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**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
AWARDS FIRST SCIENCE SCHOLARSHIPS TO THREE NYC STUDENTS**

**\$30,000 FOR EACH OF THREE WINNING PARTICIPANTS IN
MUSEUM'S SCIENCE RESEARCH MENTORING PROGRAM**



Scholarship Winners (l-r): Shanawaj Khair, Ryan Moye, Caitlin Dorman © AMNH\R. Mickens

Three New York City high school seniors – a budding astrophysicist searching for other Earth-like planets, a young paleontologist studying the evolution of prehistoric reptiles, and a teen scientist researching the potential medical benefits of venomous marine snails – have all won \$30,000 four-year college scholarships from the American Museum of Natural History's first annual AMNH Science Scholars Award. The three students are all in the final year of the Museum's Science Research Mentoring Program (SRMP), a prestigious two-year program that offers more than 50 New York City students (ages 17-18) a unique opportunity to work with

Museum scientists on an array of independent research projects. The SRMP teens, many from groups underrepresented in the sciences, have been working in laboratories across the Museum, including at the Sackler Institute for Comparative Genomics, the Department of Ornithology, the Department of Paleontology, and the Microscopy and Imaging Facility.

“This year the Museum is thrilled to be able to award college scholarship funds of \$30,000 over four years to each of three outstanding science research mentoring program graduates,” said Ruth Cohen, Senior Director, Education Strategic Initiatives. “The awards were very competitive, and the winners distinguished themselves not only by their outstanding grasp of research and science content, but also by their passion and deep commitment to pursuing science in college and as a career.”

The award winners were honored as part of the 2012 SRMP Graduation Ceremony at the Museum on Thursday, June 7.

The 2012 AMNH Science Scholars Award winners are:

- **Caitlin Dorman** from the Upper West side of Manhattan

Working alongside Bárbara Rojas-Ayala, a postdoctoral research scientist in the Department of Astrophysics, Caitlin has been reviewing methods to estimate the metallicities (the amount of iron relative to the amount of hydrogen) of certain M-dwarf stars from molecular absorption features in their visible spectra. Together they are looking for correlations between high metallicity M-dwarf stars and the likelihood of finding exoplanets orbiting them. Caitlin will be attending Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island in September.

- **Ryan Moye** from East Harlem, Manhattan

Under the supervision of mentor Steve Brusatte, a graduate student under Mark Norell, Chairman and Curator, Division of Paleontology, Ryan is studying the evolution of skull shapes in Archosauria – prehistoric reptiles whose members includes the dinosaurs, pterosaurs (flying reptiles), and are related to present day crocodiles. They use statistical programs to model and quantify the complex skull shape of each species, so that comparisons can be made in a simple, numerical manner. Ryan will be attending Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut in August.

- **Shanawaj Khair** from Jamaica, Queens

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Shanawaj has been studying Tg77, a neurotoxin found in *Terebra guttata*, a venomous marine snail. He has been working with Mande Holford, a research associate in the Department of Invertebrate Zoology, determining the optimal conditions for scaling up production of Tg77. Researchers think that neurotoxins like Tg77 have the potential to be active ingredients in drugs treating neurological conditions including Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and epilepsy. Shanawaj will be attending SUNY-Stony Brook University in September.

American Museum of Natural History (amnh.org)

The American Museum of Natural History, founded in 1869, is one of the world's preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. The Museum encompasses 45 permanent exhibition halls, including the Rose Center for Earth and Space and the Hayden Planetarium, as well as galleries for temporary exhibitions. Five active research divisions and three cross-disciplinary centers support 200 scientists, whose work draws on a world-class permanent collection of more than 32 million specimens and artifacts, including specialized collections for frozen tissue and genomic and astrophysical data, as well as one of the largest natural history libraries in the Western Hemisphere. Through its Richard Gilder Graduate School, it is the first American museum authorized to grant the Ph.D. degree. In 2012, the Museum will begin offering a pilot Master of Arts in Teaching with a specialization in earth science. Approximately 5 million visitors from around the world came to the Museum last year, and its exhibitions and Space Shows can be seen in venues on five continents. The Museum's website and collection of apps for mobile devices extend its collections, exhibitions, and educational programs to millions more beyond its walls. Visit amnh.org for more information.

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