

## Interning in the Therapeutic Arts

First graduate of the neuropsychology program shares her experience

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Walking King, a Rottweiler service dog, through the hallways of [Concord Hospital](#) and seeing the smiles on patient and caretaker faces was just one of many great experiences Alexandra Twomey had during her spring internship.

“We were on a visit in the pediatric department and we stopped to say hello to a young patient and his family,” recalls Twomey. “King looked at the patient and really seemed to want to get on the bed to say hello. The little boy was so eager to see King. I could see the boy’s whole demeanor change; he was happy and so excited.”

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Pet therapy visits, aromatherapy, Reiki and therapeutic arts were just a few of the things Twomey experienced as an intern with the [Therapeutic Arts and Activity Services](#) department at Concord Hospital. The department provides personalized diversionary activities to help patients relax, feel creative and find enjoyment in unexpected places while in the hospital.

Twomey, the first graduate of UNH Manchester's [neuropsychology program](#) in May 2017, transferred to the university after finishing her freshman year in Long Island. The 2013 Salem High School graduate wanted to be closer to home while also finding a more affordable option to earn a four-year degree. Once she settled into UNH Manchester, she knew she'd found the right place.

"I realized in my first two classes that the teaching style was more personalized," Twomey said. "It was totally different than what I had experienced in a larger school. When I talked to my professors, they knew who I was and what I needed."

Twomey always felt supported when she spoke with her professors about her career interests.

"They always heard me out, listened to what I wanted and helped me find a path instead of laying out a pre-defined framework," Twomey said.

With the encouragement of her professors, she spent a semester studying molecular biology at MacQuarie University in Sydney, Australia, while also working at a café on campus.

"I wanted to get a sense of independence and international travel," Twomey said. "It was an amazing experience."

Twomey was also very pleased with the internship experience she had this spring. The opportunity to work with patients as a certified aromatherapy ambassador, observe Reiki and visit patients to offer artwork for their hospital rooms were all great opportunities

to test what she'd learned in the classroom.

"We know that everyone's brain is the same as far as structure, hormones and networks, but the way they express and manifest in our life based on experience, environment, etc., leaves so much room for diversity in personality," Twomey said. "Having that background allowed me to go into this internship role knowing I wanted to help people, but what helped looked like would be different for everyone. You want someone to be healthy in these situations, but you can't change everything they've experienced."

With graduation now behind her, Twomey will be moving to Charleston, S.C., to work with the nonprofit organization [WINGS for Kids](#) as a Leader in the afterschool program. The organization's mission is to help as many low-income kids as possible experience high-quality and effective social and emotional learning. Twomey also plans to pursue graduate or medical school in the next few years.

"It's my number one goal to improve the mental health in my community," Twomey said. "I hope to carry out everything I've learned from my professors at UNH and internship supervisors. I wouldn't have made it this far without their support and encouragement."

WRITTEN [Kim Wall](#) | UNH Manchester

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