Nichols Humanitarian Fund
Supporting the humanitarian activities of Vanderbilt students

Nichols Humanitarian Fund
2021 Recipients

Live beyond yourself.
Make service to humanity part of your life.
Thirty-eight students have been selected to receive the Nichols Humanitarian Fund Award to pursue volunteer and service-learning projects during the summer of 2021. The award enables students to work with communities on human-centered efforts including human rights, environmental conservation, immigrant and refugee rights, prosthesis research, and mental health.

This year, awards were limited to local or virtual projects because of the COVID-19 pandemic. These bright students discovered impactful work, and will be studying in twenty different cities including: Austin, Washington D.C., Chicago, San Francisco, Tallahassee, Louisville, Pittsburgh, Nashville, and more! In addition, many are completing virtual internships with countries across the globe including: South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, and India.

The average GPA for this cohort of recipients is 3.7.
2021 RECIPIENTS

JAKE LUPIN
HOD; Minor in Business / '21
Keeping my City Clean, One Green Space at a Time
Austin, TX

"I am most excited to see the impact I will have in my new home community. As I have reflected on my future goals after graduation, I have decided that I truly want to make a difference in my local area. My Nichols Humanitarian project is the perfect way to immediately start giving back to my local community. I first hope to learn about Austin's park system and everything that goes into keeping these spaces up and running in a major city like Austin. Even more importantly though I hope to learn and connect with the people behind the scenes of the city's great public service work. This project is so important to me because I get to be involved and make a difference in two of my passions: staying active outdoors and appreciating the beauty within our nature. My project will focus on both of these passions, and I can't wait to see the difference I will make in my new home community."

OWEN LEONARD
Computer Science; Engineering Management / '21
Feeding D.C. with Martha’s Table
Washington D.C.

"I'm excited to connect with people in my new community. I am looking forward to making a difference and creating meaningful relationships at the same time. I am hoping to learn more about the relationship between food equity, health, and education. I hope this project can equip me with the skills and knowledge to continue to make improvements in these areas in my community in the future. This project is important to me because I believe it is a vital first step in solving the greater issues of community health disparities. Also, due to the pandemic, this is an area that has been significantly impacted recently."
SANJANA KOSURI

Neuroscience; Psychology/ '22

Sustainable Solutions in Rural India & Nashville
Nashville & Memphis, TN

"I am excited to have received the Nichols Humanitarian Award because it has given me the opportunity to work on behalf of Project RISHI, an organization whose mission is to promote the sustainable development and growth of rural Indian communities. While completing my service project, I hope to learn more about the world through the lens of poverty and through experiencing the conditions faced by the occupants of these villages first-hand. This topic is important to me because I have learned that rural Indian communities have very little money and resources to aid their own development, and performing boots on the ground service in villages that are unable to help themselves can go such a long way. Through my service, I am confident that I will be able to make a long-lasting impact."

JEREMY TRUJILLO

Mechanical Engineering; Spanish / '22

Founding of a High School Climbing Outreach Program
Nashville, TN

"I am most excited to see the joy and benefits that a climbing community can bring to people who have never experienced the sport. Climbing is a fantastic way for people to push themselves mentally and physically, as the act of literally reaching new heights gives people courage and confidence to achieve more in their daily lives. I am ecstatic to foster and observe this process affecting the lives of high school students from low socioeconomic backgrounds in Nashville. I hope to learn from existing communities in Nashville how to best accomplish the goals of my project: to bring more community focus to climbing in Nashville, and build a community for high school students from low SES who might lack a strong community. I chose this project because of my passion for climbing and my inspiration from how climbing brings people together. My personal goal is to break down financial barriers to the climbing community and increase access to the community that has given me so much."
LOGAN PROCK
MHS; Minors in Spanish and Biology/’21
Translate Nashville
Nashville, TN

