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Leading through service

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Leading through service

A SCHOLARSHIP ALLOWS STUDENTS TO SERVE COMMUNITIES IN KANSAS AND AROUND THE WORLD.

In the last 14 years, Kansas State University undergraduates have created a bookmobile in northeastern Kansas; taught nutrition and biology to Wilson, Kansas, youth through a community garden; and studied community development while volunteering in a Ghanaian orphanage.

All of these efforts were supported by the Marjorie J. and Richard L.D. Morse Family and Community Public Policy Scholarship administered by K-State Libraries.

The scholarship was established to honor the Morses, who were educators, activists and devoted supporters of K-State Libraries. Since 2001, nearly \$60,000 has been awarded to 19 students who conducted ambitious, community-minded summer projects.

The most recent winner, Garrett Wilkinson, is a sophomore studying nutritional science, gerontology and nonprofit leadership at K-State. Thanks to the Morse Scholarship, he traveled to Narayanpur, Nepal, in June 2015, to visit and support Tripur Kinder Academy (TriKA), a private, English-language school funded by a nonprofit called the Open World Cause.

Wilkinson and four others from the Open World Cause stayed for more than a month with Govinda Prasad Panthy, the founder and director of TriKA. The group wanted to see Narayanpur, meet with teachers, students and their families and obtain test scores to determine how Panthy's students fare compared to students at other schools. These efforts will support future fundraising.



Wilkinson spent a month with Panthy to learn about the challenges of bringing high-quality education to rural Nepal.

PHOTO BY SHELBY LEMON

Wilkinson's fundraising efforts provided the school with safe drinking water, and the Morse Scholarship allowed him to meet the children who are benefitting from his work.

Test scores indicate that less than 30 percent of students from government schools are able to pass Nepal's university admission exams. Private schools have a much better record, but they are expensive, so an affordable private school like TriKA is key to reaching families who hope an education will lift their child out of poverty.

Panthy has been running private schools that serve low-income families for more than a decade. While his previous school served older children, TriKA is a new institution for preschool students who would otherwise only be able to attend one of Nepal's free government schools, if they attended school at all. The organization hopes to expand to serve older children in the coming years.

Wilkinson and his colleagues funded construction of TriKA through a

unique service learning partnership with elementary schools, many of them located in Kansas. The Kansas students learned about Nepal, often Skyping with the Nepalese teachers, and they launched community projects to raise funds for the school.

These fundraising activities not only paid for construction, but they also provided TriKA with technology, clean

shot at a better life. One woman told me of her dream that her son would not have to work in the fields like his father," said Wilkinson. "And you have to realize that this isn't a situation where the father's like a hired hand. Even though bonded agricultural labor was outlawed 15 years ago, these families are still facing extreme socio-economic inequity."

**"THESE OUTSTANDING STUDENTS ARE COMPLETING
AMBITIOUS, INSPIRING SUMMER PROJECTS THAT
FURTHER THE MORSE FAMILY'S LEGACY OF SERVICE."**

— ANTHONY CRAWFORD

water and a school lunch program—benefits that other private schools don't or can't offer.

Wilkinson says that some of the most meaningful experiences from the trip were the conversations they had with parents.

"They talked about the sacrifices they're making to give their children a

Wilkinson was also able to meet two alumni of Panthy's first school. One is getting his master's in chemistry, and the other is getting

his degree in finance. Together they sat on the roof of a house, talking.

"We asked what the school had meant to them, and one of the men pointed off of the rooftop toward some fields. He said, 'I would be over there if it weren't for Govinda and the others at the school. They are like my godparents, they saved me.



TriKA students and a teacher with Panthy

PHOTO BY GARRETT WILKINSON

I wouldn't have been able to get an education, and I wouldn't be able to make any more than I would make from harvesting rice.”

While stories like this one were inspiring, Wilkinson's experience in Nepal also made him more mindful that trying to enact social change in a country with a very different



Left: Wilkinson and Panthy demonstrate water filters to distribute to all of the TriKA students.

Right: Filtered water compared to water taken directly from the source.

Bottom: A TriKA student watches an English lesson via Skype.



PHOTOS BY SHELBY LEMON AND GARRETT WILKINSON

history and culture is a complicated process.

“There should be more to it than ‘We’re going to go make a difference,’ because you can really mess up,” Wilkinson said. “We can avoid unintended consequences of our work by adhering to a set of best practices and developing habits of critical reflection.”

It’s an issue that he expects to wrestle with as he continues his education at K-State, and perhaps even beyond into his professional life.

Anthony Crawford, K-State Libraries’ retired curator of manuscripts who worked closely with the Morses, was not surprised to hear that

Wilkinson had such a transformative experience.

“The recipients of the Morse Scholarship regularly credit the award in preparing them for their careers, something that was very important to Dick and Marjorie,” said Crawford. “These outstanding students are completing ambitious, inspiring summer projects that really honor the Morse family’s legacy of service.”

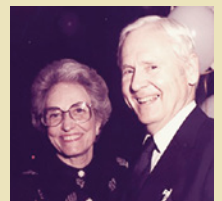
THE MORSES GIVE BACK

Richard and Marjorie Morse devoted their lives to serving others as educators and activists. Richard Morse joined the K-State faculty in 1955. He was an advocate for families and consumers, working tirelessly to promote legislation on the federal and state levels to benefit citizens in the areas of truth-in-savings and truth-in-lending.

Marjorie was an expert in child care issues, and she held numerous leadership positions in that area throughout her career.

In retirement, the Morses dedicated their time and energy to improving K-State Libraries. They were instrumental in strengthening the special collections department through financial support and by establishing the Consumer Movement Archive.

The Richard L.D. and Marjorie J. Morse Department of Special Collections was named in their honor in 1997.



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K-State Libraries are currently accepting applications for the 2016 Morse Family and Community Public Policy Scholarship.

For more information, visit

lib.k-state.edu/morse-scholarship