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Meet Marissa Mandalfino, WHSA Summer Intern

Interest in oceanography and marine science made Marissa Mandalfino's search for her first summer internship easier. She found the opportunity on NOAA's website and applied.

A student at Desert Ridge High School in Mesa, Arizona, she plans to graduate a year early and attend college to study marine science. An only child and the first in her family interested in a marine science career, she says the program has changed her plans for the future a bit. "Before this internship I was very interested in oceanography and did not know as much about marine biology, but I have learned so much I am now considering marine biology as a possible career field."

Her favorite part of the Woods Hole Science Aquarium internship was attending talks and lectures and being in close contact with scientists. "It has really given me a new perspective from the eyes of people that have careers I may one day pursue."

She is active in three bands at school and plays two instruments, baritone/euphonium and bass guitar. A big fan of classic rock, she listens to music whenever she can but also enjoys reading, especially nonfiction science books on marine science.

During the summer she enjoyed going to Stoney Beach in Woods Hole with the other interns, and went on a boat for the first time. "Living in Arizona I had never gotten the opportunity before. It was so amazing, and luckily I don't get seasick. It will definitely not be my last time at sea!"

Her favorite thing about Woods Hole is "the science that fills this small village. I feel like everywhere I go I can walk into a building and learn something from an expert." Her advice for someone thinking about applying to the summer internship program is to make sure they like hands-on activities. "You need to be okay with and enthusiastic about cutting up food for the fish and participating in any chores you are needed for such as tank cleaning. They (the Aquarium staff) are not looking for kids who will just sit out and watch."

While the experience has inspired her to follow her dreams of becoming a marine scientist, Mandalfino says she learned not to stress about her future too much. "So many scientists here have had very winding paths that led them to where they are today, so I have learned to just go with the flow."

She plans to attend a college near or on a coast to study marine science and be more hands-on, and says the internship has opened up areas like marine biology as a possible career path.

“It has inspired me to care for the earth and respect nature. It has given me the ability to learn from top scientists and use my knowledge in the future. It has made me feel at home in a community that loves what I love.”

What will she be doing in 10 years? She hopes to be out of graduate school and living on a coast, contributing to marine science in some way.

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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

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