordstrom employees knew more about my fashion style than I did. Their dedication and hard work inspired me to apply for Nordstrom’s internship program.

I interned at the Coral Gables Nordstrom in the Encore department, which specializes in plus size clothing for women. I worked closely with my department manager reading daily reports, checking shipment schedules, scheduling employees, and discussing products with our regional merchandiser. I worked on the sales floor helping our customers and working to surpass our department’s last year’s goal. Midway

In South Florida, BrandsMart USA is a household name. Being a Miami native, I shopped there, but I never realized the commitment and dedication it takes to become that household name.

BrandsMart, with only seven stores, is ranked in TWICE (This Week In Consumer Electronics) Magazine’s top 10 major appliance sellers in the country in terms of dollar volume. Being an intern at a company who is able to do business in that magnitude was just an added benefit.

The most fascinating thing about my summer was not the non-stop adventure, but being able to experience first hand the complete retail process. Everything from buying the merchandise, displaying it at the stores, advertising, selling it to the customer and finally placing the merchandise in the customer’s hands.

Their commitment to the consumer doesn’t stop there, and neither did my internship; it continued on to the Service side. I was able to see their entire process from taking the initial call, dispatching the calls to the technicians, even going into the customers home with a technician, ordering the parts needed, and finally billing.

However, this experience would not have been the same if it weren’t for the company’s culture. BrandsMart is privately owned by the Perlman family and many of it’s top executives have been with the company for at least 10 years.

Regardless of it’s high volume and fast paced outlets, BrandsMart USA is just a big ol’ ma’ and pop store!

The leading observation from students about retailing from the internship experience was about the complexity of the industry.
As an international exchange student with hopes of gaining practical experience in the workplace, I searched high and low for an internship that would provide me with exceptional training that only an American company can provide. It was disheartening to see that retailers I applied to overlooked my global background of living in Hong Kong and going to college in the UK - Wal-Mart Stores willingness to accept me as intern just goes to show how truly committed they are to creating diversity in the workforce.

Our structured program at Wal-Mart has many similarities to those of other retailers in this newsletter: rotational training in departments, as well as guidance and knowledge transfer from fantastic managers... but that’s where the similarities end. The differences begin when I think of all that I have learnt from the associates, many of which have been working with Wal-Mart for more than 15 years. Hearing war stories while working aside them collecting carts, stocking shelves and cashiering showed me first-hand how corporate culture can remain strong across the largest retailer in the world. At Wal-Mart, “Managing By Walking Around” doesn’t quite cut it... “Managing By Doing” does! The respect earned by the latter management style ensured that associates were more than happy to listen to me as an assistant while I managed during the last few weeks I was there.

As large as Wal-Mart is, the internship provided plenty of opportunities to make a difference. My business project consisted of acting as a consultant and interviewing several associates and management at other Wal-Mart facilities. I was able to devise a plan that could save 150,000 trees a year while possibly earning Wal-Mart a significant amount of money annually. Which other company would allow you the chance to brighten up your resume with a factoid like that? None other than your local Wal-Mart!

DILLARD’S GAVE INTERN CHANCE TO RUN COSMETICS EVENT

By: Daniel Ramos

I was a skeptic. I came back from the career fair holding twenty less copies of my resume. Where it turned around for me was when I answered the phone a few days later and spoke with Stacey Keene, local manager and recruiter for Dillard’s. After five minutes of him explaining to me that even though I was a Decision and Information Sciences major, I could still benefit from the experience. I was intrigued!

I took the internship earning a salary that was highly lucrative compared to my last summer job. Immediately, I saw that the projects were challenging! Associates were actually seeking guidance from me and asking my personal opinions on matters that could very well have a large affect on our store’s sales. This was more than I expected. Now I was in the retail zone. I realized if you want to learn about retailing, there is no better place to do it than with Dillard’s. At Dillard’s, you are given mentors and skill building projects to help you learn the ins and outs so in a few weeks you are able to set out and prove your worth to the company.

My biggest moment of triumph came when I was told by my mentor that the cosmetics manager was going to be leaving on vacation for an extended period and I was to lead her department! Not knowing anything about cosmetics, I set out to do some research and put together an event for a smaller line named Origins which specialized in natural makeup and even catered to men. This event took home three times last year’s revenues and we added seventeen new customers to our clientele catalogue.

