I spent the majority of my first day at Safe Passage adjusting to my office and workspace, and setting up an email, basecamp, and volunteer sign-in account online. Laura emailed me with plenty of things to do - many of which were things she wanted me to read before we got started on any programming. This included the goals and outcomes of the “Say Something” violence prevention program, models of prevention, and the volunteer & internship guide for Safe Passage.

Throughout the week I continued my reading assignments and researching hot topics on twitter and Facebook that were relevant to Safe Passage - an example being the hashtag #SurvivorPrivilege, which has been used to combat a horrible article written by George Will that devalidates the experiences of rape survivors. I also began brainstorming topics that I would like to write about for the Safe Passage and Say Something blogs.

I got even more excited when I discovered the hashtag #AbuserDynamics on twitter, which was even more informative of the ways in which violence subtly enters our interpersonal lives. I informed Laura of this trending hashtag and wrote a brief post about it for the Say Something Facebook page. After my lunch break Laura sent me a terrifying Washington Post article called "One way to end violence against women? Married dads" and asked me to write a blog post about it. After talking about the article (and my feelings about dads) with Laura, I spent the rest of the evening heavily critiquing the article and writing up an outline for my post.

I spent all morning on Friday writing about my feelings, which was productive and relevant to my blog post. After a quick lunch break I reviewed and edited my first draft of the blog post and sent it to Laura for edits. I spent the rest of the afternoon helping Laura, Anthia, and Greta put together packets for the "Healthy Men and Boys" conference that they are facilitating. Overall my first week working at Safe Passage consisted of a lot of self-motivated work. Laura and the rest of the office seem to be really busy and stressed out about upcoming programming, so I've been helping out with specific things when asked, and otherwise doing a lot of independent work.
My second week at Safe Passage consisted of many meetings and the start of new and long-term projects. I met with various staff members to find out more about outreach programming, what organizations they collaborate with, and what they present on. It was a really important experience for me to get to know individual staff members one-on-one and learn about the incredibly wide variety of topics that Safe Passage addresses in their workshops and programs. The purpose of gathering this information was so that I could help Laura put it in a new database that will help to create a more transparent and organized outreach plan for all staff members - not just those doing outreach programming.

I was also able to meet with Laura, who wanted to check in with me about the “Say Something” prevention campaign that I'll be helping her with. We talked about the campaign itself, what the goals and strategies are, what my role will be throughout all of this, and my responsibilities leading up to the workshops. One of my tasks was to come up with a long list of scenarios describing ever-day instances of subtle violence and microaggressions. The idea was to generate a list of scenarios that participants in the workshops could analyze and brainstorm ways to intervene or prevent these situations from happening.

At the end of the week I met with one of the program directors, Marianne, who asked me to prepare something for the next staff meeting. Marianne seemed really excited about creating a comprehensive outreach plan for Safe Passage, and having folks think more critically about Safe Passage's mission statement and which organizations they're collaborating with. My task was to help put together a spreadsheet of the different organizations Safe Passage is currently working with, so that at the staff meeting folks can think about the "warmth" level of their relationship with that organization, why it is important to do outreach with them, and how to sustain the relationship.

Friday also consisted of working overtime, as I was asked to provide some childcare for a mother who urgently and unexpectedly needed to go to court for a restraining order. I spent the afternoon playing with a 4-year old who was absolutely delightful. We had a lot of fun together, picking flowers and skipping around downtown Northampton. However, it turns out the mother who I was providing childcare for was a woman I knew, which caught me by surprise and also woke me up a little bit. I ended work feeling incredibly exhausted, emotionally and physically, but I also don't regret a single minute of that day. It was really important for me to be reminded of how close to home this kind of work is, and how I really need to be on my toes everyday, because I never know who is going to walk in the door, and I never know when I'm going to be asked for help.

While working at Safe Passage I was also able to attend a few different events with Laura in addition to working my regular office shift. The first event was the monthly meeting with members of the Rural Domestic & Sexual Violence Forum. Mark, a man who works at the Boston Public Health Commission, was the one who facilitated the meeting. The meeting was essentially a presentation on different prevention models. Though I was already familiar with much of what Mark was presenting on, it was reassuring as a young person to hear older folks in the field critique the common victim-
blaming model of prevention, and suggest alternatives. My internalized ageism often makes me forget that older folks can be seriously on point when it comes to this kind of work.

I also attended a “Preventionist Showcase” in Wellesley, MA. This was an opportunity for people from different organizations in Massachusetts to get together and talk about the prevention work they’ve been doing around issues of sexual assault and domestic violence. The first half of the day was a presentation as well as a screening of a new web series called The Halls (http://thehallsboston.com/). The Halls was created by the Boston Public Health Commission in collaboration with the Boston Public Schools. The idea was to create a web/video series that would be a relevant and engaging way for high school students to talk about issues around healthy relationships, consent, and gender stereotyping. Personally, I really enjoyed watching The Halls and think that the creators did an amazing job. The second half of the day involved a panel discussion with four women, including Laura, who work in non-profit organizations doing prevention work. Each of them talked a little about their organization and the different outreach programs they have.

