In the summer of 2011, I had the opportunity to have my internship with the small company of ZeroHero. The internship involved traveling to upstate New York, Lake Tahoe, coastal Oregon, and all over the Rocky Mountains. Through the internship I found myself backstage at raging music concerts, navigating over the breath taking passes, and on the occasion picking up trash.

ZeroHero is a company performing the greening of events and festivals all over the nation through waste management, biodiesel consulting, and carbon offsetting. I knew there would be some “trash man” roles working for ZeroHero this summer, but I had minimal understanding of the amount of planning, preparation, equipment, and leadership it took to successfully manage and run an event.

One event ZeroHero manages every year is a festival in upstate New York called Camp Bisco. It is an electronica music festival with 26,000 attendees all of whom camp on-site. When people gather they produce waste, lots and lots of waste. ZeroHero was in charge of the Green Team which was hired to manage the site, manage hundreds of volunteers, run equipment, and finally clean the site. It was no easy task telling volunteers and fellow employees what to do. I quickly learned when you are in a position of power it requires leadership, strong verbal communication, competency in the professional field, and respect to achieve success in the workplace.

After six 18-ton compactor trash trucks, twenty 30-yard roll-off waste containers, eight 30-yard roll-off recycling containers, and four extra days after the conclusion of the event... we finally had the site looking better than we found it. Dealing with “trash” all day is not the most glamorous of jobs, but looking back on it I enjoyed every second of it. I know the classes I took and the class work I dedicated countless hours too helped in my overall performance of my internship.

After my summer concluded with ZeroHero, I was offered a job. I am now working for ZeroHero in Old Town Fort Collins. In the office at ZeroHero I find myself composing emails, reaching out to contacts in the industry, and writing proposals for new events. These were all skills I acquired and perfected at CSU and have helped me to thrive in the small business environment. I also obtained newly acquired knowledge learned about the recycling and composting processes and their facilities. The Environmental Health undergraduate program at CSU paved the way for me to have this experience of a lifetime.