

My Summer at DIG

By: Kelly Hawk

Everyone who has met me since I made my decision to go to law school has heard the same story: I came to law school because I was tired of seeing kids get pushed around by a flawed education system. I came to law school to make a difference. So, when the application for the Florida Bar Foundation Legal Services Summer Fellowship came out, four different people emailed about it, saying it was the perfect fit for me. Getting the opportunity to work at DIG for the summer thrilled me. I approached this summer ready to work and to help people. In so many ways, my experience this summer has been just what I expected, but it has also been much more.

I expected that I would work on interesting projects. I did not expect that I would get to be a part of the conference call at which Florida established its own chapter of REV UP to show the importance and strength of the disability vote. Neither did I expect that I would be able to help develop trainings to teach social justice organizations how to become more accessible and to better serve people with disabilities.

And I expected that I would get to meet new people from different organizations. But I didn't anticipate that I would meet people working in schools, in foster care, in domestic violence prevention, and in social justice movements. I didn't expect that they would show me how disability intersects with every major social issue and how important the intersectionality of these different perspectives is to growing as a community.

I came to DIG expecting to help others, but I underestimated how much working at DIG would help me grow, not just as a law student but as a human being. DIG has challenged me to rethink what I thought I knew about the world. I have learned how to look at buildings and documents through the lens of accessibility. I have learned how to push myself outside of my box. For me this summer that has meant learning to use software programs even though I am self-proclaimed technology illiterate. It has also meant taking part in a social media campaign and photo journal to raise awareness for the amazing work that DIG and the Florida Bar Foundation have been doing. I have learned how to accept and embrace the editing process and to collaborate with others on a common project. Learning to collaborate with a great team has resulted in a final project that I'm really proud of.

Most importantly, this summer has reminded me how much I still don't know about the world, and it's funny because, after way more years of school than I'd care to admit to, I've found it way more empowering to say "I don't know yet." Because when you can admit you don't know yet, someone can help you open your eyes. In the podcast "Aftereffect," Arnoldo Rios' sister Miriam says that people just don't know what's going on in the world of disability, but that once you see, you can't go back. For

me, DIG has opened my eyes to a new way that the world can be, a new way that I can be – both as a person and as a future lawyer – and I’m so grateful for this summer.