Summer interns strengthen their careers and enrich programs

By KENDRICK JESIONOWSKI
Times staff writer

Prior to last summer, the Ohio State University Extension hadn’t had any interns helping provide programming and services.

However, after job-shadowing Extension 4-H director Mark Light for a day last winter, Tina Hiller asked Light if he ever needed summer help.

“He thought about it and said ‘well, we haven’t in the past but let me see what I can do’ and the next thing I knew he had a grant to hire on two interns,” said Hiller, a Kenton High School graduate and an English education major at Ohio State University.

The internship went well and Light was able to get an even larger grant this year. As a result, not only Hiller, who is serving at the Extension Office as a 4-H and youth development intern, but OSU students Demi Snider and Taylor McNamara also were brought on for summer duties.

Snider is a family and consumer science intern working with Jami Dellifield, while McNamara is an agriculture and natural resource intern working under the direction of Extension Agent Mark Badertscher.

Hiller, who also has a minor in youth development, said the experience has been invaluable to her as she prepares for a potential career in the classroom.

“Nearly all of what I do is plan 4-H workshops that give opportunities for 4-Hers to come in and get work done on their projects,” she said. “But also for youth that are not in 4-H to come in and see what the projects are all about. That way they can decide if they would like to participate in that project. I really like the teenage age group to work with, but I find value in working with all the age groups.”

The KHS graduate, who does a lot of programming that involves Extension’s recently developed Spark Lab, said the internship also has helped her to become more certain about her decision to go into education.

The Spark Lab is a space donated to Extension that is used to instill inspiration that youth need to discover, learn and grow in a creative environment with the latest technologies. Funded by an Innovation Grant from Extension Foundation, the lab is designed to be a futuristic classroom type of setting.

“This internship kind of started when I was questioning my major as I was going through some hard classes,” she said. “Something going into teaching that has been neat is I saw the writing of the grant for the Spark Lab last summer and now to see it develop into this in its second year, it gives me so much optimism for what I would be able to do in the classroom.

“The technological advancement and training within this job has been really invaluable.”

Hiller said the diversity of working with the 4-H students also has been inspiring.

“Every year that I could be in 4-H, I was,” she said. “What really drew me to this was community education. I wasn’t questioning my major because of the education. I was questioning it (her major) because I felt like I was limited to only one subject or age group. This gave me an opportunity to be able to teach archery one week, cooking the next and digging for boxes for game crafts this morning. It’s just such a versatile position and you get a (Continued on page five)
Interns strengthen careers, enrich Extension programs

(Continued from page one) lot of soft skills working with so many different age groups. I really felt it was invaluable.”

Snider, who said 4-H was an integral part of her life growing up in Hardin County, has enjoyed coming back and working in the county this summer.

“I work with families from infants to elderly adults — working with relationships, finances healthy eating and image,” Snider said. “With my background in agriculture, I’ve really pulled my focus this summer in agriculture. In a way I feel like I’ve been part of extension whole life. We’ve been in 4-H and now we’re helping to educate others.

“It’s very rewarding to be able to give back to the county that I grew up in,” she added. “To be able to give back to those families and the youth that live in this county that are doing some of the same experiences I was when I was younger. It’s been a cycle and it’s very rewarding to me to be able to be a part of their lives now.”

Snider also noted being able to be a part of the programming in the Spark Lab has been a good experience.

“It’s taught me how to bring together what I’ve learned in college, bring it into Hardin County and utilize the creativity and versatility and speaking with a variety of groups. I think that’s something this space definitely allows us to do”.

McNamara, a Ben Logan graduate and an OSU ATI Ag business major, frequently goes into the fields with Badertscher.

“I go out and help him do things like soil testings, nitrogen plots and insect trap setups,” she said. “I like that everyday is different and I get

to help with all the different areas.”

Another thing that has made the internships fun for the three is they are able to work together on different programs.

“We all have our own department that we function under but we do a lot of cross-swapping,” Snider said. “I’m happy that this position allows me to do that.

“We’re able to create something in the forte of what our internship is, but then we also are able to capitalize on each other’s strengths to bring our other two peers in to help us out. I think that is something that’s really benefited us this summer.”

Light said in addition to helping them with their prospective careers, the three interns have been a great asset to the Extension office.

“I really think what they’ve done, especially this summer is given us a springboard to utilize not only the Spark Lab space, but also Extension,” Light said. “... I think they’ve helped us increase out visibility a lot this summer and have given people who have never experienced a program the opportunity to do so.”

While the internships provide valuable experience, Light said they also may be an

incentive to get the students to keep their talents in Hardin County.

“My job as 4-H educator is to create outstanding leaders, but if they always end up in Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati because they don’t feel like there are opportunities in their hometown or surrounding areas then we’re always exporting our product,” he said. “One of the things that I’ve tried to do is reconnect our 4-H members back to opportunities in our county. So that they can test the waters and see if they want to remain around here.

“We’re happy to have them and we hope this continues so we can provide the same opportunities for our students that are – specifically ones that live in the area, because if they want to test the waters and see what it’s like to live as an adult in Hardin County.”

Snider and the other two interns said they would be open to staying in the area after they graduate.

“I would find great value staying in Hardin County,” Snider said. “It’s always been home. Getting away has always let me know how much I love home. I love the people here. I love the opportunities that I’ve been able to have this summer.”

Missing python found

ATLANTA (AP) — Official say a large python has been found after leaving its private cage at the Atlanta Zoo.

Zoo Atlanta spokeswoman Rachel Davis tells local news media that the nearly 6-foot long, non-venomous Timor python was located Sunday morning. The snake had escaped Saturday from the zoo’s Conservation Breeding Center.

Davis says the snake is a semi-arboreal species native to southeast Asia and described as non-aggressive and shy. The snake is about 1-2 inches in diameter and weighs more than 6 pounds. It has a yellow and dark-brown patterned skin.

Davis said the snake was unlikely to eat anything heavier than 2 pounds. Such pythons typically feed on birds and small mammals and pose no hazard to humans or domestic pets.