"I am grateful for the opportunity to take tangible steps toward my pursuit of the Physician Assistant profession with the support of the Nichols Humanitarian Award. Although the pandemic altered summer plans last year, I am appreciative of the Nichols’ family’s continued generosity. I hope to learn about social determinants of health as I complete projects that reach the underserved in healthcare contexts. While working in rural, mobile urgent care models and interpreting for Spanish-speaking patients, I will gain practical experience in the field I am pursuing. Through past patient care experiences, I have been moved by by the hardship faced by people that struggle to access care and health literacy resources, and whose chronic conditions are exacerbated by socioeconomic conditions out of their control. I am so passionate about ground-level service in the clinical setting and am excited to continue work as an EMT. This project will jump start my gap year while I apply to Physician Assistant school and continue to gain patient care experience."

MILA SICORSKY
Law, History, & Society; MHS/’21
High Country Conservation Center
Summit County, Colorado

"I’m excited to grow as an environmental and food justice advocate in my time as an assistant farmer/translator with the High Country Conservation Center (HC3)! I’m also looking forward to use my native Spanish to help fellow Latinx individuals access governmental assistance programs in Summit County. I’m hoping to learn more about the ins and outs of the welfare system in the U.S.— particularly the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which provides food and nutritional education for low-income communities. Beyond the intricacies of this program, I’m excited to learn about how community farms (like the ones through HC3) increase access to locally grown food for welfare recipients. As someone who wants to be a public interest lawyer, I am wanting to immerse myself in communities that are recipients to the public benefits/welfare system in the U.S. Additionally, since many of the WIC recipients in Colorado are Latinx immigrants, working with these communities as a Latinx immigrant myself means a lot to me."
ARNAV PILLAI  
Psychology / '22  
Providing Educational Resources & Infrastructure to Schools That Are In Need  
Pamulaparthi, India (Virtual)

"I am excited about helping the Indian students in rural villages in need out. I am excited to help give them more supplies that will help facilitate a positive learning environment for village students in need, because they are the future of India, and have time to make an impact with the right resources. I hope to learn more about the village of Pamulaparthi and the most effective ways to help these students learn so they can succeed later in life. I hope to learn how to help those in need given the resources I have attained through the Nichols fund, so that later in life I can continue to help implement sustainable solutions for improving rural education across India. This project is important to me, because I have been lucky enough to grow up with proper access to educational resources, and I believe that all students should at least have that same opportunity I have been blessed with. Future success starts with the learning environment of children, and I think that rural Indian children deserve a better learning environment and the right resources so they can at least have a chance of a future."

SREEKAR MIRIYALA  
MHS; Minor in Sociology / '22  
Sustainable Development & Health Service in Rural India & Nashville  
Nashville, TN

"I am most excited for being able to finally get to work closely with the schools in India through Project Rishi and also help the Shade Tree Clinic. Over the last year I have had the opportunity to work with both a little bit, and am very grateful for being able to use the funding to support communities in need (here and abroad). I hope to learn how to coordinate some service projects through the shade tree clinic as well as better understand the needs of rural villages in India. In both cases, I know dilemmas will arise, and I hope to gain some valuable problem-solving experience. I hope to become a physician and my interests are in health and wellbeing. I hope to help eliminate health disparities in my work and both of these projects help me help marginalized communities."
CHIDINMMA EGEMONU
Cognitive Studies & HOD / '23
Creating Virtual Wellness Workshops for Generation Z
Grand Lake, CO

"I am excited to use this opportunity to learn how to better impact diverse groups of people within Gen Z. I am also excited to learn about the impactful projects that other students in the program will complete. I hope to learn how to design mindfulness-based programs that allow Generation Z to deal with the social issues that negatively impact them. I am also interested in learning how to increase accessibility to these programs, especially for young adults who belong to minority groups and/or low-income. This project is important to me because there are not a lot of external resources specifically tailored to Gen Z in order to help them process the triggering videos and pictures that define current social movements. Therefore, by creating accessible programming, I hope to develop safe spaces that allow young people to discuss issues that impact marginalized groups without having to interact with triggering media."

