

Important information for students about what's happening at Thomas University

Biology major interns at marine lab

When Dana Blough talks about her summer internship at the Gulf Specimen Marine Lab in Panacea, Florida, one thing becomes apparent – just how much she enjoyed the work, even the not-so-glamorous behind the scenes tasks of cleaning tanks and scrubbing sea turtles' shells.

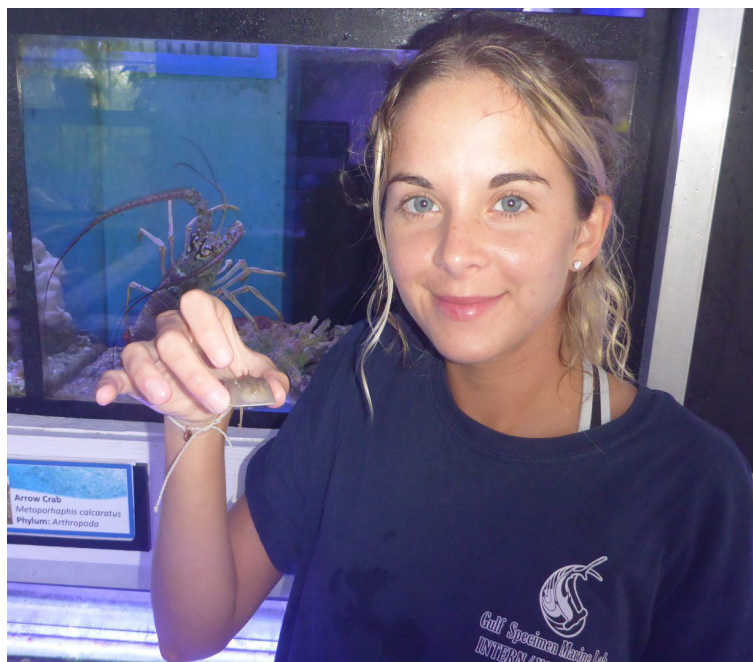
The daughter of Kim and Paul Blough of Cairo, Blough graduated from Cairo High School in 2015 before enrolling at Thomas University.

"I have a really strong passion for marine animals," she said.

A Thomas University senior Biology major with a concentration in environmental science, Blough was one of 12 students interning from May 12 through Aug. 2 at the lab.

"We did a lot of educational tours," she said. "That would probably be about 90 percent of the internship. That's where we have kids' camps or just tourists come in. We basically talk about the animals and give a lot of background information on them."

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Biology major Dana Blough gets up close with a baby horseshoe crab during her summer internship at the Gulf Specimen Marine Lab.

MBA student gains experience in HR at Oil-Dri

Aron Wimberly, a student in the Master of Business Administration program from Mayo, Florida, interned with Oil-Dri over the summer.

Located in Ochlocknee, Oil-Dri produces, markets and sells sorbent mineral technology for use in pet products, animal health, fluids purification, crops and horticulture.

Wimberly gained experience in the human resources office at Oil-Dri working with Robin Weatherington, the Human Resources manager.

"From the beginning, the position allowed me to immediately get hands-on experience," he said. "I was involved in recruiting, on-boarding,



Aron Wimberly

Wimberly also learned a great deal about other areas outside of HR.

"During my time at Oil-Dri, I was also given the opportunity to develop relationships with different

terminating, policy reconstruction and writing proposals for the HR manager. My assigned tasks varied day-to-day, but there was always something that needed to be done in the office."

However,

departments within and outside of the organization," he said. "For instance, I was assigned to work in the logistics department for a few weeks in order to get them back on track with the large number of invoices they were receiving daily. It gave me an insight into the functions of other departments within Oil-Dri."

Wimberly said the internship was a great opportunity that provided professionalism and expertise that he'll use in his future career.

"My experience at Oil-Dri has made all the difference in me and given me a foundation on which to grow," Wimberly said.

TU to hold money and banking seminar

The Thomas University Division of Business will present "Money & Banking," the first of a four-part series, at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 24, in the TU Library. The event is open to all TU students.

The seminar will cover the basics of financial health, such as how to establish and build credit, explaining what a credit score is, and the roles of a community bank and banker.

