

Opportunity Knocks

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Alumni Profile: Marisa Casey

Philanthropy intern turns SEO experience into career of giving back

Sometimes a lifetime vocation begins as if by chance.

When Marisa Catalina Casey caught a glimpse of a poster advertising the SEO Philanthropy Internship in 2001, she did not realize it would start her on a path toward a permanent career in philanthropy.

SEO's Philanthropy Internship, launched in 2000, offers outstanding students extraordinary access to internships at some of New York City's most prominent philanthropic organizations, while foundation benefit from high-quality work, greater diversity and the opportunity to help the next generation better understand the role of philanthropy.

Inspired by her SEO experience, Marisa Casey, who interned at the William Randolph Hearst Foundations in 2001, now works full-time at the Hearst Foundations and plans to devote her life to nonprofit and foundation work.

Marisa was introduced early to philanthropy, as her mother founded and runs a nonprofit international adoption agency, the Alliance for Children. Marisa herself was adopted from Colombia, and felt a personal investment in the agency, where she has volunteered since childhood. Marisa continued her community service while a student at Brown University, as a mentor to at-risk youth, at the campus Women's Center and as a Latino culture and adoption rights activist.

After graduating with honors, Marisa came to New York to participate in the Philanthropy Internship. She described the placement as an excellent fit, saying, "Hearst is so invested in education, arts and youth, which are my strongest areas of interest, and my placement put me right in the thick of things. I was treated as a member of the program staff. I not only reviewed proposals in the office, but also attended several site visits."

At the end of the summer, Marisa said she knew her future lay in community involvement, and she wanted to gain further philanthropic experience. She received a grant to travel cross-country and photograph displays of post 9/11 patriotism. She returned to New York City to

participate in the Work-Scholar Program at the Aperture Foundation, a nonprofit fine art photography publisher.

For the past two years, Marisa has been working at the Hearst Foundations as a program associate, reviewing grant proposals in the areas of health, social service, education and culture. She also consults for the Alliance for Children Foundation and volunteers weekly at The Door, teaching photography and creative writing to underserved teenagers. Marisa and her mother co-authored a collection of essays on adoption, entitled *Born In Our Hearts*, proceeds from which benefit the Alliance for Children Foundation.

Marisa is currently applying for graduate programs in arts administration and arts education, with a long-term goal of establishing her own nonprofit focused on youth and the arts. She hopes that more young people of color will see their future in philanthropy. "Philanthropy is not something just for the future," Marisa added. "Young people need to know that they can make a difference now, be it with time, money or energy. The sector is always growing and changing and definitely needs greater diversity of perspectives."