Alum of the month

Kaitlin Calculator, LCSW
CHHS- Class of '2010 (Social Work)

What are you currently doing? What is the most rewarding aspect of your career?

I am the Student Assistance Program Coordinator through Project SUCCESS at Rochester Middle School in Rochester NH. I work to support, assist, and provide support and psychoeducation to at-risk students with various issues, most commonly but not limited to: substance misuse (either current use, past use, risk of first use due to presence of one or more risk factors, or impacting family member use), mental health issues, bullying, dating violence, and peer pressure. The most rewarding aspect of my career is when a student advocates for themselves and “self-refers” to me, and when students refer other students/friends whom they are concerned about.

What do you know now that you wish you’d known while an undergrad?

You are not a superhero. Celebrate small victories. To the world you are just one person, but to one person you may be the world. Also, social work is such a versatile field. There are so many roles and settings that employ social workers, explore as many as you can. Take full advantage of your internships – they are the most fruitful learning and networking experiences! I interned at a school, an outpatient agency, and an inpatient psychiatric hospital, all of which opened doors for me and allowed me to evolve in the field of social work.

Based on your experiences and education, what skills do you think have been the most helpful in your career?

The skills and training that has been most helpful in my career include: Resilience Theory, Systems Theory, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and Motivational Interviewing.

How did you obtain your first job after graduation? What steps did you take, and what would you recommend to others?

I earned my BSW in Social Work in 2010 and then worked in the restaurant industry until October 2011, where I then transitioned into my first social work job at an agency in Hyannis, MA as a Family Support Worker. Shortly after obtaining this position, I realized I was not satisfied and began researching and reviewing various agencies that, also, offered entry level positions. I interviewed and accepted a position at Child and Family Services as a Therapeutic Mentor. What I would recommend to others is to take the time to research and review several agencies. I initially took a position with a poorly rated agency offering a higher salary, in which I learned quickly that the reputation and history of an agency/organization is worth far more than dollars in a paycheck. I stayed with this agency for over 3 years.
What experiences and/or people have significantly impacted your career journey?

It may cliché, but every student, client, and patient I have worked with has impacted my career journey. I have learned more from them than they have from me. More personally, my co-worker and later boss, Erin Russell LICSW and my MSW intern supervisor, Diana Barbosa LICSW, have significantly impacted my career journey by pushing me to reach my goals and then inspiring me to reach further, modeling what it looks like to work with integrity and fidelity, and supporting me in every way.

What advice do you have for students interested in your field?

Personally, I believe these three things will either make or break someone in the field of social work:
1) Time management/organization (Write everything down and using a planner)
2) Personal and professional limit setting (Feel comfortable & confident to say “No”)
3) Work-life balance (Take care of yourself – work to live, don’t live to work)

(Want to know more? Kaitlin is happy to talk to you. Email: kcalculator87@gmail.com)