

Aspiring Biologist Makes a Splash

Working with animals has always been Bladen Wilfong's passion. An aspiring biologist, he was looking for a way to turn his love of animals into a practical career. Unfortunately, traditional schools didn't offer Bladen the opportunities he needed to get ahead or grow as a person.

Bladen transferred to Visions in his Junior year for a **flexible schedule free of social pressures**. Here, he was able to explore his interest for wildlife and develop his professional skills through Visions' **Work-Based Learning Internship program**.

"My mom told me about this internship with SeaQuest. Immediately, I was like yes, I want to do this."

Through Visions' partnership with the [SeaQuest Interactive Aquarium](#), Bladen secured an internship opportunity that gave him high school credit and real-life experience.

At SeaQuest, he worked alongside staff and other Visions interns in a hands-on, immersive environment where he learned how to care for a variety of marine animals.

Additionally, Bladen learned **practical career-building skills** like resume writing, communications, and customer service. Interacting with the public on a daily basis forced Bladen out of his shell, something he credits with helping his anxiety.

"I had really bad social anxiety before SeaQuest; this was almost like a cure."

Ready for a Career

After the internship ended and he graduated, Bladen was offered a position at SeaQuest! He's currently attending Sierra College and plans on using this experience to transfer to U.C. Davis to pursue a degree in Wildlife Biology. Bladen's experience at SeaQuest also comes full circle as he prepares to mentor the next generation of Visions interns that participate in the program.

"It's really a growing-up experience," Bladen said. "I hope more kids take advantage of this program."

