

Hometown: Auburn, NY

College: George Washington University, 2012

1) What made you decide to pursue an internship with Congressman Arcuri?



I go to college in DC [at George Washington University]. Some of my friends that are older said that one of the best experiences and, kind of, unique things you can do here is intern on the hill. So, I looked into it and thought, where better to start than my home district-I thought it would be a really cool way to connect back to where I am from. I went onto the website and there was a button asking if I wanted an internship with Congressman Arcuri and I was like, "Yes!" I got a reply the next day scheduling an interview and then started shortly after.

2) What is one thing you have learned about Congress or interning that really surprised you?

I never realized how big the Capitol Complex was, or how many people it take to make everything work so smoothly. Beyond Members of Congress and their personal staff, there seems to be a job for everything. I guess I assumed this was sort of a quiet place; between everyone who works here and the tons of visitors, it's anything but. Even though it is so big and there are so many people here everyday, you still see people you know or didn't know you knew. Not too long ago I was walking down the hall and ran into another intern who, coincidentally, lives two floors above me in my dorm building.

3) What is your impression of Washington, DC and how does it differ from home?

Washington, DC is, for starters, a lot bigger than Auburn. And even though it's so large, everybody walks or takes the metro; nobody drives. Even though I really miss driving, it's nice actually, because it seems like everything is within walking distance and you get the chance to really enjoy the city. But, as a pedestrian you have to be careful. Every time I walk, I am always on the phone. I feel like at least once per conversation, I end up interrupting because I've gone to cross the street at the wrong time or someone didn't stop right away. I guess the blinking "Walk" sign doesn't mean the same thing here as it dose back home.

4) What is something that you have learned that you will continue to use after your internship?

I am really comfortable talking to people I know, but I didn't like to talk to strangers and I hated calling people; I would even refuse to call the pizza guy. This internship has forced me to have to talk to people-all the time. You need the ability to communicate; between giving tours of the Capitol, receiving visitors in the office, or taking constituent phone calls.

5) What do you think is the most important issue for Congress to address?

Personally, I think as a nation, we should become more invested in Africa. It just seems like they have been left alone to struggle with a multitude of humanitarian issues like the HIV/AIDS epidemic, widespread poverty, internal conflicts and genocide. Everyone knows that these things are going on, but the rest of the world just sits idle because it doesn't directly affect us. Being such an important nation in the world, we should take it upon ourselves to do more, regardless of what is happening here at home.

6) What are your plans after graduation?

Growing up overseas, I gained an appreciation for the U.S.'s role in the international community. And although I have a long way to go because I am only a freshman now, I am pursuing a degree in international affairs with a concentration in Africa and cultural studies, and a minor in geography. After graduation, I hope to join the Peace Corps or join a not-for-profit

organization that will allow me to go to Africa and help. Ultimately, I would love to work for the United Nations, but I really need to get in gear to learn some foreign languages-I'm stuck on English, currently.

7) What advice would you give a prospective intern?

I would say that they shouldn't be embarrassed if they do not know how to use the office equipment. Being technologically illiterate made it really hard for me at first-even simple things, like using the phones or sending a fax. At first, I was trying to transfer calls and hanging up on people and sending blank faxes because, apparently, if the page is facing up people don't get them. In time, I got the hang of it, and I don't think I've hung up on anyone or sent a blank fax since.

8) Walk me through your first day?

The night before I was really nervous and couldn't get to sleep. I left my dorm room really early thinking it might take me 45 minutes or so to get to the office. I had never ridden the metro that far, so I didn't know how long it would take me. Even after getting off at the wrong stop, I still got there in like 15 minutes. So, I decided to grab breakfast at a little café to kill time. A few minutes before 8:00am, I arrived at the office to find a bunch of papers bundled outside and the door locked. I waited patiently outside the door for everyone to come in at 8:00am, but no one came. People were looking at me as they walked by and I had no idea why. It turns out;

because the House was out of session, the office doesn't open those days until 9:00am and staff dresses casually-I was all dressed up for my first day, and really stood out as a new intern.

9) What is your impression of Congressman Arcuri and how does it differ from before you started your internship?

I had the opportunity to meet the Congressman before because he came to Auburn High School and spoke to my class when I was a senior. Because it was a government class we asked him a lot of questions; he seemed genuinely interested in what we were asking and tried to impart as much wisdom upon us as he could in such a brief amount of time. During my internship I have learned, that is how he interacts with everyone who comes into his office. Even if he has to, literally, run over to the Capitol because he has one or two minutes left to vote, he takes the time to talk to everyone, and you can tell he is really listening to what they have to say.

10) Is there anything you have done or tried in DC that you have never done/tried before (could be food, activity, ect)?

The first thing everybody does when they come to Washington is go to the Mall and see all the monuments. It's great to see them, but you have to fight your way around because of all the tourists. After I came here, I found out the best time to go is at night, when all of the monuments are lit up. There is only ever a hand full of people around, so there are no crowds to fight and it's actually almost peaceful. There's something special about sitting on the steps of the Lincoln memorial in the middle of the night and looking out over the mall and just taking-in the DC skyline.

11) Is there any type of food you really miss or something you've had in DC that they don't make quite like at home?

You don't know Spiedie Chicken? It started in Binghamton, like they have a Spiedie Fest every year, but I've gotten it at the state fair; I think it's all over the place. It's this marinade with herbs in it and you cut up the chicken, shake it up and put it on a roll or eat it like popcorn. I don't know, but it's so delicious! I'm going to remember to get a few bottles of the marinade from Wegmans when I go home.

12) Has anything funny or embarrassing happened to you during your internship?

So I answer a phone call, and go through the greeting, "Good morning, Congressman Arcuri's office, this is Marisa speaking, how may I help you?" and I got this hurried sort of response, "It's Mike, I need Sam." I was thinking to myself...ok, slow down, I can't just transfer you over. So, I curtly asked if I could have his last name and organization before I checked to see if Sam was available. It turns out this "Mike's" last name was "Arcuri." And I was like...oh, ok. Hold on one second Congressman, let me get him.

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