The Song of a Community: A Reflection on Hope Personified

Tatiana Havens

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/tvc

Part of the Higher Education Commons

Recommended Citation

This Reflection is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Education and Social Services at UVM ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Vermont Connection by an authorized editor of UVM ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact schwrs@uvm.edu.
THE KENNETH P. SAURMAN AWARD

This award honors Kenneth P. Saurman, who will long be remembered for his dedication to the field of student affairs and to the graduate program at The University of Vermont. After his death in 1980, a memorial fund was established for a prize recognizing the outstanding graduate in the program. This award is a reminder of the professional excellence and commitment Kenneth P. Saurman inspired in his students and colleagues. Each spring, a committee of faculty members in the College of Education and Social Services selects a student, or students, who best display(s) the established award criteria. Those recognized: (a) show a record of outstanding achievement; (b) demonstrate ability to make outstanding future professional contributions at both local and national levels; (c) demonstrate future ability to make outstanding intellectual contributions to the field in the areas of research and scholarship; (d) show evidence of having fostered a sense of community and cooperation among peers, staff, and faculty; and (e) show evidence of outstanding contribution to the University through internship and practical experience.

In May 2022, the Kenneth P. Saurman Award was proudly presented to: Tatiana Havens.

Tatiana Havens (she/her) is a recent graduate of the UVM HESA Program, and she holds a B.A in Psychology and English Literature from Emmanuel College (MA). She currently resides in Burlington, VT with her beloved partner and two cats.
The Song of a Community: A Reflection on Hope Personified

Tatiana Havens

My mother-in-law gifted me a tea towel with Emily Dickinson’s, “‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers”, artfully printed with a beautiful bird resting on an olive branch. It hangs delicately along the shelf that holds our coffee mugs, cookbooks, and the sourdough starter from a dear HESA colleague. Less than a year ago, I shared some of this starter with another colleague who now bakes twelve loaves of fresh bread for the campus food pantry every week.

Nine months have passed since graduation. I refer to myself as a “COVID alum” because working as a student affairs graduate student in higher education during the pandemic was a unique experience. An experience I do not believe is examined closely enough, and one that did not naturally lend itself to hope. However, there was, and still is, a community who molded and shaped this experience with wholehearted love, care, and tenderness. This reflection is an ode to our community.

There is a lot of love, care, and tenderness involved in bread baking, but the process is not without force. A crumbled mixture of ingredients must be turned and roughly kneaded for an extended period of time in order to make a loaf. The stretch of the skin on my knuckles cracks beneath the dry flour, and the sticky residue from the dough coats my nailbeds. Once the dough has risen, it must be slashed and scored to allow for an even bake. The crunch of the cracked crust coupled with steam billowing out of the loaves’ center as the knife makes the first cut is an experience meant to be shared. The warmth of each slice’s center is too.

“Hope’ is the thing with feathers”
By Emily Dickinson

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird -
That kept so many warm -

I’ve heard it in the chilliest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity, -
It asked a crumb - of me.

This journal exists in part to unfold the nuance of existing and persisting in a helping profession, and in my experience, the community is what makes persistence feel possible. At times, I have felt slashed and scored, and I do not know if the brittle mixture will take structure. It is a humbling reminder to know the world of higher education will carry on regardless of my presence. I say this not with contempt but with the deepest admiration for those in our community who currently possess the will to ensure it.

This next year of my life is dedicated to redefining my joy and exploring a new purpose for myself. The weight of my world has been held by my community of friends, colleagues, family, and fur babies. I sign every email “With gratitude” if not for the recipient than for myself. Gratitude is a practice for healing. I hope to heal, to return the favors of those who carried me. I hope these things and more for all the journal’s readers too.