



**Nichols
Humanitarian
Fund** Supporting the humanitarian
activities of Vanderbilt students

2021 Reflection Reports



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To the recipients,

Thank you for living beyond yourself and making service to humanity part of your life. Never lose your enthusiasm and idealism and never stop doing what you can to help others and improve the human condition. You are our heroes!

With all our gratitude and admiration,

Ed and Janice Nichols



**Nichols
Humanitarian
Fund** Supporting the humanitarian
activities of Vanderbilt students

Introduction

The Nichols Humanitarian Fund is a companion scholarship fund to the Nichols Chancellor's Medal. These programs seek to make Vanderbilt students better members of their communities and society in general by supporting their humanitarian activities and bringing speakers to Vanderbilt who embody the best of humanity. For more about the Fund, visit its website or contact Vanderbilt's Office of Immersion Resources.

Thirty-eight students were selected to receive Nichols Humanitarian Fund awards to work on humanitarian projects during the summer of 2021. Their projects involved counseling women experiencing unplanned pregnancies, 3D-printing and distributing of prosthetic arms, gentrification, mental health, community beautification, mentoring disadvantaged high school students, food insecurity, immigrant and refugee rights, rural India social health initiatives, sport

climbing for the formerly incarcerated transitioning out of prison, health care, environmental conservation, alleviating gender based violence, homelessness, climate change, and much more.

Twenty twenty-one was a year of unprecedented challenges and change but this year's recipients stepped up and met the challenges with imagination and determination. The nature and scope of their projects declare their fortitude, ingenuity, and desire to serve a higher purpose. More often than not they were required to do virtually what they would have done in person but for the pandemic and they found a way. They persevered and achieved through adversity. They gave life to the Fund's core values of compassion and service to humanity and made Vanderbilt, the Nichols family, and all those associated with the Fund proud. They are truly the best of Vanderbilt!



Obede Abraham '23

*Computer Science and Applied Math,
Engineering Management minor*

'Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.'(John F. Kennedy). For most of my life, I grew up away from my homeland South Sudan. This made me often contemplate on my people, family, culture and nation and how I can contribute to the growth and development of this young nation, my home. My urge to fulfil this desire grew as I became equipped with the tools of changemaking; knowledge and will. This desire was nurtured from my diverse experiences studying in Kenya, United World Colleges ISAK Japan, Vanderbilt University, to being surrounded by courageous and loving parents who relocated to Kenya due to war to ensure their children had a great future.

In the beginning of July 2021, I landed in Juba, South Sudan to begin laying ground for the long awaited workshops I had planned focused on alleviating gender based violence and promoting peace building strategies among all youth in the country. I implemented this project through KOGO Women Initiative for Children and Youth Empowerment (KWIFCE). **The venue of the workshop was St Thomas Parish Munuki in Juba, South Sudan to open it up to the entire community.** The first week was focused on peace building strategies, where the Executive Director of KWIFCE talked about 9 strategies for peace building in South Sudan applicable to the youth. The strategies that most participants highlighted after the workshop were; peace building through sports, peace building through music, dancing and drama and peace building through trauma healing and counseling. I was surprised by the level of engagement of the participants in this introductory session as we engaged them in dancing together during the breaks. Important follow up questions from the participants were also asked such as where the youth can go and receive trauma healing and counseling. This was huge since in a country undergoing rebuilding from

Abraham implemented workshops focused on alleviating gender based violence and promoting peace building strategies among youth.

war, it is surprising that most youth were never engaged in any form of trauma healing. The Dean of St Thomas Parish then highlighted that one of the roles of the church is to provide counselling and that the doors to his parish are always open.

The second week was dedicated towards exposing the youth to the discussion on gender issues in South Sudan and recommendations for ways forward as well as what career opportunities the youth could engage in at various ages and how to excel in them. During this week, we held group discussions to open up the dialogue on gender roles in South Sudan and their impact on the nation. It is surprising that in South Sudan there are still areas and families where gender roles are emphasized. The ones most affected usually end up being the girls and women of the community as most are groomed for marriage from a young age. This comes at the expense of even having to forgo education. One participant asked which help channels are available to assist in the event that one is about to be forcefully married. We divided the participants into 3 large groups of 25 each where every group nominated a representative to summarise their group suggestions for the way forward at the end of the workshop. With regards to career and educational opportunities, I invited the Coordinator of National NGOs in South Sudan, who talked about available internship opportunities with the NGOs he coordinates, for youth who have completed their high school and are pursuing higher education. I also invited the Acting chair of the United World Colleges South Sudanese National Committee who was able to talk about the United World College scholarship which is open to all South Sudanese in their final year of high school. This is a program which I am also a beneficiary of. The National Director of Mercy Ministries was also present and talked about their first high school in South Sudan which they were

opening in South Sudan and urged participants to apply.

The workshop satisfied the following aims: provide applicable knowledge and skills to South Sudanese youth on gender issues and peace building, create awareness on educational and career opportunities available for the youth and to promote unity in the community. This was made possible through the diverse set of speakers I managed to invite. Initially, I anticipated having 3 key speakers, however, 10 key speakers ended up showing up. This included the Director of Community Development in Munuki Payam, the Bishop of Mundri Diocese, in addition to the speakers I have already mentioned. The guest of honor was the Former Presidential Advisor in the Office of the President of South Sudan. His final speech focused on the role of the youth in the country. He highlighted that without a strong foundation, the youth are susceptible to be manipulated into causes such as war, referencing that the youth made up a huge population of those who took part in the war during his time. I was really happy to have the youth receive advice from such a respected member of the South Sudanese community.

The entire workshop was broadcast nationally through the South Sudan Broadcasting Channel (SSBC), as well as other radio stations such as Youth FM, a popular station amongst the youth in the country. This enabled the contents of the workshop to be accessed by everyone in the country who tuned in to the workshop via radio or TV. I also took part in a radio talk show at the end of the workshop through Youth FM, where participants nationally were able to ask questions about addressing certain instances of gender based violence and how to subvert from gender roles and promote equality. I estimated having around 30 participants, however, we ended up having 75 participants throughout the workshop series, each of whom received certificates after. They were also from diverse tribes, age groups including some of whom were disabled. My biggest success was the fact that I managed to bring all these diverse people in the same place and watch the happiness, love and unity that they shared

amongst themselves. This was also the first time where the church, the government, Non Governmental Organizations and the community were seen working together since they are all independent entities. This can be seen from the positions of the key speakers who attended. This experience reminded me of the old African proverb that says, *“If you want to move fast, go alone, but if you want to move far, go together.”* Therefore, to build lasting peace in South Sudan, we need to operate as a united entity and embrace our unique differences. Most importantly, I would like to urge all South Sudanese youth all over the world to think of what they can do to contribute to their homeland, however small it is. I would also like to urge the international community to continue supporting this young nation and also take a chance to visit this beautiful country (after the pandemic) as it is experiencing a period of steady rebuilding and peace.

Finally, I would like to give my appreciation to the Nichols Humanitarian Fund for this unique opportunity to leave a lasting impact in my homeland. I will continue monitoring the activities of KOGO Women Initiative for Youth and Children Empowerment remotely. I would also like to thank Vanderbilt University, United World Colleges, KWIFCE and the South Sudanese community as a whole for bringing me where I am today. Additionally, I would like to extend my gratitude to my parents, siblings, friends, participants and everyone who was able to make this experience a success.



Therefore, to build lasting peace in South Sudan, we need to operate as a united entity and embrace our unique differences.



Fares Ali '22

Political Science and Sociology, Arabic minor

This past summer was not much different than the summer before in terms of the necessity to be adaptable to the changing conditions and regulations brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, my team at LAUNCH Mentorship and I had planned an enriching summer day camp for students in marginalized communities in which we would introduce them to new topics, opportunities, and professionals to learn from. Unfortunately we were unable to continue with that project due to unforeseen circumstances stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately however, my team and I, determined to find a way to still impact our community positively, came up with a new plan. We began drawing up plans for a large-scale Back to School Event in which we wanted to distribute Back to school essentials such as school supplies and haircut vouchers to those in need within the Nashville Community.

Our event, the "Nash Back to School Bash," was truly a success as we were able to pack and distribute over 1000 bags filled with school supplies and entertained over 4000 people at our event. Working in partnership with Metro Nashville Public Schools and community partner PENCIL, we were able to reach many different parts of the greater Nashville area. While the event went relatively smoothly, there are definitely many things that I learned from the experience of planning and then executing the event.

One of the most important things I learned regarding community events such as these is that most people will want to help. As we reached out to restaurants and businesses within our community, we received a large amount of support in the forms of donated funds and/or donated food. Unfortunately, we were unable to capitalize on some of the businesses in our area due to timing constraints.

Ali and his team planned the Nash Back to School Bash event and distributed over 1,000 bags of school supplies to Nashville community youth.

Corporations that require notice months in advance were willing but unable to contribute to our cause and assured us that they will help next year if notified in a timely manner. Our event also confirmed my belief that volunteers are essential to an organization's cause. I know for a fact that we would not have been able to successfully execute our event without the help of our volunteers who were great at being flexible as situations arose during the event.

Thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Nichols and the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, over 1000 kids went to school on the first day with some of the tools required to succeed in class. We were able to make sure that these students were prepared with protractors, crayons, pens, and whatever else they would need in their curriculum based on their age. This event has truly motivated me and my team at LAUNCH Mentorship to continue to strive to achieve our mission and help every single student that comes our way.

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Carlissa Arrow '21

Mechanical Engineering and Public Policy Studies

For my Nichols Humanitarian Project, I returned home to volunteer with a local non-profit, Youth Serve Birmingham. Youth Serve coordinates community service projects with local community partners geared toward youth. Their mission is to uplift youth leadership through service and civic engagement. Every summer, Youth Serve hosts three weeks of service camp for groups of 30 youth to immerse them in civic leadership through volunteering daily at local service sites and engaging in workshops built to raise conversations on complex societal issues. This year's theme was Urban-Rural exchange and centered around issues that both affect urban and rural communities.

I challenged myself to develop, design, and execute my own workshop on environmental justice in Alabama, in both rural and urban communities. My goal was to inspire young people to look within their own communities for STEM-related projects that address environmental issues. The first portion of my project was to incorporate a community science project that connected students to the importance of the natural environment to their own health. We partnered with the Cahaba River Society who brought in specialists to perform science projects that helped determine the health of the Cahaba River and thus the health of our communities. They performed a water testing project that required the students to go knee-deep into the river and catch fish by hand. They learned that the presence or lack thereof of certain species determines how polluted the river is. It was a privilege to watch students who were terrified of fish overcome their fears and pick them up with their hands. This reaffirmed my belief that getting outdoors is the first step to building care towards nature.

For the 2nd portion of my project, I dived into two case studies, one rural and another urban. The most prominent urban case was the North Birmingham superfund site. A new term for me, a superfund site is a highly polluted area that

Arrow developed, designed, and implemented a workshop on environmental justice in rural and urban communities in Alabama.

requires long-term clean-up. This area is a historically Black and working class neighborhood located between two large Coke plants that fills the community with pollutants in the air and soil, unable to grow their own food. Multiple lawsuits and the redirection of blame has led to very little progress on the clean-up. The rural case was in Hanceville, Alabama where poor Black residents are required by State law to purchase their own private \$20,000 septic tank because they do not live on a municipal line. Without one, when it floods, exacerbated by climate change, their homes fill with toxic waste.

Both cases are a blatant example of environmental racism. After the first two weeks of camp, I felt disheartened at how helpless the students felt after the workshop. I felt frustrated and overwhelmed. I needed to find a way to emphasize what they can do to help. I began to think about not just the commonality in these case's problems but also their solutions. In both cases, residents reached out to local scientists and activists to perform scientific testing to support their claims of pollution. This community science work allows locals to rely on themselves instead of corporations. Between the second and last week of camp, I decided to revamp my workshop to include a visual diagram to assist in conceptualizing environmental injustice and to emphasize community science as a form of community service.