Presenters include Linda Palmer, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of TC Federal Bank; Janet S. Liles, Vice President and Lending/Business Development Officer at Thomasville National Bank; Hollie Lloyd, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer at Thomasville National Bank; and Greg Eiford, Market President for Thomasville with TC Federal Bank.

Palmer has more than 30 years of experience in community banking. She previously served as CFO of Farmers & Merchants Bank in Monticello, Florida, and Premier Bank in Tallahassee, Florida. She was an examiner for the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. Palmer graduated cum laude from the University of

Texas at Dallas with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a major in Accounting. She also earned a diploma from the Graduate School of Banking at Louisiana State University.

With 38 years of experience in the banking industry, Liles works with businesses, homeowners, and a myriad of loan programs for commercial and personal endeavors. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Degree in Finance from Auburn University.

Lloyd has more than three decades of experience in the field, and is responsible for Thomas National Bank's financial, deposit, technology, administrative, audit and compliance functions. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Finance from Georgia State University.

Eiford began his career at TC Federal Bank in 2008. Before working in banking, he worked in the homebuilding industry. Eiford is a graduate of the Georgia Institute of Technology and the Stonier Banking School.

For more information about the event, contact Dr. Melinda Piller, Chair of the Division of Business, at mpiller@thomasu.edu.



Grad students participate in first meet & greet

Thomas University graduate students gathered for a meet & greet in the TU Library on Monday, Sept. 16. Students and professors enjoyed the opportunity to chat outside of the online classroom.

Top left: Dr. Pauline Patrick (second from left), Chair of the Division of Counseling and Psychology, and Dr. Deb Burch (third from left), Assistant Professor of Nursing, chat with grad students.

Bottom left: Dr. Gale Neal (right), Assistant Professor of Education welcomes grad students.

Below: Grad student Tommy Lewis strikes a pose with Talon, the TU mascot.



First-ever TU cross country team takes off



This fall one group of students is making history as TU's first-ever Cross Country Team. The teams have already competed in two events with more scheduled. Here team members and their supporters joined for a quick photo before a competition. To learn more about the Cross Country Team and all of TU's Athletics teams, visit www.tunighthawks.com.

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When not interacting with visitors, Blough and her fellow interns helped keep the facilities in shape.

"We would also do a lot of tank cleaning as well," she said. "That was probably the not-so-fun part, but it was still exciting because that was the time we got to engage with the animals."

Blough is quick to point out that while she was sharing information about the animals, she was also gaining new knowledge.

"As I was teaching other people, I was learning a lot myself," Blough said. "It just made me love it even more."

The internship was an opportunity for her to spend time with some animals that she always loved – sea turtles.

"We have a sea turtle rehabilitation center there," Blough said. "We actually had a turtle come in this summer. He was a Kemp Ridley Turtle, which we named Chester. He came in halfway through the summer with two hooks, one in his mouth and the other in his stomach."

Chester wasn't the only sea turtle

Blough met.

"We had a loggerhead sea turtle," she said. "Her name was Lil Herc. She was awesome. She was actually blind, so whenever we'd feed her, we'd have to touch the back of her shell. It was just a really cool experience."

Then there were the stingrays.

"We had two different types of stingrays," Blough said. "We had the Southern Stingray and an Atlantic Stingray. They are the most social creatures you'll ever meet. It is so interesting to watch them. I'd come in every single morning, and they'd come right up to the top. I'd just give them a nice pat on the top of their head, and they loved it. It was just fun to see their personality come out because a lot of people find them frightening and don't expect that from them."

When asked why she's so passionate about marine animals, she responded, "I see them like I see you. I think they're an equal. There is still so much of our oceans and the animals that inhabit them that we have yet to discover. I want to help

them, and I want to learn from them."

Blough said taking Prof. Elizabeth Harrell's zoology class at Thomas University helped prepare her for the internship by learning about the classification of animals.

"I think we have a super great biology program here," she said. "One of the things I really like about the school is the classes are so small. I like the fact that you have so much one-on-one time. I have a special bond with one of my professors in particular. It just makes me love the biology program even more and makes me eager to learn from her."

The summer internship isn't the only hands-on experience Blough is gaining while earning her degree. This fall she is interning with Birdsong Nature Center, where she'll help map gopher tortoise burrows using the GIS (geographic information system) skills she learned at TU.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in spring 2020, Blough plans to work in marine animal rehabilitation. She also plans to pursue a master's degree later on.