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Developing Local History

February 27, 2015

The landscape of small towns in America has shifted somewhat as fast food chains, gas station mini-marts, and big box stores now populate properties often set close to a highway bypass far from downtown. No longer the sole shopping hub, these towns have begun to rely on tourism to bring people to their centers. Honors student Shelby Herrin has been studying just that; more specifically, she has been looking at heritage tourism in Jenkins County, Georgia.

Herrin (recreation and tourism management '15) has focused her studies on the city of Millen, home to Camp Lawton, Magnolia Springs State Park, and the third oldest Baptist Church in the state of Georgia.

Her research examines both the theory and practice of heritage tourism. In the first section, she completed a theoretical assessment on resources in Jenkins County. In the second section, Herrin created a plan to make Millen into a cultural and heritage zone.

"Millen has a lot of sites that are interesting to tourists, but nothing was being promoted. It needed promoting," Herrin said.

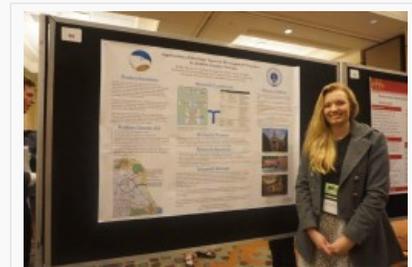
Herrin worked closely with her mentors, Dr. James Bigley and Dr. Svitlana Iarmolenko, to create the model for her thesis. "My mentors had high standards for me, and they made me add a layer of depth to this project that I wouldn't have had without them," Herrin said.

Herrin created a day trip inventory and designed a pamphlet on the Millen Scenic Byway. Then she worked with Georgia.gov to distribute the pamphlets throughout Georgia. Millen will soon develop a new Welcome Center, and Herrin's research will be held there. "The reason I choose this topic is because it's going to make a difference," Herrin said.

In January, Herrin presented her work at the 20th annual Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism at the University of South Florida. "The conference was mostly graduate students, but many people were interested in my work. I received a lot of input that was very helpful in my revisions," Herrin said.

After graduation, Herrin plans to become certified in different aspects tourism and then put her knowledge at work for a tourism organization.

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Shelby Herrin presents her work at the 20th annual Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism at the University of South Florida.

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Every Day at the Capitol

February 27, 2015



From Left: Dr. Tammie Schalue, Rep. Jan Tankersley, Dr. Jean Bartels, Dr. Keel, Rachel Neuhauser, Andrew Smallwood, Rep. Jon Burns, Rep. Butch Parrish

Georgia Southern had its official “Day at the Capitol” on February 3, but for University Honors Program students Andrew Smallwood and Rachel Neuhauser, every day this semester is a day at the capitol. Both students are spending the spring in the Georgia Legislative Internship Program.

Smallwood (political science '15) chose to participate in the internship because of his interests in political science. “It was an unparalleled opportunity to network and gain an extra leg up in terms of experience,” he said.

Smallwood said that each day for the interns is a little different. Some days are spent answering calls from constituents or organizing events, and on other days he is summarizing legislation in order to brief elected officials on special topics.

Neuhauser (sociology '15) find the work very rewarding. “Through hard work, I’ve gained the respect of dedicated public servants, who in turn entrust me with immense responsibility,” she said.

She chose this internship to have a better understanding of the government that influences lives on a daily basis. “In order to be an active citizen, it is necessary not only to understand the government, but also to have an educated appreciation for government,” said Neuhauser.

Smallwood agrees and said, “I was excited to be doing work that mattered with people who can really make a difference.”

Both students will use this internship opportunity in their honors thesis. Neuhauser’s thesis is an examination of modernization processes in China. The internship has given her a new perspective on the role of government and constituency. “In having the knowledge of what a state government controls, I have a greater understanding of the magnitude of issues that China’s government faces,” Neuhauser said.

Smallwood's honors thesis is an analysis of government branch popularity. His work in the Governor's Floor Leaders' Office has given him the privilege of witnessing the two branches interact with one another. But the best perk of the internship is the reference letters that come from senators, representatives, lobbyists, he said.

Both Neuhauser and Smallwood work with high profile senators, representatives, and lobbyists. "There are a lot of negative associations to politicians, but in my experiences so far, they do not apply to Georgia officials," Neuhauser said.

"They may be high profile, but they're just people," Smallwood said.

Neuhauser and Smallwood encourage other students to apply for this opportunity. "The legislature deals with so many issues that people from all types of backgrounds can find their niche," Neuhauser said.

Smallwood echoed that sentiment, and emphasized how the position pushes him forward in his requirements at Georgia Southern as well as prepares him for his career. "Accompanied with class credit, the work experience is second to none," he said.

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