I was significantly more proud in my workshop the final week and my favorite part was students coming up afterwards to ask more questions. That was the moment I realized I had inspired them. Overall, I learned about a few of Alabama's dirty secrets, but I also learned a lot about myself as a student and teacher. It takes a lot of confidence to believe in your own ideas and ability to effectively explain it to others. I realized that one of my biggest personal struggles was believing in myself, so I am thankful for all the people that believed in me and this project and I am glad this is how I spent summer 2021!



Mary-Preston Austin '23

Vanderbilt Law School

I spent the summer working with Guernica 37, and international law group located in London that focuses on transnational litigation to protect human rights and support international criminal norms. It was a fascinating experience, to say the least, and eye opening to the realities of international law practice.

The first assignment on which I worked was a jurisdictional challenge. I initially felt hesitant, particularly when the answers I was discovering seemed too obvious. But, after my first meeting with much of the staff—a knowledgeable and welcoming group—and a conversation with my boss, I gained confidence. Further, I began to recognize the range in caliber among the various legal systems. As I continued to research for our defence of a man indicted in a manner that seemed outlandish, I learned not only about the intricacies of a specific country's laws and history, but also of the machine which allows such prosecution.

International law that contemplates the prevention of atrocities inherently sits upon a precarious precipice of legal fiction. Indeed, such is the case of any system to which not all have agreed; here, some countries are unable to

Austin worked with an international law group located in London that focuses on transnational litigation to protect human rights and support international criminal norms.

prosecute, and others unwilling. As such, it is of paramount importance that those accused receive competent defence, and that careful attention is paid to the appeals process. Consistency and equity in the law's application are integral to confidence in the system; such confidence, in turn, is integral to the system's continued ability to protect human rights.



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Betty Barnett '22

Philosophy and Psychology, Chemistry minor

This summer, I used my Nichols funding to conduct research remotely in philosophy and psychology. I lived with friends, so I did the bulk of my work at various cafés, where I bought coffee in exchange for air conditioning, power outlets, and—only on occasion—reliable Wi-Fi.

As an intern at the University of California, Irvine Ethics Center, my project centered around resilience and trauma recovery in the context of World War II. In partnership with a group of students from around the country, I composed a literature review on this topic. Together, our research contributed toward a book that my mentor, Dr. Kristen Monroe, is currently writing, which explores the factors that helped Holocaust survivors to flourish and create constructive lives. Building on literature in the fields of neuroscience and moral, social, and political psychology, my team examined the roles that hardiness, resilience, flow, and intrinsic motivation played in these individuals' journeys. Our work drew from both classic psychological theories—such as Viktor Frankl's and Sigmund Freud's—and from more contemporary concepts, such as restricted environmental

Barnett conducted research focused on resilience and trauma recovery in the context of World War II.

stimulation theory and complexity theory.

Overall, I had a very meaningful summer, and would like to thank Mrs. and Mr. Nichols, along with the Office of Immersion Resources staff, for facilitating my experience.

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Isabelle Bui '22

*Political Science,
Architecture and the Built Environment minor*

My experience this summer as a Nichols Humanitarian scholar has reinforced my passion for working in the public interest sector. By volunteering for a local City Council campaign and then interning for New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), I was able to learn about the different ways civic engagement can impact communities. The work I was able to accomplish directly impacted my city, and altered my philosophy toward the relationships in my life.

Despite losing the election, the campaign I volunteered with provided important services for constituents, as well as boosted civic engagement in my hometown, District 15 of the Bronx. For example, my team helped connect a mother to a summer sports camp for her son. In our follow-up call with her, we were able to get her a ride to the polls on election day! My other volunteer experience also emphasized constituent services – i.e housing applications, heat/hot water requests, and free tax services. Through canvassing I was able to connect with constituents on a personal level. One of the most frequent complaints I received from constituents during the campaign was that the streets were dirty. Families deserve to live somewhere decent, regardless of socioeconomic status.

With this in mind, I continued my work in the public sector after the election as an intern for NYCEDC where I helped manage NYC's quality of life programs "City Cleanup Corps". I coincidentally reported on cleanup swarms in District 15 in the Bronx, as well as my current neighborhood in Queens. It is an amazing feeling to be able to work directly toward a

Bui volunteered with a local New York City campaign and helped manage the City Cleanup Corps quality of life program.

better quality of living for New Yorkers.

Because of these experiences, I plan to work as a public servant post-graduation. I used to think that relationships outside of my close friends and family were unimportant. However, my volunteer experiences over the past few years have pushed me to understand that life is all about relationships, and is about all relationship. The impact of my work will be about the relationships I form, whether short or long term. I am able to support and understand people through these relationships, and by understanding others I am more understanding of life in general. I am beyond grateful for this opportunity through the Nichols Humanitarian Fund.



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Claire Chen '24

Economics, History

This summer, I worked with Project RISHI, a Vanderbilt student organization providing educational supplies and sustainable infrastructure to schools in Pamulaparathi, India. Our mission was to deliver the same supplies and infrastructure that our schools depended upon in a COVID-safe way. Since we could not make our customary trip to India, we had to be open and flexible. When many applying students from our organization were generously awarded the Nichols grant, we realized we would have more than enough funds to cover the items for the schools described in our application. So, we decided to use the surplus funds to expand Project RISHI's mission of sustainable school development to a local school in the Nashville area in addition to completing our primary project of working with our Indian schools. Through a tutoring contact, I introduced Nashville's Dupont Hadley Middle School to Project RISHI, and as a result, I was assigned primary responsibility for the school.

With each school came unique challenges. Effective communication was a challenge for all of our schools; students assigned to our Indian schools faced a language barrier, time zone delays, and international purchasing considerations. Though Dupont Hadley did not have these restrictions, the bureaucratic delays common in overworked public schools meant that communication challenges were common. Eventually, with the help of the school's Community Achieves Site Manager, we were able to determine the school's needs and purchase "Wish List" items that the school had sent.

Excitingly, Project RISHI was able to purchase every single item requested by Dupont Hadley. My 5k award was used to purchase 3.3k in items, including supplies, clothing, and hygiene supplies, for Dupont Hadley, with the rest of the 1.7k award used on reimbursements and future projects for

Chen worked with a team to provide school supplies, educational items, and hygiene products to schools in India and Nashville.

our Indian schools. Below is the transaction record of the purchases I made on behalf of Project RISHI.

ITEM	amount USD
Arcade 1Up Outrun Stand Up Edit	
Arcade 1UP Street Fighter	\$1,091.39
Arcade 1Up Frogger	\$436.99
Giant 4 In A Row Connect Game	\$195.55
Binders	\$489.54
Clothes Order 1	\$557.57
Clothes Order 2	\$453.33
Hygiene Items	\$94.41
Greenboards, Ashwin	\$417.56
Greenboards, Ashwin	\$88.92
Total	\$3,825.26

The task of procuring clothing and hygiene items was delegated to a Project RISHI student in Nashville, who purchased the supplies from stores in the area and delivered them to the school. Since the rest of the items were better suited for online delivery, I ordered them remotely. Dupont Hadley teachers need the binders to teach organizational skills next year, while the arcade games are meant for Dupont Hadley's new incentive room, "The Kennel," which rewards students for working hard in class. Dupont Hadley shared with us a video showing the new game room with the supplies we had provided.

On a macro level, Project RISHI's summer project was complex, targeting four schools across two continents and requiring the coordination of Project RISHI students located all over the United States. Our performance updates, held via the Zoom throughout the summer, highlighted the supplies we've provided for each of the schools that Project RISHI targets, including a TV for Pamulapurthi Primary School, computer supplies for Pamulapurthi High School, and tables for Gowraram High School, just to name a few.

Overall, my work with Project RISHI gave me the unique opportunity to assist schools in need, and I feel honored to be able to work with Project RISHI through the Nichols Award for this summer.



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This summer, I was able to use all of the skills I've been learning in my law school classes in a setting that is actively making people's lives better and ensuring accountability and justice here in the U.S. and abroad.

Sarah Dvorak '22

Vanderbilt Law School

Dvorak worked for the Department of Homeland Security in the Human Rights Violator and War Crimes Unit.

I'm very grateful for the Nichols Humanitarian Fund and all that it has allowed me to accomplish this summer. I worked for the Department of Homeland Security in the Human Rights Violator and War Crimes Unit and was able to learn from some of the most brilliant attorneys and mentors I've ever met. Everyone at HRVCU loves what they do and is passionate about the work they do day in and day out, and I see now how much of a difference that makes in comparison to the other private sectors of law I've worked in. All of the attorneys I had the pleasure of working with this summer truly believe in the work they do, and their enthusiasm was tangible.

The Nichols Humanitarian Fund allowed me to truly make a difference this summer in people's lives, and every day I was able to truly see how I was assisting the Department of Homeland Security in its mission statement: with honor and integrity, we will safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values. This summer, I was able to use all of the skills I've been learning in my law school classes in a setting that is actively making people's lives better and ensuring accountability and justice here in the U.S. and abroad. I'm very proud of the work I was able to partake in this past summer, and this experience has only strengthened my dedication and resolve to be a part of governmental public interest work.



Chidinmma Egemonu '23

Cognitive Studies, Human and Organizational Development

Egemonu helped design programming for workshops on Intersectionality and Nature Immersion in Colorado.

I decided to complete my Nichols Humanitarian Fund project at the Shadowcliff Lodge in Grand Lake, Colorado. Shadowcliff is an educational non-profit lodge that is located within the Rocky Mountains. The staff specializes in creating educational programs that focus on helping visitors develop mindfulness techniques, artistic talents, and physical wellness. These workshops are a way for people at the lodge to develop a natural human connection with other members at the lodge. These activities mainly targeted adult members who were financially able to rent out a space at the lodge and use their resources to travel through the mountains to be physically available to attend these sessions.

However, the executive leadership at Shadowcliff realized that there was a demographic that was not being included: Generation Z. It was very important for the lodge to target this group because of the social justice events that were prevalent in the Summer of 2020, and the fact that young people were very impactful and influential when it came to the general awareness of those events. Therefore, Shadowcliff leaders believed that young people would greatly benefit from sharing their voices and opinions in a space that emphasizes mindfulness techniques and human connectivity. I learned about this project from a relative of Kathy Baldwin, who is one of the project coordinators at Shadowcliff. I was eager to join because I was passionate about education and had experience working in an education lab, but I wanted to learn more about how education could be used to increase conversations about social impact. More importantly, I was eager to learn more about how I could use my background in education to increase human connectivity amongst Gen Z.

The aim of the project was to create various pilot programs that were geared towards Generation Z. There were ten people who were assigned to two different groups that

covered different topics. We selected the topics by creating a survey that were spread to organizations and group chats that had members that were in Generation Z. The two topics that I focused on were Intersectionality and Nature Immersion. As a member of the Intersectionality group, I helped design a pilot program in which members watched a TED talk about how intersectionality leads to black women being forgotten by the justice system, created and discussed an artistic piece about their different ideas, and shared how their identities have either provided or removed access to important resources in their lives.

In the second workshop, I helped design a nature trail experience to understand the impact of climate change on a fire that spread through the Rocky Mountains, and how the fire impacted the local community. Additionally, I led a discussion about individual sustainability and how corporations could be held accountable for the amount of waste they produce. Overall, I enjoyed teaching the pilot group about really important topics, and I also learned a lot from the pilot members as they shared their experiences.

I enjoyed my time as a pilot leader at Shadowcliff. It was really unique to work in groups with young people from different backgrounds to create important workshops that could be used for Gen Z. I am also happy to announce that the pilot programs received positive reviews and will be officially launched next summer. I am happy that I got to hone my leadership skills while contributing to a project that will have a real impact on young people's lives.



Will Fritzler '22

Philosophy and Political Science

For my Nichols Humanitarian Fund service project, I launched a digital media platform called Bolder that features content on global humanitarian issues. Bolder includes podcast and written content on three topics: environment, health, and inequality. During summer 2021, I launched the Bolder website and podcast feed, publishing multiple podcast episodes and written articles. I recorded several other podcast episodes that have yet to be released, and most importantly made several meaningful connections with people around the world working on these crucial issues.

