

Careers In Compassion

American Humanics prepares next generation nonprofit leaders

When used needles and burnt spoons are as common as crayons and coloring books around the house, it's easy to see why kids of substance abusers often follow in their parents' footsteps. "But when a child hears these statistics time after time," says Roni Flakes, "it can become very discouraging."

Now a senior in the American Humanics nonprofit management and leadership program at the University of Arkansas-Little Rock, Roni could have become just another statistic. Fortunately she has never let circumstances stand in the way of her purpose.

"My way of conquering that shame was to begin telling others my story," she explains. "It was empowering, and I found that I can be a voice for those that might not have the courage to speak for themselves."

Roni's passion led her to UA-Little Rock's American Humanics program. There she gained competency in fundraising, volunteer management, and other skills needed to turn her passion into a career.

American Humanics (AH) is a national alliance of colleges, universities, and nonprofits dedicated to preparing the next generation of nonprofit leaders. The AH certificate is offered at nearly 70 universities nationwide; AH graduates are now professionals with organization such as March of Dimes, Girl Scouts, 4-H, and the YMCA.

The AH NextGen Leaders Award is a competitive scholarship program to support AH students serving as interns with nonprofit organizations. Roni was recognized as a NextGen Leader



Roni Flakes, recognized for her inspiring story at the 2009 AH Management/Leadership Institute, Indianapolis, Ind.

last summer. In January she told her story to over 1,000 AH students, faculty, and nonprofit professionals attending the annual AH Management/Leadership Institute in Indianapolis.

"Through my involvement with AH I found Simone's Home, Inc., a residential girls' home started by a graduate of the AH program," she said. AH coursework helped Roni prepare for a productive internship. "I presented a fundraising plan to the board of directors and saw many of my ideas utilized in the organization," she continued. "That's something that I'm really proud of."

Many nonprofit internships are unpaid, which can inhibit people like Roni from exploring a career in helping others. The NextGen scholarship provides a \$4500 stipend to help support the intern's living expenses. Of the 385 NextGen Leaders recognized so far, ___ are female and ___ are

students of color. A significant portion of AH students are non-traditional; many return to school to pursue a career that makes a difference.

"I found that my real passion was to help those who are going through what I've been through. I can be a voice for those that might not have the courage to speak for themselves."

Nonprofits represent the fastest growing sector in the US economy. They will need a significant number of talented, diverse leaders as the current generation retires. AH is committed to adding diversity to the workforce and leadership in the sector. Communities of color consistently represent 35-40% of the AH student body, including talented and passionate people like Roni.

"It was so powerful and so touching to see young girls in those same situations as mine, to hear them lovingly call me 'Mommy,' and to be able to make a difference in their lives, Roni says. "It has been a blessing to be part of the AH program."

For more information, visit www.humanics.org or call (800) 343-6466.



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