

# The Henry J. and Erna D. Leir Global Internship Program

The Sam and Myra Ross Institute at Green Chimneys



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**E**xplore a world of possibilities, discover new skills, investigate a unique professional direction, and meet new people through a truly rewarding experience at one of the most innovative facilities for the education and treatment of children with special needs.

**The Henry J. and Erna D. Leir Global Internship Program** offers a distinctive immersion experience for individuals interested in exploring human-animal relationships and interactions and nature-based activities to benefit children with special needs. Furthering the legacies of its founders, Henry J. and Erna D. Leir (middle photo), the Leir Foundation has been and continues to be, integral in the success of Green Chimneys and this internship program. The leadership of the Leirs and the support of The Leir Foundation is reinforcing the future of human-animal interaction.

**Green Chimneys** is a multi-faceted nonprofit organization helping young people to maximize their full potential by providing residential, educational, clinical and recreational services in a safe and supportive environment that nurtures connections with their families, the community, animals and nature. Recognized as a worldwide leader in animal-assisted therapy and activities, Green Chimneys operates a special education school and residential treatment center for children in grades K-12. We are pioneers in animal- and nature-based programs, striving to create a harmonious relationship among children, animals and the environment. Each of our programs celebrates the dignity and worth of all living things.

**The Sam and Myra Ross Institute** represents an internationally recognized model program and training site for the varied facets of human-animal and nature-based interactions, often identified as nature-based programming, animal-assisted and horticulture education/activities, humane education, and green care. The Institute focuses on education, advocacy, and research serving as a resource and living laboratory for those who wish to learn and implement these programs in a variety of professions and environments. The Institute aligns with the Green Chimneys mission to maximize the potential of children with special needs and supports its therapeutic programming. The Institute is inspired by the remarkable work and lifelong commitment of Green Chimneys Founders Sam and Myra Ross (third photo), and its work is grounded in evidence-based practice for implementing diverse and ethically responsible animal, plant and nature supported educational and therapeutic interactions and activities.

The Leir Internship takes place in Green Chimneys' enriched and supportive environment on one of two campuses. The **Brewster Campus** in Brewster, New York serves over 220 children in residential care or day treatment where a professional treatment team of medical staff, social workers, teachers and children's services professionals are supported by experts in animal-assisted activities, horticulture education, outdoor education and nature-based life skills training. The Farm & Wildlife Center is home to over 300 farm animals, horses and permanently injured or imprinted wildlife. Interns also interact with children and families through public programs and special events open to all community members. The **Clearpool Campus** in Carmel, New York is a beautiful forest setting where 40 children work with a smaller group of professionals under a similar structure. The campus is very rustic and features a New York State Model Forest and numerous natural resources, creating a very quiet and dynamic learning environment. The Popper Farm & Garden at Clearpool hosts small number of farm animals during the spring to fall as well as educational garden and collection of pet and classroom animals and reptiles.



## WHY BECOME A LEIR INTERN?



A Leir Internship with The Sam and Myra Ross Institute can be a profound and life-changing experience. The coveted position offers a well-rounded introduction to the theoretical and practical principles of green care, incorporating animals, plants and the natural world in the re-education, socialization and treatment of children experiencing significant social, emotional and behavioral challenges in their lives. The internship relies heavily on “doing,” getting one’s hands dirty and being directly involved in the day-to-day of a working farm within a special education and treatment facility.

Leir Interns are immersed in general campus life and the therapeutic milieu of Green Chimneys. Through supervised and guided participation, Leir Interns learn the practical application of nature-based programs and are able to work with our children using a caring and supportive approach to help prepare each young person to address his or her own life challenges and to develop skills to help them be successful in their treatment and beyond.

The internship is based on self-discovery and student-guided learning models. Interns must be motivated, proactive, and eager to find learning opportunities in their daily activities and interaction with children and staff. Interns are given much freedom in creating and implementing different types of activities under supervision. Our knowledgeable and passionate staff supports interns with supervision and guidance whenever they discover something they would like to learn more about.