My greatest takeaway from my project, which I will continue into senior year, is that people working on global issues are eager to share their wisdom to help others engage in similar work. All of my podcast guests—whose backgrounds were as varied as nonprofit, social entrepreneurship, political, and legal work across various humanitarian issue areas—were quite generous with their time and excited to share what they learned to empower others to do good in their own lives.

This leads me to believe that there is an exciting opportunity for a media platform to share the ideas of impactful leaders, which can help people like you and me contribute to solving seemingly intractable humanitarian issues. Media has the power to change worldviews, and if more people thought about humanitarian issues in a more productive, thoughtful way, I believe our world will greatly benefit. My goal now, as when I started, is for Bolder to contribute to this trend.

One thing I learned during the summer that has influenced

Fritzler launched a digital media platform called Bolder that features content on global humanitarian issues.

my current plans for Bolder is the sheer difficulty of launching a media platform that covers complex topics like global humanitarian issues. I have since begun to prioritize forming a team over bulk content creation and marketing, so I can better manage the various tasks involved in launching and sustaining such an enterprise.

Whatever Bolder becomes, I am very grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Nichols for their generosity in funding my project and those of my fellow Nichols Humanitarian Fund recipients. Thank you as well to Brittaney Baker and the Office of Immersion Resources for coordinating the Fund; and to my fellow recipients for inspiring me to do good in the world.



My greatest takeaway from my project, which I will continue into senior year, is that people working on global issues are eager to share their wisdom to help others engage in similar work.



I have never worked with narrative data before, and it humanized the subject as the work progressed. For research that so directly impacts people, having voices shape the project's trajectory has been a meaningful experience.

Farrah Hasan '22

Chemistry, Creative Writing and Sustainability Studies minors

Since mid-May, I have been working with Nadia Seetaram, a doctoral candidate at Florida International University. Her research pertains to the relationship between climate mobility and economic vulnerability. As flooding accelerates in South Florida, and especially Miami-Dade, the county of interest, local populations are being relocated. Seetaram is interested in how communities' desire to or to not leave Miami is affected by sea level rise and the extent to which financial capacity can determine that decision for them.

My work has involved editing transcripts from interviews Seetaram conducted earlier in the year. After this, we used a software called NVIVO to code for certain information across transcripts to later determine patterns of similarity and/or difference across participants. Seetaram has since been comparing the narrative data to flood risk data to consider the relationship between economic vulnerability and geographic vulnerability. For the last six weeks, I have been

Hasan worked to create a narrative around climate migration in Miami through the usage of narrative data.

working to design a StoryMap, a web application by ArcGIS that combines the functionality of a dynamic map with the elements of storytelling. I have been using Nadia's research and the participants' voices to create a narrative around climate migration in Miami. I hope to have this completed by late August or early September.

This summer has been a formative experience for my future aspirations. Climate migration has long been an interest of mine, and being able to engage with this kind of research has been incredibly rewarding. I have never worked with narrative data before, and it humanized the subject as the work progressed. For research that so directly impacts people, having voices shape the project's trajectory has been a meaningful experience. I intend to carry this form of data collection with me in the future if I am to conduct my own climate migration research.



Chetan Immanneni '22

Neuroscience and Medicine, Health and Society

For my Nichols Project this summer, I and my partner, Rakesh Kathiresan, initially planned to have a seminar series with immigrant men focused on understanding and improving the awareness of mental health issues. Unfortunately, due to limitations in large part due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this plan had to be modified. Nevertheless, both Rakesh and I were able to realize our original mission by connecting to organizations and taking note of insights gained from individual experiences.

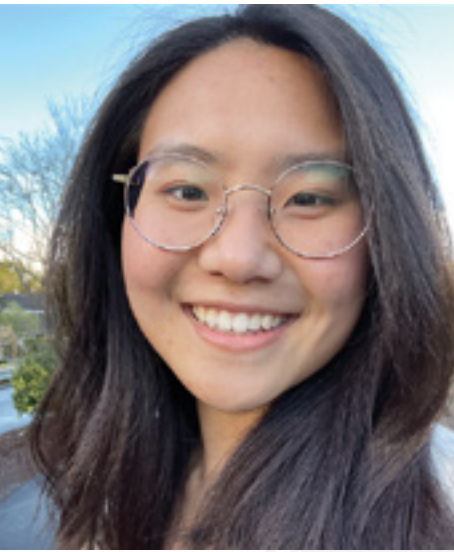
My first experience was in connecting to an event in Dallas called Por Maricón, The Measures and Violence of Masculinity. I saw that this unique in-person event was one that just seemed to match what Rakesh and I wanted to learn about. To have this serve as an important introduction, Rakesh and I attended this presentation and took quite a few points from it. For one, we heard from speakers that masculinity in Latinx individuals is an issue that has only very recently begun to be studied. Similarly, we also heard about the LGBTQ+ experience as it relates to masculinity and mental health. For future work, I think that this is certainly an aspect that should be considered. Apart from this experience, I was able to contact and connect with NICE (Nashville International Center for Empowerment) and schedule an interview with a few individuals who had experience working with recent immigrants. One powerful moment from that interaction was one where a Nepali coordinator described quite personal experiences of issues in that community where mental health was all but ignored due to norms of masculinity.

Immanneni conducted interviews and attended a presentation focused on immigrant male mental health.

In short, while the initial plan did not go as planned, Rakesh and I certainly got a better understanding of current realities that immigrant men face and feel confident in explaining this intersection and the need for work to be done. Simply put, we can now both speak to that junction not just from personal experience, but from an experience of having conducted a summer project. We hope that our work can be continued in the future with support from the Nichols foundation or other organizations where we can go visit people and take note.



In short, while the initial plan did not go as planned, Rakesh and I certainly got a better understanding of current realities that immigrant men face and feel confident in explaining this intersection and the need for work to be done.



Brigitte Jia '22

Neuroscience, Art History minor

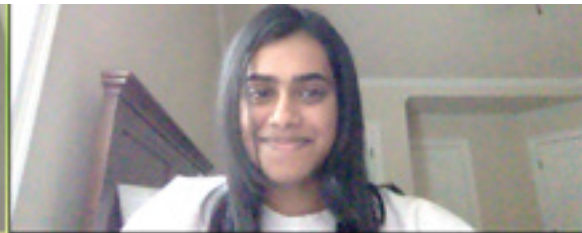
I had a wonderful time helping out with ENP, filming Free Store events, interviewing ENP volunteers and Edgehill residents, and researching into Edgehill's rich history this summer with Mr. and Mrs. Nichols' support. My journey into Edgehill's culture and ENP's efforts to sustain it taught me to more deeply appreciate the sense of community created by acts of giving to one's neighbors and receiving from them in turn, and the power of that feeling in gathering support in the form of physical food and household resources for ENP residents in need. From May to August, in interviewing, researching, and filming for the purpose of putting together documentary media to widen ENP's reach, I became more integrated into the organization and Edgehill itself. Through volunteers' and residents' extraordinary goodwill, I was made to feel less like an outsider from the "Vanderbilt bubble" and more like a member of an extended family than I'd ever experienced within my volunteerism before. Coming into Free Store events and working on film clips for social media fundraising hardly felt like tasks – they were labors of love this summer.

I particularly enjoyed being able to conduct and film volunteer interviews (with written media consent, of course!) – doing so gave me a chance to learn about a volunteer's involvement with ENP and to devote some time to understanding how their personal journey – perhaps as a Nashville newcomer like myself, or, as with many volunteers, as a long-term Edgehill resident – intersected with the organization's efforts to provide necessary items to Edgehill's residents in need. One volunteer served as a minister with the Edgehill United Methodist Church where ENP had started and was on her 11th year of ENP volunteering; another had arrived in Nashville recently and found their way to the organization during graduate school, and yet another had lived in Edgehill for longer than I'd been alive. The collection of interviews I

Jia spent the summer conducting interviews, researching, and filming the rich history and culture of the Edgehill community.

obtained is a beautiful exemplification of Edgehill's and ENP's acceptance of everyone who needs help from others or is willing to help others. As volunteers describe their favorite Edgehill memories, lessons learned from ENP, and three words they'd use to describe their work on film, they share themselves and their wondrous perspectives of Edgehill with the camera. I'm having a blast editing the full clips into a complete documentary product now, and I'm excited to distribute the finished collection alongside clips of ENP Free Stores, captions detailing Edgehill's history, and shots of the area in the fall.

Overall, I'm really grateful to the Nichols for granting me the chance to stay in Nashville this summer and work on this wonderful project with Edgehill and ENP. I was able to walk around Edgehill as I filmed shots of the neighborhood, and I got to see historic emblems like the Edgehill polar bears that would show up in people's yards after they'd gone through momentous life events like new births and marriages, which now rest along the main Edgehill road, that I would not have been able to experience had I not had assistance from the Humanitarian Fund. I'll never be a Nashville native, but I feel as though I understand the spirit of community within Edgehill and the rest of the city beyond it much more clearly than I had before I embarked on this project and began helping out with ENP. This neighborhood and the organization that helps it run, they're something extraordinary – there's no invisible barrier between the "helper" and the "recipient" and everyone is genuinely keen on aiding each other through thick and thin. The Nichols Fund helped me fully experience this sentiment and dig into the history behind it to aid fundraising and educational efforts for ENP and Edgehill!



Preethi Karnam '22

*Neuroscience and Medicine, Health and Society,
Anthropology minor*

As a child accompanying my dad at clinics in rural Jamaica, I remember meeting one patient with advanced, debilitating arthritis in his hand. He lived remotely and worked long hours, seeking care only after he required surgery from months of aggravation. This story is all too common, fueling my desire to address health disparities on a larger scale and opening my eyes to the need for initiatives in medicine, policy and beyond to reduce such disparities.

Coupling my experiences with my time in anthropology classes during college, I was inspired to complete a global health fellowship with the Foundation for International Medical Relief for Children. In this recent work, I conducted research with my team led by clinical director Dafne Calderon and proposed specific clinical interventions and recommendations to reduce anemia prevalence in the marginalized Haitian population of the Dominican Republic. I catered solutions to both various demographics including women, children, even urban and rural populations. Reminded of larger social barriers from my upbringing, I realized the importance of understanding that illness can manifest differently based on cultural and geopolitical contexts. Solutions, similarly, have to be culturally and contextually tailored. It was a great learning experience that challenged me and made me excited to take the next steps toward a career in medicine.

Karnam conducted research to propose specific clinical interventions and recommendations to reduce anemia prevalence in the marginalized Haitian population of the Dominican Republic.

Cognizance of such community- and even person-specific barriers to equitable medicine allows for the highest quality, personalized care. Effective medicine requires physicians to look at more than just the physical symptoms, but at the whole person and everything they bring into the exam room. Whether it's through research, culturally competent care, or political advocacy, physicians have a duty to work towards an equitable healthcare system. I hope to continue transforming ideas into impactful practices that educate and uplift vulnerable communities locally and globally.



Cognizance of such community- and even person specific barriers to equitable medicine allows for the highest quality, personalized care.



I wanted to explore the unique cultural barriers that this [immigrant and minority young men] population faces when trying to access care and how this issue affects other aspects of their lives, specifically their social relationships and physical well-being.

Rakesh Kathiresan '22

Medicine, Health and Society and Neuroscience

I received the Nichols Humanitarian Fund to pursue service and learn about something I am very passionate about: the gap in mental healthcare among immigrant and minority young men. I wanted to explore the unique cultural barriers that this population faces when trying to access care and how this issue affects other aspects of their lives, specifically their social relationships and physical well-being. While I would have never imagined my summer immersion to go as it did, I am elated to say that I was able to give back and learn more about these issues.

