



Alison
Mandelker

Contact Information for Alison Mandelker:

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Are you currently a member/involved with other non-profit organizations? If Yes, please list them below:

- Yes,

What volunteer experience do you have?

- I've volunteered through a number of non-profits over the last 10 years, though always experiences with children. My mother works for a non-profit in St. Louis called COCA (Center of Contemporary Arts). In addition to their arts classes, Creativity in Business courses for professionals, and performances, COCA's core focus is their extensive outreach program offered to low-income youth through our nationally recognized Urban Arts Program. I spent years volunteering as a co-teacher, early and after hours program coordinator, and summer counselor throughout middle school and high school. Throughout college, I volunteered through a program called TAP, "The After School Program" in Nashville, TN. Once or twice a week, I was paired with a child and helped him/her their homework assignments. If we completed homework in time, we went on to read and complete "stretch opportunity" writing and reading exercises. Finally, in Chicago, I volunteer weekly with WITS, "Working in the School" program. As a volunteer, I spend my lunch hour at Melody elementary school paired with a third grade child. In an effort to improve literacy and foster a love of reading, we spend the time reading books selected by the child based on their interest. In addition to the above volunteer experiences, I've also volunteered for several political campaigns- most recently, for Rahm Emanuel. In this capacity, I've drafted several research briefs, letters to the editor, and daily summaries directly for the Mayor. Additionally, I pulled research reports of the city's radio programming and newspaper schedules to brainstorm targeting strategies.

What contributions would you make as an Associate Board Member for Dreams for Kids?

- As an Associate Board Member, I'd add value immediately. Through my past internship and professional experiences, I've developed strong writing capabilities, specifically through a PR lens. For a variety of clients, I've brainstormed and implemented several strategies to captivate a target audience (through both traditional media, social media, events, etc...) I hope to get the opportunity to share my ideas and put together newsworthy events and messages to further the message of Dreams for Kids to both my network, and the greater Chicago network. In my current role, I am constantly communicating with clients through cold calls, e-mails, and virtual meetings. I'd use my communication strengths to continue and further outreach for Dreams for Kids through reaching out to my personal and professional connections, as well as calling other vendors (ie: restaurants, venues, future donors/volunteers etc..)

Why are you interested in serving as a member for the Dreams for Kids Associate Board?

- I feel extremely lucky to be where I am today; living in a safe Chicago neighborhood in a warm apartment, working in a paid full-time professional role, and surrounded by a strong support system of family and friends. However, I strongly believe that while I work hard, I am where I am largely because of the family I was born into and the opportunity that provided me. From an early age, my parents signed me up for a variety of extracurricular activities ranging from sports to dance, singing to cooking, academic clubs to political volunteering. Through these experiences, I developed the skills necessary to find success. I learned how to cooperate, how to lead. I learned how to share my opinions, and persistence. I realize that the above traits (and more) helped shape me into a working, contributing member of society--and above all, made me happy. Not every child is as lucky as I am to have so many opportunities readily available. Through my mother's career at COCA (the non-profit I described above), I've witnessed once at-risk youth lives change through involvement in the arts. While arts may not be the right path for everyone, it is the opportunity to get involved that can transform lives and futures. I'd be honored to serve on the Dreams for Kids Associate Board and give every child a chance, no matter what situation they are born into.