Urban Green Lab is Nashville’s first and only non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of the city through sustainability education. Located in the downtown area along the Cumberland River, Urban Green Lab has reached out to Nashville’s local families, businesses, and schools through innovative community workshops and events. Urban Green Lab’s mission is to facilitate a range of educational and social programs that inspire participants from all socioeconomic backgrounds to make sustainability a bigger part of their lives - in their homes, neighborhoods, and businesses. Sustainability is a word that is used by many in different ways. Keeping in mind that it is a huge and dynamic concept, Urban Green Lab defines sustainability as sticking to the triple bottom line of “people, profit, planet.” This all-inclusive social, financial, and environmental understanding of sustainability enables Urban Green Lab to build personal relationships, save money and resources, and to preserve and enhance our natural environment.

Urban Green Lab is in the middle of an exciting and transformative time because of the Mobile Lab construction. This 36’ long trailer will be completed in November, and will start visiting Nashville’s metro middle and high schools in January. Outfitted with green technologies (i.e. solar panels), interactive exhibits, and a unique curriculum, the Mobile Lab will essentially be a sustainability classroom on wheels for Nashville’s residents. The curriculum will address five topics in sustainability: water, energy, green building, food & agriculture, and sustainable transportation. The Mobile Lab aligns with MNPS middle and high schools’ science and technology curricula and inspires sustainable behaviors. As Nashville’s first sustainability laboratory, the Mobile Lab creates ongoing educational and relationship-building opportunities.
Though its main focus will be in schools, Urban Green Lab plans to bring the Mobile Lab to community events to share with our neighbors.

As one of the two interns, I was the community engagement and communications intern for the summer. The majority of my work connected to the work and duties of Eileen Schaeffer, one of Urban Green Lab’s three Americorps VISTAs and a Sewanee graduate from the class of 2013. During the week, I spent an average of 8.5 hours daily working on a wide variety of assignments, as well as attending Urban Green Lab events. My biggest responsibility during the summer was being in charge of all media fronts. I controlled Urban Green Lab’s website, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. This included finding articles relating to sustainability online to post on our Facebook account; on average, we post about 5 times a day. I scheduled and provided details for each event on our Facebook page, as well as the website’s calendar. Along with these daily/weekly updates, I also designed and wrote Urban Green Lab’s newsletter to send out to hundreds of locals twice a month. Along with media updates, I helped to plan and create our programming calendar. This includes meeting with other local, sustainable-minded individuals, non-profits, schools, or businesses that would like to join forces, as well as simply coming up with fun and educational workshops for the public.

Throughout the summer, I developed several new skills. Most importantly, I learned how to work confidently. Though I consider myself a confident person, I usually depend on recognition and support from others when I am in a working environment. In school, this usually translates to asking a friend if my ideas sound good or asking others to edit my work. As an intern with Urban Green Lab this summer, I learned to trust my instincts and fuel my creative mind in order to complete tasks independent of my coworkers. I nurtured this new talent while
making big design and content changes to our website, starting a Sustainable Snapshots series featuring local sustainable inspiration, and creating Urban Green Lab’s first *Green Home Guide*, which includes various tips and tricks for keep you and your home efficient, safe, and healthy.

Busy work aside, I learned a lot about myself and my career goals this summer. I am so grateful for the opportunity to work in a field that is dedicated to sustainability. A few weeks into my internship, I realized how lucky I am to be working with an organization that I could see myself being involved with even 20 years from now. Sadly, there are millions of people that will never get the chance to take part in such a meaningful experience as that. I am only 21 and I have already worked with a sustainability non-profit and sustainability is the single thing that about which I am the most passionate. As an Environmental Arts & Humanities major at Sewanee, I could go a lot of directions with my major. I have delved in Ecology research, religious studies, nature writing, outdoor education, mindfulness, and policy. The good news is that I am interested in all of these topics, and the bad news is that I am interested in all of these topics. Thankfully, my internship with Urban Green Lab helped me understand that I am a person that thrives on face-to-face communication, relationship building, and “in the field” kind of work. Luckily, I had the chance to feed this desire at Urban Green Lab’s workshops and events, but selfishly, it was not enough. During the weekday when I was spending 8 hours at a time sitting down at a computer screen, I felt like I was not *really* accomplishing enough. I feel more at use when I am working with people outdoors. Though it sounds like I am pointing out negative aspects of my summer, I am really not. I am proud of all of my work from the summer and am confident that I want to devote my career to the field, but I am also certain that I want to find a career that requires the majority of my time to be out and about, sharing my love for the environment with
those around me. When I return to Sewanee to complete my senior year in just three short weeks, I plan on talking to professors in my field about my revelations from the summer and working hard to find the best fit for me from there! This has been a growing summer for me, and I will always be grateful of my experience and my funding from Sewanee’s generous donors. Thank you.
Other questions -
Are there other Sewanee students, faculty, or alumni involved in your internship/RA? If so, how did that contribute to your experience? *

Yes! Eileen Schaeffer (Class of ‘13) is one of the 3 Americorps VISTAs that has a year-long job with Urban Green Lab. Though Eileen and I were only at Sewanee together during my freshman year and her senior year, we became close friends. She made the transition into a different, intimidating work environment much more relaxing and exciting this summer. She is a wonderful mentor of mine, and helped me use my time well during the week at Urban Green Lab. We taught at workshops and events together and formed a strong, work-based and Sewanee-based friendship together as coworkers this summer. I am forever grateful that we had each other during these past months.

What has this experience taught you that you did not know about yourself before the summer began? *

My time with Urban Green Lab has taught me that I truly thrive on working “in the field”. At my core, I am a people person. I feel enriched by meeting community members, hearing about various local non-profits and their work in the area, and working outside, under the sun. That being said, it took consecutive days stuck at my desk, inside, on my laptop for me to realize this about myself. I have always known my love for connecting with others and being outside, but it wasn’t until this summer that I discovered that I want to find a career that requires much less “screen-time”. Though I still do good work when I am inside at my desk, I feel much more effective and confident in my work when I am meeting people, teaching ways to be more sustainable, and sharing my love for the environment with the community.

What has it meant to you to have financial resources to assist you in funding your Sewanee internship experience? *

It has been a wonderful help for me this summer. Though I have lived at home during this internship and didn’t have to pay rent anywhere, having financial resources available has taught me how to plan, save, and use my money responsibly. During the week, I feel more dedicated and hard-working in my work because I know that donors have contributed through the Sewanee to help make my summer useful and important to me.

What would you like to say to the donors who made your internship possible?
THANK YOU - seriously. You have no idea how much your donations have helped me this summer! I feel like I’ve got a leg-up on my future internships and jobs now that I’ve had this internship experience -- and that means a lot! I also feel more confident than ever that Environmental Studies/Sustainability is the field that I want to work in… for as long as I can! I am lucky to be confident in that at such a young age. Thank you.