

Alexander Voses

GNBCC Students and Scientists Research Program 2020

Great Neck South High School

My summer internship experience over four weeks this summer has been an amazing one. It was a fantastic educational experience and I left the program with important information to share with my community. I was able to meet many new people, all of whom taught me something new. I completed two science communication projects, a video and an infographic. Dr. Vandenberg is a great mentor and provided valuable guidance and knowledge throughout the entire program.

During my experience, I learned about various environmental factors that increase the risk factors for breast cancer and other ailments. While Dr. Vandenberg provided us all with a general overview of the chemicals her lab studies, we were each encouraged to do our own research about a specific chemical that increased risk factors for breast cancer.

The chemical I researched was BPS, which has been shown to have adverse effects on female reproduction, mammary gland development, and maternal social behavior. BPS has been marketed as a safer alternative to BPA but has been shown to be just as harmful, if not worse, in certain ways. With this new knowledge, I was able to inform my family about the dangers of BPS and encouraged them to pay greater attention to the plastic used in products they buy. Due to the circumstances caused by COVID-19, my ability to spread this knowledge has been delayed. However, with Dr.

Vandenberg's assistance, we were each able to create an infographic that could be shared easily over any social media platform.

Over the course of this internship, I had the opportunity to work with both my peers and graduate students. Both of these groups helped make this experience truly special. My fellow high school students provided me with welcome feedback and suggestions for my two projects and helped create a very collaborative environment despite the fact that we were working on different projects. The graduate students' work served as examples for what we strived to achieve and they were kind enough to share their work with us so that we could learn something from each of them. They were also very generous with their time and were willing to talk to us about anything from science to the college process.

Dr. Vandenberg was a great role model and mentor for us. In addition to being an incredible teacher and helping us understand the complex topics we covered, Dr. Vandenberg also gave us a glimpse of the path to becoming a professional researcher. I am most thankful that she was able to create this program for us and provide us with a unique experience from home. When I heard the news that the in-person program had been cancelled, I was extremely disappointed. However, the at-home program was everything I could have asked for and more.

Many thanks to GNBCC for this fantastic opportunity this summer. Thanks to Laura Weinberg and Lisa Levine for running such an enlightening program and enabling us all to continue our pursuit of learning in spite of the extraordinary circumstances. I also thank Dr. Vandenberg for making every meeting enjoyable and informative.