

### Summer Internship Summary

I write this summary while preparing for day five of “Mr. Ali’s Natural Disasters Camp,” which will look at volcanoes and all their power and glory. At the same time, I am looking back at earlier today, day four, which dealt with Tsunamis and how awesome 50 metre waves are. Basically, this summer experience at the Florida Museum of Natural History was a blast. My first and second grade campers were an absolute delight. I had three girls and ten boys, all between the ages of five and eight. I had campers from all types of backgrounds: Chinese, Italian, Canadian, Finnish, and American. I even had a camper who was visiting from Japan for vacation and could barely speak English! I thought it would be quite a challenge to engage them and keep them disciplined. Yes, at times it was hard to effectively communicate with them. However, I began to understand what they wanted to do, and found a way to combine my teaching goals I laid out in my lesson plan with their ideas about “fun.” They thoroughly enjoyed the “human hurricane,” where they all stood with their elbows interlocked, and formed a hurricane and spun counterclockwise as Atlantic hurricanes do. They were amazed when what they thought was an hour-glass made from Zephyrhills water bottles began to form a water tornado in the “tornado in a bottle” activity. They even took advice from a talking crab who spoke about Tsunami safety on a Youtube video. I was amazed at their receptiveness to the material and it reminded me of the joys of learning when I was younger.

In addition to teaching the Natural Disasters camp, I worked in the “Discovery Room.” This is an open space for children to learn about the wonders of our world in an interactive playful environment. Kids always like to colour, and plenty came to our colouring station to colour their version of a zebra butterfly or boa constrictor. I will never forget this one eight-year old girl who found it strange that a man (me) could colour a picture of a snake with pink, and she proceeded to tell me that I am a woman who can never be the “real man” her father is. Oh man, that girl was awesome. To see that kind of spunk in someone is always welcoming to me, as she was very playful and inviting of my presence and she knew that all my jokes were in good fun. I learned a lot about interacting with kids who are shy about trying new things and about the kids who feel they know the answer to every question. I also learned how to effectively manage both children and adults in a public setting; how to direct them, approach them and speak with them. My confidence in my ability to interact with others really received a boost this summer, and it came from the indirect training I received by working that room and the camps. If given the chance, I would absolutely do this again; it was a wonderful opportunity.