



Community leaders to choose finalists for \$1 million Opus Prize to recognize outstanding social entrepreneurial achievement

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Community leaders will meet Wednesday (Feb. 11) at the University of St. Thomas to choose three finalists for a \$1 million award that will be given in November to an organization or individual whose faith-based, social entrepreneurial leadership helps people in need transform their lives.

The “jury” of 13 community leaders, chaired by Father Dennis Dease, president of St. Thomas, will consider 10 individuals from around the globe for the 2009 Opus Prize. In addition to the \$1 million award, two individuals will receive \$100,000 prizes for their organizations.

St. Thomas will host a private dinner for the finalists Nov. 2 on the St. Paul campus and a public awards ceremony the evening of Nov. 3 at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis. Events also will be held on campus that week for students, faculty and staff to highlight the congruence between the university’s mission and the faith-based humanitarian work done by the finalists.

A St. Thomas faculty and staff committee chose the 10 semi-finalists from 23 people nominated by 17 “spotters” who work in educational, nonprofit, humanitarian and religious communities. The spotters anonymously researched potential candidates and submitted nominations to the on-campus committee.

The jurors will submit three finalists and an alternate to the Opus Prize Foundation board for its consideration. St. Thomas students and faculty or staff members will accompany foundation representatives on due-diligence visits with the finalists this spring and summer. The board then will select the winners, whose names will be kept secret until November.

The Opus Prize recognizes unsung heroes who, guided by faith and an entrepreneurial spirit, are conquering the world’s most persistent social problems and showing that change is possible. From establishing an innovative public health program for the poor in Brazil to addressing the poverty of farm workers in central Florida to tackling youth illiteracy in India, Opus Prize winners have dedicated themselves to help transform the lives of others.

The foundation works in partnership with Catholic universities to facilitate the award process, and the recipients may have roots in any faith. Seattle University (2008), The Catholic University of America (2007), University of Notre Dame (2006), Marquette University (2005) and University of San Francisco (2004) were the previous partners.

“St. Thomas is honored to be chosen by the foundation as a partner to award the Opus Prize this fall,” Dease said. “We will be proud to host the winners on our campus, and they will be a real inspiration to our students, faculty, staff and the larger community.”

Selection criteria emphasize social entrepreneurship, transformational leadership, a faith-filled life, service to others, enhancement of human dignity, unsung heroes and an ability to teach people how to fish (adhering to the adage, “Give a person a fish; you have fed him for a day. Teach a person to fish; you have fed him for a lifetime.”).

“The Opus Prize Foundation is proud to partner with the University of St. Thomas to spotlight the work of unsung heroes dedicating their lives to solving some of the world’s most persistent social problems,” said Amy Sunderland, foundation executive director.

To learn more about the Opus Prize and its past winners – view videos, photo journals and winner profiles – visit www.opusprize.org.

Working closely with the foundation, St. Thomas will use a grant associated with its selection to carry out the events and marketing communications efforts associated with awarding the 2009 Opus Prize. Many committee members and St. Thomas staff members have generously volunteered their time and expertise for the project.

In addition to Dease, members of the 2009 Opus Prize jury are:

- William Cooper, chief executive officer of TCF Financial Corp.
- Charles Denny Jr., retired chief executive officer of ADC Telecommunications

- Father John Estrem, chief executive officer of Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis
- John Finnegan Sr., retired editor and senior vice president of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*
- Dr. Josie Johnson, president of Josie R. Johnson and Associates and a former University of Minnesota regent and associate vice president for academic affairs
- Robert Kierlin, chairman of Fastenal Co. in Winona and a former state senator
- Susan Marvin, president of Marvin Windows and Doors and a member of the Board of Governors for the Opus College of Business at St. Thomas
- Alan Page, associate justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court
- Edward Phillips, chairman and chief executive officer of Phillips Beverage Co.
- Albert Quie, former governor of Minnesota
- Richard Schulze, founder and chairman of Best Buy Co., a member of the St. Thomas Board of Trustees since 1995 and co-chair of the Opening Doors capital campaign at St. Thomas
- Rabbi Marcia Zimmerman, senior rabbi of Temple Israel in Minneapolis

About the Opus Prize Foundation

The Opus Prize is given annually to recognize unsung heroes of any faith tradition, anywhere in the world, solving today's most persistent social problems. Opus Prize winners combine a driving entrepreneurial spirit with an abiding faith to combat seemingly intractable global issues. The Opus Prize Foundation is a private and independent foundation. The prize is awarded through a partnership with a university or college as a way to inspire lives of service. The Opus Prize Foundation does not accept unsolicited nominations.