

By Katie Coffin

Cultivating Local Talent

IMPACT Awards Celebrate ‘Homegrown’ Success

There is no denying that internships are critical for individual students to gain real-world work experience. The importance, however, goes much deeper. It’s all about building a more skilled workforce for our state – and internships are helping do just that.

Indiana INTERNnet (IIN) is Indiana’s only free internship-matching program linking employers, students, high schools, colleges and universities with the goal of achieving high talent retention in the state. IIN celebrated internship excellence on February 3 at the 10th annual IMPACT Awards luncheon, sponsored by Ivy Tech Community College. Nearly 60 individuals and organizations were nominated for their leadership, hard work and ingenuity in their internships and internship programs in 2015.

The luncheon theme was “Homegrown: Cultivating Local Talent,” and Angie Hicks, namesake and face of Angie’s List, spoke to the interns about the abundance of opportunities for young professionals to succeed in Indiana. Hicks, a Fort Wayne native, credits an internship with Bill Oesterle as the stepping stone that led to her success at Angie’s List. She so impressed Oesterle as an intern that he asked her to join him in co-founding Angie’s List in 1995.

The following winners were honored:



The 2016 IMPACT Awards luncheon attracted nearly 400 attendees – a record number – from throughout the state. Angie Hicks, namesake and face of Angie’s List, shared her story of “homegrown” success that began with an internship.



Paige Carroll (Ball State University)

Intern of the Year – College/University



When Paige Carroll began her insurance operations internship with Baldwin & Lyons, Inc. (B&L), she had no prior insurance knowledge. She was responsible, however, for a task of great strategic importance to the company that specializes in marketing and underwriting insurance for the transportation industry. The project left little room for error.

In a short amount of time, Carroll learned the process from the ground up. Details of the project shifted several times as the departments that requested it made changes, and Carroll easily adapted to the new needs. She even trained and supervised an intern from another department to ensure project completion.

“Paige’s work capacity was astonishing,” affirms Valerie Wilson, corporate communications manager and chief of staff of B&L. “She went beyond her original role and accepted additional responsibilities, taking on several new tasks and enabling others in her department to accomplish more than they otherwise could have.”

Before she returned to school, Carroll documented her work processes. She wrote procedures for all of her areas of responsibility to help future interns taking over those tasks to quickly learn the background information and process steps.

Wilson says Carroll’s overall performance was assessed in the top 5% of her peer group.

“Paige exemplified Baldwin & Lyons’ values of excellence, innovation and teamwork,” Wilson boasts. “She truly immersed herself in this experience and, as a result, indicated she is now interested in obtaining her Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter (CPCU) designation and producer’s license so she can continue to thrive in the insurance industry.”

Salvador Espinoza (East Noble High School)

Intern of the Year – High School



You could say Salvador Espinoza is a “serial intern” with Group Dekko, Inc.

He began his tenure with the company in 2013 as one of the students from East Noble High School to participate in the pilot of the Explore program. Explore is a paid summer internship experience in which high school students rotate through a set of manufacturing careers during a six-week period to see where

their skills and interests align.

Espinoza completed two more internships with Group Dekko before graduating from high school in May 2015. He fulfilled a summer internship in the company’s human resources department before starting college, and during his first semester, he took on his fifth internship with Group Dekko – this time in the marketing department.

Espinoza became a leader of the Explore program, serving as a mentor to the other interns. In one instance, a problem arose during the students’ production process. Espinoza took charge, directing the students, tearing down finished goods, reassembling, inspecting the quality and packaging the finished product. The product was finished on time for an open house auction benefitting Wounded Warriors, raising \$2,000 for the cause.

“Group Dekko is privileged to be a part of this young man’s life,” remarks Cynthia Nesbitt, training and development specialist. “To see how he has grown over the years has been exciting and we look forward to the day he becomes a leader of our company. For us, that is true success.”

Scott Bachman

Intern of the Year – Non-traditional



On his first day at Baldwin & Lyons, Inc. (B&L), Scott Bachman noted in his work plan – “I am ready to jump into new and ongoing projects in order to learn as much as possible.”

This declaration was put to the test when, six weeks into his internship, he was tapped to fill in for a manager on a number of projects until a replacement could be hired.

One project was a strategic company initiative with over a \$1 million budget.

Thanks to Bachman’s work, the project didn’t miss a beat, and he ensured the transition to a new project manager was seamless. As a result, he saved B&L an estimated \$10,000 in potential temporary consultant fees.

Bachman began his internship with information technology experience but very little knowledge of project management. He watched 70 informational videos on Lynda.com, and he studied industry resources to answer many of his project management questions independently.

