

USU's HDFS Students Have the Opportunity to Participate in a Practicum at Agencies Within the Community

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USU's HDFS students get the opportunity to participate in a practicum at agencies within the community to help them refine their career interests based on their aptitudes and interests. While most students assist with and fulfill an already existing role, we have had a few students who have developed a practicum of a unique nature. One such student is April Rasmussen, who completed her practicum during the summer of 2023.

In addition to her interests in assisting in the professional helping field, April Rasmussen has talents in writing and theater. She used these talents to serve her community by writing the script for a play, *Seeing People: The Struggle is Part of the Story*. The storyline focuses on one particular family, but also on individuals that this family interacts with in their community. Each of these characters have mental health difficulties or stressors, which are depicted by separate actors. For example, the main character, a teenager named Rose, deals with anxiety symptoms. While one youth acted out the role of Rose within the play, a second actress played the role of Rose's Anxiety. Her agitated behavior and dialogue accurately displayed the racing anxious thoughts that Rose was dealing with. Other actors portrayed "burnout," "depression," "ADHD," and other mental health symptoms that the characters dealt with.

April was able to work with the Worm Creek Opera House, in Preston, Idaho, and the southern Idaho community to direct her play for audiences from July 20-22, 2023. The play portrayed how the characters in the community came to recognize each other's areas of difficulty and to develop increased compassion for them. As a member of the audience and a mental health clinician, I was impressed with how accurately April was able to portray what it was like for the characters to deal with their mental health issues. She provided a wonderful message for all in attendance, to recognize that most people are dealing with some difficulties and that we need to be patient, caring, and inviting to each other. With the story's emphasis on adolescents, it contains a message that should be shared in secondary schools throughout the area. April is commended for using her knowledge gained within her department educational experience, along with her writing and theater talents, to compose a message that was impactful for everyone who had the opportunity to attend.

April is planning on graduating from Utah State University in December 2023 with her degree in Human Development and Family Studies. She is currently applying to social work and marriage and family therapy graduate programs. She says that her professional goal is to "help people with mental health issues on the road to recovery."