

Dimarie Camareno: Using College Experience to Jump-Start A Career

When Springfield native Dimarie Camareno enrolled for a work-study program through the UMass Field Experience office in college a few years ago, she didn't dream it would lead directly to a job offer upon graduation. But that is exactly what happened for this 2006 University of Massachusetts Amherst grad.

"My goal as an undergraduate was to get education and experience that would allow me to start a career after graduating, working with youth in the community I grew up in," she says. Through the UMass Amherst Field Experience office, Dimarie obtained a position at the New England Adolescent Research Institute (NEARI) in Holyoke. NEARI includes a day school for highly at-risk children and youth; a brain-based education and resource center; training and consulting center; Jump-Start -- a relationship-based after-school program for at-risk children and youth living in Holyoke; and the NEARI PRESS, which produces evidence-based books and resources.

Dimarie's experience there, which was documented in a UMass class-required daily log, culminated in a research paper based on her fieldwork. "Finding the opportunity to work with youth while in school allowed me to really immerse myself in that population and learn the many difficulties they face." Once the semester's work-study program was over, Dimarie was excited to be offered a part-time job at NEARI. She was employed there through the remainder of her time in college, and says, "I enjoyed every minute of it!"

Dimarie majored in psychology and Spanish, and was involved in Boricuas Unidos (Puerto Ricans United) – which promotes awareness of the Puerto Rican community, and the Bilingual Collegiate Program, through which she worked at the Latin American Cultural Center in the Southwest complex at UMass Amherst. "Through UMass Amherst, I got hands-on experience in the population I knew I wanted to work with," she says.

After graduating, Dimarie was offered a fulltime position with NEARI, and is now site coordinator for the Jump-Start after-school program held there for neighborhood children. She also is a part-time electives teacher in the school, with classes as diverse as Cultures in the Pioneer Valley to art classes specifically for female students. Dimarie's goal is to pursue a Master's degree in Social Work in the next few years.

Dimarie has parlayed that first UMass-directed work-study experience into a job she loves, working with children in her community. Her job is truly an outgrowth of her major and extracurricular activities she participated in while at UMass Amherst, and is groundwork for her future goals. She is an extraordinary example of a new graduate putting her degree to use in her own community here in the Pioneer Valley – and enriching it with her concerned involvement.



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