

Annapurna Johnson's Story

2018 recipient of the AAUW Healdsburg Branch High School Scholarship

My name is Annapurna Johnson, and I am a Healdsburg High School graduate! I was lucky enough to be awarded an AAUW scholarship for my undergraduate education. My undergraduate experience was unusual for many reasons: after enrolling in NYU and beginning my classes in January of 2019, rather than the customary fall after my graduation in 2018. Following my freshman and first semester of sophomore year, I went to Italy to study abroad as a sophomore at NYU, taking advantage of their Florence location. It was in March of 2020 that Italy shut down due to COVID and I was sent home about a week before the lockdown began.

A few months into COVID, after I had moved to Idaho for several weeks to babysit and escape the reality of my study abroad experience being cut short, I began to hear from colleges I had applied to as a transfer student. I found out that I had gotten into UC Berkeley, which was where I transferred to. My first year was difficult: it was online, I lived at home, and could not have felt further away from being a Berkeley student. However, I took amazing classes with incredible professors, worked part-time, which allowed me to get out of my house, traveled to Berkeley to meet up with my friends, and became involved in the community.

Being a student at UC Berkeley was ultimately the most fulfilling experience I could have hoped for: I majored in Global Studies, was a member of a sorority called Alpha Delta Pi, worked as an editor for the Berkeley Political Review, and wrote an honors thesis studying the pattern of forced abortions among FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia) members in Colombia. I made some of my closest friends at Berkeley and have a community in the Bay for the rest of my life. I feel like I grew the most as a person at UC Berkeley, but realistically, none of this would have happened if I had not attended NYU first. Part of the reason I could attend NYU was because of the unfailing generosity of the organizations in Healdsburg that awarded me scholarships. That money allowed me to graduate from both NYU and Berkeley debt free.

Now, the next chapter of my life is attending law school. I have been accepted to UC College of Law SF, formerly UC Hastings, with a scholarship and guaranteed housing throughout my three years of school. I committed to UC College of Law SF last week, opening the door to my next great adventure. Throughout it all, I thoroughly recognize how fortunate I am to have such an extensive network of selfless people, like the women who run AAUW. I am honored to have received the scholarship in high school and look forward to paying it forward, so the next generation of high-achieving women feel as supported as I have. Thank you, Healdsburg AAUW members, for all you have done for me. This story would not have happened without your help.