

Alert:

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Stanford University fellowship takes YES alum to South Africa

Maya Wolpert does public health work in rural clinics.

2007–08
YES Competition
for Students

Online submission
deadline
February 4, 2008
by 5:00 pm ET

YES National
Event
April 4–7, 2008

My Stanford African Service Fellowship, from July 2, 2007 through September 1, 2007, was the most challenging and rewarding experience of my life. My work was to help rural clinics in South Africa organize themselves and begin implementing effective monitoring and evaluation tools, so that the provincial government would deem them capable of rolling out anti-retroviral treatment for the HIV-positive population. I visited three clinics on a weekly basis, offering skills training in data collection, sitting in on AIDS support groups and identifying weaknesses in the system for which I provided suggestions for improvement.

From these clinic visits, I learned much about the nuances of the rural lifestyle and the lack of education and its effects on the overwhelming stigmatization of HIV/AIDS. It was this stigmatization that prevented people from going to voluntary testing, thereby denying themselves the relief that anti-retroviral medication would bring them. More than anything, I learned how complex the AIDS epidemic really is. Tied to the problem of HIV/AIDS is a whole host of other issues: joblessness, poverty, cultural norms, gender inequality, malnutrition, governmental corruption and lack of education. Indeed, it was sometimes difficult to find hope in this barren landscape. Still, by watching my boss with his tireless passion and commitment to these issues, I found myself sharing in his optimism and understanding that while these things don't resolve themselves overnight, they will eventually find solutions.

On a more personal level, my fellowship changed me in varied and profound ways. Living on my own in a rural African village, I was forced to quickly learn my surroundings, attempt to learn the native language and simply "go with the flow," a skill that was necessary—and difficult for me to acquire. I had to be resourceful and outgoing, tolerant and open-minded. More than anything, however, I learned just how adaptable people can be. I experienced things in Africa that I continued on page three



"I am sure, now more than ever, that I want to continue giving back to the world around me," says Maya Wolpert, 2005–06 YES Scholar



Young
Epidemiology
Scholars

Visit www.collegeboard.com/yes

YES Competition Scholars visit the CDC

"I was delighted to meet with another outstanding pair of scholars. Both presented excellent research studies to a CDC audience and handled questions with poise and maturity. The YES program is, once again, well represented by the two winners of this year's competition."

Dr. Steven Thacker
Director of the CDC's Office
of Workforce and Career
Development

For the second year in a row, the YES Competition, along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), sponsored an educational excursion for two top YES Competition winners. In August, Megan Blewett, now a freshman at Harvard, and Will Slack, a freshman at Williams, spent a full day at the CDC in Atlanta, Georgia. The trip included an in-depth tour of the Center, and both students were able to present their award-winning research papers from the YES Competition to scientists and researchers at the CDC.

While at the Center, the two YES Scholars had the chance to network with the CDC's professional epidemiologists, including Dr. Steven Thacker, director of the CDC's Office of Workforce and Career Development. They discussed various epidemics such as Reye's syndrome and Legionnaire's disease, as well as the methods that could prevent such outbreaks. "Dr. Thacker has played an instrumental role in handling many disease outbreaks," says Will. "I also appreciated our

tour of the Director's Emergency Operations Center, which was established to coordinate the response to public health incidents."

"What I most appreciated about the CDC," says Megan, whose YES project focused on multiple sclerosis, "was its society-centered mindset. The CDC brings together some of the nation's finest scientists and epidemiologists, but the goal is always to help society and handle health crises."

The CDC visit is another way the YES Competition opens doors for young people to learn about epidemiology—and brings out the best in them. "As a YES judge I am continually amazed at the students' level of knowledge and analytical skill," said Wayne Giles, director of the CDC's Division of Adult and Community Health, who attended the presentations at the CDC. "Megan and Will both conducted outstanding research on some of the most challenging public health conditions facing the nation today."



Megan Blewett, Dr. Steven Thacker, and Will Slack



YES Scholar interns at RWJF

Aman Prasad gets up-close look at health foundation.

I spent this summer working as an intern for the Public Health Team at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's 70-acre campus in Princeton, New Jersey. The Foundation's mission—to improve the health and health care of all Americans—is proclaimed throughout the building on posters and plaques, and an underlying energy and urgency among the staff gives an outsider the sense that the mission is being driven forward. The Foundation is backed by an endowment that crossed \$10 billion in June, a prominent board of trustees and a team of 280 employees.

The greater part of my summer was spent assisting the team as it begins delving deeper into the area of public health law. I also worked closely on the YES initiative and twice attended YES teacher workshops, where I had the privilege of meeting middle and high school teachers who were learning (many for the first time) about epidemiology and potential ways to integrate it into their curriculum. And I joined the team in a major summit on wellness and disease prevention in Washington, D.C., that was attended by journalists and political and corporate leaders.



