Of Emma Chinman’s many accomplishments, she is most proud of her role as the Associate Chaplain of Durham’s Waysmeet Center. Not only is she serving in this role as an undergraduate student, but it also fulfills her passion and commitment to community service, inclusion and equity. After hearing her story and learning about her work ethic, one realizes that Emma is more than fit to serve this role.

Ask Emma to attribute her successes and achievements to her skills, however, and she would say it all came down to two things: luck and connections. She will admit her strong work ethic and dedication certainly came into play during her past four years as a UNH student. After all, one cannot resurrect a community service project, tutor incarcerated students in the greater Boston area, be a teaching assistant for women’s studies courses, attend Socratic Society meetings, and travel to Washington D.C. with New Hampshire Youth Movement without a little hard work and determination.

As a fourth-year social work and women’s studies dual major, Emma has always been passionate about activism and community service. Growing up amid the values of a Unitarian Universalist Church helped foster these values, she said, as she learned seven principles towards understanding and acknowledging people’s worth. Emma also admits, however, that she has always been in tune with the feelings of those around her. “My mom used to call me an empath when I was younger... I thought I could feel what other people were feeling. When kids cried, I felt their pain,” Emma said. “But then I realized that was just empathy and compassion.”

In addition to her values of inclusion and equity, the intersection of people’s social identities and their experiences are her prime interests, and her UNH journey follows these closely. It started during Emma’s second semester at UNH. Her mentor, Megan Brabec, saw Emma’s passion for giving back to her community, and she recommended that Emma revitalize the dormant UNH club Oxfam, an offshoot of the international organization that raises awareness about global hunger and social injustice. It’s an organization that Megan was once a part of herself. UNH students created this group to foster a community to empower students to find their voices and make change. Oxfam had long been out of action, and Megan told Emma this was part of her calling.

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As a first-year student with only one semester of college experience under her belt, Emma felt like this is what she had been searching for at UNH. She enjoyed her fall semester, but she found it challenging to connect with the culture. Something was missing, and Megan helped her realize that engaging the community was what she needed. Along with some dedicated peers, Emma revived Oxfam at UNH that spring.

The following semester, Emma met two other mentors who would help shape the rest of her UNH experience: Waysmeet Center’s Director Larry Brickner-Wood, and Faina Bubke, Associate Director at UNH’s Center for Social Innovation and Enterprise. Faina helped Emma secure an internship at Semester in the City the following summer, where Emma tutored incarcerated students in the greater Boston area and helped develop programs to teach people to be change-makers in their communities. This experience helped Emma expand and reshape her vision of equity and cyclical oppression, and it fueled a new passion to be a community organizer in her future.

Following this experience, Emma took on the role of Associate Chaplain of the Waysmeet Center. Emma and Larry formed an instant connection when they met at U-Day and, for the past two years, Emma has been following her passion in this role at Waysmeet. As Associate Chaplain, Emma had opportunities to help organize a campus rally in support of UNH lecturers whose contracts were not renewed last year, facilitate de-escalation trainings for student activists to act in solidarity with students of color, and bring together multiple community organizations to create educational discussions on cultural competency. During all of these experiences, Emma still found the time to serve as a teaching assistant for women’s studies courses and volunteer at New Generation, a family-oriented shelter for homeless pregnant women and mothers with children.

Reflecting on her experiences, Emma admitted it felt odd to celebrate so many of her achievements. For so long, she had lived by the rule she learned through her many community experiences, “If you’re a good organizer, no one should know your name,” Emma said. She doesn’t quite know what lies ahead as she prepares for graduation, but she will be forever thankful for those who helped her forge her own UNH path.

“I’m lucky to be where I am, and it’s because I’ve met so many amazing people who wanted to help me,” Emma said. “I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for those people.”