## Learning Outcomes

The Leir Internship will help you gain:

- An overview of the field of animal-assisted interventions, including animal-assisted activities, education and therapy; horticulture activities, education and therapy; ways to work in and apply nature-based programs, animal-assisted services, humane education, and green care, within a professional setting.
- An understanding of how a nonprofit organization operates and provides services.
- Knowledge of the therapeutic milieu of a working treatment center through observations, including participation in staff and team meetings.
- Experience in managing individuals and groups of students in a special education environment, including working with students with social and behavioral challenges, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and/or difficulties with emotional regulation.
- An ability to develop activities that enhance learning goals based on individual students’ behavioral, emotional, physical, and educational needs through chores, animal and plant care.
- An opportunity to explore human-animal interactions and relationships between children, animals, and facilitators, and learn how to teach emotions and empathy through interaction and care of animals and plants.
- Knowledge in the application of animal-assisted activities and/or horticultural activities for children who face social-emotional challenges, as part of a total treatment plan.
- Insight, through observation, into the field of social services and the pursuit of careers incorporating animal- and/or horticulture-assisted activities.
- Valuable practical skills that are applicable to other service programs and environments, as part of future career plans.

## INTERNSHIP STRUCTURE

The Leir Internship at Green Chimneys is a full-time, 4- or 8-month commitment. Interns participate in programming 5 days a week, as well as occasional weekend activities and events.

Leir Interns develop comprehensive skills in nature-based education and activities and practical knowledge for employing those skills in working with children with special needs.



### Internship Skill Areas

- **Animal Care, Handling and Management**  
Interns learn how to provide humane and species-appropriate care for farm animals, horses, wildlife and a variety of small and large species in the context of a nature-based therapeutic interaction program. Animal handling, selection, feeding, medical care and training are taught by experienced staff.
- **Plant Propagation, Gardening and Organic Farming**  
Interns work in a horticulture education and vocational farming program and learn how to provide appropriate care for diverse vegetables, trees, herbs, houseplants and other varieties of plants in a farm-based education program.
- **Introduction to Program Administration**  
Interns are given opportunities to learn how to create, implement, and document activities around animals and nature. The internship experience provides an important introduction to program development for those who seek to replicate and administer nature-based programs in other settings.
- **Therapeutic Interaction with Children**  
Interns work with individual children who have a range of special needs, applying therapeutic animal-assisted and nature-based activity support programs. Interns are trained and expected to communicate with clinical treatment teams via email and phone, under supervisor guidance.
- **Farm Class Teaching Support**  
Interns are taught to skillfully apply animal-assisted interactions and horticulture education to groups of students as teaching assistants in farm, equine, wildlife, and garden classes.
- **Intern Project**  
Interns, either as a group or individuals, will participate in an additional project to enhance the Green Chimneys Farm & Wildlife Center or another area of the organization and its programs.

### Internship Session Dates

<b>Animal Programs:</b>	January – August	interview in October
	September – December	interview in May
<b>Garden Education:</b>	January – November	interview in October
<b>International Applicants:</b>	January – December	interview in May
	September – August	interview in January

*Exact dates may vary depending on Green Chimneys' calendar.*

## CHOOSE YOUR AREA OF FOCUS

**Nature-based learning is a form of experiential, interdisciplinary education that connects people to the environment, their community, and the role of all living beings in our lives.** Experiential learning within nature creates the opportunity for children to self-reflect through the interaction and relationship with people, animals and the environment. Interns are trained and communicate regularly with the treatment teams, under supervisor guidance. Interns may also have opportunities to observe and work with an interdisciplinary team and participate in the treatment of the students enrolled, including attending clinical team meetings and seminars for educational purposes.



Interns also learn daily routines, protocols, species-specific behaviors, individual animal personalities, handling techniques, medication and treatment procedures, and use of equipment.

**The Henry J. and Erna D. Leir Global Internship Program at Green Chimneys features five focus areas for interns to choose from.** Each program provides extensive information and training to enable interns to fulfill their role and perform necessary tasks, including interaction with children who have psycho-social challenges. Interns must select one area to be assigned to for the semester. Selections must be made at the time of application. If there is more than one area of interest, a first and second choice may be indicated. Please note that some programs are seasonal and may not be available at certain times of the year.

