



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Stephen T. Chan

Our Interns' Experience

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This year, Senator Chan welcomed almost 20 interns into the office, many of them being high schoolers. Before the internship began, the office of Senator Chan wanted the internship experience to be a multifaceted account of public service. Throughout the six-week internship, the many interns had experience with constituent services, press releases, conferences, community affairs, and outreach. The experience, we hope, was just as impactful and meaningful for our interns as it was for us. And, we hope that our interns walk away with a renewed appreciation for public service.

Below are the accounts of nine of our interns.

We wish them the best of luck in their continued passions and pursuits.

Nihan Lobo Huerta

I applied to work for Senator Chan for the hopes of reinforcing my passion for political science behind the scenes—I didn't know that instead, I would learn that and more.

Initially, when I had first started interning for the Senator, I expected to be behind a cubicle working behind the scenes, and while there were opportunities for that, a huge portion of the internship was getting me and the other interns out of our own comfort zone. At the end of the day: Politics is focused on helping your own community.

One of the most memorable experiences I had was attending the Police Department in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. Planned by Ari Kagan, a former city council member who was thrilled to showcase the wide variety in policing. While interning, we were able to meet the chief director of police. Despite the introductions, it led me to have a reflection on the work that policies will continue to do. Aside from only meeting policies, we meet other city council members as well who taught us what they typically do in their job, an underrepresented job, while also granting the chance to meet the help behind running the New Utrecht librarian. Who knew that giving away books was harder than one thinks? It's important to be able to appreciate those who work and keep the city running.

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Becoming a politician is also about learning your own audience.

One of the first lessons learned for someone creating their product is that politicians are also in a way similar. A valuable lesson that I learned while interning with not only the Senator, but also fundraising events, opening of restaurants, and speaking on valuable issues such as the homeless protests. This became truly apparent, even in my own experiences with my coworkers, where we had to make flyers. Understanding our audiences would help us understand the viewership as to who would want to participate in the events through the flyer. The same lesson would also apply while crafting articles, led by our communication manager who lent us the opportunity to help members in our community be able to process a fast-paced article on an issue that had occurred.

But my favorite experience was visiting the senator's office, an experience I didn't expect to be able to go behind the office and visit. In my prior experience, I was able to research the building and knew some of the most highlighted officials who were partaking in the office such as the governor. But the visiting experience truly changed my perspective, through the constant floors and walls each was decorated with embroidered paintings. In one of the halls, there were paintings depicting New York City, through different decades. In all sincerity, this made me have a memorable experience because I found an interesting scene depicting the wagon, and the next is depicting the city buildings behind gas. Different interactions of what make New York City whole, both depicting it rightfully. But aside from the paintings, the Senator's own office was an interesting site into his achievements that aren't as easily seen. When I first walked into his office alongside the other interns, the first thing to catch my eye was his achievement. It was a miniature statue of a Chinese deity in its stand. When asked, he told me it was a celebration after serving the highest position as the first Chinese American. Not only was this award honorable, but it made me understand that from a student wanting to study political science- the love for serving your community runs deeper than only serving in a position, but truly doing an act that could impact others.

The senator chose this by making his community safer by policing, whereas this made me further reflect on my way to serve through my community. One by one.

Fiona Shpak

Boring summer job? Not at Senator Chan's office. Whether we attended a press conference, visited a community center, or spoke directly with politicians, we were almost never bored. Every day presented a new task or challenge, an opportunity to better the community, learn something new, and connect with people from all walks of life.

One of the most memorable days was our trip to the State Capitol in Albany. We had to meet up early and set out on the long drive upstate. I was assigned to ride in the Senator's car, and I expected a quiet, uneventful trip. The other interns in the back seat dozed off or distracted themselves with movies, but I had a front-row seat to something far more interesting. The Senator and I ended up talking for hours, covering everything from how laws are written and passed in the state senate to the challenges of representing a diverse district. We also spoke about college, career paths, and different ways to serve the public. It felt less like a car ride and more like a personal mentorship session, one that left me inspired and with a clearer vision of the possibilities ahead.

