



Micah Thompson, '14
Director of Marketing, SafeHaven of Tarrant County

Micah Thompson's career journey highlights that it's OK to explore more than one passion. The 2014 public relations graduate grew up cheering on OU's sports teams and eventually worked in the athletics department. Following the end of her internship, Thompson followed her different interests in women's rights and nonprofit work to SafeHaven of Tarrant County, where she finds "the most meaningful moments almost daily." Thompson recently reflected on her career path so far, her time in Gaylord College and more.

Do you have a favorite faculty/staff member at Gaylord?

To be completely honest, I was terrible at making relationships when I was in college. I wish I would have been better at that. I would have laughed if you told me this while I was in her class, but

I won't lie, it was exhausting. I had a pretty extensive to-do list before I was off for the holiday break, but my job transitioned to solely fielding questions from the media and from social media. The outpouring of support we saw from across the world was truly something special. We received close to 5,000 boxes filled with shelter needs like toiletries, sheets, clothes and toys, and we more than doubled our year-end fundraising goal.

This whole experience was a good reminder of how wonderful people are when we give them a chance to be. Working in nonprofit has taught me that people want to solve problems. We often want to brag about how well our organization is doing or show our successes, but when we present our constituents with a problem we see so much more success in the response.

looking back now I learned more in Professor (Katerina) Tsetsura's capstone class than I ever have. I was out of my comfort zone the entire semester, and I don't think I've ever worked harder in my life. I really appreciate how tough she was and also the grace she offered me when I asked for help. It's so obvious that she loves and cares about what she does, and we can all learn from that.

How did your career path lead you to SafeHaven of Tarrant County?

I love the quote, "Sometimes on the way to a dream you get lost and find a new one." That hits the nail on the head with me. After graduation I worked in the OU Athletics Communications office as a full-time intern, and it was incredible. I was writing about teams I loved, spending time watching games and even traveling some during my teams' seasons. After my internship ended, I really had to do some soul searching. I've always been passionate about women's rights and nonprofit work, and a position at SafeHaven fell in my lap. As soon as my interview with them was over I knew this was exactly what I was supposed to be doing.

Describe your role at SafeHaven.

I'm the Director of Marketing for SafeHaven of Tarrant County, a relatively large local nonprofit based in Fort Worth, Texas. I started at SafeHaven as a Creative Coordinator and was promoted this past summer. In my role I serve as the agency's brand manager, media liaison, fundraising writer, graphic designer and so much more. I work on our development team, which as a whole is tasked with fundraising for our \$9 million yearly budget. You get to be a bit of a jack-of-all-trades when working in nonprofit, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

In December, SafeHaven's Facebook page shared a letter to Santa from Blake, a 7-year-old boy living in one of your shelters. Talk about the experience of that letter going viral and the response the organization received from people around the country.

Going viral was probably one of the most incredible and exhausting work experiences I've ever had. I posted a photo of the letter on Facebook, went into a staff meeting, and came out to missed calls from Fox News and People magazine. Over the course of the day

What do you consider to be the most significant moments of your career so far?

There are so many exciting moments I've experienced in my career. My first year working at OU I traveled to two Big 12 Championships, the NCAA Wrestling Tournament and the Final Four all in the month of March – it was a dream for a girl who grew up loving OU athletics. But while my job at SafeHaven may not seem nearly as exciting, I find the most meaningful moments almost daily. I get to hear stories of survival every single day, and that gives so much meaning to what I do. No, I'm not on the front lines working with survivors of domestic violence every day, but I constantly remind myself that what I'm doing here makes such a difference for the lives of so many families seeking safety and independence. I'm right where I'm meant to be.

How did Gaylord College prepare you for your future career?

I learned so many hard skills while in Gaylord, but I think the most helpful thing it did was preach to me over and over how important it was to get an internship. I cannot even imagine what my career would be like today had I not interned while I was in college. I learned what I liked to do (and even what I didn't like to do!) and gained so many real-world experiences that I would never find sitting in a classroom.

What advice would you give to current students aspiring to a career in mass communication?

Learn every single skill someone offers to teach you. Be the annoying kid who is the first to show up and the last to leave and who follows everyone around like a shadow trying to learn. There have been so many times in my career where one of my supervisors or colleagues needed something out of the box, and I had experience because I paid attention to a skill back in college. As a communications professional we are constantly given the "other duties as assigned," and when you know how to do those skills, you instantly become a favorite at work.

What do you do for fun outside of work?

I've taken up a new hobby of illustrating, and my 2020 resolution is

we heard from CNN, GMA, CBS and so many more outlets, and over the course of the next week the letter was in print newspapers across the country and even one in India!

to illustrate more – for work and for fun! Outside of that I love to be with my family, and we fish all over southern Oklahoma. I'm up for everything outdoors, even if that's just getting a frozen drink on a patio!



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