ELIZABETH LANSDEN
Medicine, Health, and Society; Minor in Psychology / '21
Providing Community & Social Support for Women Experiencing Unplanned Pregnancies that Choose Life
Nashville, TN

"I am excited to have the funding to serve the families at Hope Clinic through a community and faith based approach in order to offer support and fellowship in a way that the clinic desires to grow in. I am also excited to progress the clinic's mission and accompany them as they excel in providing free healthcare, counseling, baby supplies, social work services, and mentoring to women experiencing unplanned pregnancies. I hope to learn how connecting in a spiritual, social, and communal way can foster the holistic wellbeing of the clinic's clients. I also hope to learn more about the lived experiences of these women and their families to discern how I can continue to serve them and make their needs known. The Guttmacher Institute reports that there are ~71 million abortions per year globally. This statistic reveals how there is an enormous amount of work to be done in supporting families experiencing unplanned pregnancies and in fostering a culture that respects the sanctity and dignity of life. My project will allow me to take steps towards this in the Nashville community."
CARLISSA ARROW
Mechanical Engineering; Public Policy Studies / '21
Community Science Project
Birmingham, AL

"I am excited to have the opportunity to teach youth how to advocate for their communities through science! Even though I couldn’t be overseas, it’s important to recognize how environmental issues affect all of us at the local, national, and global level. I will learn how to design my own community science project that’s geared towards youth. I hope to learn how youth engage with environmental issues which can be used to understand how to organize more young people for environmental justice. The threat of climate change overlaps with many issues such as food insecurity, healthcare, and racial equity. Oftentimes, the government permits corporations impose megaprojects that pollute BIPOC neighborhoods and these communities are left to fight for themselves. This matters to me because Black and Indigenous youth will be the ones disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis and I believe it’s imperative to prepare them to advocate for their own communities!"

GAURAV NITIN PRABAKARAN
MHS; Minor in Business / '22
Serving Chicago's Underserved Youth
Chicago, Illinois (Virtual)

"As a recipient, I am most excited about pursuing an opportunity I never would have been able to. Devoting a significant time to service without having to worry about finances is something I can finally get to do through the Nichols Fund. Through hands-on experience, I hope to learn how to empower marginalized communities in the most efficient way. I also want to understand what resources need to be tackled in order to address these inequalities. Throughout my life I have been intrigued by how socioeconomic disparities can have such large impacts on a person’s life. This project will allow me to gain hands-on experience and work towards improving educational disparities in my hometown which is something I have looked forward to contributing to."
FARES ALI
Political Science; Sociology; Minor in Arabic / '22
LAUNCH Mentorship
Nashville, TN

"As a recipient of the Nichols Humanitarian Award, I am excited to have access to the resources needed to make a meaningful impact on my community. I am eager to begin working with and for my community. I hope to learn more about the workings of nonprofit organizations. I also hope to learn new innovating ways to help communities in their areas of need. This project is important to me because it will allow me to give back to the community that I am from. I will be able to help many students from this marginalized community to realize and hopefully achieve their full potential."

ELLY SHIN
Chemistry / '21
Breaking Down Biotech: Video Series
San Francisco, CA

"I’m excited to create community and meet people who are driven to effect meaningful change. Specifically for my project, I hope to better understand the obstacles against access to information. As a Nichols recipient, I hope to learn how I can best implement vision and improve existing systems. Science has historically been an old boys’ club– this is nothing new. But innovation and progress are most often fueled by contrarian perspectives and diverse experiences. I believe this project is important for two reasons: 1) equal access and opportunity across social and economic lines, and 2) equipping the best and brightest minds with tools to help everyone."
PRECIOUS UKACHUKWU