After the car ride, we arrived in Albany and were quickly ushered into a whirlwind tour of the Capitol. We explored the senate chambers, meeting rooms, and the offices of senate staff who work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep government running smoothly. Walking through the ornate halls, we came across relics of New York's history displayed like treasures in a museum, statues, artifacts, and paintings that told the stories of the state's past. We learned about the innovators who shaped the world with creations we still rely on today, many of which we were surprised to discover had originated in New York. Every stop on the

tour brought something new to learn, and every conversation added a deeper layer to our understanding of how the state operates.

By the time we left Albany, I realized that the day had been more than just a field trip, it was an inside look at the inner parts of state government. Seeing the intricate process of lawmaking, meeting the people who dedicate their careers to public service, and engaging in thoughtful discussions throughout the day made me feel more connected to my community and more certain about my own future in public service. What I once thought might be just another summer job had turned into an experience that would stay with me for years to come.

Amy Wu

I first learned about an internship opportunity for Senator Stephen Chan through the program SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program). Through the internship, I was given the opportunity to attend and participate in many different kinds of events that I would otherwise not be able to. As the interns were given a variety of tasks throughout the internship, I was also able to experience and learn about a variety of skills.

During the end of the school year, I was looking for more ways to expand my knowledge while contributing to my community and this was it. However, I've always been curious about what the back scenes were like behind the news I read on articles and the events that occur in our communities. So when I was presented with the opportunity to join the Senator's team even if it was temporary, I was overjoyed.

While interning, I was able to learn more about the ongoing issues and events within not only my community but also within the surrounding communities. Constituents would come into the office for sorts of reasons. It could range from helping them translate letters

to helping them find justice for their son who was assaulted. When the staff members spoke to the constituents, I would shadow them in order to learn about the issues occurring in the communities and programs that were available to help people. Occasionally, I also helped in any areas I could such as Mandarin or Spanish translation. Additionally, I was provided opportunities to go out in the field and personally observe how the Senator works at events or even participate in the events myself.

There were many aspects that I liked about interning for the Senator. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the interns were given opportunities to attend any events that they wanted. These events had a wide range. We could be helping clean up the community, attend the grand opening of a business, or learning more about how the police worked. One of my favorite and most memorable events was our excursion to Albany. The Senator assisted the interns in gaining permission to visit the New York State Capitol and even accessing the rooms that would normally not be open to the public such as the Senator's office. Not only were the rooms and building gorgeous, but it was also very informative and provided me more insight on how the officials voted. However, if I had to point out an aspect that the internship would need to improve on, it would be better scheduling of interns. Since the interns were given flexible hours, sometimes there would be too many interns, which resulted in some without a task.

Thanks to this internship, I got to expand my awareness on the issues and events occurring in my community while also contributing back. Most importantly, I had a lot of fun interning as the staff members, other interns, and volunteers made the office a welcoming and enjoyable environment where you could learn while also having fun. I would recommend this experience to any looking to intern or volunteer for Senator Stephen Chan. He welcomes any one who has a love for learning or looking to contribute to the community:

“My heart fills with joy when I see youths get involved in the community. It’s not something we see much now, but I’m happy to see any few that do exist.”

Ayla Chen

I had the privilege of interning at Senator Stephan Chan’s Office. The experience gave me a firsthand look into the responsibilities of a legislative office while also allowing me to contribute meaningfully to Senator Chan’s work on behalf of the community. Although I began this internship seeking professional experience, it became a transformative journey that helped me grow, broadening my perspective on the government, and inspired me to further dedicate myself to public service.

During my internship, I assisted with constituent services on a daily basis through answering phone calls, responding emails, and helping residents navigate resources available. Many of the constituents I spoke with were elderly citizens seeking senior housing or other forms of support. Although learning how to connect them with the right resources was sometimes challenging it was also rewarding at the same time. Through these tasks, I gained a deeper understanding of the importance of patience, empathy, and clear communication.

In addition, I also had the opportunity to support community outreach initiatives. One especially meaningful experience was helping with voter registration efforts in the district. Speaking with residents about the importance of voting reminded me that civic participation is essential to keeping a strong democracy. It was inspiring to see how even small efforts could impact on encouraging civic engagement within the community.

