“I see things in sequences now. The song on the radio becomes the score, the shots line up in my head and I can see the story playing out visually, whether in video, photos or words.”

Stories are very important to Abigail (Abbey) McIntosh’s life. Enjoying them, experiencing them, creating and sharing them. An accomplished student, leader and communication major with a strong background in studio art, she’s passionate about capturing, creating and sharing stories through photography, videography and fine art.

It’s fitting, then, that one of Abbey’s favorite childhood novels played a critical role in the UNH chapter of her story. “Growing up in Nashua, I didn’t consider UNH as strongly at first, but during a tour of campus, the Harry Potter score played from the Thompson Hall bells and I knew this place was special.” Abbey had been accepted with strong scholarships to a small college in New Brunswick, Canada, but, upon reflection, she knew Durham would be the right place. “Where you go to college becomes a ‘home-base’ for the rest of your life in many ways... I made an emotional decision that day and never once questioned it.”

Once here, Abbey immediately set out to experience all she could on campus, adding story after story. “I loved that I could find my community at UNH, and I wanted to surround myself with people of similar values.” She got involved with Alpha Phi Omega, the co-ed community service fraternity on campus, the MUB’s Office of Student Involvement and Leadership, Leadership Camp, UNH Social Media as an intern, and as an Orientation staff member. Through her communication classes with Professor Michael Soha, leadership activities, part-time jobs and her study abroad experience in London, it clicked for Abbey just how much she wanted to help others tell their stories. “In class and working with Orientation, Leadership Camp and UNH Social, you can never really ask others to authentically share their story unless you are willing to share yours first.” MUB staff members Dave Zamansky, Nate Hastings and Curt Kenoyer, as well as Tyler Wentworth, formerly of UNH Social Media and now UNH’s Career and Professional Success team, all made lasting impacts on Abbey’s personal and professional growth. “I made so many genuine connections with staff, students, and faculty who shared their own stories and experiences freely with me. I was inspired that I could release my inhibitions and share myself authentically with others too.”

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When Abbey was 12, her mother was taken from her by a rare and aggressive brain tumor. As the keynote speaker at UNH’s Relay for Life event, Abbey opened up to hundreds of fellow students and community members to share the full story. With awe-inspiring strength and positivity, Abbey shared her family’s tragic story with the community. Yet her message was not one of pain and loss, but different themes that echoed through the Whittemore Center: to make the choice to focus on her mother’s strength. To recognize love and be loved unconditionally. To find the light in difficult situations. “To live life to the fullest every single day so that I may do justice to the memories of the amazing people I have lost. To dance in the rain.”

The speech moved hundred to tears that day, and paid homage to one of her mother’s favorite sayings: Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass, but learning to dance in the rain.

It’s a credo that Abbey has chosen to live by, and the way she shares her story and empowers others to share theirs has left a lasting impact on so many within the UNH community. Abbey’s long list of academic accomplishments, including recent selection as a COLA Dean’s Ambassador and earning a nearly perfect GPA, numerous leadership experiences, and dedication to excellence in her professional internship have all translated to a full-time job secured months before commencement. She has written another chapter in her own personal story, inspired hundreds of other stories in the UNH community, and looks forward to continuing to tell visual stories upon graduation as a social media coordinator with a small creative agency in Portsmouth, N.H.