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Haley Doolittle Johnston '13 Works as Freelance Artist in England

One reason Haley Doolittle Johnston '13 chose to attend Gardner-Webb University

photo of Haley Dolittle Johnston

was for the study abroad programs. Since she

was 10 years old, she had told her family she wanted to study in another country. "I only applied to colleges that had study abroad programs," Johnston explained. "I liked that I could do an exchange program at GWU and apply for a small scholarship for it."

The Charlotte, N.C., native was also familiar with GWU, because her brother was a student there. When she visited him, she liked the sense of community she felt on campus. "My brother also played a big factor in my decision to attend," she assessed. "I love that I was able to experience my first two years at GWU with him."

She began as a photo journalism major, but by the end of her first year, she realized art was her passion. "I had always loved creating art and my grandfather was a professional artist," she reflected. "I took 2D design with Paula Spangler Casper, and throughout the class she was encouraging and helped me grow exponentially as an artist. At the end of the semester, she asked me if I had ever considered being an art major. Soon after that, I decided to make the switch, and it was the best decision I ever made."

Her junior year, she studied abroad for a semester at Trinity Saint Davids in Wales.

Immersed in the culture, she learned about

the country and grew as an artist. She also met her husband, Sam Johnston. After graduation from GWU, she was accepted into a graduate school in London, England. After dating for a year, she and Sam were married and moved to Oxford, England, for job opportunities. She worked as the arts coordinator for the Active Education Group in Oxford, an organization that provides camps for children in 25 locations throughout England. She was responsible for writing lesson plans and training about 100 art instructors.

The couple now live in Portsmouth, England. She freelances as a designer and social media consultant and has created illustrations for a book. She is collaborating on a children's book and has achieved certification as a florist. "The classes I took at GWU gave me the backbone of my career," she affirmed. "I remember what my professors taught me and still refer to it while painting and designing these days."