One of the highlights of my internship was traveling to Albany to visit the New York State Capitol and the Legislative Office Building. Stepping into the chambers where decisions that

affect millions of New York state citizens are debated and made was both humbling and inspiring. I gained a deeper understanding of how laws are created, from a bill's introduction to its passage, and witnessed the immense responsibility carried by those in public office. This experience not only reinforced my interest in law and government but also deepened my appreciation for the challenges and importance of the legislative process.

Overall, my internship at Senator Chan's office strengthened my skills in communication, research, and constituent engagement, while also deepening my sense of civic responsibility and appreciation for the impact of public service. Most importantly, it showed me that public service is not just about policy but about people, their stories and their needs. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to work with Senator Chan and his team, whose guidance provided such a meaningful experience. This internship has inspired me to continue seeking opportunities in law, government, and community service, with the aspiration of continuing the cycle of service by giving back to my community.

Eric Li

Volunteering at Senator Chan's office over the course of the summer has provided me with great hands-on opportunities to improve my own community. By allowing us to apply our knowledge in a real-world setting, it has led to us developing new skills and building professional connections. In particular, being able to shadow the constituents' service advisor, I was able to observe problems in our community, and I learned to utilize platforms like Bluebird to streamline assistance with constituents

Along with the guidance of several mentors, I was able to go to numerous events where I was able to network with professionals, allowing me to gain valuable insights in the industry. Furthermore, our communications coordinator, Benjamin, gave us an outlet to express our

own opinions and get our name out by allowing us to write about the trips and events we attended. Through these press releases and articles, I was able to enhance my writing skills in the professional world, as well as enhance my research skills.

The trips and events were a great way to gain insight about the community and its people. For example, I attended the National Night Out, where we supported the police community and their fight against crime. It was enriching to see local residents, community leaders, and officers come together in a positive setting for the betterment and safety of our community. We strived to inform our community by distributing pamphlets and the constitution to passing residents during the event. This experience helped strengthen community awareness, but also highlighted how important accessibility to information is in empowering citizens and shaping their neighborhoods.

Another great event that I attended was the Chan and Chang 8th Ave Cleanup on August 11th, where we gathered as a community to clean up debris, making the area better and more welcoming. Events like these showed me how small actions like picking up trash can lead to a big impact on the community. I like to think that these acts of public service are not only about policy but also about actively participating and connecting with the neighborhoods we represent.

Having such an influential figure in our community, like Senator Chan, was truly inspiring. Watching his commitment to serving the community reminded me of the profound impact leadership rooted in integrity and compassion can have. This internship has not only strengthened my sense of civic duty but also deepened my interest in public policy and advocacy. What stood out to me the most was his willingness to take time out of his day to mentor and guide us. Seeing him take an active role in these gatherings gave me a deeper understanding of what it's like to be a leader.

This internship has been invaluable in broadening my worldview and has helped strengthen my commitment to our community. I gained an innumerable amount of skills through opportunities from assisting constituents and going to events to learning directly from Senator Chan and his team. Most of all, I'm grateful for the chance I got to learn directly from dedicated individuals who strive to improve the lives of the community. This experience has motivated me to look for more ways could improve my community and advocate for long-lasting positive change.

Kayle Kam

Over the course of my summer internship, I gained a deeper understanding of the responsibilities and daily life of Senator Stephen Chan. When I first applied for this internship, I was expecting to be stuck in an office doing boring office work. However, Senator Chan allowed us to come along with him to his events, whether it was grand openings of restaurants or press conferences.

Through traveling with him to events and working with constituents in his office, I was able to witness the Senator's deep connection with his district. Even when he was busy, Senator Chan always took his time to listen to his community and their problems. I watched the way the Senator spoke to everyone with kindness and compassion, and treated all his interns with respect. While traveling to events, Senator Chan shared more about his life story, including his childhood working in the factory and his years spent serving the United States as a marine. I noticed the way his humble and hard-working background shaped his morals and platform as a politician who cares about the safety and quality of life of his district.

