Harlem Children’s Promise Zone (HCPZ)

Harlem Children’s Promise Zone targets a specific community that was labeled as a “troubled neighborhood” due the high poverty families and the three local high schools listed in the top 100 worst high schools in the USA. Harlem was destined for failure according to many. However, Geoffrey Canada refused to give up on them. He saw hope and believed in them. That’s how Harlem’s Children’s Promise Zone was formed. Over the summer, I interned with HCPZ writing a concept draft about the program which will be used as school libraries, united ways, used as key pointers, and as a reference for business plans and funding proposals. I attended a talk given by Mathew Costello, a Sewanee alum and the first executive director of Eau Claire Promise Zones, that described the program and the tasks they would need an intern to do which included keeping constant communication, independent work (20 hours a week), and strong writing skills along with research.

I embarked on this opportunity because the program sounded very similar to my high school’s goals. I attended KIPP Houston High School, a school built in underserved communities with the purpose of getting students to college. They drilled college into our head. They told us we were capable of going further than a high school degree- something nobody had told us before. To many of us, we had never even heard of college up until high school, something people take for granted. Because of the lack of resources provided to some communities, in Harlem specifically, I decided I wanted to learn more about it and help in any way I could. The Promise Zone is a non-profit organization that needs to continually apply for grants in order to receive funding. My job was to write a concept draft about the program specifying what the programs were and the purpose of it. I spent hours at Starbucks doing research for this and constantly calling Matt for questions and more documents. He was very helpful by sending me a numerous amount of documents I utilized to write the draft. By the end
of the summer, I had written approximately 10 pages describing the program and providing the basic information about HCZ to be used as a reference in the future.

I learned valuable information about the program. It is, indeed, very similar to the program my high school has. They both have the same purpose: To give children the opportunity and resources they deserve. With that said, I love the program and I hope that I can, sometime in the future, have the opportunity to step on Harlem and volunteer. This also pushed me into thinking of my career path. I am strongly thinking about working in a non-profit organization after I graduate. I am fully aware that workers do not make as much as a doctor would but I think contribution to the community is much more important than buying happiness.