

Where Are They Now?

[McMinnville WORKS Internship Program](#)

By Christopher Nobles, MEDP Internship Program Coordinator 2021

I admit that I'm a big fan of the Broadway show, Hamilton. No, I'm not a bandwagon follower. I'm simply a fan of good music and awesome storytelling. It's a great show, and if you haven't seen it you're missing out. One of my favorite elements of the show is its use of themes, specifically on the idea of "legacy." Near the end of the show, the main character asks a simple question. "What is a legacy?" He answers, "It's planting seeds in a garden you never get to see." While his sentiment is poignant, I'm not sure if it's entirely true. Some of our efforts do bloom in time for us to see their fruits, and when they do, we should pause, take a breath, and appreciate the story we are creating.

Each of us has our own story, and all of us, at one time or another, get to play a role in the story of others. This summer, I've had the



2021 Intern Cohort at the Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum

opportunity to be a part of an organization's story. [MEDP](#), McMinnville Economic Development Partnership, and more specifically, the [McMinnville WORKS Internship Program](#). This program is dedicated to the growth of a healthy workforce and the development of young professionals. I get to help write that story. Today, I want to pause, take a breath, and appreciate all the people who have been in the program before me. I want to take a look at the story we are writing, the legacy we are creating, and what better way to do it than by taking a look at the program's alumni, and where they are now. I think it's a good reminder of how our stories can have a meaningful effect on those around us, and as Hamilton would say, "History has its eyes on you."

The challenge with writing a story about the McMinnville WORKS alumni is that it would be impossible to interview each individual within the 9 weeks that my internship lasts. Since the program began in 2013 it has seen 1,192 applicants and 119 interns, which includes [Career Bound](#) (founded in 2019 for high school students). However, I would be able to interview at least a few. So I reached out to some of the program's alumni, and asked them to each answer the question, where are they now? Where did they go after their internship position, and what

newfound knowledge did they take with them? One sunny afternoon, I sat down in McMinnville coffee shop Mac Market, across from alumni Chris Poole, and asked him just that.

Chris Poole

“Just know that you are not alone, and to keep persevering and working towards the future.”

Chris Poole and I share a couple of things in common. Most obviously, we share a name, but more interestingly, we both have held the same position at MEDP, only Chris held the Intern Coordinator position in 2015, six years before me. Unlike most interns, Chris held three positions through the McMinnville WORKS Program, first as a Marketing Intern at MEDP and then as the Intern Coordinator, and finally another marketing position with Oregon Lithoprint. By the time he finished, Chris had gained valuable project management and leadership skills, all of which would play a huge role in getting him to where he is now. Today, Chris is working with one of the largest companies in the world, Nike.

Chris grew up in the Salem area, and after graduating high school, he decided to attend Linfield University in the fall of 2013 to earn his bachelor of arts in business management. He graduated in three years, but those years were spent not only as a student, but also as a track & field athlete, and as a Resident Assistant (RA) on campus. He added more to his plate during his second year when he signed up to be a Marketing Intern for MEDP during the winter and spring months. When the time came for the summer program to begin, Chris decided that he enjoyed working with MEDP, and applied for the summer Internship Coordinator position.

As the McMinnville WORKS Internship Coordinator, Chris organized weekly Professional Development Workshops, planned events, and marketed the program.



Chris Poole and his wife, Chris

The experience was largely a new one for Chris, but because he had been working with MEDP since January, he quickly picked up the routine. When I asked him if he was nervous at all, he said of course he was, but whenever he began to doubt his ability, he remembered that “They hired you for a reason.” That’s been a motto of his ever since.

Chris graduated from Linfield the following spring and decided to return to the McMinnville WORKS Program for another summer internship. This time around, he was hired by a different

Host Site in the program, Oregon Lithoprint, as a Social Media Marketing Intern, where he developed social media content and ran multiple advertising campaigns. Although his position was similar in many ways to the first two, Chris said that he had grown, not only in his professional skills but just as importantly, in his confidence as a project manager. As Chris said to me, "Project management applies to everything," and he's still using those skills today.

As an athlete, one of my first questions was, "How did you land a job at Nike?" Chris stated that it had always been a dream job of his, it just took a while to find the opportunity. After finishing school and his time with MEDP, Chris worked in a few different jobs, including one as an Assistant Planner at Kroger and a Sales Analyst at Columbia Sportswear. Then his opportunity appeared in the form of a friend and fellow Linfield alumni who worked at Nike and who knew of an opening. Through his connection, Chris applied, and in October of 2020, he joined the organization as an MPO Specialist Lead. Chris achieved his dream job faster than some, and slower than others, but what he expressed was the importance of the hard work and perseverance that it took to get there. Like a race, achieving one's goal often requires endurance as much as anything else. Chris's perseverance towards a goal led him to a position he has thrived in and an organization that he would love to remain with for the foreseeable future.

