Ila has always had an appreciation for the natural world, which is such an integral part of her community here in Puget Sound. After taking an Environmental Science class in high school she decided that she needed to learn more and joined Pacific Science Center’s Lake Washington Watershed Internship program (LWWIP). LWWIP is an environmentally focused, teen engagement program where high school students become informed stewards of their local environment through hands-on learning, habitat restoration, and stream monitoring. Ila admits, “before joining LWWIP, I had mostly learned about climate change and other environmental issues on a global scale. I was still oblivious about how it was affecting my local watershed.”

Two years later, Ila is anything but oblivious. As part of LWWIP’s monthly stream monitoring program, she has learned more about the North Creek watershed then she ever could have imagined. “For two years we measured factors like, pH, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, temperature, stream flow, and even presence of E.coli bacteria. This year we began analyzing the trends in the local data and got a better understanding of how the actions of the Bothell community, have positively and negatively affected the stream health. As we gain more experience and collect more accurate and precise data, we’ll be better able to answer the questions about the health of our local wetland.” This hands-on environmental science research experience isn’t the only result of stream monitoring. She says that “gaining more awareness about these issues in our local community has inspired me to take further action to promote awareness.”

Ila’s story is just one of many that illustrate how Pacific Science Center is making an impact on young people’s lives, helping to shape their understanding of, and interest in, the natural world, and creating strong environmental stewards and advocates.

LWWIP interns are passionate environmental advocates and take an active role in passing this knowledge on to youth in their community. Ila explains that “one of the core activities that we get to do as interns is outreach to younger kids. We volunteer at the Pacific Science Center, local elementary schools, and at science fairs. I have gotten to see how eager young children in my community are about learning about the environment.” Why is this type of advocacy so important? Ila believes that “climate change is such an immediate concern, especially in our generation, that informing and engaging youth in protecting their environment is essential. Being part of this effort allows us to protect the future of our community.”

Ila and her fellow LWWIP interns gain unique hands-on environmental science experience that takes what they are interested in off the pages of a textbook and into the community. “Because of this internship, what started as my concern for the environment, after taking a class at school, has allowed me to see and make real changes in my community.”

OUTDOOR YOUTH PROGRAMS

“Because of this internship, what started as my concern for the environment, after taking a class at school, has allowed me to see and make real changes in my community.”
Lake Washington Watershed Internship Program (LWWIP) is the Pacific Science Center’s environmentally focused, teen development program during which high school students become informed stewards of their local environment through mentoring, hands-on learning, habitat restoration, and stream monitoring.

LWWIP consists of students who show an interest in environmental science, are highly motivated, and traditionally underrepresented in STEM career fields. They gain experience doing hands-on environmental science research, undergo extensive Environmental Science education and teacher training, deliver over 300 hours of direct Environmental Science programming at local elementary schools, and participate in habitat restoration projects.

The Lake Washington Watershed Internship Program is not just about environmental science, it’s about providing learning opportunities that build confidence, empower youth with employable skills, teach teens about self-advocacy, and emphasizes the importance of service to the community.

“[The Environmental Science & Technology Practicum] gave me endless amount of possibilities of what I could become and made me more excited and prepared of what I might do in the future. Most importantly, this program encouraged me even more than when I first came, to go out into the world and make a lasting change on our environment and learn more about the beautiful world around us.”
— Ananya, 2019 Girls-Only Practicum Participant

**BY THE NUMBERS**

Over 8,000 youth engaged with the natural world during Pacific Science Center programs in FY19. These programs include field trips, summer camps, and teen engagement programs.

- **7,100 students** visited Mercer Slough on field trips.
- **860 youth** participated in Camps for Curious Minds at Mercer Slough.
- **42 teens** participate in Environmental Science Pathways program, Environmental Science & Technology Practicums, and the Lake Washington Watershed Internship Program.

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