

The LIBN 30 Under 30 honorees are described as “bright and dynamic young professionals who contribute to the Long Island community through public service and who have made significant strides in business”. Among the recipients for 2019 is Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare Alumni, Grace Johnson.

Now the Director of Counseling Services and Health Operations at The Long Island Alzheimer’s Foundation, Grace has a history of organizational leadership. During her time at SBU, she held positions as both the Treasurer and President of the Undergraduate Social Welfare Alliance. She was a recipient of the 2015 Stony Brook University Leadership Award. Since graduating from the BSW program, Grace obtained her master’s degree, LMSW, and has held positions in both the non-profit and private sectors.

Reflecting on her experiences in the field, Grace has many words of wisdom for students and recent graduates.

Give it your all:

“I believe that the student that you are is reflective of the professional that you will become. I don’t necessarily mean in terms of academic performance. I am referring to attitudes, enthusiasm, and willingness to learn.”

Take your time:

“The beginning of your career can be an incredibly challenging time, especially if there are any additional stressors in your personal life. Rest assured, more challenges equal more opportunities for growth. Therefore, supervision is vital. Understanding and accepting that the concept of lifelong learning implies that you do not actually *ever* have to know absolutely *everything* can be quite the relief for young professionals.”

Remain open:

“I keep a list of goals and I complete objectives towards them regularly; the rest is not up to me. I recognize that opportunities usually present themselves at times that aren’t necessarily scheduled in our day planners, and that’s the fun part! Stony Brook taught me so many things that I wouldn’t have thought I needed until the positions and tasks presented themselves. For example, I knew from the beginning of my social work education that I had a strong interest in clinical work. What I didn’t know was that I would also develop a love for management, administration, and program development. Thanks to my time at Stony Brook, my toolbox was

already filled with the skills and knowledge that I would need to be successful in these roles.”

Be out there:

“When speaking about my work, the most common response I hear is ‘I didn’t know that social workers did that!’.

Why doesn’t society hear “social worker” and think “psychotherapist”?

Why doesn’t society hear “social worker” and think “executive director”?

Why doesn’t society hear “social worker” and think “chief of staff”?

I want to see all these remarkable social workers making themselves more visible. The community should know about the roles that we are filling and the work that we are doing.”

Let the work change you:

“I have become a better person, a softer person, a more grateful person.”