My first meaningful interaction was at the opening of an art exhibit, titled *El Maricon*, at the Dallas Museum of Art. The exhibit was designed by Jose Villalobos, an artist dedicated to revealing the measures and violence of masculinity. During the event, I was able to converse with the artist and members of the Latinx community in Dallas about their difficulties with their cultural constructs of masculinity. I noticed similar themes in my meetings with coordinators at the Shade Tree Clinic in Nashville, specifically with regards to Latinx men seeking care. Donating some of my funding to the Nashville International Center of Empowerment, an organization dedicated to helping immigrant populations transition to life in America, was one of the most gratifying moments of my summer.

While I knew I wanted to do work related to some of the physical manifestations of poor mental health in minority populations, I quickly discovered that I needed to narrow my scope. Given that one of the most widespread consequences of toxic masculinity is an unhealthy drive for muscularity, I decided to research eating disorders and dietary supplement use in young men. I proceeded to work at Boston Children's Hospital with faculty at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health on research in the areas of eating disorders and dietary supplement use among American adolescents.

Kathiresan conducted research on eating disorders and dietary supplement use in young men.

I was surprised to find that protein and weight loss supplements are largely unregulated by the FDA, as a result of the DSHEA Act passed by Congress in 1994. Many of these supplements are readily available at grocery stores, pharmacies, and gyms across the country, leaving millions of adolescent men vulnerable to product adulteration by the dietary supplement industry. After weeks of research and discussion with experts in the field, I am currently working on a paper to be published in *The Pediatrics in Review* journal to shed more light on this issue.

My experience as a Nichols Humanitarian Fund recipient has allowed me to engage with my community in new ways and has led me to meet so many inspiring people from drastically different backgrounds. I am confident that I will take the lessons I learned this summer with me as I continue to study healthcare inequities throughout my career.



Anish Katta '22

Medicine, Health and Society

For the entirety of my time at Vanderbilt, I have been part of the Vanderbilt Chapter of Project RISHI. Project RISHI is a service organization that seeks to create sustainable development in rural Indian villages. This means that the projects we implement every summer are made to last, and can be easily repaired or upgraded by the denizens without extensive help from our organization. We've worked on various projects for these schools in the past, such as building bathrooms for the schools, setting up computer labs and the appropriate wiring, as well as providing the necessary educational materials, so that students can achieve their full potential.

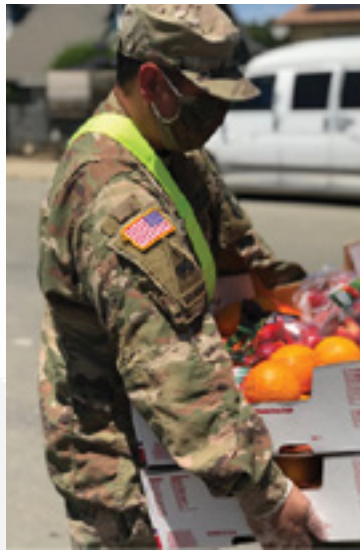
Over the past five years, members from Project RISHI have traveled to Pamulaparathi Village in India and worked on service projects there for 3 schools: Pamulaparathi Primary School, Pamulaparathi High School, and Gowraram. However, with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to travel to India this year. Thus, we had to shift our focus to aid that we could provide to the village remotely. This proved to be a challenge as most of our projects from previous summers involved hands-on construction and dealings with local suppliers. We settled on ordering items and having them installed for the schools via contractors we had previously worked with in the past. The main project I specifically focused on was helping Pamulaparathi Primary School transition to online learning. This involved purchasing microphones and recording equipment for the school, as well as a TV system so that teachers would be able to live-stream lessons to students. Additionally, we also were able to expand the school's supply of educational equipment by ordering them new green boards and computers and helping them acquire learning materials such as textbooks and worksheets. These materials were instrumental in allowing the school to teach more students.

Katta worked with a team to provide school supplies, educational items, and hygiene products to schools in India and Nashville.

In addition to Pamulaparathi Primary School, I also worked with a fellow Project RISHI member on facilitating general improvements to Gowraram High School. The school did not have a clean water source for students to drink, so we provided them with a water purifier. Additionally, several of their classrooms lacked adequate ventilation, so we provided the school with several fan units. Like Pamulaparathi Primary School, the school was also provided with educational equipment such as green boards, tables, and a TV to allow the school to reach more students in the village.

Some of the challenges that I faced while completing this project came from working with both the local suppliers and the schools themselves. There is a nine-hour and thirty-minute difference between the US and India, so it was a bit of a challenge coordinating meetings at times convenient for everyone. Additionally, working with the local suppliers could prove challenging as there was a language barrier for a couple of our suppliers that made ordering supplies a little more complicated. However, with the help of some members from Project RISHI who were fluent in Hindi and Telugu (the languages primarily spoken in the area), we were able to effectively communicate and successfully place our orders.

While we were limited in what we could do for the schools this summer, I believe that we were able to contribute in a meaningful way to the schools of Pamulaparathi village. Seeing the videos and photos of the schools using the equipment we provided makes me happy that our equipment is being put to good use. While working on my project, I learned a lot about working with the constantly changing demands of the schools, as well as coordinating meetings with local suppliers, despite there being a language barrier between us. In the future, I hope that we will be able to return to India in person and be able to provide more infrastructural improvements to the schools there.



Berkeley Madeliene Kendrick '22

Medicine, Health and Society, Anthropology, Business

Kendrick served on a team to help eliminate food waste and help address the systemic issues that our society needs to address in order to end hunger both within our borders and eventually beyond.

It is hard to believe that we have been dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic for over 19 long months. My philanthropic odyssey with food equity began the day after I flew home from Vandy back in March of 2020. Although counties across America have been under tremendous pressure due to the Covid-19 pandemic, here in Monterey County, where I grew up, the hunger situation was even more dire, as 1 in 4 adults and 1 in 3 children were now hungry. Sadly, my county has the dubious distinction of being the 'childhood poverty capital' of California. We have more homeless students here than in San Francisco and San Jose combined, even before Covid. During the pandemic, the demand for food in my county quadrupled and remains at this extraordinary level.

When the stay-in-place order went into effect in March 2020, the Office of Emergency Services, every municipality, and every school district in the country turned to food banks to feed their residents. As the only emergency food source in many counties, food bank staff along with volunteers and National Guard were on the frontlines (non-stop), responding to this public health emergency as a humanitarian crisis.

Working with the National Guard to accommodate pandemic safety protocols and to meet the explosive increase in food demand, food banks across the nation redesigned food distribution operations, many with miles-long lines, serving families and individuals who in many cases had never previously needed support from their local food bank. At the same time, Farmers were forced to let crops rot and throw away milk while food bank demand soared and they were running perilously low on food. The reality for many farmers was that it was simply more cost-effective to let crops rot in the fields as their markets collapsed and they could not afford to harvest crops. At the same time, food banks desperately in need of food were not in a position nor were they set up to cover labor and transportation costs for the

farmers. Unfortunately, the food system was built to serve commercial enterprises. During Covid, we experienced the inherent flaws in this system, specifically when for-profit demand collapses; there is a ton of waste that occurs. Similarly, restaurant dairy processors were unable to redirect their cheese and butter to food banks as the industry no longer had enough retail demand to stay afloat.

Of course, many asked why not donate all that unused product to food banks? The simple answer, logistics and harvesting cost money farmers, and other agriculture producers did not have.

This is where FarmLink comes in, a non-profit created by college students during Covid to help eliminate food waste and help address the systemic issues that our society needs to address in order to end hunger both within our borders and eventually beyond. Specifically, The Farmlink Project is acting as the "link" connecting the broken supply chains in the agricultural and food access industries. It's important to recognize that Farmlink is part of an extensive food insecurity ecosystem and that there is much work to be done alongside the tremendously philanthropically minded organizations such as congregate meals, food pantries and food banks across this nation as they truly understand the unique needs of the communities they serve. Still, after my experience at Farmlink in conjunction with my work on the Five Acre Farm Project (more details to follow) I am convinced that we are in the nascent phase in terms of both the influence and impact of the potential of the Farmlink project. Although we made great strides at Farmlink this summer, essentially, we still need to systematically address the massive food waste and food insecurity issues that are inherent in our food system and have existed for decades. Equally important, we need to acknowledge that the logistics behind food recovery requires both infrastructure

and funding that simply does not exist, many including the government are willing to fund food, but not the resources needed to get it where it needs to go. Ultimately, hunger in this great nation is primarily a function of inadequately funded and antiquated logistics. Admittedly, there were many nights during my tenure at Farmlink that I went to bed a pessimist, but I always woke up an optimist as I thoroughly believe if we deployed the critical design thinking and intellectual talent, ending hunger in this great nation is both achievable and more importantly should be considered an inalienable right. After all, we could use a big win.

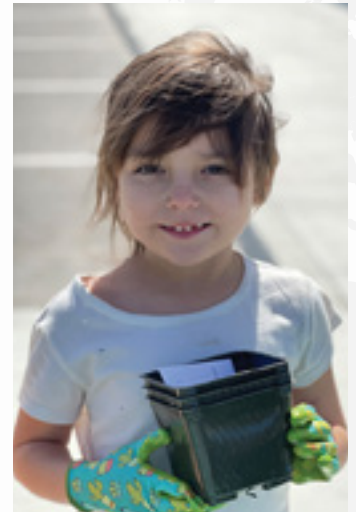
Some Additional Observations from my work this summer. The pandemic has disproportionately affected farmworkers and hospitality workers and their families, who often reside in overcrowded conditions where Covid-19 can spread rapidly. Moreover, farmworkers returning for the growing season, who are contending with reduced prospects and uneven vaccination opportunities, have created greater urgency for solving food insecurity.

Beyond the pandemic crisis, there lies many chronic health concerns. It is no coincidence that poorly nourished communities have high rates of chronic illnesses and hospitalizations, disabilities resulting from complications, work injuries, and educational disruptions, all of which increase family stresses, deplete resources, curtail activities, and diminish overall quality of life.

Lastly, undernourished residents are unable to marshal the energy, focus, resources, and physical labor needed to pursue and succeed in new job opportunities, education, neighborhood initiatives, and advocacy for self, family,

schools, and community. They cannot partake in or sustain economic or social activities that enrich and advance their lives when they are worried about securing their next meal. The strength and vitality of any community is reliant upon the health of its residents. Health is impossible without good nutrition.

I am truly grateful for this opportunity that the Nichols scholarship provided. I feel privileged to have been part of this amazing start-up and to have worked alongside such a talented and dedicated team. This experience has had a profound impact on my future career aspirations and I look forward to better days ahead.



Although we made great strides at Farmlink this summer, essentially, we still need to systematically address the massive food waste and food insecurity issues that are inherent in our food system and have existed for decades.



Safwaan Khan '21 and Elly Shin '21

Economics and Chemistry

This summer, we made a series of blog posts to provide open-source, accessible education on aging biology. The idea stemmed from our interest in the novel scientific field of aging biology. Beyond 'biohackers' and fountain of youth-esque elixirs is a field backed by hard biology and empiricism (of manipulating lifespan). This research field seeks to extend human lifespan (number of years lived) as well as improve the quality of life during the years lived. Diseases like Alzheimer's, muscle atrophy, declining senses may one day be prevented! If we invest the time, talent, and resources...

We believe in the mission and ethos driving this field, and we created this blog as a way to introduce aging biology to the broader community, attract brilliant minds, and provide a doorway for diverse backgrounds into biotech, a traditionally insular community (an old boys' club, so to speak). When we first started working on this idea, we wanted to create online crash courses on aging biology. This project eventually evolved into a blog so that more people can access the information at any point now or in the future. We'd spend hours in a coffee shop writing and rewriting, editing and discussing. In addition to pure science information, we started writing about ways to break into and navigate the biotech industry.

