

Kelly Coughlin's Internship Report January/February 2011

I am a senior at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. My major is business administration with a focus in marketing and management. I was given the opportunity to have an internship at Sydney Observatory for the months of January and February through a program called CAPA which is based in Sydney. My goals of the internship were to gain some experience in event management, marketing, and to observe the daily tasks of the manager.

My main task during my internship at Sydney Observatory was planning the 'Valentine's night under the stars' event. The work involved a variety of different tasks including planning a budget, ordering various items, creating flyers and promotional pieces for the event. The Valentine's event has been a successful occurrence that the Observatory has been putting on for the past few years. I spent the first days of my internship researching advertisements and plans that had been previously used. I compiled techniques from past promotional pieces and my own ideas to create a flyer for the event for visitors of the Observatory to take from the front desk.

Also among promotional pieces, I wrote an explanation of the event on the website 'What's on in Sydney' and a media release that was sent through to the Powerhouse Museum for their marketing group to promote. The media release was something that I had never done before, so it was a great learning experience and strongly related to my marketing background. After having my version reviewed by Toner, she helped me by explaining how I could be more creative with it. The feedback was appreciated and will be useful in the future.

The early stages of planning this event involved multiple checklists and budgets to see what was needed for the event. It was very helpful to have budgets from previous years to get an idea of past places that the Observatory ordered from and to gain a general idea of what was needed. I also researched many different places to order supplies such as balloons, tables, chairs, tablecloth, and decorations for the best prices. I was given the freedom to order from whom I wanted and gained experience with working over the phones. Another small but important detail for the event was registering for the liquor license. There were so many little things that I never really thought about when it came to planning an event that were necessary to do.

Deciding on food and choosing a caterer was an important task. Toner and I created a list of possible food items that would be both tasty and filling. Next, I put together a plan of our thoughts to be sent off to various caterers for quotes. Toner edited my notes and sent the information to three different caterers. Once receiving the quotes, I created separate budgets with the different caterer information and what each had to offer.

The day of the event was the longest, yet quickest day of work. I worked for over 13 hours, but the day flew by. I was busy setting up tables and decorating. I created many signs including welcome, informational, a sign for the band, and New South Wales

Wine Society. The Wine Society provided wine and wine tasting for all guests. As the time neared 7:30pm, I was the 'meet and greet' person and marked off guests as they arrived. I handed them a program that I had created of the night's events which included a story of the history of St Valentine.

The event went smoothly and with the exception of a cloudy night, people seemed to be enjoying themselves. I enjoyed walking around and seeing all the happy couples on Valentine's night. Planning an event is something I had never done before, and I'm glad to have had this experience. I really learned that there are so many little things involved in planning an event. Organisation and time is necessary for a good event, but a smooth end result really brings a great feeling of accomplishment.

Although the Valentine's event was my main task, I was involved with and enjoyed many other aspects during my time at the Observatory. I had the opportunity to 'shadow' Toner for a day at the Powerhouse Museum, be involved with an evaluation for a program called 'Digging up the past,' visit the YHA Sydney Harbour to deliver a poster that I created for Australia Day, and I viewed budget and visitor trends for the past three years at the Observatory. The big highlights of working at the Observatory were having the chance to drop the traditional time ball and seeing the beautiful views of the harbour from the top of the tower. Not to mention, never have I found a better lunch spot in Sydney than on Observatory Hill overlooking the harbour.

