



Independent Animal Rescue
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PROFILE

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LEX TAMVAKIS'S JOURNEY FROM MEJO 332 TO COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Independent Animal Rescue's Lex Tamvakis had always known she was interested in



nonprofit PR but wasn't sure if that or the corporate world would be better for her. After taking the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Public Relations Writing class, her decision was solidified.

Tamvakis has always been a huge animal lover. "If you'd asked me what I wanted to be from when I was 3 to 12, I would have said a vet," she said. She had also always known she wanted to work with a community-oriented organization. After interning and volunteering with a few community organizations in communication roles, she cold-emailed IAR asking if there was a way to get involved. To her surprise, they had a role open.

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In her position as Communications and Fundraising Manager, Tamvakis is responsible for a wide range of tasks.

“I wear a lot of hats,” she said.

She is responsible for finding grants, reporting them, leading the social media team, leading external and internal communication and a variety of other tasks.

Tamvakis is currently the youngest employee at IAR. Being the youngest employee has pushed Tamvakis in her professional life in more ways than one. As a self-proclaimed “slack diva,” she said that it has been a great exercise in pushing beyond the communication strategies learned about in an academic setting.

“I realized you need to meet your audience where they are at,” she said.

Working with a team that is made up of mainly 60-year-olds has pushed her to adapt her communication strategies while also teaching them new ones.

This has allowed her to grow in the internal communications aspect of being a communications manager. Internal communications were not something she thought was as pervasive in the role of communications manager but working with IAR board members, staff and hundreds of volunteers taught her how important it is, she said.

“It’s super fulfilling to get a view into how the volunteers are thinking and feeling,” she said.

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One of Tamvakis's main tasks is helping plan and manage communications for the "Fast and the Furriest" 5k, an annual fundraiser at IAR used to raise money for its general fund.

This event has pushed her to crave more chances to learn more about event planning as a communications professional, but it has also challenged her. There are so many layers to an in-person event like picking the right route, permits, etc. Tamvakis said.

Anyone who works for a nonprofit would most likely say there are limitations you probably wouldn't have with a corporate client, Tamvakis said. With such a small staff at IAR, a lot of what they do relies on the help of volunteers.

Everyone on the board of directors are volunteers and work at least 40 hours a week. This has presented the challenge of trying to balance working with volunteers which oftentimes for Tamvakis, means working later at night or on the weekends.

When she joined IAR, she went in with a mission. She wanted to elevate the organization's presence in the community to better reflect the work that is being done. As part of an onboarding session, she attended a Sunday clinic and she saw so many volunteers working together in what looked like a "well-oiled machine," she said.

She remembered there were so many volunteers helping deal with feral, unhappy cats who had just been caught. It warmed her heart to see so many people spend their time in that way just out of the goodness of their hearts.

"There is something so earnest about people spending their time that way," she said.

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Seeing all the volunteers giving up their time and not necessarily getting the praise left her astounded, she said. This experience made her realize this was at the crux of what she wanted to do at IAR. Singing the praises of the hundreds of volunteers at IAR who won't do it themselves is one of her favorite parts of her job.

"I like being the cheerleader for the volunteers," she said.

Even with these limitations and challenges, Tamvakis loves her job. In her role, she has been pushed to become a stronger communications professional.

"It's been a really valuable learning experience," she said.

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