2011 Plastino Scholars

Allison Rogers, a pre-veterinary medicine and animal biosciences major and wildlife conservation minor from Scarborough, Maine, is affectionately known among her fellow majors as “the bird girl” for her passion and interest in the health of birds. As a Plastino Scholar, she will travel across the country – from Los Angeles to Pittsburgh to Rhode Island – in order to bring awareness to the world parrot crisis, an issue that involves the homelessness, excessive breeding and avian diseases that result from the smuggling, overcrowding and neglect of these exotic birds.

Chris Kerwien, an Honors Program student from Wilmington, Del., will apply the knowledge he has gained as an electrical engineering and computer science major with minors in sustainable energy technology and mathematics by working as an intern for Promethean Power Systems, a company in India that has developed a solar-powered refrigeration system for commercial cold-storage applications in off-grid and partially electrified areas of developing countries. The company’s technology enables suppliers to store and preserve perishable items — from vaccinations to produce — without the need for expensive diesel-powered generators.

Kerwien will collect solar, thermal and operational data and perform data analysis of system performance while living in housing supplemented by the company, thereby gaining valuable hands-on experience in solar energy technology while immersing himself in an environment in which the systems he’ll analyze will change the lives of those who use it.

Lisa Russo, an anthropology and history double major with a minor in East Asian Studies, from Scottsdale, Ariz., will conduct anthropological field work in Indonesia. Russo will spend 10 weeks in Bali, studying the art of gamelan, a prevalent form of music and dance. Gamelan is a musical ensemble that is considered a single instrument, although it consists of dozens of percussion pieces. She will study what aspects of gamelan make it such an integral part of everyday life in Bali, and how and why people incorporate this beautiful art form in their lives.

Stephanie Halperin, a history major with minors in anthropology and Latin American and Iberian studies from Riverdale, N.J., will combine her background in Latin American history with her personal interest in social and cultural anthropology through the Plastino Scholars experience. She will conduct ethnographic and historic research on the Jewish community of Buenos Aires – the largest Jewish population in Latin America and nearly two percent of the Argentine population. Living with a family in Argentina, Halperin hopes to better understand how this population has assimilated and integrated in accordance with Argentine society’s larger cultural expectations and standards. She plans to write a senior thesis on the topic.