While writing blog posts this summer, the biggest challenge has been deciding a scope to write within (yes, even more difficult than choosing the blog name). There's so much information within the biotech industry, within the aging field that needs to be shared more often with more people. It can be overwhelming when trying to communicate in 1 page blog posts. But this challenge leads to a broader, meta-question

Khan and Shin created a series of blog posts to provide open-source, accessible education on aging biology

that we frequently discussed: How do great thinkers and problem solvers with non-traditional backgrounds break into a field where all information is as tightly held as IP? How can people from non-biology fields help further a technical innovation that can improve people's quality of life?

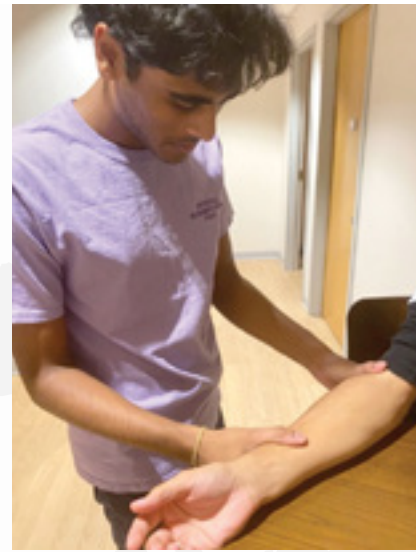
Aging. FYI hopes to enable people from all sorts of backgrounds and countries to break into the scientific field of aging and push towards technology to improve physiological quality of life as we get older.



We believe in the mission and ethos driving this field, and we created this blog as a way to introduce aging biology to the broader community, attract brilliant minds, and provide a doorway for diverse backgrounds into biotech, a traditionally insular community (an old boys' club, so to speak)



Their kindness was unparalleled, and the work they put in daily (standing in 80+ degree weather for hours to sell newspapers) was nothing short of inspiring.



Chandrahaas Kona '23

Economics

Coming into this summer, I was excited to start working but also hesitant to rush the process. Two months is a very short period of time and I wasn't sure what type of impact I could immediately create. Over the last 5-6 weeks, I've been conducting weekly blood pressure screenings at The Contributor, a non-profit street newspaper that is sold by people experiencing homelessness. Each Wednesday, I would load my backpack with two blood pressure machines, packs of sanitation wipes, and informational flyers and head downtown to The Contributor's central offices. My goal was to offer free blood pressure screenings to homeless individuals, no questions asked.

Almost immediately I ran into a big issue: trust. Because the homeless community received inadequate access to healthcare, I thought that my project would be welcomed with open arms. But because of a long history of isolation and neglect by policy leaders and the broader community, people experiencing homelessness are rightfully distrustful of outsiders. In order to fully implement my project, I would first need to know them. My first week volunteering, I specifically took time to talk to people in line for the biweekly newspaper reveal. I wasn't a college student dedicated to taking their blood pressure for a humanitarian project; rather, I was an individual interested in getting to know them. I talked to an individual (names not given due to privacy concerns) whose passion lay in International politics and relations. Just that morning I'd read an article discussing the assassination of Haiti's president; after discussing the shocking murder and

Kona offered free blood pressure screenings to members of the Contributor street newspaper team.

its broader implications for Haiti, the man told me he'd write an article about it for the next edition of The Contributor. I talked to a pair of friends who'd relied on each other for the past couple years, and a woman who yearned to move to Mecca. Just two people got their blood pressure taken that first screening, but I started to learn about and understand the people who were standing in front of me.

Over the following weeks, I became a regular fixture on Wednesday mornings at The Contributor. I was still an outsider, but I was also more recognizable as each week passed. As people lined up to receive newspapers, I would strike up conversations and learn more about themselves; in some cases, we would continue conversations started in weeks past. Around the fourth week, my number of screenings hit double digits. It was incredibly rewarding to be able to talk to everyone; no one story was the same, and many had advice and tips to give. I talked to a man who grew ten different types of vegetables in his garden; he gave me a bag of the largest tomatoes I'd ever seen the following week. Each experience was unforgettable and shaped how I viewed those less fortunate than me in my community. Despite their hardships and daily struggles, most were willing to talk and share their story. Their kindness was unparalleled, and the work they put in daily (standing in 80+ degree weather for hours to sell newspapers) was nothing short of inspiring. I'm really thankful to have had this experience. I'll be continuing this project through the school year, and I'm excited to see what's in store.



Both of these experiences have shown me the range of healthcare disparities faced by people globally as well as in Nashville.

Sanjana Kosuri '22

Neuroscience and Psychology

My proposed service projects for this summer involved working with both Project RISHI (remotely) and Shade Tree Clinic (in Nashville).

For Project RISHI, we had to make dramatic changes to our plans due to the pandemic. We have a long term commitment to our villages, sending members from the organization on a yearly service trip to continually expand upon our efforts for sustainable growth in rural areas. We keep in touch with the members of the village during the year to get their input on what will benefit them and updates on how our projects have been working. Normally, we send students in-person to implement projects, but this summer, we were limited in the ways in which we could help, so we mostly contributed by sending them necessary supplies for their schools. We hope these supplies will help children receive a quality elementary and middle school education that will be incredibly beneficial to the growth and development of these villages!

I spent a large chunk of my volunteering time working with Shade Tree Clinic here in Nashville. Shade Tree Clinic has the amazing mission of providing care and resources for uninsured individuals in Nashville. This summer, I spent most of my time working with the patient assistance program (PAP program). The PAP program is unique among student-run free clinics and assists uninsured patients in getting access to expensive medications directly from the pharmaceutical company. I regularly made calls to pharmaceutical companies to check on the applications we sent in for our patients, ensuring that their medications arrived on time. I also talked directly with many patients, calling them before their clinic

Kosuri worked with two organizations to provide resources to communities in India and Nashville.

visits to remind them about their appointment and explaining what paperwork they needed to bring, so that we could successfully apply for the free medications.

I had an amazing experience working with both of these organizations, and I will continue to work with them during the school year as well. For Project RISHI, I'm excited to help plan our future projects for the upcoming summer when we will hopefully be able to send students in-person to work on larger projects that will be even more beneficial for the villagers. For Shade Tree Clinic, I hope to expand my role in working with patients. Shade Tree has a limited slate of patients that it can take on due to the fact that it is run by medical students and provides completely free services. When our patients are able to find a more stable source of income and can afford insurance, we transition them into their new insurance program so we can take on new patients who are still without insurance. However, it's hard for them to leave the clinic because of the high-quality care at no cost, so I will begin calling patients to help them with their transition into their new insurance program and making the change as seamless as possible, ensuring that they continue to have reliable healthcare access.

Both of these experiences have shown me the range of healthcare disparities faced by people globally as well as in Nashville. It has made me more passionate about a career in healthcare, and I now hope to also help address and alleviate these disparities in the various areas of the healthcare industry.



Induja Kumar '24

Law, History, and Society - Data Science

As I mentioned in my application for the Nichols grant, for most of my childhood my energy was focused on excellence in all the things I did, including in the arts. I did dance for most of my adolescence, and we were constricted to sets of rules in which we were to move our bodies in accordance with the way the art form was structured. I did not get to experiment with it until I was much older and graduated from beginning levels of learning. Since going to college, I've abandoned the arts altogether; it seems I can never find time for them.

My time with Rising Youth Theatre was, therefore, a break from what I was used to. Rising Youth Theatre focuses on helping children, especially from underserved communities find creativity in the arts. One of the biggest things I noticed that they do very differently from other nonprofits in the Arts Education field, is that their work is intergenerational: kids, adults, and teenagers all in the same room, and children who grew up in the program often become "apprentices" in the program in high school or college. This long-term vision is one of the many reasons I appreciated RYT's commitment to bringing arts and arts education to the valley.

Arizona has long lacked the endowment for the arts that many other states have, which I had learned through a year of volunteering with the Chandler Arts Center during my senior year. During the pandemic, the number of students who have access to arts resources has only been lowered. Being in a (virtual) room full of kids who have been doing school on zoom for over a year and devising creative ways for them to engage with the arts (visual arts, dance, and drama together) has nonetheless proven to me how valuable the arts are, especially for young children to learn how to express their feelings and process emotions, create something and feel that they are a part of something bigger than themselves (which is so much more important during

Kumar worked with an art education nonprofit to focus on helping children, especially from underserved communities find creativity in the arts.

our current state of isolation), and build community.

As an apprentice, I was so surprised by the adults I worked with; they treated kids as their equals in intellect and ability, they were ever so resourceful, both in coming up with exercises for students to do at home and in helping guide students towards ideas for the final showcase, which we managed to put on even in a virtual setting, incorporating ideas from all the students. Most importantly students' creativity was never taken for granted. One of our rules is "don't yuck someone's yum" — that is, don't put down what someone else finds enjoyable. This rule encompasses a lot of what went on during our camp; students were given full freedom to express every part of themselves, and in the process were able to create something that played with the bounds of reality: writing stories about a sardine who is shunned by his family for wanting to be a painter, or a girl who hates bats but later turns into one, and realizes how important they are to a desert environment like Arizona, and through the process, were able to recognize that change is a part of life (which they were only too familiar with), and that sometimes those changes bring hardships, but they may also help you find a hidden part of you that is strong and willing to take on anything, that was there all along.



One of our rules is "don't yuck someone's yum" —that is, don't put down what someone else finds enjoyable.



Sarah Elizabeth Lansden '21

Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner

With the support of the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I originally intended on pursuing a month-long medical mission trip to Argentina. One of my key project goals was that beyond serving medical needs, I desired to connect to the community spiritually and culturally to provide more holistic care and understand this community's perspective towards medicine and health. In response to the pandemic, I pivoted my project to focus on service in the Nashville area and partnered with Hope Clinic, a clinic that provides a wide range of comprehensive services (pregnancy testing, ultrasounds, counseling, parenting classes, social work services, baby supplies, etc) for women and families experiencing unplanned pregnancies. Similar to my original intent, the clinic was meeting the medical and practical needs of the women already but did not have the capacity to host intentional events for community building, spiritual connection, and celebrating the mothers' decision to choose life for themselves and their child.

I decided to host two celebratory dinners for the mothers to have a safe and welcoming space to meet one another, share prayer, enjoy a delicious meal, relax, and be celebrated for their courageous and sacrificial decisions amidst tough situations. The first event was held on 7/23/2021 and the second was held on 8/20/2021. Both events were hosted at Frassati House, which is a beautiful home that contains space for events and serves as the headquarters for the Catholic Vanderbilt students. At the first dinner, we dined around an elegantly decorated and candlelit table and enjoyed a catered Italian meal. At the second dinner, we enjoyed a home-made Mexican meal. At the start of each event, a photographer was present to capture the joy and smiles of the women. After beginning the meal in prayer, we shared enriching conversation and vulnerable stories surrounding the journey to and through parenthood. At

Lansden hosted two celebratory dinners for the mothers experiencing unplanned pregnancies to have a safe and welcoming space to congregate.

the close of the night, each mom received a fresh flower arrangement to take home. Mothers were reimbursed for the cost of transportation and childcare, as this population often faces socioeconomic barriers to participation.

Over the course of seven months of planning, I learned how to collaborate with a dynamic organization to undergo a detailed planning process, communicate effectively with a wide range of staff, and respect the timeline that the organization needed to obtain certain approvals and complete tasks. Planning and hosting these celebratory dinners challenged me to rethink how I define success. Rather than judging success by the number of guests in attendance or other superficial factors, I analyzed the quality of the conversations had both in person at the event and over the nearly hundred phone call invitations I made. The women at the event rejoiced in the presence of one another and hopefully felt affirmed and supported in their decision to choose life. Another area of growth was learning to let go of control and trust the clinic's guidance and the Lord's voice in prayer throughout the planning process. This opportunity has affirmed my worldview that life, from conception to natural death, is sacred and should always be fought for. It also reminded me that action and service should intentionally flow from the truths we uphold, especially by serving those that are most vulnerable.

To make these events possible, I was assisted by the Hope Clinic staff and event volunteers Dr. Jessie Wellette (VUSN professor), Erin Montgomery (VU '20, VUSN student), Emily Engelhardt (Baylor '19, VUSN student), Bernie Tarre (VU Peabody student), Grace Gallo (VU '22), Liz Bullard (MSMU '20, Lipscomb student), and Chloe Page (UTK '17).



