Maria Graceffa fuels change. At Bay State Community Services’s Granite House, a residential treatment facility in Quincy, Mass., for adolescent mental health patients, Graceffa devises program-specific treatment plans, counsels patients during emotional crises and runs a psychological education group for 14- to 18-year-olds on building healthy relationships, nutrition and medication education.

Graceffa, a human services and psychology double major at Northeastern, prides herself on improving the mental health of individuals not much younger than she. “I know there’s a huge amount of people that are different for the better because of me,” she said. “It’s so gratifying when I can see a behavioral and emotional change in another human being and know I am partially responsible.”

Working with young patients suffering from depression, borderline personality disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Graceffa’s immense responsibility on co-op has taught her an important lesson. “I’ve learned that nothing is a disability,” she said. “It’s only a disability if you allow it to be; you can learn to work with absolutely anything.”

Besides her co-op at the Granite House, Graceffa works at the McLean Hospital in Belmont, Mass., as an alcohol and drug treatment program researcher. She leads interviews with adult bipolar patients to determine whether they have substance abuse disorder.

For her outstanding devotion and commitment to serving others throughout her co-op experiences, Graceffa received the Thomas E. McMahon Award from Northeastern. “I’ve never considered myself a person of outstanding service,” she said. “I just do my thing.”

In anticipation of graduation in May, Graceffa has applied to a number of graduate school programs, for clinical psychology.

— Jason Kornwitz

Let us know
Do you know of a student who has had an interesting co-op job? Send story ideas to:
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Maria Graceffa
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