



Alumni Spotlight

Abbie Shervinskie '17

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As a young alumna, Abbie Shervinskie '17 has already managed to accomplish a great deal and go far...literally. Her interest in mental health, along with a willingness to try new things, has taken her across the globe and around the country.

Growing up on a small farm outside of Sunbury, PA, where her family raises sheep, goats, and chickens, Shervinskie knew that she wanted to go to Millersville University by the time she was a sophomore in high school. While attending the Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership conference on campus, she says that she had a very pleasant experience that helped to confirm her interest in the 'Ville. Shervinskie majored in Psychology and minored in International Studies. "I wasn't sure that psychology was the right major for me when I started," she says, "but I had always been interested in mental health and knew that I wanted a versatile degree." International studies gave her the chance to explore her interest in other cultures.

Shervinskie quickly became mentored by Peggy and Al Forsyth, after she took their freshman seminar. They continue to serve as her mentors today. Psychology professor, Dr. Woo "had high expectations and encouraged a multicultural perspective," which aligned well with Shervinskie's goals. She also worked on campus at the Center for Health Education and Promotion where her supervisor, Jayme Trogus, inspired her interest in public health.

Shervinskie recommends that current students pursue every opportunity that presents itself, just like she did, because it opened her up to new experiences, gave her a greater understanding of people and the world, and led her to discover and shape her passions.

Through Dr. Woo's Cultural Psychology class, Shervinskie was introduced to a volunteer opportunity abroad through an organization called SLV.Global, which is based in London. She spent fourteen weeks in Sri Lanka with the organization, working in different types of mental health facilities and providing creative therapy sessions. "I was able to work with individuals of all ages with different needs," she explains. "I'm proud to have volunteered because their main focus is providing sustainable and culturally sensitive therapy programming." Shervinskie lived with a local family, learning their language and customs, and learned about psychology through a cultural lens.



Currently Shervinskie works as the Addiction and Behavioral Health Coordinator in the Office of Governor Sununu in New Hampshire, a position she earned through the AmeriCorps VISTA program. Serving alongside the governor's Advisor on Addiction and Behavioral Health, her focus is primarily on the opioid epidemic, though she also works on projects related to addiction in general. "One of my main projects is helping to manage the governor's Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative," she says. "This initiative engages workplaces of all types to aid people recovering from addiction by providing training to educate employers and employees on addiction, stigma, and the resources in their community." The goal is to shift workplace culture so that people feel more comfortable coming forward and asking for help.

Shervinskie will soon advance her career by pursuing a Master's in Public Health with a concentration in global health, later this year.

"I hope to use my MPH to work alongside health officials of other nations to increase access to physical and mental health care in low- and middle-income countries," she explains. "With my degree, I want to support sustainable and culturally informed health initiatives in communities worldwide."