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Summary of Summer Abroad Plans/Request for Scholarship

As an undergrad, I studied cultural anthropology and Latin American studies, and had the opportunity to travel, study, and work abroad several times. I decided to write my senior thesis on human rights issues in Guatemala, and spent two weeks there during my senior year. I was so fascinated by the country that I wanted to return and have a chance to learn more about the country. Before starting medical school, I deferred my acceptance for a year so that I could spend a year volunteering with an organization called Familias de Esperanza. Through the organization, I worked in a small village north of the capital as a youth group coordinator for about 80 middle school and high school age kids from the area. It was a wonderful experience, and when I returned to school (four days after leaving Guatemala), I felt much more focused and passionate about studying medicine and eventually serving in a community like the one I had spent the past year. At RWJ, I am the director of the medical Spanish program and am also co-president of the International Health Interest Group.

This past summer, I decided to return to the same village in Guatemala to help the community finish the construction of a new elementary school that had been started just as I was leaving a year earlier. I spent two and a half weeks in Guatemala this past August, helping move in desks, finish painting the classrooms, and joining in the celebration of the opening of the school. It was a wonderful opportunity to be involved with this community again and to take part in a very meaningful project alongside my former neighbors and students. It was also a very valuable time for me, because it confirmed again for me why I have chosen this path and how much community outreach and service are to me. Also, it was a ideal chance to speak purely Spanish for 2 weeks, and to re-affirm my ties with Guatemala. I hope to continue to be able work and serve both in this country and abroad in the future, and experiences like this one strengthen that goal.