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## Meet Teddy Verra, WHSA Summer Intern

A June 2016 graduate of Strawberry Crest High School in Dover, Florida, Teddy Verra is attending classes this fall in the aquaculture program at Hillsborough Community College and working part-time at Home Depot. His experience as a six-week summer intern at the Woods Hole Science Aquarium exposed him to some new career paths and reinforced his plans about the future.

“I have always been interested in doing something that revolved around the environment and the creatures that live in it,” he said. “I like to fish and identify animals, to be outside and work with equipment, so the Aquarium internship sort of bridged all of that. The program exposed me to some career paths that I could probably take with my education and experiences, and has opened up the possibility of returning to Woods Hole.”

Like many students, Verra found the summer internship opportunity online. He visited Woods Hole in the summer of 2015 before applying, having heard about the village’s scientific community in his high school marine science class. “The experience has given me good connections and I got my feet wet in the field of work that I am interested in.”

He is taking an ichthyology course and other classes in the college’s aquaculture program, designed to prepare students to work at local tropical fish farms. If he likes school he plans to complete his associate’s degree and transfer to a four-year college. “I like to work with equipment and use my hands, and would like a job that I am always learning at so it does not get boring. I might like to maintain an offshore fish farm, or work with fisheries to maintain fish stocks. I just want to keep learning.”

During his time in Woods Hole, he enjoyed “being in a walkable village surrounded by water and being with people who are interested in the same thing as me.” His favorite activities were snorkeling at Quissett Harbor, collecting walks, visiting Martha’s Vineyard and The Knob in Falmouth, and kayaking. The first day he arrived in town he joined the last tour group of the day to see the new 238-foot R/V *Neil Armstrong*. “I got to ask a lot of questions and explore the ship before it departed for Iceland. It was cool to see a brand new ship and talk to the crew. It was a unique opportunity.”

At home in Tampa, Florida, he likes to fish and snorkel, be outside biking and kayaking, working on his car and “learning anything and everything on YouTube videos.” He also enjoys staying connected to his friends and being with his family, which includes a younger sister who is also interested in a science career.

“The internship taught me that aquaculture knowledge could be used in collecting and supplying marine specimens for research, sustainable aquaculture farming, or for working someday for NOAA Fisheries,” he said. “Woods Hole has many different people in it and not everyone has a PhD or is a research scientist. There are lots of opportunities to do different things. You just need to keep an open mind and don’t be afraid of trying new things and meeting new people.”

Verra’s favorite thing about the internship program was “getting to have real world experience in a science facility” and collecting specimens for the aquarium. His biggest surprise was learning there are tropical fish in local waters during the summer, brought north by the Gulf Stream. Among his new adventures were catching a flounder with his bare hands and seeing animals in the wild he had not seen before, including seals, squid, manta shrimp and eels.

“It was a great experience for me and I liked it a lot,” Verra said. “It has been awesome!”

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**Related links:**

Woods Hole Aquarium Summer Interns Speak to a Full House:

[http://www.capenews.net/falmouth/news/woods-hole-aquarium-summer-interns-speak-to-full-house/article\\_2bf88775-ec7c-5af3-ab94-5ad0e3c5dcab.html](http://www.capenews.net/falmouth/news/woods-hole-aquarium-summer-interns-speak-to-full-house/article_2bf88775-ec7c-5af3-ab94-5ad0e3c5dcab.html)

Woods Hole Science Aquarium: <http://aquarium.nefsc.noaa.gov/>