How did UR students make their summer count?

Amazing people are doing incredible things all over campus. Each issue, we recognize a few students or alumni that are working to make their lives—and our community—better through self and social improvement.

JAMES HENRY '77

Starting the year off with an adventure

Every year Richmond College hosts an outdoor program for the incoming freshmen. This year associate dean, Patrick Benner and Robb Moore, the assistant vice president of advancement systems, led a group of seventeen incoming freshman on a 40-mile hike through the Appalachian Trail. The men hiked 40 miles in two days, carrying all their own gear and equipment. “The students who were admitted to do the challenge are in so many ways the epitome of the general high and growing standards at Richmond,” Moore said. All seventeen students and the two chaperones completed the entire 40-mile trail in the set time. “Some cramping, blisters, and bear scares occurred along the way, but everyone exited the woods feeling accomplished,” Benner said. James Henry, one of the students that opted to do the program despite having never been hiking, was apprehensive at first, but wanted to get to know people before moving onto campus. “Getting to meet so many great guys before the start of the semester helped me feel less anxious about the first day of orientation,” Henry said.

SAMANTHA LINT '74

Changing the lives of women a world away

Samantha Lint, a senior, created an empowerment program for HIV positive adolescent girls that she implemented in Kigali, Rwanda. With approval—but no funding—from UNAIDS and a local NGO called Kigali Hope, she was able to carry out her program. She did receive funding from the UR Summer fellowship fund. “The program provides a space to explore social justice and change making, as well as facilitates a community change project designed by the participants,” Lint said. Samantha taught the girls she was working with a range of topics, from violence against women, to classism, to ecofeminism to democracy. According to Lint’s personal blog, after the genocide in 1994, gender roles changed quickly in Rwanda. With many men in exile, in jail or deceased, women had to take on new tasks and positions of leadership. Today, Rwanda has the highest percent of women elected officials of any democracy worldwide. But these advancements are not felt in the lives of everyday women with HIV, who remain marginalized and oppressed. “Positive Change hopes to give these girls the tools to realize their potential as change makers in their communities,” Lint said.

LONG NGUYEN '74

The fight against human slavery

Long Nguyen first got involved in anti-human trafficking efforts through SSTOP, Students Stopping the Trafficking of People. Since then his interest has blossomed into a devotion and ambition to help human-trafficking victims in his native Vietnam. Nguyen traveled to Vietnam for the later part of the summer and will remain there doing research for the semester. “During the months I’ve been here, I’ve focused entirely on securing vital connections and preparing for my actual research,” he said. He has been working primarily with two NGOs and the women of the Vietnam Women’s Union. In the coming months, he plans to start his research traveling to various regions in Vietnam to collect data to create his International Studies senior thesis. “Freedom is something our society takes for granted, and it is disturbing to see how so many people out there don’t have the type of freedom that we have.”

GABBIE RAFFIO '74

Making her way to the top

Gabbie Raffio made her first ascent to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro in the summer of 2012, then again this past summer. Raffio was more excited this year because of the challenges she faced along the way. Although Raffio trained for the hike, she said the real challenge was adjusting to the altitude. “The actual days are not challenging, it’s just about making sure you’re acclimated,” she said. Uhuru Peak, the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, is the highest point in Africa and the world’s highest freestanding mountain at 5895m or 19,341ft. Even the fittest hikers and athletes are affected by the high altitude and lack of oxygen closer to the summit. In January earlier this year an experienced hiker died on the mountain after being struck by lightning.

- NABILA KHOURI

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