KETI LONCAR’S FINAL REPORT

My internship at the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health (ICAH) started on Sunday morning, May 18\textsuperscript{th}, 2008 at the organization’s annual champagne brunch fundraiser. At the brunch I met most of ICAH’s staff members, board members and some youth organizers/leaders (YO’s & YL’s). My responsibilities at the event were to greet guests, maintain the registration table, sell raffle tickets as well as perform other small administrative duties.

I worked primarily with ICAH’s Social Change Initiatives Coordinator, Zahra Alabanza. Zahra (a.k.a “Z”) is very enthusiastic about social justice issues and does a phenomenal job working with youth leaders/organizers and activists affiliated with the organization.

I also had the opportunity to work and travel with the Director of Sex Ed, Jonathan Stacks (a.k.a. J. Stacks!) and the Manager of Training & Resources, Vivian Barrett (a.k.a. Viv). Jonathan, Vivian and I traveled to Springfield, the capital of Illinois, to host a comprehensive sex-ed workshop. ICAH was contracted by The Illinois Department of Public Health (that’s a BIG deal!) and we had over 100 providers throughout the Illinois area in attendance. What a learning experience! I met ICAH’S lovely training coordinator from Peoria, IL, Carrie Andrews, and she and Jonathan lead a 9 – 5 training workshop. I made sure materials were ready for the guests, handled tech. equipment and formatted “Adolescent Sexual Health Toolkits” for attendees. (Adolescent Sexual Health
Toolkit is a jump-drive with medically/scientifically sound information designed to assist sex-ed providers).

Zahra and I attended a Reproductive Rights convention with Dorothy Roberts, among other phenomenal women advocates (amazing!) at the University of Chicago and traveled to various urban youth community centers and schools to distribute information about sexual health, reproductive justice and LGBTQ issues. We also recruited potential youth activists, organizers, leaders and participants for ICAH’s Action Out Loud! (AOL!) program.

The Executive Director, Soo Ji, did a phenomenal job in making me feel welcomed when she invited me to be a part of the strategic planning meeting that took place at one the board member’s office space on a Saturday morning. I went in motivated, however the meeting lasted from 9 to 5 and was mentally draining. It was much more difficult than I had imagined, but I’m excited that I received the opportunity to genuinely observe and be a part of the mental grunt work that goes into planning a three year vision/mission for a non-for-profit. Moreover it was a great experience fleshing out what Reproductive Justice means to ICAH and what we envision it means to the rest of the world.

My main responsibilities were to assist in planning ICAH’s 4th annual “Action Out Loud!” program. AOL is a 5-day, all day, youth activist training boot camp. Youth ranging from 14 to 20 years of age engaged in interactive workshops throughout the week of August 4th through the 8th. The camp taught 40 plus youth about social justice issues (i.e. sexual health, reproductive justice, condom access, power and oppression, youth leadership, etc.) This year’s camp
had a “mind, body & spirit” framework and ultimately concluded with youth taking to the street of downtown Chicago to attain signatures of citizens who reject Title V.

Preparing for AOL was both stressful and fun. We had many meetings over the course of my internship. Our meetings with Young Parent Allies (YPA) and Youth Organizers (YO) typically began at 4 p.m. or 5 p.m. and sometimes went to 6:30-7:00 pm. We brainstormed about workshops we planned on conducting at AOL! and to make sure we were all privy to the latest policies and issues that affect young adults, such as parental notice. Adult allies, like myself, collaborated with the YO’s to develop and facilitate the ninety minute workshop throughout the week of AOL.

Some of the tedious, but necessary work I had to do as the logistics’ team leader was researching décor for the event, gaining donations, soliciting sponsorship, designating the venue for the event, researching and purchasing breakfast, snacks, lunch and supplies for AOL, negotiating costs to stay within budget, and developing and maintaining lists...lots and lots of lists (participant lists, food lists, snack lists. staff cleanup list, contact lists, mailing lists etc.) I also spent a lot of time researching activities in sync with the theme of AOC and icebreakers for the program.

I was responsible for delegating responsibilities to other interns and staff members at ICAH who were part of the “Logistic Squad!” The people I worked closely with (Emily, Laura, Becca and Kevin) were vital to the ultimate success of
Action Out Loud! They also lent plenty of support to me beyond my responsibilities with AOL, and I am a better person for having worked with them.

Getting to know the participants before the actual event was exciting and frustrating as well. I, and several interns, conducted over the phone interviews with youth who submitted applications for AOL. Many potential participants were hard to reach or provided inaccurate contact info. Proceeding with plans without a headcount made purchasing an ordeal….did we have too little, did we have too much? It was a guessing game up until the week of the event.

Despite some inevitable hiccups in organizing, the outcome of the event made it all worth it. The week of AOL went by so quickly and we had lots of fun. We ultimately had the event at my old community college Harold Washington College. The ICAH staff said it was the best venue they’ve ever had….and I was able to get my former college to sponsor the space!! I saved ICAH a great deal and I believe Harold Washington College is willing to continue sponsoring AOL every summer!