

**THE BLOG**

Big Pharma Dreams

By Marty Kaplan

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Did you see this *New York Times* story about how resourceful the right is when it comes to raising the next generation of conservatives?

The Heritage Foundation, a faux-think-tank front for Republican ideologues, has spent millions to recruit on college campuses, and to pay summer interns to learn the ways of Washington, where they are housed in a Heritage dorm.

By contrast, public interest groups and Democrats are at best playing catch-up, and their internships offer no pay, no room and no board.

The *Times* story offered portraits of this summer's Heritage interns, including one who caught my eye: a Georgetown junior, whose father is described as a longtime Heritage donor. She's spending her summer "working in donor relations, which she thinks will be useful in her intended career as a pharmaceutical lobbyist. 'It's all about forging one-to-one relationships,' she said. 'That's where business starts.'"

I'm trying to get my arms around the idea of wanting a career as a pharmaceutical lobbyist.

What kind of worldview do you have to have, to aspire to a life preventing Merck from being penalized for selling Vioxx because it knew about and concealed its fatal side effects?

What does it say about your education, to want to put it in service of Big Pharma's campaign to stop Medicare from negotiating lower prescription prices for seniors?

Can you imagine wanting a career whose purpose is making it illegal to buy cheaper drugs from Canada?

I can see how someone might end up as a pharmaceutical lobbyist. You start out with big dreams about making the world a better place, and you end up a high-paid, bitter, self-hating bagman doling out campaign contributions and golf junkets to Congressmen who couldn't care less about their constituents' access to affordable and safe medicine.

But to set out to be a pharmaceutical lobbyist?

It's like wanting to grow up to be Willy Loman.

Well, I guess Jack Abramoff is the new Willy Loman.