One of my favorite moments was attending a Cantonese Opera with the Senator, where he gave a speech and presented an award in Cantonese. Although the opera was located out of

his district, Senator Chan still made a point to attend and show support for his community.

While attending events, I had the pleasure of talking with the Senator and learning about what he stands for as a politician. I admired the way he spoke as a part of the community, rather than a politician. I learned about his constant push for a safer community through stricter regulation of electric vehicles and his support for education and schools.

Senator Chan showed support for his community by listening and showing up. I was able to accompany the Senator to multiple media interviews, where the Senator talked about several accidents in and out of his district. The Senator showed deep compassion for the families of people who were affected in these accidents, which I, along with other interns, would later cover in press releases and articles. For the press releases and articles, we did extensive research on the victims and events to ensure our writing was accurate and conveyed the Senator's commentary on the situation.

On days where I worked in the office, I worked with constituents, helping them solve their issues. The Senator's office always treated everyone with respect and attempted to assist with everyone's problems, whether it be reading mail or applying for senior housing. The staff in the office all spoke different languages, allowing them to help everyone, no matter what language they spoke. When Senator Chan was in the office, he spoke to his constituents himself, listening attentively and taking his time to truly understand their concerns.

During the weeks I spent working as an intern for Senator Stephen Chan, I met his amazing office staff and other interns, many of whom I became close friends with. Working in the Senator's office has taught me important lessons and allowed me to make lasting friendships, which I am extremely grateful for. This experience is one I would recommend to

anyone who is looking to learn the ins and outs of politics, learn more about the community, and visit new places.

Ella Labinskiy

My time interning at Senator Chan's office was an experience that changed the way I think about public service. We learned skills that, at first glance, might seem "boring," but quickly proved to be invaluable. Talking to constituents who came in with real problems often far beyond what I had known before was eye-opening. Some came in frustrated or angry because of their circumstances, but left with a smile after speaking with Senator Chan. There were times when the interns ourselves would step in to speak with constituents, hearing about situations that needed urgent solutions. The staff at Senator Chan's office didn't just tell us how to handle these situations. They showed us, until we were confident enough to take care of them ourselves.

While this was the skill I took away most, my favorite part of the internship was attending events. With Ari Kagan, we toured the 61st Police Precinct to see the daily life of a police officer firsthand. While I'd always heard about what officers do, seeing it in person and hearing their stories was a completely different experience. I also attended Curtis Sliwa's fundraising events, where I was able to meet him, take a photo together, and hear speeches from him and other politicians. That same night, I got to see how truly busy the Senator's days are: halfway through the event, we had to leave abruptly for a press conference, and I didn't get home until 10 p.m.

One of the most impactful experiences came when I learned about the dangers of moped incidents in our neighborhood, something I hadn't even known was an issue before. During my time in the office, there were two fatal moped accidents just days apart. Senator Chan

made it clear this was unacceptable. This tied back to the Barreto case a year earlier, when a man was fatally struck and the consequences were minimal. Determined to send a message to Brooklyn, Senator Chan took us to the District Attorney's office, where I sat in on a meeting with the Chief of Staff, other DA staff members, and the victim's family. I got a rare, behind-the-scenes look at how cases are handled and the work that goes into fighting for justice.

I even had the honor of representing Senator Chan at the American Conservative Party celebration, giving a short speech in his place and meeting prominent Brooklyn politicians.

Overall, this internship taught me that serving the community goes far beyond speeches and events. It is about listening to people, finding solutions, and showing up every day to make Brooklyn better. I'm deeply grateful to Senator Chan for his leadership and to Yamin for going above and beyond for the interns, always including us and giving us opportunities to learn. Because of them, I walked away with skills, experiences, and lessons that will always stay with me.

Celine Yan

I had the honor of interning with Senator Chan and his staff this summer as part of the SYEP program. I had first gotten to know Senator Chan through volunteering on his election campaign last year with a few friends from school. When I learned that his office was offering a summer internship, it felt like a natural and exciting opportunity for me to continue engaging with the issues and work I'm passionate about.