### Choose the internship focus area that combines your interests

*Focus areas are outlined on the following pages*

- **Farm Animal Education and Interaction**  
For those interested in human-animal interaction with farm animals; farm animal science; green care; farm animal training and management.
- **Farm/Garden/Nature Education and Interaction** (Clearpool Campus, Carmel, NY)  
For those interested in a smaller setting and combined garden, farm and pet animal experience.  
Location remote and commuting option only.
- **Wildlife Rehabilitation, Education and Interaction**  
For those interested in human animal interaction with birds of prey; wildlife conservation education; wildlife rehabilitation; wildlife care and management.
- **Equine Education and Interaction**  
For those interested in human-animal interaction with equines; equine care, handling, training and management.
- **Garden Education** For those interested in horticulture education in a Children's Garden setting; horticultural careers; nature-based education; management of a diverse educational and therapeutic garden.

## **Farm Animal Education and Interaction**

*Offered January through August and September through December*

Green Chimneys maintains a large number of domesticated animals traditionally associated with farms and small pet species. As a member of the Farm Based Education Association (FBEA) and holding an exhibitor license (C) for animals with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Green Chimneys' farm-based education program provides experiential, interdisciplinary education that connects people to the environment, their community, and the role of agriculture in our lives. The team consists of a certified teacher and staff with extensive practical experience in livestock management.

Animal-assisted activities and education create the opportunity for children to self reflect through interactions and relationships with people, peers, animals and the barn environment. This experiential learning can happen at any time - in a stall, in a pasture, or when the child grooms a llama, leads a goat, or participates in feeding chores. Experiences with farm animals can teach responsibility, care and concern for another creature, interpersonal boundaries such as appropriate touch, movement, fine and gross motor skills, as well as leadership and teamwork skills. Children become primary caretakers. Therapeutic and educational experiences take place in the chore setting, feeding animals, cleaning stalls and tending to the basic care of animals.



## **Farm/Garden/Nature Education and Interaction – Clearpool Campus**

*Offered January through August and September through December*

This internship option offers an exciting opportunity to participate in an integrated nature-based setting that brings together farm animals, gardening, environmental science and education for the 40 students attending Green Chimneys School at our Clearpool Campus in Carmel, NY. The campus is located on 350 acres of pristine woodlands, part of which is designated as a New York State Model Forest, and includes a small farm animal area and an organic garden. This internship offers an integration of animal care and gardening with immersion in an innovative outdoor education environment. Interns support certified teachers, therapists and outdoor education staff in environmental, horticultural and animal care activities with students. It is ideal for an enthusiastic, flexible and adaptable generalist who believes that all contact with nature can be beneficial. The Clearpool Campus internship is based on a self-discovery model in which interns should have the ability to explore, identify learning opportunities and seek guidance. There is also a unique opportunity to create a service plan to execute an individual project at Clearpool upon approval by the work supervisor. Clearpool Campus interns are trained, guided and supervised by the Clearpool Animal Caretaker, with support from Brewster staff. This internship is for a local individual who can commute.



## **Wildlife Rehabilitation, Education and Interaction**

*Offered January through August and September through December*

The Paul C. Kupchok Wildlife Rehabilitation Center features 50 permanently disabled or imprinted raptors and other native wildlife. It also is home to reptiles, amphibians, insects and fish that are part of the wildlife classroom. Licensed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to maintain and rehabilitate birds of prey, the Wildlife Center treats, rehabilitates and releases injured, orphaned or distressed birds and specializes in hawks, falcons, eagles, owls, vultures, and songbirds. Small mammals are also handled on occasion. The Wildlife Center features a beautiful education center, animal triage care area and has large display and flight cages, woodland paths and naturalistic habitats. State licensed wildlife rehabilitators, a wildlife educator and animal caretaker comprise the staff in this area.



Interns in this area assist wildlife classes, work one-on-one with students, learn about wildlife rehabilitation, maintain the center and become primary caregivers for the animals. Children participate in all activities and learn that wildlife should never be pets and must be respected from a distance with a different set of rules.

Wildlife classes provide opportunities for children to learn and appreciate nature and promote awareness of ecology and natural environment. Students assist in animal care by preparing diets, cleaning bowls, filling water, and designing enriched habitats with staff to keep animals stimulated. Although students' hands-on contact with the wild animals is limited, they learn from their experience. Rehabilitated bird releases often are timed to coincide with a child's discharge from Green Chimneys, creating a wonderful parallel between the animal's recovery and the child's own healing and growth.

