

Meet Our Latest District 5170 Global Grant Scholar . . .



Emily Vokach-Brodsky is a Bay Area native. In 2017 she graduated from Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), where she majored in Behavioral Decision Science and International Relations, and minored in Hispanic Studies. As an undergraduate, Emily learned about cognitive biases, heuristics and the ways in which human decision making deviates from rationality. She also discovered how to use these insights to promote healthy choices and support vulnerable populations. Emily's research contributions have leveraged behavioral science to inform HIV prevention policies in Kenya and South Africa, and advance maternal health interventions in the United States.

Currently, Emily works as a Research Associate at a start-up - a collaboration between CMU's Department of Engineering and Public Policy and the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Their team is designing a prenatal health app in partnership with the largest provider of healthcare in Western Pennsylvania. The innovative app merges behavioral science, machine learning and clinical medicine to provide real-time interventions to users. It uses nudges to encourage healthy behavior and combats health disparities by detecting adverse outcomes among at-risk patients.

In addition to her research, Emily's experiences as a public health volunteer in Central America, policy intern in Washington, DC and Fulbright Scholar in Brazil have given her the tools to address a gap in our global health approach that she wants to help close: health interventions must consider inherent human biases and other environmental factors to be truly effective. She says, "the Rotary Scholarship will allow me to pursue a graduate education that marries my background in behavioral science with global health to help me develop appropriate, effective maternal health interventions in underserved communities."

In the Fall, she is thrilled to be attending The London School of Economics to study Health and International Development. The Masters course will give her a comprehensive foundation in global maternal health, including skills in research design and policy analysis. Emily is particularly drawn to courses like *Sexual and Reproductive Health Programmes*, and plans to join research efforts regarding family planning access in East Africa. After LSE, Emily would like to complete a PhD and one day hopes to advocate for an inclusive research agenda as a leader in global health.

On the weekends, Emily can be found outdoors - hiking, running, camping or climbing. She also loves to paint and bake bread. Her life motto is the same as that of her alma mater: My Heart is in the Work. She is extremely grateful to the District 5170 Rotarians for their kindness and support, and is honored to represent the Bay Area as a Rotary Scholar in London. Emily is looking forward to staying connected with Rotary International throughout her time at LSE and beyond.

