The Sprout Experience
Serena Contreras

Background

• The Sprout Experience is a 501(c)(3) educational nonprofit organization that provides immersive domestic and international travel programs for youth, based out of Avon Lake, OH.

• The mission of Sprout is to provide immersive programs that encourage a love of learning, foster social/emotional growth, promote global citizenship and have a long-lasting impact on the lives and learning of our students.

• Sprout was created by two teachers, Julie Milkie and Daniel Grigson, that wanted to expand education beyond the borders of a classroom and out into the natural world.

• I heard about Sprout through the praise of a Sprout student alumni and soon joined the organization as the Program Development Intern.

Programs: Trinidad & Kenya

Trinidad & Tobago
• Students stay along the coast of Trinidad while researching and rescuing sea turtles.
• Visit Nariva Swamp to see Amazon rainforest flora and fauna.
• Snorkel and SCUBA in Tobago, exploring coral reefs.
• Experience native Trini culture, music and food.

Kenya: Lale’enok & Maasai Mara
• Students stay at the Lale’enok research center and a river camp along the Maasai Mara.
• Track lions in the African night with wildlife biologists.
• Observe wildlife such as cheetahs, zebras, elephants and giraffes.
• Exchange culture and conservation ideas amongst local school and villages.

Reflecting Back

With Sprout I was able to...
• Create life changing experiences with students.
• Learn how to enforce what I learned as a SENR student to real world environmental education programs.
• Assist in the fundraising and operation of a non-profit organization.
• Learn how to build educational programs from the ground up.
• Improve upon my skills as a mentor and teacher to youth.
• Realize I want environmental education to be a part of my future career endeavors as well as The Sprout Experience as a whole.

Acknowledgment

Thank you to The Sprout Experience for allowing me to be a part of the organization.

Wildlife pictured in the Florida Everglades

Florida Everglades: On The Job

• Students, myself and other co-leaders stayed in reclaimed airstreams on an organic farm located near the Everglades National Park.
• Together, we ate fresh organic meals provided by the farm owners.
• Freshwater kayaked through mangroves, searching for a 13ft crocodile known as "Croc-zilla".
• Explored the Everglades searching for and capturing pythons, learning about invasive species.
• Identified types of corals and marine wildlife while snorkeling at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park.
• Slogged through the swamps of the Everglades, finding an alligator nest and plenty of unique floral and fauna.

the sprout experience.org