Owen Leonard '21

Computer Science and Engineering Management

This summer I had the opportunity to work with Martha's Table which supports and serves members of the Washington D.C. community by increasing access to quality education, health and wellness, and family resources. I spent most of my first week working on McKenna's Wagon which is Martha's Table's mobile food service that runs 365 days a year and provides hot meals at multiple downtown locations to people who may be experiencing housing instability or hunger. I was lucky to spend time distributing food at the beginning of the project because it gave me a lot of perspective on the importance of all the work that goes on behind the scenes before the food eventually reaches its destination. It also gave me an appreciation of the scale and urgent nature of the need that the organization meets.

During the remainder of my time at Martha's Table, I was involved in every step of the food distribution process. This process begins in the kitchen early in the day and ends each evening with the delivery to people around the city. First, hot meals are cooked, divided, and boxed by the chef and volunteers in the kitchen. Meanwhile, sandwich lunches are assembled and bagged by more volunteers before they are sent to the kitchen to have a hot meal added to each bag. Finally, all of the meals can be loaded into crates to be distributed via McKenna's Wagon. In this way, a full day's worth of meals can be delivered each evening. There are a lot of moving parts - but as a result of the hard work of many helping hands, the organization is able to feed hundreds of people each day.

One of the most meaningful takeaways from my experience was a principle that the organization instills in all of its

Leonard supported and served members of the Washington D.C. community by increasing access to quality education, health and wellness, and family resources.

volunteers called "start with yes". Whether you are being asked to do something new, or being asked for a favor by someone that you are serving, you should start by saying yes and trust in yourself and the support of the people around you to find a solution. In this way, I was encouraged to take the initiative to solve a problem whenever it presented itself instead of defaulting to asking for permission or help to make a change. This allowed me to be more independent and; ultimately, it helped me to be a more valuable volunteer. I am grateful to have learned the importance of this lesson and many more and I look forward to applying them in future service and beyond. I am even more thankful to the wonderful people I have met along the way and I hope to continue to make a difference in this community.

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Whether you are being asked to do something new, or being asked for a favor by someone that you are serving, you should start by saying yes and trust in yourself and the support of the people around you to find a solution.



Jake Lupin '21

*Human and Organizational Development,
Business minor*

As a senior who just graduated this past May, my last three semesters were quite the wild ride filled with uncertainty due to COVID-19. Through these unprecedented times, the Nichols Humanitarian Fund has made such a positive impact in my final moments as an undergraduate student. I would first like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Nichols for this scholarship that helped me explore and make a difference in my new home community of Austin, TX.

Looking back to the planning of my trip for the summer of 2020, a friend and fellow Nichols scholar and I were getting ready to go to Singapore to do environmental work with the Singapore Nature Society. Once given the chance to still complete a humanitarian project in the summer of 2021, I immediately knew that I wanted to somehow help the environment of my new local community.

This is how I came up with my service project to help preserve the green spaces within the city of Austin. During the month of August, I have cleaned up different parks, trails, community gardens, and recreational fields to help keep this city in pristine condition. I additionally volunteered and organized a clean-up for Keep Austin Beautiful's "Love Where You Live Day." Keep Austin Beautiful is an organization dedicated to keeping the city of Austin clean through volunteer work among Austinites, so they completely aligned with my mission for my Humanitarian Project! It was fulfilling

Lupin created a service project to help preserve the green spaces within the city of Austin.

to get out with other local volunteers who share some of the same values as I.

While there is still lots of future work and effort needed to keep the green spaces of Austin beautiful, I feel that I have made a real impact on my local area. It is a great scene when people of all different backgrounds can come together for a common purpose. During my project these past few weeks, I have also been introduced to Austin's homeless problem as many of the parks have high homeless populations. Going forward during my time in Austin, this is an issue I will look to make a difference in. I am very thankful for the Nichols Humanitarian Scholarship and the opportunities it has given me to get involved with volunteer work in my new home.



It is a great scene when people of all different backgrounds can come together for a common purpose.



Diya Mathur '21

Neuroscience, Business

During a service visit to a nursing home many years ago, I was conversing with a resident when a water bottle slipped out of the man's prosthetic hand. He frustratingly remarked how often this occurred, before resuming our discussion. This non-instance, however, piqued my interest. Why did this happen? Did other prosthetic users experience similar issues? Was this an avoidable inconvenience? My curiosity transformed into a research project, and before I knew it, I was describing perception inaccuracy trends at international research fairs along with a teammate, improving prosthetic arm designs, and assembling 3D-printed prosthetics for amputee clients.

Through my project, I came to learn of a discrepancy between the force people think they should apply to lift an object versus how much is actually needed. Able-bodied individuals can quickly account for this difference; however, those who use prosthetic arms, like the resident I had met in the nursing home, often do not have this luxury.

Never before had I appreciated my ability to accurately perceive objects when lifting them. I had always taken this act for granted, and it was not until I interacted with members of the amputee community and discovered the science behind this did I fully reexamine my perspective. This humbled me. It gave me a greater sense of empathy for those without this privilege.

This inspired my 2021 Nichols project where I assembled 3D-printed prosthetic arms and distributed them within my hometown's community. I was able to employ many skills I had gained in the past and apply them in a new setting. It was fascinating to set up a 3D-printer, print all the individual parts, organize pieces, and acquire the necessary tools to assemble the arm. I attached motors and strings to the prosthetic's forearm to aid the fingers' movement and secured each of

Mathur printed, assembled, and distributed 3D-printed prosthetic arms.

the 3D-printed parts with different types of screws. Though these steps took longer than I had anticipated, building the arm was extremely fulfilling.

It was such an honor to support amputees' reintegration into their communities. It deepened my understanding of care delivery and research practices and showed me that innovation should be intertwined with patient care. By gauging perspectives like that of the nursing home resident and the clients for whom I assembled prostheses, I began to understand the true necessity of adopting a patient-centric approach when making health-related decisions.

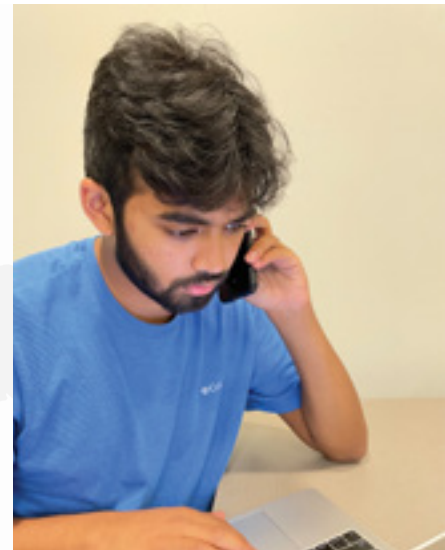
Thank you again to the generous Nichols family for this opportunity! This experience made me a better community member, and I am confident it will make me a better physician.



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It was such a fulfilling experience to know that our work was helping to serve a local school in the area that has provided me with a second home over the last three years.



Sreekar Miriyala '22

Medicine, Health and Society, Sociology minor

Miriyala worked with two organizations to provide resources to communities in India and Nashville.

This summer I had the amazing opportunity to virtually volunteer with the Shade Tree Clinic and Project Rishi. My interests lie within healthcare and creating equitable access to basic resources. Both of these organizations have helped me make a positive impact within these fields and build integral skills. My initial plan to serve while in Nashville fell through due to a necessity to be with my family this summer. Hence, I was able to use my funding to support myself and also contribute to the various endeavours Project Rishi took on this summer.

Through the Shade Tree Clinic (STC), I was able to volunteer as a Patient Assistance Coordinator (PAC) this summer. In this role, I contacted various pharmaceutical companies to help obtain medicine free of cost to those without insurance in the Nashville area. Twice a week I would monitor updates from the clinic staff and then call the associated companies. During this process, I got an in-depth look into the process that physicians go through in order to provide equitable care, especially since much of this medicine is extremely costly and inaccessible to patients without the support of the clinic. My passion for mitigating inequities only grew over the summer and I am inspired to elevate my volunteering with the clinic now that I am in Nashville for the semester and to seek in-person opportunities as well. Throughout the summer

some opportunities arose to communicate with patients directly via a translator to remind them about appointments. While I focused on making calls to companies, If I could go back I would also have liked to take better advantage of these patient calls to connect with them directly and grow my interpersonal skills. Volunteering as a PAC taught me the value of patience and persistence when connecting with these companies, because in the end when these two values are lived, a positive impact is best reached.

Through Project Rishi, I was able to serve with fellow volunteers and Nichols recipients to coordinate with schools in Pamulaparathi and Gowraram (villages in Telangana, India) to fund sustainable infrastructure projects. For example, we helped fund desks and green boards from local suppliers to Pamulaparathi High School. In addition, we were also able to connect with a local Nashville school, Dupont Hadley, to help fund school supplies, clothing, and arcade games for students. It was such a fulfilling experience to know that our work was helping to serve a local school in the area that has provided me with a second home over the last three years. While I was not able to travel to India and help build sustainable projects in-person, working with fellow Nichols recipients this summer still helped me find a way to meaningfully use my funds to make a positive impact.



Serena Musungu '23

Medicine, Health and Society, Human and Organizational Development minor

It was a real pleasure to go back to my home country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the means to create a substantial impact in my community. I worked in partnership with TOSANGANA, a local, student-led non-governmental organization, to develop and conduct the project. From the selection of the orphanage to the completion of the health education, we had 20 to 30 people involved, not counting the volunteers recruited after the completion of the first phase. As a reminder, the project BOPETOLI (*Lingala for "Cleanliness"*) aimed to improve the sanitary conditions of an orphanage to reduce the rates of infections and other preventable diseases due to the lack of hygiene in a crowded environment. The project consisted of two phases. Phase one was the rehabilitation of the bathrooms, and phase two was an education on hygiene and the health problems that arise from the lack of the latter. We hope that, given the better infrastructures and the material they need, the residents will engage in more hygienic routines for better health outcomes.

The first step of Phase one was to assess the work to be done in terms of rehabilitation. We visited the orphanage with the architect we hired and carefully evaluated the state of the bathrooms. With the cooperation of the nuns in charge of the institution, we developed a course of action that would take place in the following two weeks. The work to be done included changing the earthenware, emptying the septic tank, replacing the old toilets and shower trays, fixing the plumbing and electricity, etc. Some members of TOSANGANA and myself worked on the site to reduce labor expenses. Thanks to everyone's help, we completely renovated three full bathrooms. However, the entirety of the budget was spent on the first phase.

To cover the expenses of the second phase, we conducted both a local and online fundraiser. The money we collected served to purchase materials such as towels, hand soaps, bar soaps, toothbrushes, and toothpaste tubes for the residents. It also helped cover other expenses such as

Musungu improved the sanitary conditions of an orphanage to reduce the rates of infections and other preventable diseases due to the lack of hygiene in a crowded environment.

printing, transportation, and refreshments for the volunteers. Due to the financial limitation, we were not able to meet all the expressed sanitary needs, but we did our best to provide the necessary. Once everything was purchased, we went back to the orphanage and over two days, we talked with the residents about health and hygiene. We adapted the discussion to the different age groups and accompanied the theory with some practical activities for the younger ones.

Despite the obstacle faced over the last months, I am content with the contribution made to our community. This project could not have happened without the active support of TOSANGANA, and I am grateful for what we accomplished together. BOPETOLI will remain as a signature project of the NGO, of which I remain an active member, and we plan to recreate it whenever we get funding again, either from grants or our annual fundraising events. This experience revealed multiple unpredicted situations that we did not prepare for, such as the inflation. Nevertheless, I know we gained valuable knowledge to make a larger impact in the future.



This experience revealed multiple unpredicted situations that we did not prepare for, such as the inflation. Nevertheless, I know we gained valuable knowledge to make a larger impact in the future.



