105-Year-Old Philanthropist Renews Projects for Peace Grants for College Students

The Pantanal Partnership, University of Michigan Student Organization, Develops Rural Healthcare Infrastructure in Brazilian Wetland

MIDDLEBURY, Vt. — College students across the country are once again being challenged to design and undertake "Projects for Peace" around the world, thanks to philanthropist Kathryn W. Davis. Now 105 years "young", Mrs. Davis launched Projects for Peace on the occasion of her 100th birthday in 2007 and has renewed her commitment every year since. In 2012, nearly $1.25 million will be awarded in $10,000 grants to students submitting the winning proposals for projects to be completed over the summer of 2012.

Davis is eager for motivated youth to come up with effective building blocks for peace-building in the world, and she is putting her money up to make that happen. Projects which address conflict resolution, reconciliation, foster understanding, provide opportunity, and unleash human potential to build community are among the many successful projects to date.

"Competition is keen and we congratulate the students whose projects have been selected for funding in 2012," said Philip O. Geier, who runs the Projects for Peace initiative as well as the Davis United World College Scholars Program. "Kathryn Davis feels a great urgency about advancing the cause of peace in the world, and she is investing in motivated youth and their ideas in order to accelerate efforts for peace in the 21st century."

The Pantanal Partnership has been selected to be the University of Michigan recipient of the 2012 Projects for Peace grant. The Pantanal Partnership is a student organization dedicated to increasing access to education, healthcare, and sustainable technologies in the Brazilian Pantanal – the world’s largest wetland and a UNESCO world heritage site. Its members consist of 10 College of Engineering students representing all class levels and multiple academic disciplines. The students will work with staff from the College of Engineering and Ginsberg Center to coordinate the trip details.

In 2010 the Pantanal Partnership also received a Projects for Peace grant to build the Pantanal Center for Education and Research (PCER), a school and research center in the northern Pantanal. This summer, the Pantanal Partnership will be traveling to the Brazilian Pantanal for one month to complete projects focused on rural healthcare infrastructure in an isolated community and a clean water initiative.
“We’re incredibly thankful for this generous award,” said Gregory Ewing, CEE ’13, Co-Director of the Pantanal Partnership. “The continued support and attention to our project given by Davis Projects for Peace and the University of Michigan community has been extraordinary. With this backing we’re able to continue our involvement with a special community of people, whose energy, enthusiasm, and kindness are contagious.”

“There are two projects that are scheduled for this summer,” noted Julie Bateman, ’12, Co-Director. “We’ll build a system that converts a cell phone signal to internet. With this internet connection we hope to connect to the Brazilian federal university hospital network. This will provide vital health services to a community who currently must wait for a medical boat to come to their area only three times a year. Additionally, we plan to visit four rural schools that lack access to clean water and build biosand filters with the students. As part of these visits, we will teach lessons on basic filtration science, the importance of clean drinking water, and general maintenance of the filter.”

"I want to use my birthday to once again help young people launch some initiatives that will bring new energy and ideas to the prospects of peace in the world," said Kathryn Davis. "My many years have taught me that there will always be conflict. It's part of human nature. But love, kindness, and support are also part of human nature, and my challenge to these young people is to bring about a mindset of preparing for peace instead of preparing for war."

For more information on the Pantanal Partnership, see www.pantanalcer.org

For more information on Projects for Peace, see www.davisprojectsforpeace.org.