



**Seattle University and Opus Prize Foundation announce
\$1 million Opus Prize**

Woman working with children of Burundi earns one of the world's largest faith-based humanitarian awards

SEATTLE (Nov. 18, 2008) – Seattle University and the Opus Prize Foundation today awarded the \$1 million Opus Prize to Marguerite "Maggy" Barankitse for her 15 years of work providing safe havens to 30,000 child victims of ethnic strife in Burundi, Africa. Two \$100,000 winners also were honored: Michael Woodard, founder of Jubilee House Community and Center for the Development of Central America, who has spent the last 15 years creating self-sufficiency from poverty in Nicaragua; and Krishnammal Jagannathan, founder of Land for Tillers' Freedom (LAFTI), who has spent 40 years fighting for land rights and the self-empowerment of women in Tamil Nadu, India.

The recipients were announced this morning at a press conference hosted by Seattle University President Stephen Sundborg, S.J. The three social entrepreneurs will spend three days on campus visiting with students, faculty and staff. This evening, they will be honored at a civic celebration at Benaroya Hall in downtown Seattle.

"Seattle University is clear about its mission: empowering leaders for a just and humane world," said Fr. Sundborg. "Bringing these unsung heroes to our campus is a great opportunity to honor their work and provide our students an incredible educational experience by meeting inspiring individuals. Something is coming about from our students being global citizens and reaching out across the world to reach other people. My vision is that our students learn their own humanity through knowing more of humanity."

Today's announcement capped a yearlong search. It began with a confidential selection process, much like the MacArthur Fellowships, in which anonymous nominators put names forward. That list was given careful consideration by a jury of top civic leaders in Washington State, led by Fr. Sundborg, and the recommendation was forwarded to the Opus Prize Foundation for final decision.

Barankitse, the \$1 million winner, founded Maison Shalom in 1993 as a home for 25 children orphaned after a violent attack by ethnic Tutsis, and the organization has grown into a multi-service agency helping to heal and support young people and families. Today, 500 small houses, or "children villages," nurture and support children so they may be reintegrated into loving families. In addition, efforts centered on education, health, vocational training and reconciliation strive to change the lives of children and better the lives of all Burundians. Maison Shalom recently opened a hospital, and the organization's successful model is now being used to aid children in Rwanda and the Congo.

"We are one family, one human family," she says in a documentary on her work.

Leading a staff of 12, Michael Woodard has organized and reinvigorated lagging economies in Ciudad Sandino, Nicaragua and surrounding areas through education, micro-credit, agriculture and technology initiatives. He has also partnered with Bucknell University to build a health clinic with its own lab and pharmacy, women's health clinic, dental clinic and labs, caring for more than 11,000 patients to date.

Krishnammal Jagannathan and LAFTI have elevated the social status and acceptance of the Dalits, some of the India's poorest residents, by negotiating land subsidies with the Indian government. Providing skills workshops to encourage empowerment and sustainable practices, Krishnammal is helping these individuals command the respect of others and showing them that everyone has the right for a good, dignified life.

"We are thrilled to be recognizing and supporting three amazing entrepreneurs for their transforming, faith-driven work throughout the world," says Amy Sunderland, executive director of the Opus Prize Foundation. "These individuals show us that change is possible. They are an inspiration to us all."

The Opus Prize Foundation recognizes unsung heroes of any faith tradition, anywhere in the world, solving today's most persistent social problems by annually awarding the Opus Prize, a \$1 million award and two \$100,000 monetary awards. Opus Prize winners combine a driving entrepreneurial spirit with an abiding faith to give power to the disenfranchised, opportunities to the poorest, and inspire others to pursue lives of service. The Prize is awarded through partnerships with Catholic universities or colleges to maximize the scope and impact of its mission. The first Opus Prize was given in 2004. Today, 16 individuals from the United States and around the world have been recognized. The Opus Prize Foundation, established in 1994 by the founding chairman of Opus Corporation, is a private and independent foundation and does not accept unsolicited nominations. For more information, visit www.opusprize.org.

As part of the Opus Prize Foundation partnership with Seattle University, and guided by SU's mission of "empowering leaders for a just and humane world," students will be given the opportunity to learn more about social entrepreneurship from the award recipients themselves. The Opus Prize honorees will speak to the SU community about their humanitarian work on Nov. 19 at the university's Mission Day, an annual campus-wide gathering and discussion about Seattle University's Jesuit Catholic mission.

The 2008 Opus Prize jurors include prominent individuals from private industry, journalism, academia, health care, athletics, and social and humanitarian action:

Stephen Sundborg, S.J., president, Seattle University
William Gates, Sr., chair, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Daniel J. Evans, former U.S. Senator and governor of Washington State
Maria Cantwell, U.S. Senator, Washington State
James Sinegal, CEO, Costco
Sally Jewell, CEO, REI
Lenny Wilkens, chairman, Lenny Wilkens Foundation, and former head coach of the Seattle Supersonics
Bill Clapp, chairman, Global Partnerships
Dr. Leland Hartwell, president and director, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center
Margaret Larson, former NBC Dateline correspondent and KING 5 anchor
Kathleen Ross, SNJM, president, Heritage University
Bishop Carlos Sevilla, S.J., bishop, Diocese of Yakima
Maestro Gerard Schwarz, musical director, Seattle Symphony

For text, video and audio clips about the Nov. 18 Opus Prize announcement and the award recipients, visit www.seattleu.edu/opusprize. For more information on the Opus Prize, visit www.opusprize.org.