Since his time interning through the McMinnville WORKS Program, Chris has worked diligently to build both successful relationships and a career. He and his wife married in July 2021 and they now live in Newberg. During his free time, Chris coaches cross country at Sherwood High School, and he still loves to run on his own on a daily basis. When I asked Chris for any final advice, he said, "We live in unprecedented times today. Just know that you are not alone, and to keep persevering and working towards the future. Everything will end up working out, it may just take longer for some than others!"

Erin Moller

"Say yes to every opportunity. Expose yourself to everything you can."

While some alumni move on to work at other Oregon companies like Nike, others, like Erin Moller, love to work in McMinnville. Erin, a Linfield graduate and McMinnville WORKS alumni, now works at Predicta, a local Artificial Intelligence Software Company, as an Administrative and Financial Controller.

Erin took part in the 2016 cohort as an Editorial Intern at Suite 4. The experience was new for her, but her confidence quickly began to grow as she attended the Professional Development Workshops, specifically because she was able to do it with a group of young adults just like her. They were all learning together, figuring out the professional world one step at a time, and it helped Erin to know she wasn't alone in that journey.

During my conversation with Erin, she emphasized that her path hasn't been the most predictable, but it's been made possible simply by her willingness to say yes to new opportunities. She began her college journey when she decided to move from Southern

California to McMinnville to attend Linfield University, where she played soccer, and double majored in psychology and in marketing. She worked both as an Office Assistant and a Research Assistant while at Linfield, and she did all of this through the time that she was an intern at Suite 4. Her internship and college experience both ended in spring 2017, but her enthusiasm for research and learning new things through new experiences would carry her into the next stage in her life.



Erin Moller

Erin's current position with Predicta began because of her interest in psychology, specifically, the interaction of humans and technology. While she already had the background to study the human side of the interaction, she wanted to learn more about the technological side, and therefore she joined the team at Predicta in the fall of 2017. Since she has begun working at Predicta, Erin has worn many hats and had many great opportunities that she never expected she would have. Her diverse education in psychology and marketing has helped her succeed in many situations, and she expressed that even though she never could have guessed where she would be today, she loves the team she is now working with. When I asked her for a piece of advice to share with future interns, she said, "Say yes to every opportunity. Expose yourself to everything you can."

Lacey Dykgraaf

"Make the most of the connections you can make here."

One of the biggest benefits of having a McMinnville WORKS internship is the potential of joining the organization full-time after the program, and that is exactly what Lacey Dykgraaf did. Like Chris Poole and I, Lacey worked as the McMinnville WORKS Internship Coordinator during the summer program, and afterward, she was hired as the MEDP Communications Manager, a position in which she excelled for over three years. Lacey recently earned her MBA from Willamette University and is now working as the Community Engagement Manager for the City of Newberg.

In 2016, Lacey graduated from Linfield University with a double major in English and in marketing. During her time in college, she had held several positions, including an internship at a craft shop and as a Teacher's Assistant (TA), but she also wanted to be part of the McMinnville WORKS Internship Program. An opportunity appeared when one of her classes required her to have a mock interview with a local company. It just so happened that the

company that she interviewed with was MEDP. The interview wasn't for a real position, but it was a chance for Lacey to meet the MEDP team in person. Not long after, she applied to the MEDP WORKS Program and was hired as the Internship Coordinator for the summer of 2016.

During our conversation, Lacey expressed how acquiring her position after her college experience benefited her in a couple of different ways. For one, it allowed her to be hired directly after the internship, but also, Lacey felt much more confident in her role than she would have in previous years. Her college experience and multiple jobs had helped prepare her for her internship and given her the needed skills to thrive in her new position. She felt excited and prepared. However, there was one thing she wasn't prepared for, and that was how welcoming the McMinnville community was. She had spent most of her time at Linfield on the campus, but when she stepped out into McMinnville, she learned how open and willing local professionals were to help in any way they could. As she put it, "Mac helps everyone."



Lacey Dykgraaf

Following her summer internship, Lacey was hired by MEDP as the Communications Manager, where she stayed for three years before moving a short distance away for a new position with the City of Newberg. Lacey is now the Community Engagement Manager at the City of Newberg and handles all kinds of marketing and community projects. When she and I sat down and talked about her story, it was clear that a lot of hard work had gone into getting her to where she is now, but one of the things I appreciated the most was Lacey's willingness to help those who are in the position that she once was. She recognizes the importance of networking with others and assisting them in their personal journey. As the old saying goes, sometimes it's not what you know, but who you know.

