Pharmacy Students Study Medicinal Plants of Amazon

The Amazon rainforest provided a classroom of sorts for four pharmacy students last summer.

Fourth-year students Stephanie Victor, Jennifer Compton, Lara Judson and Ryan Toth embarked on a four-week journey studying medicinal properties of rainforest plants as part of a residency rotation. The experience included a five-day excursion down the Amazon River and an opportunity to study beside shaman Rossana Nascimento.

The international rotation was hosted by the Global Awareness Institute (GAI), a Florida-based non-profit organization dedicated to creating a sustainable industry developing the Amazon’s medicinal plants. GAI has brought groups of university students to its 92-acre reserve and research center in Iquitos, Peru, since 1999. This is the first time Wilkes students have participated.

The session begins and ends with a week of on-campus study in Florida and provides two weeks of field study in the Amazon. Students cover ethnobotany, pharmacology, pharmacognosy and toxicology at the Hospital de la Luz and the National Institute for Traditional Medicine and attend workshops on medicinal plants and agronomy at the National University of the Peruvian Amazon’s Institute of Research. Victor believes her experience will help her “better relate with many customers in a retail setting.”

Left: Stephanie Victor, kneeling, practices a shaman ritual while Ryan Toth, left, “protects her spirit.”

Below: Preparing for day two of their canoe trip are, from left, Stephanie Victor, a Peruvian girl, Ryan Toth and Jennifer Compton.

James Culhane Wins Carpenter Award

James Culhane, associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences, received the Carpenter Outstanding Achievement Award from his peers for excellence in teaching. In a speech at summer commencement, he shared five tips for lifelong success and happiness:

• From his dad, a retired aircraft mechanic: No matter what you do in life, make sure you make enough money to pay the bills.
• Surround yourself with brilliant, enthusiastic and highly motivated people, and then mooch off of them for all they are worth.
• If you have the opportunity to help someone, take it. You can never predict how the ripples from one kind act can change the world.
• If you should ever find that the senior drill sergeant has taken your unsecured M-16 A1 assault rifle, make sure you retrieve it as soon as possible. Admit your mistakes and accept responsibility.
• Make sure your job, career or profession is meaningful to you.

Creative Writing Program Now Offers M.F.A.

Now you can live the writer’s life and earn a master of fine arts (M.F.A.) degree to boot. The University’s Creative Writing program offers the 18-credit M.F.A. option in addition to its 30-credit master of arts degree. The M.F.A. is a terminal degree, the highest offered in the visual, literary and performing arts. It is required to teach at the college and university level.

The low-residency format of these programs means students work mostly from home, coming to campus only twice per year. Application deadline for the January 2008 residency is Dec. 15. For more information, visit www.wilkes.edu/creativewriting or call (800) WILKES-U Ext. 4527.
“We were ENERGIZED by the CROWD cheering and the C-130 flyover, and it went like clockwork! We were not doing it for those folks in the stands or those at home; we were doing it for (the soldiers). We were THERE FOR THOSE who, through their sacrifice, MIGHT NEVER BE REUNITED with friends and family OR EVER RETURN HOME.”

– Cadet Adam Mann

Biology Students Conduct Research at Yale University Lab

Two undergraduate students spent the summer conducting cutting-edge genomic research at Yale University.

Junior Naseem Mian of Johnson City, N.Y., and sophomore Jay Shah of Vestal, N.Y., worked alongside Wilkes biology Professor William Terzaghi and Professor Xing Wang Deng of Yale’s Department of Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology, in New Haven, Conn.

Terzaghi was on sabbatical to research the rice genome. Mian has worked with Terzaghi for two years, and Shah has worked with him for one.

Mian and Shah studied the structure and function of antisense ribonucleic acid molecules in rice. A surprising number of rice genes are copied off both sense and antisense strands, Terzaghi explains, and groundbreaking work that earned the 2006 Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology showed that some antisense RNAs block expression of certain genes in other organisms. Terzaghi’s and the students’ research could lead to new ways to improve crop yields and resistance to pathogens and environmental changes.

Upward Bound Alumni Celebrate Four Decades of Success

The University’s Upward Bound program celebrated its 40th anniversary this summer with an event titled “A Carnival of Decades.” Alumni, current Upward Bound students and their families attended the event, which included a photo slideshow, program memorabilia, games, face-painting and a barbeque.

Upward Bound at Wilkes is one of the longest-running, continuously funded programs in the United States. Since 1967, nearly 2,000 students from Luzerne and Wyoming counties high schools have participated in the program. And 92 percent of graduates have pursued post-secondary education.