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Rotary Scholarship Recipients Embark on Journey of a Lifetime

January 17, 2007

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. - Two Illinois Wesleyan students, senior international studies major Patrick Beary and senior international studies and political science double major Shannon O'Rourke, received Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarships earlier this school year. Beary received the \$23,000 Academic-Year Ambassadorial Scholarship, which provides a year of study in a foreign country, and O'Rourke received the \$10,000 Cultural Ambassadorial Scholarship, a three-month intensive language training and cultural immersion scholarship.

Beary, from New Lenox, Ill., and O'Rourke, from Ada, Mich., are both being sponsored by the Bloomington Rotary Club.

Rotary seeks out students who are prepared for the challenge of serving as outstanding ambassadors of goodwill. The award aims to further international understanding and friendly relations among people of different countries. Scholarship winners are encouraged to support program objectives by choosing a study field that will help address the humanitarian needs of the world community. While abroad, scholars serve as ambassadors of goodwill to the people of the host country and give presentations about their homelands to international Rotary clubs and other groups.

The Rotary Foundation's oldest and best-known program, the Ambassadorial Scholarships program has allowed nearly 37,000 men and women from 100 nations to study abroad since its inception in 1947. Approximately 800 scholarships were awarded during the 2005-06 year, sending scholars from about 70 countries to study in more than 70 other nations. It is currently the world's largest privately funded international scholarship program.

The application process for the scholarships consists of a lengthy paper application, several letters of recommendation and evaluations, and an interview with the entire district selection committee. The Academic-Year Ambassadorial Scholarship requires a foreign language evaluation by a language instructor.

Beary will use his scholarship for a Masters in international relations at the Universidad Torcuato di Tella in Buenos Aires, Argentina, starting in early 2008. O'Rourke will be living in Dakar, Senegal in the fall of 2007, where she will attend a French language course at Africa Consultants International, and possibly enroll in a class to learn Wolof, the tribal language that is used for everyday conversation in the country.

"I see the presentations as a particularly important aspect of the program because anti-Americanism is widespread in Senegal," O'Rourke said. Other projects will be more developmentally focused. "One of Rotary's recent projects was water and agriculture training. I have also heard talk of a current project involving the funding of a school for girls in the region," said O'Rourke. "I am passionate about development and human rights, particularly women's rights, so this opportunity is ideal for me."



Patrick Beary (above) and Shannon O'Rourke