“Scott truly took advantage of opportunities to grow so he could make meaningful contributions to the company, and he shared his contagious enthusiasm with all he encountered,” Wilson affirms. “We have had many interns in the Project Management Office (PMO) before, but Scott surpassed all expectations.”

Bachman accepted a full-time position as a project coordinator following the completion of his internship, and Wilson says B&L is “excited to use his skill and ingenuity to better the PMO.”

Brandi Gilbert (IUPUI)

Career Development Professional of the Year



Eight years ago, Brandi Gilbert set out to develop an internship program that would help undergraduate students gain professional experience while exploring career options. The result was the IUPUI Life-Health Sciences Internship (LHSI) Program, which has employed more than 350 interns since beginning in 2007.

The LHSI program continues to grow from the initial group of less than 20 students to the latest class of more than 70. It is one of the largest undergraduate internship programs on the IUPUI campus, offering sophomore and junior students a year-long paid internship with faculty mentors in the life and health sciences. The goal is to develop each intern’s transferable professional skills.

As a “one-woman show” running the LHSI program, Gilbert:

- recruits, trains and oversees all faculty mentors in the program (there have been more than 130 since the beginning);
- conducts orientation for new interns and organizes networking events and workshops;
- oversees more than 70 intern/mentor relationships and about four Intern Ambassadors each year;
- visits interns on-site each semester to make sure they are on track; and
- advises the LHSI Alumni Council, a student organization that connects interns and alumni.

“Brandi always has the best interests of her students at heart,” declares Kamilah Walters, senior ambassador for the LHSI program. “In addition to her remarkable accomplishments developing the LHSI program, pervasive commitment to students’ professional development and impressive organization of communication between students, employers and other campus faculty, she is a downright wonderful person to work for.”

netlogx, LLC

Employer of the Year – For-Profit



The netlogx, LLC internship program is a balance of practical work experience, networking opportunities and professional development activities – with mentoring at the center of it all.

Interns take part in the netlogx Mentor Program designed to provide information, encouragement and support to help them succeed. In addition, for the past three years netlogx has partnered

with the Indiana Latino Institute to sponsor an intern. netlogx provides structure, support and exposure to a “real” working environment and then delivers feedback to both the interns and the Latino Institute, ensuring the interns maintain a certain level of professionalism.

Interns are immediately integrated into the work environment at netlogx, working side-by-side with seasoned employees on a variety of tasks and owning at least one project.

Projects netlogx interns have worked on include:

- Researching target companies for business development
- Creating concepts and taking photos for the netlogx web site
- Developing and improving templates for visual presentations
- Creating and shooting video campaigns to market netlogx to Millennials
- Developing an employee survey

“My time at netlogx helped me grow both in my professional career and my development as a human being,” recognizes Joe Harrison, 2015 summer intern. “I was awarded opportunities that helped further myself along the path to success and that have taught the importance of being a kind and personable individual on top of being intellectual and professional. These are skills that I will cherish moving forward in my career.”

IU Health (North and Saxony hospitals) and St. Vincent (Carmel and Fishers hospitals)

Employers of the Year – Not-for-Profit



Noblesville High School (NHS) is one of the most recognized institutions in the state for forging business-education partnerships to benefit their students. The program it administers with Indiana University Health North and Saxony hospitals and St. Vincent Carmel and Fishers hospitals

is a productive model thanks to the dedication of the hospital professionals.

A hospital setting can be a difficult placement for interns due to patient care, confidentiality and hospital regulations. Susan Wiersema, NHS internship coordinator, says the hospitals never considered these barriers to participation.

The three-way partnership began with NHS approaching Melinda Wirstiuk, volunteer coordinator with St. Vincent, to explore internship possibilities at the Fishers location. The result was a system in which students rotated through different hospital departments, gaining exposure to various health care careers.

In the second year, twice the number of students were interested. Wirstiuk coordinated a duplicate program at St. Vincent Carmel, allowing students to experience two unique hospital settings.

Continued growth led NHS to approach IU Health. The North and Saxony locations enthusiastically came on board, and now students in the program spend one semester with St. Vincent and one semester with IU Health.

Students have had the opportunities to observe surgeries, shadow nurse practitioners, meet with doctors and more.

“It brought me great joy to watch these two organizations come together, share ideas, plan joint orientations and overcome obstacles, all for the benefit of the students,” Wiersema shares.

See the March/April 2015 *BizVoice* issue for more information about Noblesville High School’s internship program.

RESOURCE: Learn more about internship success at www.IndianaINTERN.net.



Lieutenant Governor Sue Ellspermann, pictured with the award nominees, closed the program by reinforcing the value of internships.