

THE HILL



A rush from the classroom to Rep. Baird's office

By Eliza Adelson

August 6, 2009

Like the many young people on Capitol Hill today, Brienne Adderly learns with a purpose — she is the scheduler/executive assistant for Rep. Brian Baird (D-Wash.) and has just enrolled to get her master's in public administration at George Washington University.

Adderly, 24, applied to the program for the fall but has started early, enrolling in a four-week summer course that meets once a week at night. In the fall, her classes will meet twice a week.

"I knew that if I didn't go back soon I might not ever go back," she said.

After graduating from the University of Puget Sound with her degree in political science, Adderly was accepted into AmeriCorps City Year program in Washington, D.C., which allows young people to perform full-time community service for 10 months. AmeriCorps students typically volunteer in schools or organize after-school programs and summer camps.

Her current job includes event planning, calendar maintenance, office errands and travel planning as well as constituent services for Baird.

Now that she is both in school and employed full-time, working in the fast-paced Capitol Hill environment and juggling classes doesn't seem to be a challenge for Adderly.

Adderly said about her current job, "It's a job that requires me to do everything in the office that I need to do."

Adderly, who goes by "Brie" in the office, says she enjoys setting up meetings for the congressman to talk to constituents who have called in with questions or concerns about a

particular issue. Most of her afternoon schedule is full of meetings.

"A lot of the people who want to come meet with him are very enthusiastic about an issue and I like to be a part of their passion," she said.

Phone calls start coming in at around 9:45 a.m. each day, which because of the time change is actually 6:45 a.m. in Baird's district out west.

Adderly said, "We typically don't get calls until the afternoon but really enthusiastic ones will call at 7:30 a.m.!"

She thinks that it may be more difficult to balance classes and work in the fall, when she will be taking two classes at the same time.

"I'm going to eat well, try to go to bed early, and try to stay as stress-free as possible," Adderly said. "I'll try to manage my time well on the weekends especially, and I might have to cut out some social life."

Adderly plans on returning to the non-profit world after she completes her degree. "You don't necessarily get paid the way you want but when you're that young and idealistic, it doesn't really matter because I got to work with D.C. youth," she said.

Her idealism stems from a long-standing commitment to activism.

"In high school I was kind of a muckraker in the sense that I would write my mayor and get all up in arms if trees were being cut down for no reason, so I thought the government would be a good path to try to get some things done," Adderly said. "I've discovered through all the facets of government that things don't always happen as quickly as you would hope."