

FCC Graduate Making Dreams Come True at Disney World

The last four years have been a magical journey for Sarah Simpson as she strives to make dream vacations for others become a reality at Disney World.

Sarah is a Tech Support Analyst and a member of the Walt Disney World Resort 2015 Disney Traditions Team, a promotion she received in August. To achieve this, she went through a rigorous audition process over a period of six weeks. She is responsible for facilitating the Disney Traditions classes for new generation cast members, crew members, and imagineers. In the Traditions Program, Sarah introduces them to Disney's story, heritage, and culture. She also encourages them to explore and understand the role they will play in making sure their guests have a magical vacation.

The Fairfield native never dreamed that she would someday be a part of the Walt Disney World Resort team. She had visited the resort with her family back in 1996 when she was just seven years old. However, it was 11 years later when she became interested in working at Disney. "It all started on a whim one day when I was in the college library," stated Sarah. "I saw a brochure for the Disney College Program and took one home that evening to read through. I realized what a great opportunity this was and submitted an online application." Sarah scheduled an interview with a Disney Recruiter for the next week, who was scheduled to be on campus doing an information session the next week.

Sarah was accepted into the Disney College Program and spent January through August of 2008 in Orlando working at the Magic Kingdom theme park. "While I was working at Magic Kingdom, I truly developed a sense of business," stated Sarah. "I was fascinated with the Disney culture and became interested in the heritage and success of the Walt Disney

Company. I also worked closely with casts from all over the world – many of which I keep in contact with to this day."

Returning back home, Sarah enrolled at Frontier Community College for the fall semester. While a student at FCC, she was a member of the Phi Theta Kappa National Honor Society and active in chapter activities. She participated in the spring show choir, and obtained CEO Honors each semester. Sarah completed the Associate in Science and Arts degree in May 2009.

Sarah transferred to Southern Illinois University at Carbondale to pursue Hospitality. However, there was always an underlying desire to move to Orlando and work full-time at Disney World. In the summer of 2011, Sarah returned to Disney World for a vacation and it was then that she made the decision to complete an online employment application and see what turned up. In November 2011, she was offered a position at the Contemporary Resort as a Private Dining Cashier and moved two weeks later.

Eight months later in July 2012, Sarah received a temporary assignment for a pilot test taking place at the Contemporary Resort. During the 4-week assignment, Sarah gathered feedback from guests and cast members to be used in the development of the Next Generation Experience technology project.

In September 2012, Sarah signed on with another 6-month assignment that turned in to two years. In this role, Sarah was a Project Assistant for the Park Support-Hypercare Team. The Next Generation Experience, packaged under the name MyMagic+, was ready and her role was to help implement it in all facets, specifically at Magic Kingdom Park. This included supporting dining locations and merchandise and operations teams with troubleshooting and resolving technological issues. She also

gathered feedback from cast members on a daily basis to report back to the executive steering committee. Sarah is very happy for the opportunity to be working full-time at Walt Disney World.

When reflecting back on her time at Frontier Community College, Sarah is pleased with the quality education she received and the strong foundation it laid for her current job. She is also thankful for a staff and faculty that cared about their students and wanted to see them be successful. "At Disney, we primarily communicate through e-mail, so I constantly think back to my Composition 2 and Introduction to Literature classes that I took with instructor Judith Puckett," stated Sarah. "In my business emails, it's important to make sure the messages are precisely and professionally conveyed using proper English."



One of Sarah's favorite quotes is from Walt Disney himself: "You can dream, create, design and build the most wonderful place in the world, but it requires people to make the dream a reality."