



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Advancing the future of senior care

Samantha Standing has built a rewarding career in a field that surprised her

By SALLY PARKER

Samantha Standing remembers accompanying her great-grandfather for Thanksgiving basket deliveries to families in need. She was around 8 years old and was developing an acute awareness of poverty.

"I knew I had everything I need and there are people in the community who do not," says Standing, who was raised with her aunts by her grandmother in Rochester and Greece. "I always understood I was lucky."

Standing, 32, is vice president of development for the Jewish Foundation, the fundraising arm of Jewish Senior Life. The organization is perhaps best known for operating the Jewish Home of Rochester. But a host of other programs and services also fall under its umbrella: independent senior living at the Summit at Brighton, assisted living at Wolk Manor, adult day health care, at-home services, hospice care, outpatient rehab, physician house calls, transitional care and wellness programs. A new social day program for people with Alzheimer's disease and memory loss, called Marian's House, is in the fundraising stage.

Standing was promoted to her current position a year and a half ago from director of development, a job for which she was recruited. She was doing development work for the Catholic Family Center when she got the call and was unsure she wanted to make a change.

"It was a surprise to me. I had to be sold on it," she recalls. "I knew it was a great career move for me, but I didn't know if I'd have the passion for the job."

"I did not anticipate that aging services would have just such a fast pace to it."

It turns out that senior care is constantly changing and evolving, Standing says. Organizations are adapting to meet the needs of a new generation of seniors, who increasingly prefer to stay in their own homes as long as they can.

Baby boomers "are going to be looking into services provided in a completely different way," Standing says of senior care's next wave.

As a vice president, Standing is on the senior management team and works with the board. She is part of the organization's three-year strategic planning process; her responsibility is to find ways to generate the funds that will move Jewish Senior Life forward.

Educating long-time donors about changes in senior care is part of her job, Standing says. It is also one of the most rewarding.

"I like making the connection between an individual donor or family who wants to make a difference and when they can see (what they've helped to fund), those 'aha' moments," she says.

During the crippling economy of the last couple of years, donors remained generous but narrowed the scope of their giving—from 10 recipients to seven, for example. Standing leads Jewish Senior Life's efforts to stay at the forefront of donors' giving plans.

"It's always a challenge, of course, but the mission is exciting," she says.

Standing studied English with a concentration in creative writing at SUNY College

at Brockport. In her third year of college she discovered fundraising as a career. Given her upbringing in a family that supported the community, it seemed like a good fit.

She initially considered grant-writing work, but a job during college and for a period after graduation revealed other possibilities. She worked as a development assistant at a human resources benefits firm, writing annual fund letters and managing donor databases. During that time she started meeting other people in the field through the Association of Fundraising Professionals' Genesee Valley chapter. The group provides education and networking for fundraisers.

During a downsizing, Standing lost her job. Through AFGV, she found support as new acquaintances offered her job leads; one led to an offer from the Catholic Family Center. Today Standing is president-elect of the group.

"Every step of my career, I have had more seasoned professionals who have encouraged me and helped me make those connections," she says.

Jewish Senior Life surrounds Standing with seasoned pros of another sort—the seniors who participate in its programs and live in its facilities. Through a program called Connect Two, she and other staff members connect one-on-one with residents who want to socialize. Residents inspire her in many ways, she says—for example, by picking up a paintbrush for the first time in their 80s or 90s and creating art.

"We've got a great arts program here," Standing says. "If somebody can learn something new at 90, I can at 32."

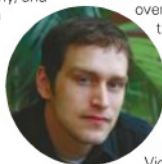
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What I do

Ben Munson, CEO and co-founder, Newdigs

Age: 31
Job: Newdigs is a full-service rental listing platform built around our website, Newdigs.com. We offer tenant screening, lawn signs, print and online rental marketing, full-service listings with HDR photography, and rental agent referrals. Being the CEO of a bootstrapped dot-com startup in Western New York brings constant challenges. I collaborate on our print guide and website, meet with property management executives, form corporate alliances and structure marketing relationships with housing organizations. These days I'm heaviest in sales activity and scouting for talent to bring on board as we scale up.

What drives me: We do everything in our power to keep this dot-com business from migrating to California. I want to see Newdigs put Rochester's startup scene on the map. We spent a few years working on Newdigs before we saw our first dollar of revenue, and it took some serious faith to keep going some days. Now we are starting to see the



seeds of that hard work and faith pay off. I'm one of the fortunate few who gets up in the morning and spends my workday seeing my dream take shape.

Roots: I grew up in Penfield and attended RIT. My career took me to Boston, Richmond and Philly before I chose to move back in late 2005. I wanted to start investing in real estate, and all the major markets were overheated except my hometown of Rochester. I thought I was settling when I moved back, but I've never been happier with where I live than right now. The cost of living is low enough that I can take the risk of starting a business, and it's a very supportive city where you can easily make a difference in the community.

Home: My wife and I live in the South Wedge. It's an amazing place. We live in a walkable community several homes away from the Genesee River Trail, surrounded by historic Victorian architecture and all of the great amenities of city living. I love to hang out at the Rochester Public Market and at Lux and Dickie's in the South Wedge. My favorite part of the day is taking my dog on walks in Highland Park and on the river trail.



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