MHS; Minor in Computing and Business / '22

Empowering Nigerian Youth to Attain their Educational Goals

Lagos, Nigeria

"I am ecstatic to be granted the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the youth of Lagos, especially with the extenuating circumstances that the pandemic exacerbates. As the developmental years are very important to shaping an individual’s identity and goals, I am excited to see how my project can impact the heart and minds of the youth. I hope it can serve a way to remind them to dream big and work hard to reach their educational goals. I hope to be able to learn from the youth to be an informed physician in the future. As a pre-medical student interested in spreading health care access to underprivileged areas across the globe, completing this project will allow me to start to make an impact in these communities. I will be able to immerse myself through this experience, which will allow me to gain a unique perspective and further understand the communities I hope to help in the future. The topic of education in youth is most important to me because coming from Nigeria, I have seen the social and economic disparities in communities and understand their limitations; therefore, I hope to inspire these children to prevail over adversity and reach whatever educational goals they set for themselves, while staying true to and proud of their culture.

SAFWAAN KHAN

Economics / '21

Paying PhDs a Better Wage Through Cohort-Based Courses

San Francisco, CA

"I’m excited to be able to allow people (PhD students) to monetize their knowledge. In doing so, I hope to increase their quality of life. I hope to learn two things: (1) how to create a transformational learning experience online (that is as good as in person) and (2) how to expand the 'economic pie.' Vanderbilt changed my life. Sadly, most people in my position (international & in need of financial aid) won’t be able to experience this. By learning how to create transformational online learning experiences, I hope to give people the opportunity to change their lives the way Vanderbilt changed mine."
Will Fritzler

Philosophy; Political Science/ '22

Bolder: A New Media Platform for Humanitarian Change

Lake Oswego, OR

"I am most excited to be given the resources to make a difference on humanitarian issues through my new media platform, Bolder. The award will empower me as I build my platform to reach like-minded people who want to help solve humanitarian challenges, which I think will be an incredibly rewarding experience. I hope to learn the various paths that exist for people like me to help solve humanitarian challenges, and also the most effective way to present that information to others in media. I also hope to learn what motivates others to work on humanitarian issues, so I can learn what unites us to build a platform and movement far bigger than ourselves. One of my deepest values is impacting the world in a profoundly positive way, and I believe my project will help me begin to realize that goal. I believe I have the motivation and skills to make a major difference on humanitarian issues, and I think it is important for anyone in my position to hold themselves to nothing less."

Betty Barnett

Philosophy; Psychology; Minor in Chemistry/ '22

Pace University Counseling Center Internship

New York, NY (Virtual)

"Receiving the Nichols Humanitarian Award means that I can do research on the topics I care most about—ethics and psychology. I am excited to delve into the literature on resilience this summer at the UC Irvine Interdisciplinary Center for the Scientific Study of Ethics and Morality! I’ll be drawing heavily from the fields of neuroscience and moral, social, and political psychology in order to better understand the factors that helped Holocaust survivors to flourish and create constructive lives in the wake of WWII. Studying the mechanisms that help people to deal with trauma is highly relevant today. Given all that the world has faced this past year, understanding resilience is more important than ever."
DIYA MATHUR  
**Neuroscience; Business / '21**  
**Increasing Access to Cost & Energy-Efficient 3D-Printed Prosthetic Limbs**  
*Louisville, KY*

"I have been furthering prostheses research for the past 9 years, and I am excited to now apply those experiences from a service lens. Supporting amputees’ reintegration into their communities and connecting with local rehabilitation clinics will be fulfilling. Most notably, I hope to learn how I can continue supporting amputee communities beyond graduation and as a future physician. By immersing myself in the world of prosthetic arm design and distribution, I hope to understand issues with medical equipment access as well as common experiences amongst amputee communities. Approaching healthcare delivery from a non-clinical perspective before entering medical school should be informative, as it will provide me with a comprehensive framework of thinking to approach health (and prosthetic) disparities. I want to treat patients and improve health systems, and I aspire to do so as a physician leader who can utilize her experiences treating patients to drive this work. I am hopeful this experience will not only allow me to explore the intersection of research with service, but that it will also enhance my medical decision-making acumen as I work to connect and serve my local community."

