



## Wartburg News



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### Students make plans for Davis peace project in Guyana

May 21, 2009

WAVERLY, Iowa — So this is how Wartburg College students Abhay Nadipuram '10 and Rachel Coleman '10 plan to spend their summer vacation.

They'll travel into the interior of Guyana in northeast South America, beginning July 6 for nearly a month, toting 3,000 square yards of netting, sewing machines and a generator.

They'll sleep in hammocks in mud and thatch homes called "benabs," bring food to cook over an open fire and on occasion may be near running water or an outhouse.

It may not be your typical college student's vacation, but it's one with an extraordinary purpose. They will be supplying the materials necessary for the 890 Amerindians in 14 villages to make bed nets to ward off mosquitoes and the scourge of malaria, which kills 3,000 children annually in the region.

In addition, they will help them produce booklets in the native Macusi language to spread the word on the importance of the nets.

Guyana has the highest level of malaria cases in the Western Hemisphere, mostly in its interior.

"We're not just taking bed nets, as much as supplying them with the materials so that everyone in the area can have the nets, which are actually hammock nets, because many of them do not sleep in beds," Nadipuram said. "But that's just part of the project. It's kind of cool, instilling more of the entrepreneurial spirit."

Nadipuram, from Waterloo, and Coleman, from Chanhassen, Minn., received a \$10,000 grant earlier this year from Davis Projects for Peace. The program was established by philanthropist Kathryn W. Davis on her 100th birthday in 2007 to challenge college students to undertake innovative and meaningful projects to build peace throughout the world.

The Davis Projects for Peace grant will help fund some of the netting and transportation costs.

But at 22 square yards per net, their current supply will not go nearly as far as they want. They are hoping to raise more financial support for more netting.

In addition, they want to forge an ongoing Wartburg partnership with the regional Bina Hill Institute, which works with village leaders to promote development, primarily ecotourism in the rain forest.

This will be a return trip for Coleman, a biology major. She was there last year with a class led by Dr. Roy M. Ventullo, the Burk-Will Chair in Biology and director of undergraduate research at Wartburg. Ventullo, the adviser on this project, has worked with the Bina Hill Institute.

"Last year we went hiking and camping," Coleman said. "Dr. Ventullo wanted to add a service-learning trip component to the field experience."

Nadipuram, a political science major and student body president, said the residents of the Rupununi district are "family-oriented, pretty smart people from simple villages." However, the government has focused most of its attention on health care for the more populated coastal cities. The Amerindians, he said, are not as well supplied.

"We're trying to get into the villages and show that what's a simple bed net to us is a lifesaver to them," Nadipuram said. "The mosquitoes are nocturnal. It's easy to prevent malaria by using the bed nets, but they need the resources."

Those resources don't currently include access to traditional medicine. Nadipuram maintains even the high incidence of malaria is underreported because there are no doctors to confirm its occurrence.

The only remedies are native concoctions

"When someone gets sick," Coleman said, "they hike into the forest to get what they need. Then they make some sort of stew to treat it."

Nadipuram and Coleman hope to establish an ongoing Wartburg commitment to the cause. They envision Wartburg classes following in their footsteps on an every-other-year basis.

"Once we set something up," Nadipuram said, "more people will be able to participate. One of our goals is to share the good news of our success, that the payoff will be great. These bed nets will be something that the Indians will truly be able to use for years to come."

Donations should be sent to:

Development Office

Attn: A Gain for Guyana

100 Wartburg Blvd.

Waverly, IA 50677

The project proposal can be viewed online at <http://www.kwd100projectsforpeace.org/>

In 2008, Wartburg students also received Davis funding for a humanitarian project in Cambodia. Wartburg is a partner school in the Davis United World Scholars Program, which helps sponsor international students on campus.