A common theme I noticed the more I participated in these events and meetings is that a lot of the focus is around educating young people (18 and younger). I’m also hearing a lot of challenges stemming from the fact that public schools are resistant to bringing in organizations to educate their students about issues of consent and dating violence, as well as organizations not having enough time, staff, or money to go to schools and provide services. The more I worked at Safe Passage and participated in these events, the more curious I was to find out how these obstacles are being navigated at an organizational level. I also became worried that folks are forgetting to also educate parents, teachers, office managers, etc. about consent and dating, sexual, and domestic violence issues.

Aside from these different events, I spent the majority of my time at Safe Passage prepping for the prevention workshops that Laura and I would be starting. I continued to write identity-based violence scenarios as well as created a pre- and post-workshop evaluation test. These were used to help assess the knowledge and attitude levels of folks (regarding oppression and identity-based violence) before and after they attend the workshops. I also continued working on writing another article for the Say Something blog. My next post was about The Halls, and why it’s a great resource for high school students.

Once the violence prevention workshops started, I began spending my time doing practice facilitations and prep work with Laura. We facilitated each workshop for the staff, volunteers, and board members at Safe Passage and received feedback on what we could change or adjust before the workshops for the community began. By my fourth week at Safe Passage we had begun a practice facilitation for the first workshop: Violence Prevention 101. The workshop went well and we received a lot of helpful feedback. The next practice session was on gender, sexuality, and violence, and I was assigned to put together a list of gender identities, gender presentations, sexes, and sexualities for Laura to use in the upcoming workshop. By my fourth week I was also co-facilitating a staff meeting with Marianne, the executive director. The staff meeting
was on outreach programming and collaboration. I had been prepping for this meeting for the past few weeks by putting together flip charts, spreadsheets, and collecting a list of all the organizations Safe Passage currently collaborates and does programming with.

While at Safe Passage, Marianne also gave me the title of "Breath of Joy Intern" this week which I appreciated. As a result I was given the task of creating a "Good Vibes Box" for the office. I spent a large portion of Thursday trying to create a box out of paper which was embarrassing at first, but ultimately successful. I filled the box with little pieces of paper, all of which had something kind or inspirational written on them. It's currently sitting on the front desk so clients and staff can access it if they are in need of some good vibes. I was also asked to create a few more prompts for the giant bulletin board in the front of the office. Every month the office hangs up a new prompt written on a huge piece of paper. In the past, prompts have said things like "What does a healthy relationship look like?" or "Where do you find strength in yourself?". Laura asked me to brainstorm prompts for the giant board, and then I created new ones so they're ready to be hung up in the coming months. I created three - one that says "Self-care is when I...", another that says "Where do you feel grounded? What is this like?", and another that says "I hold trust in...".

For the most part, my time at Safe Passage was extremely fun and rewarding. I love how I was able to take on a broad range of different responsibilities. For me this meant being flexible, self-motivated, adaptable, and communicative. However, like any job, there were a few challenges I faced. These challenges taught me a lot about myself and I was lucky enough to have people to talk to and process with in order to overcome them. The first challenge was taking on a schedule that was both time consuming and energetically exhausting. Working 9am-5pm Monday through Friday is really intense and not something I'm used to! I knew this was going to be hard for me before starting my job, so I took the proactive route and talked to Laura before I started about a day or two each week that I could work from home. She was totally responsive and understanding, which made this conversation feel a lot less daunting. I also learned that it is incredibly important to establish boundaries with your co-workers as well as the clients that you may interact with in the office. There were a few times when I felt my time and energy resources were not being considered when I was asked to do tasks for clients. Lastly, this work is high-stakes and exhausting. I tried my best this summer to prioritize self-care, crying, and talking to one of the counselors in the office if I needed to. One of the best things about working this job was that I was surrounded by people who are emotionally intelligent and want to provide space to feel feelings. Whenever I had a hard day at the office, all I needed to do was ask for help.

Safe Passage as an organization is absolutely wonderful. The office space and the people who work in it are all incredibly nurturing and understanding. They all seem to be on the same page regarding the importance of self-care and humor when working in this field. Because of this, the work environment is neither depleting nor limiting. In terms of my internship, it felt a bit disorganized at times. However, as a disclaimer, this was the first time Safe Passage did an internship that was solely prevention based. In the past, RRASC interns worked closely with the legal advocates and counselors, and
spent many hours in the shelter providing childcare. This was the first year that a RRASC intern worked in the office under Laura’s supervision. With that said, the internship was a bit scattered, which Laura was transparent about and joked about. There were definitely times that I wasn’t sure exactly what I needed to be doing, or how exactly to sum up my internship responsibilities. This is why I was asked by Laura to write the new Safe Passage Prevention Internship job description. Additionally, my time at Safe Passage is not over! Before my internship ended Laura asked if I was interested in a paid position as a workshop facilitator for the Say Something workshops that we worked all summer on!

More information on the RRASC internship program: clpp.hampshire.edu/RRASC