BERKELEY MADELIENE KENDRICK  
**MHS; Anthropology; Business / '22**  
**Native Hawaiian Homeless Summer Camp**  
*Hawaii*

"I am excited to help an impoverished community. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the indigenous children in Hawaii. I hope to be immersed in the Hawaiian culture. I want to learn from the kids, and I want to learn how I can better help them and their community. I have always been passionate about philanthropic endeavors and giving back to all communities where I live, work, and study. I am inspired by people. I think giving is truly the best gift."
Neuroscience; Minor in Art History / '22

Roots to Rise: Student Support for the Edgehill Neighborhood Partnership
Nashville, TN

"I'm thrilled to research and record the Edgehill community's rich history and current culture this summer. I look forward to bringing Edgehill to the forefront of the public eye, so that Edgehill residents can receive the food and basic necessity support that they need. I hope to gain a better understanding of the Edgehill neighborhood from a lived-in point of view rather than an outsider's, and to learn more about historic Nashville beyond the borders of the Vanderbilt community. I'm excited to expand my perspective through living and working with individuals from backgrounds that may be very different from my own. Nashville has become my home over the past few years, as I've worked towards completing my undergraduate degree, and I want to give back to the local Nashville community that I know is supporting my own campus experience. I know so little about the city beyond the edges of Vanderbilt's campus, and I feel that educating myself and others about the residents of the historically Black Edgehill community that rests just a few blocks from Peabody is of utmost importance, as Edgehill is often overlooked in terms of funding allocation in favor of more well-known areas like Broadway and 12th South even though its residents are in need of more accessible food resources and basic necessities."

Political Science; MHS; Minors in Spanish and Arabic / '22

Investigating the Assimilation of Female Immigrants in the United States
Nashville, Tennessee

"I'm excited to supplement my research project with service learning. This will allow me hands-on experience and a better understanding of the issues faced by female immigrants. I hope to learn more about how everyday people can help the immigrants in our community. They play such a critical role and they deserve our support. As the daughter of two immigrants, I have developed a deep personal connection to issues concerning immigration and assimilation. I am able to sympathize with immigrants and I want to do my part to help them create a home here in the US."
PREETHI KARNAM

Neuroscience; MHS; Minor in Anthropology / ’22

Virtual Global and Public Health Internship in Uganda

FIMRC Global Health Fellowship

"As a recipient, I’m most excited to promote mindful global health programming in various clinics through participating in FIMRC’s Global Health Fellowship. With a global upbringing, I craved an experience abroad to expand my understanding of healthcare in different parts of the world, and a virtual fellowship offered an incredible opportunity to do so, despite COVID-19 limitations on travel. With aspirations to work in healthcare as future physician, I would like to gain Global Health insight and be introduced to unfamiliar healthcare systems and culture. After building a strong foundation of knowledge and skill in Global Health, I hope to enact positive change through specific clinic-based projects. With this fellowship, I have the opportunity to converse with NGO professionals and healthcare providers from several clinics around the world who are working towards better public health and clinical outcomes. Through FIMRC, I found a service project that could have long-term community impact and help change lifestyles for disease prevention in generations to come."

SAFA SHAHZAD

Political Science; Computer Science / ’23

Refugee Crisis Remote Summer Service

Virtual

"I am excited to be able to delve into work with a charity that focuses on helping and supporting refugees, through things like English lessons, social media campaigns and lobbying. I believe the Nichols Award will allow me to explore these interests I would not have otherwise been able to do. I hope to learn a lot more about the experiences of those who have been forced to leave their homes due to the international conflicts I have often studied as a Political Science major. I also hope to learn about how a non-profit charity works during the pandemic. Human history is made up of migration and movement. The fact refugees are often not given the help and support they need says a lot about how we view different people, just because of the place they are from. I think this work will allow me to support those who need it, and to learn more about their experiences myself."
ANISH KATTA
Medicine, Health, and Society / '22
Project RISHI Pamulapurthi & Nashville Educational Enrichment Plan
Pammulapurthi, India (Virtual)

