

Two Seniors Receive Watson Dream Grants

St. Paul, Minn. – Morgan Sleeper '11 of Deland, FL and Keren Yohannes '11, of Louisville, KY, have been awarded Thomas J. Watson Fellowships. The fellowship, a one-year grant for independent study and travel outside of the United States, is awarded annually to graduating college/university seniors. This year the Foundation awarded 40 fellowships out of the 148 finalists who were nominated, and the awardees came from only 23 of the 40 colleges on the Watson roster. The fellows come from select private liberal arts colleges and universities.



Keren Yohannes and Morgan Sleeper

The Thomas J. Watson Fellowship offers college graduates of "unusual promise" a year of independent, purposeful exploration and travel, in international settings new to them, to enhance their capacity for resourcefulness, imagination, openness, and leadership and to foster their humane and effective participation in the world community.

Based on a project that they have designed, the students are awarded a \$25,000 stipend to execute and evaluate their project over the year.

Sleeper, a Linguistics major, said getting the Watson was exciting. "It's an incredible opportunity to be able to travel wherever your passions take you."

His project proposal, titled "Ceol agus Comhrá: Music & Language Revitalization in the Celtic Fringe," will take him to the United Kingdom (Wales, Scotland, Cornwall) Argentina, Isle of Man, Canada, France (Cape Breton) and Ireland.

"I'll be traveling to all these Celtic nations and Diaspora regions (Scottish Gaelic is spoken in Cape Breton & Welsh in Patagonia) to look at all the ways people are using music to help revitalize the endangered Celtic languages," said Sleeper.

For Yohannes, receiving the Watson was personal. "As the daughter of a refugee from Eritrea, displacement and disability are central to family's history," she said. The Watson "is the opportunity to travel abroad and witness firsthand the factors that shape the experiences of persons with disabilities in post-conflict states."

Yohannes' project was titled "To Build a Ramp: Disability Rights in Post-Crisis Contexts," and she will be going to Sierra Leone, Uganda, New Zealand, Thailand, Jordan. She is an International Studies major.

"I will volunteer with and learn from organizations working with persons with disabilities in post-conflict states and countries of resettlement," said Yohannes.

The Thomas J. Watson Fellowship Program was established in 1968 by the children of Thomas J. Watson, Sr., the founder of International Business Machines Corp., and his wife, Jeannette K. Watson, to honor their parents' long-standing interest in education and world affairs.

Watson fellows must leave for their travel by August 1 of the year of their fellowship and return in time for the Returning Fellows Conference. During this time they may not return to the United States.

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