Throughout the internship, I have had the unique opportunity of writing and publishing senate website articles and press releases regarding the Senator's recent engagements and events, gaining first hand experience in the communications and PR work in a senate office.

An additional fulfilling aspect of the internship is to be able to assist with constituent services on the daily. I was able to communicate with constituents, many of whom are elderly citizens seeking senior housing, and also help increase voter registration in my community. I further enjoyed speaking to Senator Chan about his firsthand experience as a police officer of 27 years and within forensics.

During my internship with Senator Chan's office, I've also had the privilege of engaging with the community through visiting various organizations and speaking with community leaders about their roles. One of the most impactful experiences was participating in the 62nd Precinct's National Night Out Against Crime. This annual event fosters stronger relationships between the police and the community. Additionally, I had the opportunity to visit the 62nd precinct and meet local officers, learn about their roles, and understand the importance of community policing. Another significant experience was attending a trial at the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, where I observed the legal proceedings in the case of Mr. Efrain Barreto. Mr. Barreto, an 82-year-old community member, tragically lost his life after being struck by a moped while crossing the street in Sunset Park. The trial provided me with firsthand insight into the legal process as well as a learning experience on the various community issues, such as public safety, that are unfortunately left unaddressed.

Additionally, I gained valuable knowledge about the legislative process in New York State. At Senator Chan's office, I learned how a bill progresses from introduction to becoming law. A highlight of this experience was visiting the New York State Capitol and the Legislative Office Building in Albany. Touring the halls where significant decisions are made was both educational and inspiring, reinforcing my interest in law and community service.

Overall, my summer interning at Senator Chan's office was both enriching and educational. I had the chance to build meaningful connections and make friends out of my coworkers,

which made the experience even more rewarding. Most importantly, I felt a deeper sense of community involvement and a better understanding of our legislative system as a result.

Matthew Lee

My experience at Senator Chan's office was both informative and engaging. The trips and events made this experience particularly memorable. After the events, many interns were given a chance to write about their experiences, allowing them to express themselves. Along with the guidance of several experienced mentors, we were able to make an impact on our community. Furthermore, most of the consultants did not speak English fluently, sharpening my language skills. Finally, the other interns provided insight into problems, allowing for different perspectives in the office.

The trips and events were a great way to gain insight about the community and its people. These trips were often led by experienced people such as the senator and previous councilmen. The interactions between the consultants and the government employees often showcased just how connected the community really was. For example, our trip to FIAO II Centro Community Center showed how the community was able to come together and support one another during hard times. By telling us the history of the center, as well as how the center was able to support people of the community during the pandemic, we were able to see the diversity and the selflessness of the community. Another example was our trip to the Board of Elections, which portrayed the behind the scenes of elections and voting. Following these trips, we are usually assigned an article to write. These articles allow the interns to further express themselves as well as improve their writing and communications skills. These articles also allowed our names to be put out there, which showcased our experiences and offered different perspectives on events.

The management in the office along with the senator provided invaluable advice and mentorship. The staff were seen as more than just managers and bosses, but as people we could rely on and confide in. Having such esteemed mentors proved to be educating, as their vigor and pride in their work reflected on us. The staff showcased patience, energy, respect, discipline, and ambition. By shadowing these advisors, we are able to gain invaluable experience as well as to begin to slowly integrate our way into the office. The staff not only provided help on how to do the job, but also with life problems as well. The internship deepened my understanding of the community, while also increasing my curiosity about politics and helping others.

Our internship provided many opportunities to go out of our comfort zone as well as impact the community. This experience included a lot of public speaking, which allowed us to become more comfortable speaking out. The interns often had to greet people and hand out supplies as well as pamphlets. Along with this, the consultants usually had an issue which we did our best to solve. The gratefulness of these consultants made helping them easy, as they were easy to work with as well as patient with our mistakes. This inspired many interns to work harder as well as learn quicker in order to help those in need.

This experience is something that will be cherished as it provides many opportunities to grow and learn, as well as build connections with other people. The program deepened my understanding of the community and the people inside of it. Furthermore, the staff and other interns were incredible and were easy to get along with. Working with each other allowed us to grow and learn from one another.







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