My internship with Dillard’s was a challenging and exciting experience that I won’t soon forget but also one that has given me further knowledge about what I want in my future career. This year, I am throwing my skepticism out the window and heading to career fair with my eyes set on working in the buying office.
I have worked in retail since I was a child. I would help my mother at her bakery after school. My favorite part was always talking with and helping the customers. My concern with retail as a career was always having a good work-life balance. When I interviewed with Target and saw that I could have both, I knew it was the right place for me.

The Target internship taught me more than I could have ever imagined. From the minute I walked into the Gainesville store, I was treated as one of the executives. My ideas were listened to and often used. When working on my project of improving store communication, I was able to see my suggestions implemented every day.

My internship showed me how important the people you work with are. Target refers to their employees as team members, and they really are a team. During my internship I learned just as much from the hourly employees as I did from the managers. Everyone has unique skills and strengths, and when put together it creates amazing results. As a manager, valuing and respecting your employees is the key to success. Happy employees lead to happy customers.

While interning at Target I learned about every department, from the sales floor to human resources and assets protection, even logistics. I spent time doing each manager’s job. By week four of my internship I was serving as the Leader on Duty. The store was mine during those times, and I was given the power to make any decisions necessary to keep it running smoothly. At times I was scared and overwhelmed, but it forced me to learn in a way that I never could have otherwise. It also showed me exactly what it means to be a retail manager and gave me the confidence to manage successfully.

Vanessa Lang was trained to be Leader on Duty to run a Target store and drive sales.

I had the opportunity to work with Kohl’s as an executive intern. I had minimal retail experience prior to this internship and didn’t know what to expect. I was amazed by the level of skill necessary to be a successful leader in the retail industry. The management at Kohl’s was extremely knowledgeable and very willing to help me learn their business from the ground up. I gained extensive knowledge in the fundamentals of retailing as well as how to improve on my interpersonal skills. I was held accountable for learning what I needed to know and I was encouraged to take initiative in my training to personalize my internship.

When I began my internship with Kohl’s, I didn’t know what career path I wanted to take following graduation. After the completion of my internship, I know that retail is a fast-paced, exciting environment; I know that it is the career that I want to pursue.

All and all, the Kohl’s internship program was highly structured while remaining very flexible with my training. I was given a workbook that outlined what I needed to learn and it was my responsibility to learn it. As a Kohl’s intern, I was given big responsibilities and an opportunity to grow and excel.

I highly recommend this internship to students that are motivated and want to learn about the retail industry from one of the most successful fastest growing companies.
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Paul Levesque, Author, “Customer Service From The Inside Out Made Easy”
Bill Lucas, President & General Manager, Retail Business Group, The NPD Group, Inc.
Matthew Rubel, President, CEO and Director, Payless ShoeSource, Inc.
Joe Scarlett, Chairman of the Board, Tractor Supply
Pernille Spiers-Lopez, President, IKEA North America

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Gators now have a new way to get involved in retailing. Sponsoring important speakers and teaching important skills, the Retail Society is a fresh face on campus. This organization strives to develop a strong networking system for all students who are interested in seeking internships and careers in retailing from freshmen to graduate students. Started in the spring of 2006, the Retail Society was just an idea. With the assistance of Cecilia Schulz, associate director of the David F. Miller Center for Retailing Education and Research, several ambitious students began the process of making this dream a reality.

Our current president, Meriden Hett and several other interested students took on the responsibility of getting the organization started. Things began to take shape over the summer as the constitution was prepared and goals were developed. We believed the most important aspects of the Retail Society would be the constant contact with knowledgeable and experienced students; a different forum for recruiters to speak about their companies; and an open networking environment for open discussion about information on retailing issues and opportunities in the industry.

As the fall semester began, we began recruiting members and marketing the Retail Society on campus. The response was incredible. Although the David F. Miller Center for Retailing Education and Research is an excellent source of information for students, the reaction to the organization proved students needed a support system of their peers. The first meeting brought over 50 individuals looking to expand their retailing knowledge! From these students, 10 were chosen for the executive board. Working with these individuals with diverse educational, professional and social backgrounds has built a strong foundation for all the general and associate members. Public relations co-director Kim Kaupe and former Teen Vogue intern has enjoyed her experiences with the Retail Society so far. “It’s been exciting and innovative,” she said. Other executive board members have recalled the benefits of the Retail Society. Jan Michael Uy, webmaster, believes the organization to be a beneficial opportunity to learn important professional skills. “The most important thing so far has been the exposure to the knowledge of the retail interview process,” he said.

