

# Grad gets her feet wet volunteering with Lowell nonprofit organization



By Jennifer Myers  
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LOWELL — Everyone needs a little encouragement. A shoulder to lean on. Someone to listen and understand their struggles and fears.

Haley Waugh is working to make that critical mentoring service available for the blind youth of Greater Lowell.

Waugh, 23, originally from Augusta, Maine, landed in Lowell in August.

A recent graduate of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, a public-relations degree in hand, she was looking for a job in marketing.

A friend told her about Americorps, a

to their needs.”

Elizabeth Cannon, executive director of the Lowell Association for the Blind, says Waugh is the association's first Americorps volunteer.

“We are thrilled to be able to have her here to support our new program,” Cannon said, adding that the association, the only nonprofit organization north of Boston serving the blind, assists 300 blind and visually impaired individuals each year

through a variety of programs. “Haley is a great asset to the organization.”

Waugh's duties include marketing, recruiting and training for the program.

“My goal is to expand the program,” she said. “The biggest obstacle is the lack of transportation, which really limits our ability to reach beyond the Merrimack Valley. That really is the larger issue in all of the association's programs — getting people here.”

There are currently five mentoring pairs in the program. Waugh is developing a survey and evaluation tool for both the mentors and their protégés to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

“When she leaves us in June, there will be a complete manual for the program so we can continue it next year,” said Cannon. “It is a program that not only assists the kids, but makes

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A little training and the next thing Haley Waugh knew, she was officially an ambassador of mentoring, working with the Lowell Association for the Blind to establish and promote their new mentoring program, which pairs blind adults with blind youth.

She was trained through Mass Mentoring.

“It is important for these kids to see not only that they can live independently, but that they must live independently,” she said. “It was a transition for me. I had never worked with the blind before, so part of the job became learning how to guide them and best relate



the adults feel really empowered. They do not get a lot of chances to volunteer because of lacking technology and transportation difficulties.”

Waugh is unsure what she will do when her time in Lowell is up next summer, but the experience she has had in the Mill City has

awakened a desire to continue in the human-services field.

“You can be more creative and really do something to help people in this field,” she said.

“This experience has been great, and I know it will open a lot of doors for me.”

Haley Waugh, originally from Augusta, Maine, has been volunteering to promote the mentoring program at the Lowell Association for the Blind.

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