

Carsey Alum & Student Take Home Prizes at NH SVIC 2019

Hannah MacBride '07, '13, Marisa Rafal '19, '20G win with
toy-sharing themed projects

Saturday, November 30, 2019

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Jessica Forrest '19G and Hannah MacBride '07, '13G (fourth and fifth from left) with judges from the NH Social Track of the 2019 SVIC.

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The annual [New Hampshire Social Venture Innovation Challenge \(SVIC\)](#) highlights and awards seed money to innovative, socially oriented projects and business plans submitted by full-and part-time students from New Hampshire universities and colleges, current New Hampshire residents and University of New Hampshire alumni based anywhere in the world. Co-hosted by the [Carsey School](#), the [Center for Social Innovation and Enterprise](#) at UNH, [Paul College of Business & Economics](#), the [UNH Sustainability Institute](#), and [Net Impact UNH](#), the SVIC features two tracks – one for students and one for community members and UNH alumni – in which finalists can earn up to \$5,000 in cash prizes to fund their projects.

The Community Toy Chest

This year, the Carsey School counted an alumni and a current student among the SVIC finalists.

Hannah MacBride '07, '13G of Concord, New Hampshire, is a graduate of Carsey's [master in community development](#) program. Working with Jessica Forrest '19G, a master of business administration graduate from Paul College, MacBride envisioned the [Community Toy Chest](#) as a toy rental enterprise aimed at reducing waste (from toy manufacturing and landfill contributing) and increasing locations for families with young children to interact and socialize. Their project won second place in the community track at this year's SVIC and included a \$3,000 cash prize, a one-year membership in the New Hampshire Businesses for Social Responsibilities and other prizes.

"We were on a long walk and came up with a lot of different ideas about how we could, as families with young children, make better environmental choices," MacBride said of the Community Toy Chest's origins. "We both recognized how difficult it is raising children and making sound ecological choices, so we knew we wanted to address that."

"Children grow out of their toys so quickly, and then the toys are either donated, stored indefinitely or trashed. We want to keep toys in circulation longer and more consistently."

"Children grow out of their toys so quickly," MacBride said, "and then the toys are either donated, stored indefinitely or trashed. We want to keep toys in circulation longer and

more consistently.” The Community Toy Chest would operate on a membership basis, allowing families to rent toys for a period instead of purchasing them outright.

MacBride and Forrest did their research and found a few businesses doing some aspects of their model, including board game and Lego rentals, but nothing that rented out toys for all ages and provided a play place for families with young children. And nothing in New Hampshire.

“The most important aspect of our model is the locations; we want to establish really visible, easily accessible locations for the Community Toy Chests. They will be a place where families are comfortable socializing and where we can establish a community around this concept,” said MacBride.

The funding from SVIC will help MacBride and Forrest continue their market research into the feasibility of their plan and incorporate as either a nonprofit or for-profit enterprise.

“In putting together this project, I used many of the skills learned during my graduate program,” said MacBride. “Taking a project from ideation to reality – that was a major skill set I gained through the community development capstone project, and it’s a skill I’m using in this initiative and in every endeavor.”

The New Hampshire Toy Library Network

[Master in public policy](#) student Marisa Rafal ’19 won third place in the student track at SVIC 2019, receiving \$2,000 in funding to support her [New Hampshire Toy Library Network](#) nonprofit, which launched in 2018. Rafal developed the concept for the toy library while an undergraduate in the human development and family studies program at UNH. While writing a research paper on toy libraries – lending libraries for toys instead of books – she found that these institutions existed around the United States but that New Hampshire did not have an officially registered toy library with the USA Toy Library Association.

"Toy libraries are especially important in serving low-income areas and in providing families with an alternative to regularly purchasing new toys for their children. Plus, many toy libraries carry hard-to-find adaptive toys for children with disabilities."

“Toy libraries are especially important in serving low-income areas and in providing families with an alternative to regularly purchasing new toys for their children,” said Rafal. “Plus, many toy libraries carry hard-to-find adaptive toys for children with disabilities.”

Rafal developed the concept for the New Hampshire Toy Library Network her junior year of her undergraduate studies and implemented the model soon after. In the

summer of 2019, she and four other students opened the first location at the Dover Public Library. Today, more than 16 UNH students are involved in the [NH Toy Library](#).

“We represent a wide range of majors, including students from marketing, mechanical engineering, social work, and human development and family studies,” said Rafal. “It’s truly the interdisciplinary and collaborative team we envisioned. Plus, we’re working with college and university students across the state to establish new locations.”

A second site, spearheaded by students from NHTI-Concord’s Community College, is in the works for Boscawen Public Library in Boscawen, New Hampshire. Future goals include opening new locations statewide and hosting community workshops at these sites. Funding from SVIC and from a recently received grant from The Pollination Project in California will help Rafal and her fellow students achieve these goals.

“Given our nonprofit model, we are truly meant to be of service to child and families and we look forward to providing free toy access to youth across New Hampshire – regardless of economic background or ability,” said Rafal.

“Over the next few months, we plan to add more NH Toy Library locations statewide so that children can get free play material with a zero membership fee. We did a lot of research to hear directly from the communities and look forward to providing what they’ve requested.”

You can learn more about these SVIC projects [online](#).

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