

CASE STUDY: HIGHER EDUCATION INVESTS IN AGE-U-CATE PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

How one Northern Illinois University student integrated Compassionate Touch to launch a purposeful career in aging services post-graduation

CHALLENGE:

The demand for medical and health services leaders continues to grow at an accelerated rate. The Bureau of Labor & Statistics projects a 17% demand through 2024, which is significantly faster than average.

Higher education institutions play a critical role in exposing students to career opportunities and supporting the nation in closing workforce gaps for aging services providers.

KEY BENEFITS:

- Create Meaningful Internships
- Extend Programs into the Community
- Support Aging Services Workforce Development



"I believe that sharing these connections in a care partner relationship is essential to giving and receiving quality care."

Amber Godinsky, NIU Alumni and Meals on Wheels Program Coordinator for Volunteer Action Center for Northern Illinois

OVERVIEW:

The College of Health and Human Sciences at Northern Illinois University (NIU) offers a Gerontology Minor that students from any NIU college can access and pair with their degree. The minor includes field placement designed to offer a dynamic experience for students in collaboration with an aging services provider.

College of Liberal Arts student, Amber Godinsky took advantage of the Gerontology Minor in her pursuit of a degree in non-profit and NGO at NIU. Amber was introduced to AGE-u-cate's Compassionate Touch program, taking a 6-hour course to become a Compassionate Touch Coach as part of her field placement work.

OUTCOMES:

Knowledge and Empathy: Through the 6-hour course, Amber learned about the therapeutic value of incorporating expressive touch into the care of elders and the research-informed techniques of Compassionate Touch.

Community Outreach and Education: Amber presented a Compassionate Touch education session for the Dementia Friendly Elgin Commission that included attendees from Elgin's Elderday Center, public library staff, a township representative, a home health provider, and a real estate service for seniors.

Post-graduation Impact: Following graduation, Amber secured a leadership role with Meals on Wheels where she currently enjoys 2 years of tenure. Amber also became a Dementia Friend in her local community to support ongoing advocacy for people living with dementia.