Just being a part of the Foundation was a highlight of my internship. In the morning, you could talk in the halls with the Foundation's CEO Risa Lavizzo-Mourey and at night discuss the Foundation's work with board chairman and former New Jersey governor Thomas H. Kean. I look forward to drawing on these many experiences in public health policy and history when I'm back in class at Cornell this fall.

Aman Prasad is a 2005–06 YES Scholar in his sophomore year at Cornell.

Fellowship takes YES alum to South Africa

(continued from page 1)

never thought I'd be able to handle: lack of electricity and indoor plumbing, high levels of crime and poverty, a lifestyle and culture completely different from my own. And through it all, I gained an incredible perspective on my own life in the United States and an invaluable sense of gratitude for the things I've been given.

My experience at the YES Competition helped prepare me for working with professionals who share my passion for research and provided me an excellent opportunity to formally

write up and organize my analysis—which was beneficial during my trip.

I am sure, now more than ever, that I want to continue giving back to the world around me by pursuing a career in international public health. After all, even in resource-poor settings, people can and must be treated with the dignity, respect and compassion that all human beings deserve.

Maya Wolpert is a 2005–06 YES Scholar in her sophomore year at Stanford.

2006–07

Deborah Beihl, Saluda, SC, attends Southern Adventist University. Working with her mentor, she is investigating how acute insulin response and insulin sensitivity affect the association between sleep duration and type 2 diabetes.

Rebecca Chen, Fremont, CA, now a high school senior, spent part of her summer researching T-cell receptors at Stanford University. Rebecca plans to major in molecular biology.

Brian Clement, Longwood, FL, is working toward a career in public health. He just started the pre-med program at Duke University.

Sarah Coleman, Waynesboro, WV, is a freshman at James Madison University. Sarah anticipates a career in public health.

Laura Glass, Albuquerque, NM, now a high school senior, is furthering her YES research on social contact networks and the spread of influenza. Laura seeks a career in global sustainability.

Edward Kogan, Paoli, PA, has published the findings of his YES Lyme disease project in his high school newspaper to help increase awareness in his community. Edward will study microbiology and genetics when he begins college next year.

Zhao Lan, Potomac, MD, is a freshman at Columbia University. Zhao has started research involving non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and familial history.

Kelsey Miller, La Junta, CO, is a freshman at Colorado State University–Fort Collins where she will major in biomedical sciences. She anticipates a career in public health.

Kelly Morrison, Fairfield, CT, is majoring in neuroscience at Columbia University while continuing her sleep research at Brown University. Kelly's research will soon be published.

Adharsh Ponnappakkam, Metairie, LA, is currently a high school senior. He has received an NIH grant to extend his YES research on the effects of stress on pubertal disorders in children.

Keshav Rao, Omaha, NE, a high school senior, plans to major in computational biology and public health. He is advancing his YES research on risk factors for patient survival after hematopoietic stem cell transplantation for hematologic cancers and has submitted it to a scientific journal for publication.

Jennifer Schindler, Rockville Center, NY, is attending the College of William and Mary and anticipates a career in public health.

Junzi Shi, Rocky River, OH, attends Northwestern University and is studying biochemistry, epidemiology and international relations. She plans to present her epidemiological work on pandemic preparedness to her city's mayor.

2005–06

Ami Dalsania, Titusville, FL, is studying microbiology at the University of Florida. This summer she worked at the Brevard County Health Department epidemiology office.

Lindsay Haines, Marietta, GA, a sophomore at Yale University, tutors at local elementary schools and writes for the *Yale Journal of Public Health*. She has an internship at Yale Medical School where she is part of a group conducting leukemia research.

Miju Han, Chesterfield, VA, attends Williams College majoring in geosciences and political economy. This summer she interned with an epidemiologist at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Public Health.

Emily Lefkowitz, Suffern, NY, is attending Cornell University where she is studying nutritional sciences and policy analysis and management with a health concentration. Emily interns at Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation in the Drug Regulatory Affairs Department, Cardiovascular Therapeutics, and plans to have a career in public health.

Shannon Mentock, Durham, NC, is studying chemistry at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She would like to obtain an MD and MPH in epidemiology and have a career in the field of public health.

Ashley Richardson, Frederick, MD, attends the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. This summer she worked at the National Cancer Institute's HIV Drug Resistance Program where she studied the infectivity rates of HIV and human T-cell leukemia virus type 1 using a new vector system.

