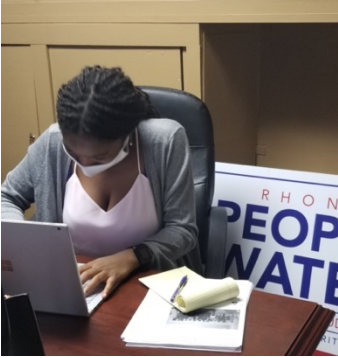


Deyona Burton
Aspiring Attorney & Politician



As a 2020 Award Recipient of the AnnieRuth Foundation’s summer internship program, I was afforded the opportunity to intern at Rhonda Peoples-Waters, PA. Due to Attorney-Peoples Waters running for the office of County Judge, Group 6, I was able to receive first-hand knowledge and experience from two different perspectives: law and politics. These two aspects feed directly into my interests of wanting to be an environmental attorney and a politician; so I truly got the best of both worlds. While working in the law office, I answered phones, filed court case papers, scheduled interviews, and prepared clients for the upcoming weeks. I even got to attend a hearing. Prior to this internship experience, I was a long-term volunteer with teen court. So, I was very familiar with what goes down in the courtroom. However, the experience with Attorney Peoples-Waters allowed me to fill in gaps and see first-hand what the legal process looks like before one enters the courtroom as well as afterwards. It takes a lot of preparation and completion of paperwork but in the end, the feeling of knowing that you have helped your client is unmatched.

From the political side, my experience assisting Atty. Peoples-Waters with campaigning for the seat of County Judge was also amazing. I worked on phone banking, sign waving, and literature drops. Upon talking to Attorney Peoples-Waters, we both agreed that students should have a place in elections. This resulted in three things; 1) I drafted and hosted the flyer for a zoom call where Attorney Peoples-Waters was able to speak to directly to youth; sharing her background and platform, 2) I wrote an article called "Herstory: 5 black female candidates running for office in Duval county" where I featured Atty. Peoples-Waters, along with Angie Nixon, Nicole Hamm, Tammyette Thomas, and LJ Holloway (the article was posted via ChngeMaker Magazine) and 3) I coordinated over 20 student sign waivers for GOTV weekend and election day. Coordinating and organizing these events have not only expanded my resume but have also allowed me to confidently solidify my plans to run for office in the near future.

My experience in the AnnieRuth Foundation’s summer internship program was amazing. Not only was I able to develop personal, academic and workforce development skills during the business seminars but being selected as an award recipient and being paired with Atty. Peoples-Waters gave me an unbelievable boost of confidence to continue to pursue my passion of both law and politics.

When Atty. Waters-Peoples was asked to describe Deyona’s work ethic during her experience, she replied, “Deyona displayed a high level of professionalism including at times in her dress when the rest of us were all dressed down. She also displayed wisdom, sincerity, and hard work. Deyona rushed to answer the phones and dealt with our clients with care. Once she completed a project, she was eager to start the next task. Although Deyona was able to work as an individual contributor, during those times when she had to work with the team, she demonstrated excellent interpersonal skills.”

What exactly was Deyona exposed to at the firm? Atty. Waters-Peoples explained, “During Deyona’s experience, she learned the art of interacting with clients, file organization, filing documents, how to make successful and unsuccessful arguments during hearings, how to interview clients and witnesses, how to transcribe recordings, how to complete subpoenas and so much more.”

Atty. Waters-Peoples ended the conversation by saying, “I have been a mentor of the AnnieRuth Foundation’s summer internship program for three years and I absolutely would love to continue to mentor students who complete this program. I am not sure how this will work with my new role as a judge but once I learn the new process, count me in.”