

A Rising Star

Service, studies launch career in public health

Monday, May 8, 2017



SOPHIA JAPHET '17G WAS HONORED WITH THE NEW HAMPSHIRE PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION'S 2017 RISING STAR AWARD.

Even before Sophia Japhet received her master's degree in public health from UNH Manchester on May 18, she was recognized in the state for excellence in her field.

The [New Hampshire Public Health Association](#) (NHPHA) has honored Japhet with its [2017 Rising Star Award](#), which recognizes a public health professional “who has been in the field less than five years and has both contributed to public health and has

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demonstrated significant potential,” according to the NHPHA.

Japhet’s reaction to the news she had received the award?

“I was humbled,” she says, adding, “As a public health professional, I have the opportunity to both serve my community and engage in work that is meaningful. This inspires me to get up every day and do the work that I love to the highest degree of my ability. To me, this award is recognition of the importance of being guided by both integrity and service.”

That commitment to service is what ultimately led Japhet to UNH Manchester and the [master of public health](#) program.

Japhet, who grew up in New Jersey, attended Arcadia University as an undergraduate. “As a biology major in my first year, I had the opportunity to take a public health elective. I was hooked,” she explains. Japhet went on to spend a summer studying in Cape Town, South Africa, focusing on the HIV epidemic and local interventions.

“Wanting to get involved in community service work after college, I joined the AmeriCorps program. This one-year program took me to a nonprofit, Families in Transition, in Manchester,” she explains. “During my year of service, I helped build donor-relations programs, expand fundraising initiatives and bolster in-kind donation programs.”

Serving as an [AmeriCorps VISTA](#), which stands for “Volunteers in Service to America,” Japhet explains, “I had the opportunity to build key skills and networks while engaging in work that had direct implications for the vulnerable populations we served.”

That year of service convinced

“The professors were working professionals who I felt could provide a beneficial and real-world perspective of the current public

Japhet that her future would be in **health landscape.**”
public health, and she began looking
at graduate programs.

“Living and working in Manchester, the UNH program was not only convenient and accessible, but I was attracted to the small, intimate and in-person class structure,” she says. “Additionally, the professors were working professionals who I felt could provide a beneficial and real-world perspective of the current public health landscape.”

Those factors have helped her to grow in her chosen field.

“The UNH staff I met during my schooling were the foundation of my professional networks that ultimately helped me to land my dream job. I am so thankful for the time and attention each professor gave to me during my time at UNH,” she says.

Following graduation, Japhet will continue her work as an environmental health specialist at the Manchester Health Department.

“As part of the UNH curriculum, I took an environmental health class. It was in this class that I found my area of passion within public health. Recognizing this interest, the professor was willing to help mentor me in this field,” she explains. “Because of this connection, when a job in environmental health came up at the Health Department, I was confident in applying for the job. And I got the job!”

As an environmental health specialist, Japhet’s work includes water-quality monitoring, food-protection and indoor air-quality programs, mosquito-borne illness tracking and asthma-prevention initiatives.

“My job takes me from the restaurants of Manchester to the banks of Manchester’s river, to the homes of some of the city’s at-risk residents,” she explains. “I love being able to work in a boots-on-

the-ground position where my efforts have direct impacts on the health and well-being of Manchester residents. No day is ever the same, and I am constantly learning.”



**SOPHIA JAPHET '17G AT UNH
MANCHESTER**

Working in public health, Japhet cites many pressing issues — including environmental health, obesity, malnutrition and mental health. But when asked to single out a most-pressing need, she describes her concern about the impact of budget cuts on public health advances.

“Continued investment and support for research, interventions and workforce development is crucial to ensuring environments and health systems that promote the health and productivity of people,” she explains. “To ensure protection of our public health funding, numerous stakeholders from research, academia, policy, local communities and practitioners must be involved in building support for public-health legislation.”

When not in school or at work, Japhet volunteers on the board of the New Hampshire Public Health Association, and, she adds, she loves hiking in the White Mountains with her dog.

And what’s next for Japhet?

“As I progress in my career, my next step will be to attain my registered environmental health specialist certification,” she says. “New Hampshire has not only been a great place to start a career, but with its numerous outdoor activities, rich history and diverse culture, it has been a great place to build a life.”

WRITTEN [Jennifer Saunders](#) | Communications and Public

BY: Affairs | jennifer.saunders@unh.edu | 603-862-3585

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