When I asked her for advice about the program, she said, "Treat it like a 9-week interview, because that's what it is... Make the most of the connections you can make here. This is an experience you can truly use as a multiplier to new opportunities." For Lacey, her internship was exactly that, an interview that helped prepare her for the next step in her career. Now she is not only writing her own story but helping those who come after.

For the last nine years, the McMinnville WORKS Program has been helping young professionals like Chris, Erin, and Lacey pursue their career dreams and build successful futures. No matter where each intern is coming from, the program aims to equip each individual with the tools they will need to achieve their goals.



The three individuals spoken of here are just a few examples of how perseverance, willingness to learn and a little networking can

2014 McMinnville WORKS Interns

go a long way to help build a successful future. After interviewing each individual, I felt that the McMinnville WORKS Program is about more than just placing young adults in successful jobs, although that is undoubtedly a worthy goal. It's about more than adding recommendations to a resume or gathering business cards. The legacy of the program is about teaching individuals life lessons and skills that will benefit them not just in their next job, but for the rest of their lives. The program is about raising up people who can make a difference, shaping people into not only professionals but storytellers as well. I think that is something we all desire, the ability to write our own stories, our own legacies. I doubt we will ever acquire that ability completely, but with the correct skills and guidance, we take one step closer.

Afterward

As mentioned before, I was far from able to interview every individual who has walked through the program, however, I was able to gather some of their quotes regarding the experiences they had and the knowledge they have taken with them. View this as a gift from the McMinnville WORKS Alumni, a few nuggets of wisdom and advice to help you write your story.



Christopher Nobles, 2021 MEDP Internship Program Coordinator

McMinnville WORKS Alumni Quotes

“Seize every opportunity that you can, even if that means stepping outside of your comfort zone!”

- **Aimee Bruner** - Aimee is currently an Electrical Engineer at Black & Veatch

“It’s so invaluable to be able to gain work experience in your field of study.”

- **Chase Doyel** - Chase is now a Product Development Engineer at RoClayCo



2016 McMinnville WORKS Intern Cohort

“Be open to all experiences and always take plenty of notes. It’s a great experience that will teach you so much if you let it.”

- **Cory Finlay** - Cory is currently an Apprentice Plumber at A.R.M Plumbing

The McMinnville Works Internship Program *“Provided valuable information and awareness about the workforce and hiring process.”*

- **Dmitrey Timofeyev** - Dmitrey is now a Manufacturing Engineer at Solar Turbines
“It (the WORKS program) helped me grow in my confidence as a young professional. I’m now able to navigate through company communications and culture much more easily.”

- **Emily Meeuwsen** - Emily who is now a Proposal and Marketing Coordinator at Ameresco



“Never stop being curious.”

- **Geneva Garcia** - Geneva is currently a videographer at Loyola University of Chicago

“(I) learned from amazing people with a lot of great professional and

life advice that I carry with me to this day.” - James Vaughan -
James is now a Mortgage Servicing Representative at U.S. **2018 McMinnville WORKS Interns** Bank.

“Learn as much as you can about everything you can. You never know how useful some random bit of information you learn today can be to you three, five, 10 years down the line.”

- **Jessica Chance** - Jessica is currently an Assistant Winemaker at E. & J. Gallo Winery



2017 McMinnville WORKS Interns

“Make the most of the connections you can make here. This is an experience you can truly use as a multiplier to new opportunities.”

- **Lacey Dykgraaf** - Lacey is now the Community Engagement Manager for the City of Newberg

“Take advantage of every opportunity. If something sounds interesting, make that interest known to your manager. Showing your enthusiasm for the work/company (even if it's not directly related to your internship) goes a long way.”

- **Lexie Smithrud** - Lexie is now a Project Coordinator at American Income Life: AO

“Fully commit to the program, invest in relationships, and ask a lot of questions!”

- **Ryan Lockwood** - Ryan is currently a Director of Operations at Avamere Health Services

If you are McMinnville WORKS or Career Bound Alumni, please keep in touch through the [LinkedIn Group](#) or by emailing info@mcminnvillebusiness.com we'd love to do a sequel!

About the Author

This article was written in August 2021 by Christopher Nobles, the 2021 McMinnville WORKS Internship Coordinator. Chris is completing his degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in Marketing and Leadership at Corban University where he is also President of the Hoff School of Business Association.

[McMinnville WORKS](#) is internationally recognized and an awarded workforce development program. Through generous support of the Oregon Community Foundation and the Ford Family Foundation, MEDP supports communities across the state to build their own WORKS programming through the [Oregon WORKS](#) network.