

# UNH Tour Guides: Guiding the Path to Wildcat Pride

The importance of passionate tour guides cannot be overstated as prospective UNH students explore campus

## **Meredith Hohnbaum, Staff Writer**

Amidst more tour groups on campus as spring sets in, the University of New Hampshire (UNH) tour guides play a fundamental role in shaping the experiences of prospective students.

“A lot of the public schools are on April break during different weeks, so that’s when they want to come,” said Cindy Westney, the admissions manager for campus tour programs. “[The busy season] goes right through April.”

For many students, a campus tour is their first look at what UNH has to offer.

Lauren Ariano, a fourth-year student and former tour guide, recalls her experience as a freshman at the Admitted Students Open House. While listening to a speech given by President James Dean, she reached under her chair to find a UNH hockey puck.

“With the tour and seeing the school and getting the perspective and then finding the hockey puck under my chair, I’m like, ‘This is kind of meant to be,’” said Ariano.

The impact of UNH tour guides on the student body doesn’t end there. These students continue to hold a sense of pride for the school long after admission.

“I love seeing the tour guides and everyone on the tour around campus because it makes me wanna just say, ‘Choose UNH!’ because I absolutely love it here,” said Alley Ford, a second-year student.

Ariano also expressed her desire for future tour guides to possess a passion for UNH and a willingness to proudly promote and share information about the school.

“The tour guides that are seniors now, they started it by volunteering,” said Ariano. “So this was made off of just the foundation of people who are passionate about their school.”

Fortunately, current tour guides reflect just those values.

“[My roommate who is a tour guide and I] are both really passionate about the school and we really like public speaking and sharing our experiences with people, so we really valued getting the word out to other families,” said Jessica Higbee, a second-year. “Just telling people about the little quirks of being a UNH student and having the huge hockey games and football games, I really enjoyed getting that word out.”

Ella Arens, a first-year tour guide, delivered her first tour last Friday, March 1. “It was very nerve-wracking, [but] I think it was a really good experience,” she said.

She reflected on why she chose to become a tour guide.

“My dad used to be a tour guide when he went here... It’s part of my ‘Why UNH’ story,” said Arens.

Arens explained the current tour path as well. Tour guides take prospective students and parents on a path from the Memorial Union Building (MUB) or Smith Hall to Sawyer Hall, where they can view what a potential dorm room can look like. Then they travel to the Wildcat Statue, the Rec Center and more academic buildings. Finally, they circle back to the MUB to complete the tour.

When asked whether anything about the tours should change, Ariano suggested that tours travel down Academic Way, a road lined with educational buildings and modern art.

“I feel like Academic Way is part of the essence of UNH,” she said.

Westney said that much of the feedback that the admissions office receives from admitted students is that they chose to come because of their tour guide.

“If they were down to their last choices of a couple of colleges, that really tipped the scale for them to want to come here, and I’ve heard that repeatedly,” she said.

