Making the Granite State Great for Youth

Graduate students recognized for research on youth engagement in NH

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Two UNH graduate students recently earned the Graduate Public Engagement and Outreach Award for their research that supports statewide initiatives for Granite State youth.

Recreation management and policy master’s students Kate Moscouver and Hannah Falcone conducted their research in partnership with Stay Work Play NH, a nonprofit focused on attracting and encouraging youth to stay in the state. They conducted 11 focus groups at high schools across the state, querying 127 students about their perceptions of living in New Hampshire and their plans after graduation.

Building on NH’s Best Features

Most students in the focus groups expressed fondness for the state’s quiet, rural settings and the neighborly spirit within the communities. They also said they enjoyed outdoor activities like hiking and skiing, as well as access to the ocean and mountains. Moscouver and Falcone’s research suggests the state would benefit from capitalizing on and promoting these attributes.

Many students also mentioned participating in a career technical course or being involved in extended learning opportunities outside of school.
Other focus group participants expressed interest in traveling beyond state lines to experience new opportunities and cultures.

"I think incorporating more of those types of opportunities into the school setting would be really beneficial because that way you can satiate student desire to try new things and spread their wings," Moscouver says.

Falcone says she came away from the focus groups impressed with New Hampshire's high school population.

"The students were as excited as Kate and I were about having these conversations about their hometowns, their schools and the communities they lived in. You could tell it’s not a topic they get asked about a lot, and so most had lots to say," Falcone says.

Applying the Research

Will Stewart, executive director of Stay Work Play NH, says the perspective of the younger demographic is becoming increasingly important. "As we learn more about this demographic, it certainly helps organizations and policymakers across the state to attract and retain young people."

Stewart says Moscouver and Falcone’s research helped lay the groundwork for Stay Work Play NH’s future engagement with the high school population.

"They picked up the ball and ran with it, and I think they did an admirable job," he says.

Personal Impact and Future Directions

Falcone, who earned her undergraduate degree in recreation management and policy (https://chhs.unh.edu/recreation-management-policy) at UNH, says the research results have already helped her in her new role as a media and events program manager at Hanover Park & Recreation.

“Everyone needs to feel like there is a place for them in their community, and throughout New Hampshire, during this period of a young person’s life; most of that seems to be reliant on the school system. My goal is to help young people know that there are opportunities in their communities for them and abundant local outdoor spaces where they were welcome," Falcone says.

Moscouver, who earned an undergraduate degree in outdoor recreation and education, plans to return to Ohio to seek employment opportunities centered on youth education.
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