"I'm most excited about being able to provide the resources and infrastructure for children who need it. I believe that every child has the potential to be a force for good if they are given the right opportunities and resources and I'm excited to be some part of that process for them. While completing my service project, I hope to learn more about Pammulapurthi and the culture of the village. I also hope to learn and implement some problem solving strategies when adapting or modifying my project to fit the needs of the villagers. Before my father came to the USA, he grew up in a village close to Pamulaparthi, where he and his family had to struggle to send him to the nearby city of Hyderabad to get a better education. To this day, rural villages like his and Pamulapurthi lag behind the rest of India and the world in terms of education and quality of life. I want to change the disparity between these villages and the world and afford every child greater opportunities and quality of life so that they can learn to their full potential and achieve their dreams regardless of where they grew up."

SERENA MUSUNGU
MHS; Minor in HOD / '23
TOSANGANA Heath Education Project
Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo

"I am truly excited to use this opportunity to serve orphanages in Kinshasa. This is a chance to make a lasting impact in my home community, and I am grateful for everything I will learn through the process. I hope to kept more knowledge on the true needs of institutions in need such as the one I will work in. Often when they receive humanitarian help, volunteers tend to focus on the same surface issues. I will use this opportunity to address a deeper need, namely infrastructure and material need. This project holds a special place in my heart primarily because it is right at home. After leaving in the U.S. for so long, I have realized the need for the diaspora to keep working on the development of our countries. This is just the beginning of all the work I hope to do at home using all the knowledge and experiences I have and still am gathering."
"As a recipient, I am most excited to meet the Nichols family and talk to them about my project before and after its completion. Rarely do award opportunities allow recipients to meet the donors of the funds; so, such an opportunity would be cherished and considered a highlight of my time at Vanderbilt University. I am most excited to learn more about my hometown of San Francisco. After completing my project, I hope to walk through my neighborhood of the Tenderloin and have a strong understanding of the buildings and neighbors that line the streets. Understanding how we can prevent gentrification in San Francisco is important to me, as my low-income community has lived in fear of the slowly increasing rent that promises to push them out of the city. Despite the rent control privileges people like my parents have acquired after years of living in SF, the buffer against sky-high rent prices is slowly waning—low-income folk may not have much time until they stay in the city."

"As part of the Nichol’s Program, I am extremely excited to be able to utilize the skills I have learnt at Vanderbilt university to better develop my native community back home in South Sudan. I am also excited to act as a force and agent of change and also a bridge between my community, country and Vanderbilt University. I hope to learn more effective methods service which lead to more long term contributions in the service community. I intend to work on projects which act as stepping stones for even more projects from the community, and hence leading to long term impact. This project is significantly important to me as a South Sudanese since it enables me to contribute valuable skills which I have gained through my experience at Vanderbilt university, and lead to the betterment of my hometown, community and home country. Having this opportunity means more than just me, but also it also shows the support that exists in the Vanderbilt Community towards ensuring that Vanderbilt Students apply their knowledge in their host communities."
"The Nichols Award allows me to become an active participant in Project RISHI’s yearly programs aiming to improve school infrastructure in India’s underserved communities. More importantly, I get to use the resources I have at Vanderbilt to engage with the global community, giving me valuable skills and perspectives that will apply not just to this specific project but also to the globally-conscious goals I have for the future. My first priority is learning how to engage respectfully and thoughtfully with the communities that Project RISHI serve. Following that, I want to understand the organizational tools that Project RISHI uses in order to make the goal of educational development a reality: tracking finances, cataloging reputable vendors, and purchasing supplies are all important skills I need in order to successfully assist schools. I’m passionate about Indian history and culture, and this project gives me the opportunity to learn from and engage with communities in India. As someone who loves teaching, whether it’s tutoring students or rambling about my special interests to my friends, I also take particular notice of the importance of education, and Project RISHI aims to improve school quality in a sustainable and holistic manner. Ultimately, I want kids from all communities to develop the same enthusiasm for learning that I have."