## **Equine Education and Interaction**

*Offered January through August and September through December*

As a Premier Accredited Center of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Int'l), Green Chimneys operates superior equine education and interaction. Equine-assisted learning, vocational barn work, and relationship-based equine activities are offered to students on the Brewster campus. Lead staff hold PATH Int'l Equine Specialist Certification and/or other equine-assisted learning credential/certification. A broad range of additional credentials in various equine activities and qualifications to implement high quality programs for children with special needs provides a curriculum of challenging, hands-on activities that engage individual children and encourage them to explore their potential through caring for and interacting with the horse.

In the Equine Program, children learn how to care for the 20 horses, donkeys and ponies, and to manage their own behavior and emotions while building a relationship with the animals. Interns have the opportunity to support children who have been unsuccessful socially or academically as they begin to experience success in the particularly supportive surroundings of the equine program. Interns participate in carefully guided interactions, helping students to develop stable management skills that enhance social, emotional, physical and academic growth beyond the horse barn. Interns in this area assist in equine education classes, work one-on-one with students, and are responsible for taking care of the daily needs of our equine herd.



## Garden Education

*Offered January through November only with option to stay through December*

Our Educational Garden on the Brewster campus plays an important role in the lives of Green Chimneys students under the supervision of a garden caretaker and a teacher with a specialized background in horticulture. As part of our New York State standards-based curriculum there is concrete pedagogical value to working on a product or process that will have lasting value beyond the task at hand. Practical lessons in the garden enhance and reinforce theoretical learning in schools. Students gain respect for nature, manual work, individuals, and the community and have opportunities to learn and participate in the growing of plants, harvesting of vegetables, using products out of the garden.



During the spring, summer, and fall months, activities take place in our gardens, where planting, maintenance and harvesting of crops take place. In the winter, students are exposed to the scientific side of horticulture, such as plant anatomy and seed propagation in our greenhouses. During all seasons, interns have an opportunity to observe and participate in classes, facilitate 1:1 activities with individual students, and may explore independent projects that can enhance the garden program. Interns also guide therapeutic/recreational activities such as creating beeswax candles, mixing organic lotions, drying culinary herbs or creating a seed catalog.

*I came for the animals but stayed for the kids. I ended up extending my summer internship to the fall semester so I could continue working with the great kids I had met. Even the most difficult kids here have the ability to make you smile. Each day working with the animals and kids brings a new adventure!*  
~ Chelsea C.





## INTERN PREPARATION AND TRAINING

The Leir Internship operates daily throughout the year-round Green Chimneys School program, including school recesses and holidays. Program and intern work schedules may be altered occasionally to accommodate new students or school schedule changes. Interns in the extended Spring/Summer program will participate in additional, in-depth training projects during school recess periods.

### Basic Internship Semester

Phase I	weeks 1 - 4	Training and orientation
Phase II	weeks 5 - 10	Practical skills development and child interaction
Phase III	weeks 11 - 16	Beyond the day-to-day: career development

### Spring Internship includes

Phase III mid-term evaluation		
April training week		Advanced animal care and public tours/events
Phase IV	weeks 17 - 25	Work with an individual student/participate in treatment team meetings to observe
Phase V	weeks 26 - 34	Summer schedule
Exit evaluation		

### Green Chimneys Orientation and Requirements

- Organization history and overview
- Overview of nature-based programs and the field
- Introduction to animal-assisted education
- Comprehensive farm and campus tour
- Student admissions criteria
- Therapeutic Crisis Intervention Training (TCI)
- Review of therapeutic behavior and demeanor
- Role-playing and crisis management
- Green Chimneys Guiding Principles
- Blood-borne pathogens training
- Introduction to professionalism in an education setting
- Appropriate behavior with students
- Mandated reporting and harassment prevention



## Internship Skills Development

- Introductory training with staff
- Introduction to administrative issues
- Introduction to animal/plant care routines
- Introduction to vocational program
- Specific animal care assignments
- Foundations of nature-based programs (special focus on animal-assisted and horticulture interactions)
- Activity design for children with special needs
- Team-building workshops
- Observation of special education classes
- Overview of student profiles and meeting with clinicians
- Documentation and record-keeping



## Supervision & Support

- Individual supervision with Education Program Manager
- Weekly peer supervision and continuous education series
- Day-to-day supervision with intern area supervisors
- Participation in weekly farm staff meeting



*My experience at Green Chimneys was one of continuous life lessons, endless self-discoveries, and constant challenges, pushing my comfort zones and testing my physical and emotional limits. It was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I went into the internship attempting to inspire the students I worked with, when, in fact, it was me who became inspired.*

~ Roxanne F.