I hope to continue my studies on the Tenderloin in collaboration with Vanderbilt University's Law School and local organizations in the Bay Area, using the project as a catalyst for a possible career in public policy and writing.

Danny Nguyen '22

Molecular and Cellular Biology and Medicine, Health, and Society

Nguyen researched anti-gentrification legislation in San Francisco.

San Francisco has a special place in my heart. After all, before coming to Vanderbilt University, I had never left the city. As my caretaker, the city molded me into a resilient individual in unconventional ways, revealing harsh truths about homelessness, drug abuse, and the substandard living conditions on the streets during my early years. Quickly, I developed a hunger to escape the Tenderloin district; though, my pursuit for escape was clouded by a misguided disdain for my neighborhood. In time, my desire for escape was met with one to understand the underlying factors that primed my home for substandard living conditions, poverty, and crime.

Through the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I learned more about my district and its history of anti-gentrification legislation to determine whether the neighborhood was a good model for anti-gentrification in major cities. Conventional thought from SF's historical and political pundits argued that the Tenderloin was a good model for anti-gentrification, as various zoning laws and protections for single-room occupancies, which comprise 30% of Tenderloin residencies, minimized displacement of low-income folk. Unfortunately, pundits lacked empathy when clamoring for the universalization of Tenderloin's SRO-fortification model across poor neighborhoods in major cities. After all, high-profile lawyers and advocates were not subjected to the cramped 80-120 sq. ft. rooms—only low-income individuals found themselves in SROs. Unfortunately, the lack of amenities like private kitchens and bathrooms primed low-income folk for worsening cardiovascular and neurodegenerative disease, a problem that could only be remedied by creating more suitable living spaces for tenants.

Analysis beyond mere statistics was integral in assessing the success of the anti-gentrification legislation in the Tenderloin. Simply put, the forces pundits claimed combatted

gentrification and displacement also maintained substandard housing conditions in my neighborhood, demonstrating their ineptitude as long-term solutions to improve the Tenderloin. Consequently, I needed to rethink whether the zoning and SRO-fortification ordinances that aimed to prevent gentrification had a place in the Tenderloin's future. Soon, I discovered that the ordinances were barring the conversion of Tenderloin SROs into more spacious studios and bedroom apartments that would offer improved living spaces. Hence, these ordinances could not be a part of the Tenderloin's long-term plans to revitalize the neighborhood, as they would bar improvement of living conditions at a significant rate. To offer more suitable spaces, the city would have to suspend them, lobby for generous state and federal funding for conversion projects, and heavily regulate development to ensure that newly converted units remain affordable for Tenderloin residents. In the meantime, the city would need to establish a pipeline system for low-income Tenderloin residents to find temporary shelter, preferably in the 17-million sq. ft. of vacant office space across SF.

While I aimed to be comprehensive in my review, there is undoubtedly more to learn about my neighborhood. Pundits like Randy Shaw, a lawyer and Tenderloin activist, have spent a large portion of their lives studying anti-gentrification measures in the Tenderloin. Still, my review has established a solid foundation for my understanding of the Tenderloin, instilling a new appreciation and care for my community. After completing the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I hope to continue my studies on the Tenderloin in collaboration with Vanderbilt University's Law School and local organizations in the Bay Area, using the project as a catalyst for a possible career in public policy and writing.



Arnav Pillai '22

Psychology

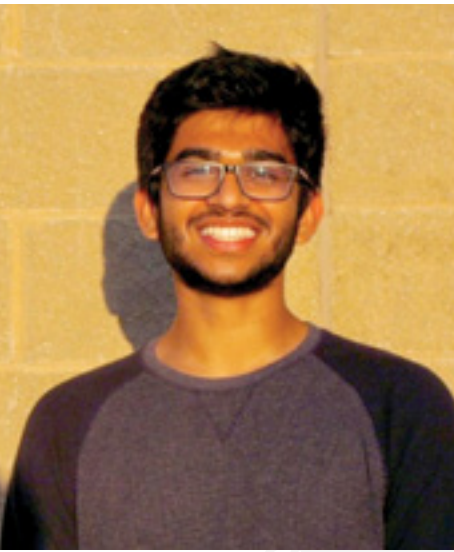
Over the course of the summer, I have worked with Project RISHI to help provide supplies virtually to our partner schools in rural India that our organization has worked with for the past six years. In order to start my project up, I had to join whatsapp groups from previous years with headmasters of the school to check in on them and schedule a phone call. One major setback was that a lot of the headmasters were not very responsive or sometimes did not show up to our scheduled meeting times, so we ended up starting later than we had intended. Arranging new times became very inconvenient due to the time zone difference, but once we were able to meet with the headmasters of Pamulaparathi High School, Gowraram High School, and Pamulaparathi Primary School, we had members of our organization who spoke Hindi and Telugu communicate with the headmasters, and we finalized a list of items for each of the three rural Indian schools.

Once the meeting was done, I was assigned to primarily get items from Pamulaparathi High School and to order some items from Gowraram High School. For starters, I ordered a few items that were requested by Gowraram High School so that they could continue to have supplies that can help the students of the school. One of the major issues that the school still had over the last few years was the lack of fans throughout the school, which made it hard for students and teachers on super hot days. Despite not being in person, I was able to luckily purchase 6 fans on amazon India. Another issue lacking in the school was the lack of a water purifier for drinking water. Although our team has helped the school maintain clean tap water, the school still needs a purifier so that the water can be clean for drinking.

Pillai worked with a team to provide school supplies, educational items, and hygiene products to schools in India and Nashville.

I also purchased various items for Pamulaparathi High School that helped the school continue to get useful supplies to help the school students. Among the items I bought include enhancements to the computer lab we had already built a few years back, and these included six keyboards, six cpus, and six mice. These items ensured that the computer lab is fully functional and updated from previous years. Another item I purchased was several Telugu to English dictionaries. The English language is useful in India to move to other states and to get into top universities, and so given that these students mostly only know Telugu, I purchased these dictionaries to enhance the students' English vocabulary. I also purchased microscopes for the school, so that the school could finally do labs in their science classes, and this lab experience will benefit students greatly in their future endeavors. Finally, I purchased an LED TV so that the teachers can connect the computer to it and present slides on the big screen and also play any video clips they need. These items arrived safely and the school sent us a picture with all the items and a thank you message.

Overall, it was a great experience to help assist the partner schools in rural Indian schools. Despite the uncertainty that the COVID-19 pandemic created in 2020, it was amazing to see that I was able to make an impact this summer in continuing to help our partner schools in Rural Telangana. Although I was never able to go to India and do hands-on work there, I still made a huge difference in the lives of the students of these schools in rural India.



Just by working with so many kids I was exposed to so many different perspectives and so many unique ideas that stem from their imaginative, curious brains.



Gaurav Nitin Prabakaran '22

Medicine, Health and Society, Business minor

Prabakaran tutored students with various academic needs in New York City.

Since I first applied to the Nichols Fund, quite a lot has changed in our world which gave me a lot of time for reflection and learning. Back in late 2019, I was elated to have the opportunity to travel to Peru and work towards fighting healthcare infrastructure disparities in South America. This was my original Nichols plan; however the COVID-19 pandemic shook our entire world putting a dent into a project I was deeply passionate about. While I was initially dejected, I was quick to realize how fortunate I was to have the financial stability from my family that allowed us to be largely unaffected by the pandemic from a socioeconomic standpoint. I was grateful to have the opportunity to still pursue my dreams as I was still able to get a Vanderbilt education throughout a pandemic. This time of reflection further increased my desire to get out there and help others in any way possible. When thinking about how I could help out during such times of need, I realized that I wanted to work towards enriching mentorship and education for those who did not have access, especially in a COVID-19 stricken world. As a result, I looked into helping out through virtual mentorship at a summer program based out of the Chicago inner city. Unfortunately, my plans had to be cancelled once again as the program changed its course, leaving me to scramble for other opportunities. I was able to work with another organization called EduMate NYC that started during the pandemic to support students from New York City public school students who were unable to attend in-person schooling.

Through EduMate NYC, I was tutoring students with various different academic needs and was forced to adopt different mentorship styles depending on the student. While some of my students such as young Kat excelled at picking up what I taught her at first glance, other students like Deniz simply couldn't wrap his head around the math and English that I taught him. This made me take a step back and realize

that I needed to get down and really understand where students like Deniz were coming from and what they truly needed from me. Deniz genuinely wanted to do his best however lost focus and got distracted too many times to effectively learn. To try and fix this, I put the studying away for a bit and just talked to Deniz to really understand what he wanted and how to effectively teach him. From listening to him, I was able to understand how I needed to approach the lesson differently by appealing to and working with his small attention span. From this, I learned a greater lesson about service as I realized that listening and understanding who you are serving is an instrumental part of service. As I opened up to students like Deniz with simple kindness and providing attention, the kids reciprocated and were a lot more open to engaging with me during my lessons. Just by working with so many kids I was exposed to so many different perspectives and so many unique ideas that stem from their imaginative, curious brains. When these kids asked questions and stepped up effort-wise from what I had even expected of them, it inspired me to go out there and do more myself. Surprisingly, teaching younger kids ended up being quite a learning experience for me as I dealt with such a unique and fresh subset of our population. I was able to grow my patience and communication skills, both of which will go a long way in working with others in my future.

Finally, I am very grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Nichols for providing me with the opportunity to conduct humanitarian work this summer. Without their help, I would not have been able to play a role in educating our future during these hard times. This opportunity has shown me how diverse our world is and the importance of effective communication between us. I am proud to have helped educate marginalized communities and will continue service in some way throughout the rest of college and beyond!



Logan Prock '21

*Medicine, Health and Society, Spanish,
Biology minor*

Nothing in the last year has been predictable. Confronting the universal hardship faced globally, I am encouraged by humanity's resilience. I see this resiliency in my Vanderbilt peers, as they remained committed to reaching the underserved in their local communities. 2020 awardees adapted their initial plans to accommodate the public health crisis and 2021 recipients developed projects meeting new needs arising in the past 17 months. Though I initially planned to work in the rural Xela Valley of Guatemala, assisting preventive health and midwifery outreach efforts through Primeros Pasos, I am grateful for the Nichols family's flexibility, allowing me to pivot my project locally.

I invested my summer providing full-time mobile urgent care to middle Tennesseans. Partnered with Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners, I had the opportunity to put my EMT license to use. Through this acute care service, we were able to accomplish a wide range of assessments, diagnoses and interventions: COVID testing, basic metabolic panels, urinalysis, IV fluids, antibiotic prescription, suturing, and much more. The beauty of the service is convening with patients in the comfort of their home, offering a holistic view of the patients' circumstances and possible societal structures impacting their health and overall wellbeing. The majority of the patient demographic treated had TennCare/Medicaid coverage, so I'm encouraged to have provided care to those who have difficulty accessing it.

Though I intended to supplement my humanitarian project with a partnership with the Shade Tree Clinic, I encountered obstacles along the way. The Medical Spanish interpreting services I hoped to perform were halted due to a recent external certification required for interpreters. Thankfully, I will be in Nashville for my gap year while I await admission results

Prock spent the summer providing full-time mobile urgent care to middle Tennesseans.

for Physician Assistant graduate programs, so I plan to gain this certification and resume volunteering with Shade Tree.

This summer, I've cultivated an improved bedside manner and an enhanced understanding of the healthcare needs in our area. The Nichols Fund raised my awareness of the value of local learning, as community service is simultaneously training: to know the regional barriers encountered by our patients, and to employ evidence-based practice to meet those needs. I gained invaluable insight into much hardship, fostering an empathetic posture in treatment delivery. As I continue through the PA application cycle, I anticipate my preference leaning toward programs closer to my home in Southern California. Additionally educational opportunities in my own backyard will ease the transition from student to provider. Reflecting on the summer, the Nichols Humanitarian Fund cemented my professional goals and reaffirmed the personal values I intend to bring into my future career as a care provider. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Nichols family for inspiring students to pursue meaningful service and advance their life's calling.

