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Northumbria Student wins prestigious volunteering award

A Physiotherapy student at Northumbria University, Newcastle, was awarded an inspirational scholarship to undertake a volunteering trip outside of the UK.

Jemma Isaac is the first recipient of the John Connelly award after her application to volunteer in Ghana was accepted. The award is open to all students who are enrolled on a Nursing, Midwifery or Allied health profession pre-registration programmes and is a once in a lifetime opportunity to study or volunteer in a foreign health development.

Patricia Hodgson, University Governor 2001, set up the award earlier this year in memory of her father and to acknowledge the value of link between donor and beneficiary. The level of the award is £500 and the visit can be of any duration.

Speaking of her father and the motivation behind this award, Patricia said: “It was his lifelong regret that he was never given the opportunity to undertake study at university. His life gave him an understanding and empathy with the suffering of other.

“It is in his memory that this award was established in order to provide others with an educational opportunity to work with health development projects which aim to contribute to human happiness and well-being. As John himself said ‘small actions can make a big difference’.”

Jemma’s volunteering trip allowed her to work with a company called Work the World volunteering at Effia-Nkwanta Regional Hospital in Takoradi, four hours from the capital of Ghana, Accra.

She spent five weeks working alongside other professionals in a physiotherapy placement which serves the needs of a diverse university and had the opportunity to network with other international healthcare students. Jemma then spent a further extended week living with a host family in a small fishing village nearby in order to have a clear understanding of local issues and to assist with health education in the village primary school.

She said of her experience: “This award enabled me to gain invaluable experience volunteering in a third world country. My trip to Ghana will not only benefit me academically, but also personally.

“I hope this award inspires others, like myself, to embark upon a life changing trip abroad, which can really broaden your horizons and challenge your own way of thinking.”

Patricia added: “My Dad was always inspired by people who try to do some good and I, in turn, was inspired by his goodness. He believed in education and opportunity for all so he would be happy to know that, through his annual award, he can continue to enable others to do good.

Having met Jemma and heard of her experiences in Ghana, it is clear that she is 'made of the right stuff' and I know my Dad would be proud of her."

For more information about NHS pre-registration programmes at Northumbria please visit: www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/postgraduate-study/financial-support/nhs-pre-registration-programmes/

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