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Beech-Nut Nutrition Corporation and the Amsterdam Community

CALS NYS Internship Program 2013

Introduction
As a biological engineer, my interests focus on combining the intriguing aspects of natural life and the analytical and synthetic methodologies of engineering to solve problems in a variety of fields. This internship offered an opportunity to apply my skills to laboratory analyses and engage in special projects in a major company - Beech-Nut Nutrition Corporation.

Learning Action Plan
My main goals for the internship included gaining laboratory experience in a professional setting and being able to work both independently and collaboratively on projects.

Host Organization
The history of Beech-Nut extends to its founding in 1931, when it first began to produce 13 varieties of baby food in unprecedented patented vacuum glass jars when other manufacturers were using lead-soldered metal cans. Beech-Nut was also the first company to offer age-specific varieties and ingredients, designed to help parents follow the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) feeding guidelines. Simply based on the number of breakthroughs and "historic firsts," it is clear that Beech-Nut is a hot spot of innovation and creativity - a quality, from my perspective as a young professional, that promotes youth attraction and retention in Amsterdam.

On-Site Projects
As a part of the Quality Assurance Department, my responsibilities included testing products with multiple laboratory techniques, leading special independent projects for the department, and improving standard laboratory procedures. The most prominent collaborative project involved closely working with a member of the Engineering department to adjust the sensitivity of a metal detector and conduct a validation of its minimum detection. Throughout the entire process, I documented and coordinated the tests to be done with regards to the type and size of metal. In the end, we established the optimal sensitivity to reject the smallest metal fragments we could test without the metal detector causing a higher amount of false rejects.

Community Capitals in Amsterdam
The strongest capital of the seven community capitals in Amsterdam is natural capital. Unlike most heavily-urbanized cities, Amsterdam does have a quite a few parks and recreational areas within and around the city.

Community Socio-Demographic and Economic Profile
Once known for its economic boom in textile and carpet manufacturing during the 19th century, the city of Amsterdam has quieted down to a "neighborhood-like" community with many prominent historical sites. Among other characteristics, the percent change of population in Montgomery County from 1970 to 2011 is notable at -11.1%. With a median age change of 44.5 to 50.1 from 2000 to 2011, the town of Amsterdam displays a trend of people leaving rather than attracting new prospecting youth.

Future
The experience of leading both collaborative and independent projects in a professional setting has given me the confidence to potentially engage in laboratory work or undertake more leadership positions during the closure of my undergraduate years.

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