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Ahalya Ramesh '22

Medicine, Health, and Society, Environmental Sociology

I began volunteering at the Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Free Medical Clinic. I am very excited to shadow physicians like Dr. Mani, to better understand the needs of underserved, rural populations in the Mississippi Delta. From the few patient stories I have heard, I can already see the extent to which financial barriers inhibit patients from receiving the health care they need. I hope to learn more about how the clinic operates - providing free of cost consults, lab tests, and medications - and brainstorm how this model can be replicated in other cities as well.

I helped the clinic organize a vaccination drive to educate community members on the importance of getting vaccinated and assist physicians in administering COVID vaccines to hard-to-reach populations. We traveled to local rehabilitation facilities, detention centers, farmers unions and factories and vaccinated a total of 165 people! It was very cool to work on something so relevant, and also gave

Ramesh worked at the Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Free Medical Clinic helping to better understand the underserved populations in the Mississippi Delta.

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It was very cool to work on something so relevant, and also gave me a different and real-world perspective into concepts like vaccine hesitancy that are often thrown around in class.



Netra Rastogi '22

*Political Science and Medicine, Health and Society,
Spanish and Arabic minors*

This year, I was graciously provided funding from the Nichols Humanitarian Fund to aid in supplementing my immersion project with service. As a daughter of two immigrants and a woman of color, issues such as immigration and overall social justice are things I am incredibly passionate about. This personal connection and passion culminated in my immersion project and was enhanced by the service I participated in this summer.

The Nichols Humanitarian Fund has allowed me to work with the Shade Tree Clinic, Tennessee Justice for Our Neighbors, and Conexión Américas this summer. Shade Tree is a medical clinic that provides low cost care to patients who are unable to afford costly medical assistance. Many of Shade Tree's patients only speak Spanish, so I volunteered as a Spanish interpreter for this clinic. Not only does this position involve translating the words of the doctor into Spanish and the words of the patient into English; I am also responsible for helping the patient feel comfortable at the clinic. My knowledge of Spanish has allowed me to connect with these patients and ensure that a language barrier will not prevent them from accessing health care.

At Shade Tree, I recall encountering several incredibly difficult cases. On my first day interpreting, I worked with a family whose eldest member was suffering from late stage Alzheimer's. Another patient was a man who had just learned he had cancer. Each of these patients were experiencing some of the worst days of their lives. While I facilitated communication between the doctors and patients, I also did something the doctors could not do because of the language

Rastogi served as a spanish interpreter and assisted in providing resources for families.

barrier: I connected with the patients. This experience helped me understand that without an interpreter to close the language barrier, these patients would be left to face their worst days on their own.

My work with Conexión Américas and the Tennessee Migrant Education Program (MEP) revealed similar issues. The MEP provides resources to recently migrated families in Tennessee to help them adjust to their life here. I was able to work directly with migrants, learn about their struggles and accomplishments, and develop a deeper understanding of what systemic issues impact them. Again, my ability to speak to these families in Spanish was critical. The experience showed me how various existing structures—such as education and health care—leave immigrants or non-English speakers without support.



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Safa Shahzad '23

*Political Science and
Computer Science*

My Nichols project was working with a non-profit, and to help them over the summer. I thought this project idea would be a fantastic way to give back to a community in need instead of perhaps working a corporate internship. I chose Care4Calais; this is a non-profit based in the UK, and they work both in the UK and across Europe. As an international student from the UK, I was aware of the big issues that refugees face. Care4Calais is a charity that focuses on helping refugees with logistical things like settling into their new homes as well as providing emergency relief in places such as Calais; Calais is a location that is a port in France, where there are a lot of refugee camps.

As the year went on, I knew that my service had to be entirely online due to COVID. Although this was a disappointing detail, I wanted to make sure that my online service was as impactful as possible. One thing I would change about my project is the fact that I should perhaps have taken language lessons alongside my service, because a lot of the times the refugees I was helping did not speak English. Often, a translator was needed; however, I feel if I took lessons I could have communicated with people on basic terms.

During my service, one thing I learnt was how much refugees in the UK and abroad rely on charities/non-profits. For things such as registering for schools, doctors and

Shahzad conducted an internship for a UK non-profit, Care4Calais.

dentists, refugees relied essentially completely on charities; government contacts were not in charge of these things.

A success was the fact I have now learnt how non-profits work and was able to connect with people from such diverse backgrounds and experiences along the way. This includes staff at Care4Calais as well as refugees who Care4Calais was helping. This opportunity has developed my view on the issues refugees face. This experience has heightened my interest in international relations and as a political science major, I would like to work in the field of advocating for refugee rights.



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Mila Sicorsky '21

*Law, History and Society, Medicine,
Health and Society*

This summer, I had the pleasure of serving as a Sustainable Food Intern with the Grow to Share Program through the High Country Conservation Center in Frisco, Colorado. My reasons for choosing this service experience were many. Although I had the privilege of exploring many different passions in an array of fields and disciplines during my time at Vanderbilt, two of the areas I spent the most time in were public health and environmental awareness. With the knowledge that I wanted to pursue a career in one (or a combination) of these fields, I set out to find an experience blending these two passions. I am grateful that I found the perfect mix of the two through the High Country Conservation Center.

In my role as a Sustainable Food Intern, I assisted in the existing partnership between High Country Conservation Center and the local Women, Infants and Children (WIC) office to supply nutritious food to low-income families, including many Latinx families. This partnership was especially meaningful to me—a proud Latinx individual whose family has plenty of experience working with local government organizations founded to assist newcomers like us. As such, I was able to use my native Spanish to translate nutrition information from English to Spanish for local Latinx recipients of WIC assistance and create a bilingual newsletter in which to present it. In these actions (as well as simply speaking with the families about their lives), I saw the links between local health and socioeconomic disparities and lack of access to nutritious food for low-resource individuals.

Although my experience was incredible, it was not what I expected at first. Indeed, my expectation for the summer was a lot of office work in an air-conditioned room, alongside

Sickorsky served as a Sustainable Food Intern with the Grow to Share Program through the High Country Conservation Center in Frisco, Colorado.

local public health and environmental officials. On my first day, however, my supervisor handed me garden gloves and instructed me on the best practices for harvesting radishes. Indeed, much of my experience involved manual labor—but the connection to the families I was serving remained. With every crop that we harvested, seed that we planted, and cooler that we packed, I had the growing awareness that I was creating a more equal and nutritious future for local families—both metaphorically and literally. True, I had my fair share of computer work (as seen in my translation of nutritional information and creation of the newsletter), but it was the gardening that allowed me to see the beauty of laboring to help my community.

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Jeremy Trujillo '22

Mechanical Engineering and Spanish

Over the summer of 2021, I set out to break down financial barriers to rock climbing for a group of people in the process of re-entering the Nashville community after being incarcerated: the residents of Dismas House. Thanks to the Nichols Humanitarian Fund, I established an entry fee sponsorship program for Dismas House residents to experience rock climbing free of charge. The weekly program draws inspiration from how climbing brings us together, pushes us to reach new heights, and teaches us to keep on going after we fall - both literally and figuratively. The program will be made resilient for years to come by an upcoming fundraiser event on September 19th at Climb Nashville West, which will contribute a portion of each attendee's gym entry fee to future Dismas House climbers and include informational resources for attendees on mass incarceration.

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted my Nichols fund project, as it affected all of our lives dramatically. Since I was awarded the fund in 2020, my project evolved from a music education opportunity for children in Costa Rica, to a local high school climbing wall construction project, before ending up as the current climbing gym sponsorship program for formerly incarcerated men here in Nashville. I ran into difficulties around every corner, including plans falling through and multiple points-of-contact at both Climb and Dismas House changing jobs and leaving their organization. Through those complications, I learned how to communicate effectively and clearly with new people in a professional setting, how to manage a large budget, and how to navigate the inner workings of humanitarian organizations where many people wear many hats. Most importantly, I learned how to take something I am passionate about from a spark of an idea to an established final product while sharing my passion with other people. Because I learned so much from the experience, I would not change much about how I approached the whole process for risk of changing the outcome I am so proud of.

Trujillo broke down financial barriers to rock climbing for a group of people in the process of re-entering the Nashville community after being incarcerated.

With all of its ups and downs (but mostly ups), the NHF opportunity shaped my worldview significantly. Spending time with the Dismas House residents showed me the incredible power of second chances. I had the privilege to see the glimmer of excitement in the eyes of grown men having the time of their lives experiencing a new activity for the first time, within days of getting out of prison. I had the privilege to see their pride in the following weeks when they got job offers in skilled industries they thought they would never work in or got accepted to finish college. One resident pulled me aside to ecstatically tell me about his new job working with technology to help other formerly incarcerated men struggling with addiction. The amount of pride in his eyes as he described his philosophy of helping others whose shoes he used to be in gave me a renewed sense of faith in the power of community. I successfully welcomed a group of people into a community I hold dear, the climbing community, but it became clear to me that belonging to a corner of the Nashville community where others care about you was far more important to the Dismas House residents.



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Precious Ukachukwu '22

Medicine, Health and Society, Scientific Computing and Business minors

Initially, after being accepted into the Nichols Humanitarian Fund the summer of my sophomore year, I intended to have an in-person service project carried out in Africa. When the Covid-19 pandemic began, my plans, like everyone else's, had to be adjusted. At that point, I was uncertain of the fate of my Nichols Humanitarian Fund Cohort — I was worried our projects would be canceled. Thankfully, we were granted the opportunity to continue our projects the next year's summer. Shifting to a remote basis allowed me to think more creatively and strategically about the impact I could make in underrepresented communities. My project shifted virtually allowing me to have a broader impact within the educational system in my home country, Nigeria.

Since I can remember, I have been passionate about education and mentorship, and as a Medicine, Health, and Society major, I study the importance of accessibility for the health and well-being of a community. Growing up in Nigeria, I did not expect that I would come to Vanderbilt University for my undergraduate study, but my path was not as hindered as most as I was born in the United States. My older two sisters were not born in the United States, like many international students, therefore they had to go through the process of applying for visas and universities to study in the United States. I identified this issue as a large barrier for high school students wanting to study abroad. My project, ENYGOAL, Empowering Nigerian Youth to reach their goals, is focused on bridging any gap by providing mentorship, fee assistance, and working with the school administration, using systems they have in place for the success of the students.

My project involved creating access within the educational system in Lagos, Nigeria. This meant working with primary schools in Lagos. Specifically, I worked with a school I went to growing up called Aaresther Divine School. I worked

Ukachukwu assisted in the development of a mentorship program in her local community.

alongside my former teachers and mentors to create a program bridging the inequities around international study for high school upperclassmen. My project, ENYGOAL, provided funding for necessary standardized testing books such as SAT, ACT, WAEC, TOEFL standardized tests, and application fees. ENYGOAL also consists of a mentorship program with students at Aaresther Divine connected to students in the US who go to Private, Public, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. These mentorships culminated in each student having a plan set up for their future educational goals and college application process. Finally, we had a final meeting with all the Aaresther Divine Students and a panel of Nigerian US College Students who were able to share their experiences and lend the students live advice.

This program taught me the importance of mentorship, both helping me recognize how vital mentorship has been for me as a student and intern, and how important it is for me to continue to mentor others. It also illuminated how connected we can be despite physical barriers. Despite completing my project completely remotely, I felt connected with the students and my former school. Also, this project and this year in general, have taught me how to be adaptable to changing circumstances. From start to finish, my project completely changed and that allowed me to shift my impact to fit the needs of Aaresther Divine better than if I had a rigid mindset. One thing ENYGOAL would benefit from would be if the project was longer. That would have allowed for more time to mentor students. Although the project is over, I will be continuing my connection and mentorship with Aaresther Divine through the end of the students' application process and on. This opportunity has shown me the impact I can have and allowed me to think more broadly about what I can do in the future to benefit others in meaningful ways, especially within Education and Healthcare.



Nichols Humanitarian Fund

Supporting the humanitarian
activities of Vanderbilt students