"I am looking forward to interacting with community members. Additionally, the idea of working on a campaign is exciting! I hope to learn more about fostering civic engagement, especially in historically marginalized communities. I am also hoping that this experience will help me learn more about myself and how my career path can serve others. This project is very personal to me because I am working for improvement in my hometown. I have personally benefited from free programs and resources in my community, and am dedicated to helping secure these opportunities for others."
CHANDRAHAAS KONA

Economics /’23

Early Blood Pressure Monitoring of Homeless Persons

Nashville, TN

"I’m incredibly fortunate to be able to serve underserved populations in Nashville. Being able to work for an extended period of time on my project is an incredible opportunity, and I’m excited to serve my community! I hope to gain an intricate understanding of the relationships between non-profits and the homeless community, case management and project growth on the streets of Nashville. The opportunities given to me by this funding will better equip me to navigate homelessness and its support in an increasingly urbanized world. Growing up in Louisville I was witness to one of the largest economic booms in the state; but with that prosperity came a massive increase in homelessness. Despite the growing severity of this issue little has been done to help this population. Helping the underprivileged is a mission I take to heart; I hope that the experiences I will have and the skills I will gain will allow me to change the conversation around approaching care for the homeless."

CHETAN IMMANNENI

Neuroscience; MHS/’22

A Cross-sectional Dilemma: Masculinity & Mental Health

Nashville, TN

"I am truly excited about meeting the individuals that I am going to work with! As I am going to be doing my project with a partner, I am also excited to work with him, especially as we get to formatting our questions and finalizing components of our project. I am also quite excited to write up our insights and present them at the close of the term. I hope to learn about many of the challenges that individuals face when it comes to mental health issues and ideas about "masculinity". In particular, I am interested in hearing about how these challenges were/are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As some of these topics might be sensitive to talk about, I want to learn and utilize strategies that will promote open conversation. This project is important to me since I, as an immigrant male, have often struggled with mental health issues as they relate to concepts of masculinity and the concept of not seeking help. More than myself, I have seen a number of my family members struggle with mental health issues and particularly for men, I have seen that their course of action was almost always "let me bear it out" or that seeking help would mean that "I am weak". I am interested in hearing about current challenges with mental health and how ideas of "masculinity" may have shifted from the past."
RAKESH KATHIRESAN

Neuroscience; MHS / '22

Tackling a Cross-Sectional Dilemma: Mental Health Among Immigrant Men

Nashville, TN

"I am thrilled to have an opportunity to create a space where young immigrant men feel enabled and supported as they learn to discuss and tend to their mental health. I am looking forward to working with healthcare professionals and multicultural organizations to address toxic masculinity within cultures that may already delegitimize mental health issues. I hope to learn more about the gap in mental health care among men from minority backgrounds. I am specifically excited to gather information and insight from our program participants to learn more about how this issue impacts their daily lives. Growing up as a South Asian American, I never really paid much attention to anything related to anxiety or depression. It was after I lost an uncle who struggled with mental health issues that I realized the tremendous gap in resources and support for young immigrant men dealing with these sorts of issues. I hope to assist my program participants by providing them with group therapy sessions, safe spaces, and professional guidance that they can utilize in their own lives to help themselves and others in need."

