

“Create Your Own Story” Celebrates 10 Years of Sharing

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There are so many great stories behind the 12,000-plus undergraduates who attend UNH every year, it's impossible to tell them all. But you have to give credit to the folks at Residential Life for trying.

Since launching "Create Your Own Story" in 2004, the staff at Residential Life has worked to share the experiences of students who have made the most of their time here. "Create Your Own Story" highlights 10 students a year, honoring their achievements while aiming to inspire others to step out of their comfort zone and get involved during their college years.

"This requires courage and conviction, which has been modeled in very moving ways by the 'Create Your Own Story' recipients throughout the years," says Ruth Abelmann, associate director of Residential Life. "The one thing all these students have in common is a sense of passion and commitment to something that really matters in their life. During their time at UNH, their passions have been ignited. Their contributions transform our community."

Students are nominated for the award by faculty and staff, and selected by a committee whose members then write the profiles posted on the "Create Your Own Story" webpage. More than 100 students have had their stories told since the program began 10 years ago.

The students are honored at an annual luncheon where the stories are unveiled.

"I think this is a wonderful initiative that brings together students, faculty and staff to celebrate students who are passionate and engaged at UNH." "I think this is a wonderful initiative that brings together students, faculty and staff to celebrate students who are passionate and engaged at UNH." The luncheon is a time when the nominators share what they believe makes these students special," Abelmann says. "This in itself is an inspiring experience for all who attend; it helps to keep motivated, grounded and connected to our passions."

What does a "Create Your Own Story" student look like?

Junior Ben Claxton spent part of the last three years in a lab researching the molecular biology of cancers. He is involved with Medical Brigades of New Hampshire, a division of Global Brigades, the largest student led healthcare organization in the world. A resident assistant, the biochemistry, molecular and cellular biology major also tutors students in chemistry, and participates in Relay for Life, a 24-hour fundraiser for the American Cancer Society.

Claxton's tells current students, "Take advantage of the opportunities UNH has to offer. There is a club for everyone...leadership opportunities are everywhere, don't ever think something is restricted to a junior or senior, you can be the president of a club your sophomore year."

For her senior project, environmental engineering major Jihyon Im designed a



JIHYON IM

potable water distribution and chlorination treatment system to update bathroom facilities for 1,200 students at an elementary school in the Dominican Republic. As a freshman, she participated in CONNECT, an orientation program for multicultural students focused on academic achievement and making connections, and went on to serve as a peer mentor and then a senior staff member. She was one the founding members of UNH's Korean Culture Club.

Regarding her involvement at UNH, Im said, "I ask myself 'If I missed this opportunity, what would happen?' I'm only in college for four years. Might as well try to take on everything and see what happens."

Read "[Create Your Own Stories](#)" from previous years.

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