Michelle Stokes, Marietta, GA, is pursuing a degree in biochemistry and molecular biology at Agnes Scott College and will apply for an internship at the CDC next summer. She is working toward a career in public health.

Krista Versteeg, Cleves, OH, attends the University of Dayton where she is majoring in biochemistry. This summer she worked in the Adolescent Medicine Department at Cincinnati Children's Hospital with the Asthma Innovation Team helping to develop new treatment plans for teenagers with asthma.

Erin Lowe Vickery, Decatur, GA, is studying chemistry and is in the pre-med program at the University of South Carolina. This summer Erin received an Oak Ridge Institute of Science Education (ORISE) fellowship at the CDC in Chamblee, GA. She worked with researchers who develop methods to test levels of water disinfection byproducts in human blood.

2004–05

Ishrat Ahmed, Middleton, WI, is interested in pursuing a career in both medical practice and medical research, and is currently majoring in molecular and cellular biology at Johns Hopkins University.

Andrew Brown, Kent, WA, received his undergraduate degree this spring from the University of Washington. He's now in the PhD program in the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences with a focus on spatial hearing. Andrew plans to become a college or university professor.

Molly Burges, Gainesville, FL, currently attends the New College of Florida and studies natural sciences. This summer Molly had an internship with the Department of Pulmonary Medicine at the University of Florida where she learned research methods associated with cell cultures.

Sesha Hanson-Drury, Richland, WA, is a freshman at Stony Brook University in New York. This summer, Sesha was a medical intern at the Kadlec Medical Center and also interned for U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell. She anticipates a career in the medical field.

Emily Lu, Tenafly, NJ, is majoring in biology with a specialization in neuroscience at the University of Chicago and anticipates a career in research.

Nina Mace, Mebane, NC, is a chemistry major at Davidson College and conducted research this summer as a Merck/AAAS Scholar. She collected and analyzed air samples in Davidson at a local elementary school to determine how the school may be affected by elevated levels of car and bus traffic.

Jessica Racine, West Lafayette, IN, is attending Purdue University. Her current area of interest is nursing, and she intends to have a career in medicine.

Allison Roggenburg, Ankeny, IA, is interested in a career in public health and plans to go to graduate school at the College of Public Health at the University of Iowa after she completes her undergraduate degree.

Andreea Seicean, Bay Village, OH, is in the preprofessional health program at Case Western Reserve University and is majoring in public health. Her many projects include work in child psychology under a Howard Hughes Fellowship and research on sleep epidemiology through the Medical School. Andreea will start medical school at CWRU next year and would like to work on improving the health care structure in the U.S.

Stephanie Wilburn, Shawnee, OK, is studying biochemistry at Oklahoma Baptist University. Stephanie anticipates a career in medicine or epidemiology.

2003–04

Amanda Anjum, Jamaica, NY, is studying environmental health and forensic anthropology at Adelphi University in New York. She is planning a career in public health.

Bevin Cohen, Rockville Centre, NY, graduated from the University of Vermont with a major in public health. This fall she will enroll at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health to pursue a master's of public health in epidemiology.

Katherine Dillon, Downingtown, PA, is studying anthropology and biology at Washington University in St. Louis. She intends to pursue epidemiology/clinical research in her medical practice. Katie was featured last summer as one of two YES Scholars on the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation homepage.

Kaitlin Eng, New York, NY, is a human biology, health and society major at Cornell University. She wants to pursue medicine and has been able to shadow several anesthesiologists in the operating room and pediatricians in the pediatrics ER of New York Presbyterian Hospital.

Alanna Hay, Fort Washington, MD, is a psychology major at Stanford University and hopes her career leads to work with nonprofit organizations.

Robert Levine, Lincolnshire, IL, is in his senior year at Middlebury College where he is majoring in molecular biology and biochemistry. He is currently interested in developing ways to use waste flows from local farms to create biofuels.

Graham Miller, The Woodlands, TX, is majoring in biomedical engineering and is currently participating in a program at the UT MD Anderson Cancer Center and Rice University. It is a clinical research and medical internship involving an anatomy course with cadaver dissections and clinical rotations at the hospital.

Stephanie Mok, Bridgewater, NJ, is studying biology at Harvard University. Her internship is at Harvard Medical School conducting research on the Chinese health system. Her career interests involve public health, particularly epidemiology and infectious diseases.

Kelly Moltzen, Harriman, NY, is attending the University of Delaware and focusing her studies on nutritional sciences and dietetics. This summer she worked as a health technician at the NIH Clinical Center in Bethesda, MD.

Raven Rice, North Little Rock, AR, is currently an undergraduate at the University of Arkansas. Next year she will attend the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and pursue a career in molecular biology.