Retailers have caught on to this great new group, too. The Retail Society has already featured speakers from Target. Carla Ragnott, public relations co-director, feels the organization is a perfect outlet for professionals. “It’s a comfortable environment for retailers and students to interact,” she said. “The Retail Society attempts to bring a different retail executive to each meeting to create a broad understanding of the opportunities for internships and careers.” As the student liaison, I work to join the retailers, the university and the students together. I work closely with the Miller Center to secure the best presenters because it will enhance the communication opportunity between retailers and students.

At this point, the organization sustains itself independent of funding from the university. There have been pros and cons to this choice. The advantages have allowed for us to innovate and think outside the box. We have found interesting and creative ways to educate our members without specific funds to inhibit our mission. However, self-sustainability also hinders our hopes to travel with our members to educational seminars and retailers in other areas of the country. Currently we are working in conjunction with David F. Miller Center for Retailing Education and Research to contact companies willing to support this excellent organization training the future retailing executives.

The members of the Retail Society not only work hard, but play hard, too. Social events help facilitate the camaraderie between members…and help the students have fun. An upcoming event in early November is a Thanksgiving potluck dinner. We also cheer on the Gators together during football tailgates. Amanda Wheeler, vice president and former Nordstrom intern, enjoys the Retail Society for the professional development aspect as well as the ability to make friends with students who have the same career interests.

“Things began to take shape over the summer as the constitution was prepared and goals were developed. We believed the most important aspects of the Retail Society would be the constant contact with knowledgeable and experienced students; a different forum for recruiters to speak about their companies; and an open networking environment for open discussion about information on retailing issues and opportunities in the industry.”

“The Retail Society is an incredible source for students to learn about the opportunities in retailing available to University of Florida students. It is a place to meet other students who have similar interests and career goals. I’ve seen members discussing job offers and comparing company cultures. I don’t think this could be done elsewhere. It is obvious that students craved such an organization because the first meeting brought in over 50 students!”

By: Melissa Hick

The Retail Society hopes to work with other universities to expand the membership in order to help increase interest and excitement about retail careers. The support of the David F. Miller Center for Retailing Education and Research has been extremely beneficial to the success of the Retail Society. We thank all the faculty and staff for their continuous support of our goals. For more information of how your company can become involved with the Retail Society and its members, please e-mail ufretailsociety@yahoo.com.
As a newcomer to the retail industry this summer I wasn’t quite sure what to expect from my internship with Save-A-Lot. Seeking more information about Save-A-Lot I learned that the company had a very structured internship program and that Save-A-Lot would be a great company for a career.

I started in the Ocala store. An in-store trainer taught me company procedures and policies. At Save-A-Lot, products are displayed in boxes to save time when stocking the sales floor, stores are small to make it easy for customers to come in and get out of our stores quickly and bags cost just a few cents so that the cost of bags aren’t tagged onto the food prices. I learned how to perform functions needed to keep a store running smoothly. I worked in the meat department, produce department, at the register and alongside store managers to ensure accurate financial records were being kept. The store manager was great about answering any questions I had and he addressed and taught me about the importance of merchandising techniques used throughout his store.

One week I was flown out to St. Louis, Missouri to visit the Save-A-Lot Headquarters for valuable management training. We covered a variety of topics that grocery store managers are faced with on a regular basis. I learned that documentation is the key tool for managers when it comes to reviewing employee performance records. Poor performance must definitely be noted, but positive performance must be noted as well -- something many of us forget. The constant upkeep of these records can help managers see when an employee is ready to be promoted to a new role or let go. We also learned processes that would help us develop our associates.

I also spent time with the District Manager. We visited various stores throughout the district. While visiting, we would perform store walks to see if there were issues that needed to be addressed. While with him I had many new opportunities to expand my knowledge of the retailing industry. I took part in store inventories, assisted in carrying out a couple store safety walks and performed a short store audit.

At the close of my internship I had a thorough understanding of what Save-A-Lot was all about. Their approach to retailing is one that is rather unique. They are a limited assortment discount grocer. For example, unlike conventional grocery stores, when you look for mustard, there will only be one mustard container to choose. That is one bottle size and just one flavor. The bottle will be labeled with Save-A-Lot’s custom label. Since they only have one selection of a specific item to choose from, they do all they can to ensure the high quality of each product. Save-A-Lot is confident enough about the quality of their products they are able to place a 100% money back guarantee on each product if a customer is dissatisfied. By selling each product in just one form, Save-A-Lot is able to maintain large cost efficiencies when ordering in bulk for its 12,000+ stores.