## WHO SHOULD APPLY?



The Henry J. and Erna D. Leir Global Internship Program at Green Chimneys seeks motivated and enthusiastic individuals from across the globe. The Leir Internship is for highly committed and flexible individuals who are able to dedicate a set period of time to Green Chimneys to acquire skills in the principles of nature-based education and therapy.

There is no academic pre-requisite but the Leir Internship can serve as a supplementary practicum in training for a career in Social Work, Psychology, Education, Veterinary Science, Animal Care and Program Administration.

Individuals who hold academic degrees or are licensed in professions such as Psychology, Teaching or Social Work may apply for an internship but will **not** be able to practice under their license. The Leir Internship is a learning experience and all interns, regardless of previous degree or certification earned, function as support staff under the supervision of the Green Chimneys staff.

### Application Process

The Leir Internship application is online. Applications for a particular semester must be received three months prior to the start of that semester. All applicants will undergo a thorough documentation review. Interviews with selected candidates will be conducted by the Intern Coordinator via in-person visit or webcam.

### Applicant Requirements

All applicants must be at least 3 years post-high school, and able to commit to the full length of the internship. All applicants will be subject to a criminal background check, fingerprinting, and health screening.

### International Applicants

The Henry J. and Erna D. Leir Global Internship Program at Green Chimneys is a formal training program requiring international interns to obtain a visa. There are some government restrictions so visas are not guaranteed and, conditions change frequently. For the latest information on visas, please contact Joanne Conrad, Human Resources Recruiter, at [jconrad@greenchimneys.org](mailto:jconrad@greenchimneys.org).

### Submission and Deadline

Applications must be received three months prior to the start date of the desired semester; eight months are required for applicants outside of the United States. [Please complete the online application >](#)

### For program questions, please contact:

Miyako Kinoshita, MS Ed  
Education Program Manager  
Email: [mkinoshita@greenchimneys.org](mailto:mkinoshita@greenchimneys.org)  
Tel: 845.279.2995 x1298

## PROVISIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

### **Housing** (Brewster Campus interns only)

Interns are provided room and board and live in a co-ed, communal house on the Green Chimneys campus. Bedrooms are shared, as are kitchen and living facilities. Local interns may commute.

**\*Green Chimneys is a smoke-free environment.** Smoking is prohibited in intern residences, as well as all areas on campus.

### **Meals**

All meals are provided by Green Chimneys and are served in the campus Dining Hall. Interns may also cook meals at their residence. Special diets may not be able to be accommodated.

### **Compensation**

In addition to room and board, interns receive a small weekly stipend for the duration of the internship. Interns are covered under workman's compensation for work-related injuries.

### **Semester Schedule**

Internship tracks including farm animals, equines, and wildlife are available January through August and September through December. Internship track for garden education is available January through November, with an option to stay through December.

### **Intern Program Schedule**

Interns are expected to participate in programs 5 days a week from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The weekly schedule is Tuesday through Saturday or Sunday through Thursday and includes holidays, at The Institute's discretion. During orientation (first 3 weeks of internship), training may take place 6 days a week.

### **Travel and Living Expenses**

Interns are responsible for their own travel arrangements, any fees required during the traveling, and any additional living expenses while residing at Green Chimneys.

### **Health Insurance**

All domestic (U.S.) interns must provide written proof of medical insurance. International interns are encouraged to obtain travel insurance or equivalent. A recent tetanus shot (within 5 years) is strongly recommended.

### **Academic Credit and Supervision**

The Leir Internship satisfies the academic requirements of many college and university programs, and some vocational schools. Interns must coordinate and clarify any academic requirements with Green Chimneys staff during the application process.

### **Internship Renewal**

Interns may seek more than one semester, either in the same area or in another area. Interns will be considered eligible if they have received a positive evaluation during the initial semester and, if supervisory staff agrees that it is mutually beneficial to continue.



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[www.greenchimneys.org/leir-intern](http://www.greenchimneys.org/leir-intern)