

# Helping Young Adults to Find Purpose, Passion and Right Livelihood

YouthEntity Internships Pave Paths to Careers

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The confident young chef shown on this magazine's cover has a good reason to smile. "I love to bake and I figured that if I love something so much, and could make a living doing it, I would never have to work a day in my life," says Delaney Passmore. "How many people can say they make delicious desserts all day for work?"

Passmore worked as a prep/line cook at the Aspen Glen Club this summer. That job came about because of Passmore's involvement with YouthEntity, a local nonprofit that helps young people discover their passions, define who they want to be and gain experience that places them on a path to successful careers. While creating a buffet with a YouthEntity team, Passmore met Jeff Gilmore, Aspen Glen's executive chef. Passmore explains, "He told me if I ever needed a job to contact him. So a few months before school let out, I got ahold of him and we worked from there."

Passmore is a dean's list student enrolled in the Baking and Pastry Arts program at Johnson & Wales University in Charlotte, North Carolina. Working at Aspen Glen, she's gained practical experience between her freshman and sophomore years, and she's on track to receive an associate's degree in baking and pastry arts in about a year. The young chef, who grew up in Silt, aims to work abroad after finishing a bachelor's degree in either entrepreneurship or food service management.

In an era when many young people arrive at college with impressive academic records but little sense of what they want from life, Passmore's story is a refreshing change. Many adolescents today lead over-scheduled, over-supervised lives. They reach the cusp of adulthood having had little chance to try and fail at new things, to discover their own problem-solving skills or to try on different personalities and interests. They lack a sense of their own resiliency or purpose in life.

For Passmore, discovering her passion in life had little to do with family models or academics. She says her aunt is "a pretty reputable baker" who encouraged her, but that there are no professional chefs in her family. Passmore first connected with YouthEntity's YouthChefs baking and pastry arts after-school program in Glenwood Springs High School. Delaney then came back to serve as a YouthChefs teaching assistant in her junior and senior years at the request of Chef Instructors Christine Bergstrom and Kelly Yepello. Encouragement from professionals outside her family convinced Delaney that she might have the right ingredients to make it as a chef.



*Delaney Passmore, chef in the making*

To bring experiences like Delaney's to even younger students, YouthEntity President Kirsten Petre McDaniel created the "My Career. My Life" internship program as an opportunity for each young person to learn about their likes and dislikes based on their personality, not a standardized test score.

My Career. My Life gives youngsters a personality test that catalogs their interests and then produces a code that identifies jobs they might like. "You can look up those careers in a book, but that doesn't help you with intrinsic motivation or finding connections," McDaniel comments. "I remember that in middle and high school, some kids knew exactly what they wanted to be when they grew up, namely those who aspired to be doctors. Then there were the rest of us, not sure where we would fit in the world or what we were good at that could be translated into a career."

Psychologists say that for many young people – and even adults – finding the right livelihood often requires trial and

error. YouthEntity's vision is to enable all local students to participate in a job internship each year from 5th to 12th grade. Currently, YouthEntity is looking to expand its internship programs in Basalt, Carbondale and Glenwood Springs. The internship programs, headed by professionals volunteering in their own fields, are focused on veterinary medicine, interior design/architecture, journalism, law enforcement, culinary arts and entrepreneurial business. However, the possibilities are endless.

"As kids participate in multiple internships, they will hone in on their future career path and be better prepared to succeed in work and post-secondary education because they know why they're there," says McDaniel. "They can envision their futures. It also helps them to find out what they don't like, saving a tremendous amount of time and money on a poorly chosen major in college, for example."

"In an internship, kids discover strengths they didn't even know they had, strengths that may not be apparent in a traditional academic setting," McDaniel continued. "The result is that they become excited about their work and themselves. As they exceed their own expectations, they set even higher expectations for themselves... Intrinsic motivation is a powerful thing and building it in every youth is what we aspire to do at YouthEntity."

The Carbondale-based nonprofit launched its experiential learning programs in 2006 with a peer-to-peer workshop where students taught other students how to build desktop computers.

YouthEntity also runs financial literacy programs for 5th and 8th graders, currently serving more than 1,000 students annually in Garfield, Eagle and Summit Counties. Assisted by volunteers from Alpine Bank and organized around workbooks and DVDs written by McDaniel, the "I Am Financial Knowledge" program is based on national standards about money and banking. Students are taught planning and money management, credit and debt, risk management and insurance. They learn about saving and investing, financial responsibility and decision-making and how much money they can make in different careers.

The workshop's crowning moment is the final; students are paid 50 cents for each correct answer, earning up to \$15. Over the last five years, YouthEntity has paid out more than \$30,000, which helps students jump-start their savings. They save using the 10.10.10.70 principle: for every dollar you earn, or are given, you should "pay yourself first" by saving 10 percent, then invest 10 percent, share 10 percent and finally spend the remaining 70 percent.

While YouthEntity has test results that back up the effectiveness of its programs, the most convincing evidence shows up in college and on the job. McDaniel notes that YouthEntity alumni from architecture/interior design internships are pursuing careers in that field by studying at CU Boulder, Cal Poly and the University of Montana at Bozeman. Students from YouthEntity's culinary internships have gone on to study to be pastry or savory chefs at Mesa State University, Johnson & Wales, Escoffier and Modul University Vienna. One YouthChefs alum is the pastry chef at the popular Coloradough restaurant in Glenwood Springs.



Right answers pay off in YouthEntity's financial literacy program.



Winning YouthEntity culinary team at the Pro-Start Invitational and Sysco Hospitality Cup, a high school competition.



Kids in a veterinary internship learn to examine a dog's hind leg.

Delaney Passmore hopes that her culinary skills will provide a passport to travel the world. She's currently looking forward to a college internship in Nashville at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel or at Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. After that, she'd like to travel the "hotel circuit." She says, "I want be able to learn in many different areas and cultures. I do love my hometown in Colorado, but I think there are a lot of places in this world that I would like to see that could escalate my knowledge to an amazing level."