INDUJA KUMAR

Law, History, and Society; Data Science / '24

Young Artists For Advocacy

Chandler, AZ

"I am excited to provide funding for the arts in my home community. I am also so thankful for the opportunity to work with institutions that have guided me throughout high school; now I am getting the opportunity to mentor women of color in the arts. I hope to learn methods for leadership, learn more about how to support the arts in my community and at a greater social justice lens, and learn more about the Chandler community, and the young and budding artists whose work our museum and Arts center will be able to showcase. I was involved with the Youth Arts Council at Chandler Arts Center for my senior year of high school and realized how much I had neglected the arts in my daily life. I believe that art is one of the greatest forms of social expression and can help build movements for social justice. One of the biggest problems with the way art is approached in America is the fact that it is not well supported especially in public education programs, especially in a state like Arizona where public goods largely remain underfunded. I hope to shine a light on these larger issues while also providing a platform for underrepresented minorities in the arts."
"As a recipient of the Nichols Humanitarian Award, I am most excited to apply what I have learned about global public health from my undergraduate curriculum to the real world. I believe that joining this community of service-minded scholars will facilitate opportunities to learn from and collaborate with one another in order to enact a positive change in our respective communities. Personally, this award allows me to participate in SAI Global Mission’s ‘Gift of Life’ program, which provides free heart surgeries to impoverished children internationally. By working in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, I will gain insight into the experiences and needs of a medically underserved community. The benefits of this immersion will come from witnessing how the various racial and socioeconomic dynamics of the region lead to disparate health outcomes. My hope is that this experience will help me identify the shortcomings of our current healthcare system, such that I can implement policy solutions in the future that fill these coverage gaps, and ensure that just and equitable health care outcomes become a reality for even the most vulnerable parts of society. As someone who aspires to enter the healthcare field, this project furthers my understanding of the intersectionality between poverty, malnutrition, ill-health, and illiteracy. SAI Global Mission is unique in its valuing of nutrition as a preventative measure towards reducing the need for healthcare interventions. Moreover, by providing free of cost health care and value-based education to all, regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity, SAI Global mission sets an important standard for the way in which governments, nonprofits, and individuals can work together towards uplifting youth, and in turn developing a society."
FARRAH HASAN

Chemistry; Minors in Creative Writing and Sustainability Studies / '22

Climate Adaption Research

Tallahassee, FL

"I’m looking forward to being part of a cohort of similarly passionate students with diverse interests. Seeing the variety of what will be conducted and produced this summer is inspiring. Hopefully, this experience will be an interdisciplinary approach of targeting a single issue. From data management to writing content, the projects assigned in this lab will enrich a diverse skillset. As a Florida native, it’s startling to see the effects of climate change on local ecosystems. It’s critical that my home state move towards adaptation for the sake of the many species at risk."

SARAH DVORAK

Vanderbilt University Law School / '22

Department of Homeland Security

Washington, D.C.

"I am most excited about being able to complete my work with the Department of Homeland Security and that I will be able to work for them full time for the entire summer. Because of this stipend, I won’t have to forgo this great opportunity and pursue some other job that will provide me the monetary assistance needed for this summer and my upcoming year of law school. I hope to gain a unique insight into how I may be an effective human rights attorney while prosecuting human rights violators and war criminals hiding out here in the US. The invaluable first hand experience I will receive while working for DHS this summer will certainly set me apart from all other potential candidates seeking a job in this highly exclusive field; this leverage will be extremely helpful when I graduate in a year with my Juris Doctorate. It has always been my dream to work in international law and be a human rights attorney. This internship I have accepted this summer with the Human Rights Violators Law Division in the Department of Homeland Security makes that dream all the more attainable, and will provide immeasurable opportunities."
"I'm so excited to be able to travel to London and work face-to-face with an incredible team of attorneys from all over the world. It's an honour to have my small contributions to the fight against global human rights violations and constant battle to maintain the integrity of the international legal system through the appeals process be recognized by the Nichols Humanitarian Fund. I hope to engage with international legal work and develop an understanding of cross-jurisdictional matters and the intricacies of the legal system as it pertains to the global community. I am also excited to affiliate with an organization that puts victims first and is widely recognized for integrity and responsible legal practice. International Law in the context of human rights violations sits in a tenuous place because the whole of the global community hasn't necessarily agreed to its implementation, and it must span the gamut of cultural practices. Obviously such a system is necessary to prevent impunity, protect and uplift victims, and hopefully avoid repetition of past crimes, but I am also a staunch believer in checks and balances to maintain the integrity of the system and prevent the slippery slope to arbitrary or politically motivated prosecution—hence the need for a robust appeals process and responsible practitioners to recognize such abuses."
Nichols Humanitarian Fund  Supporting the humanitarian activities of Vanderbilt students

Thank you for making service to humanity part of your summer.