



### **\$1 Million Opus Prize Finalists Announced**

*Nominees lead faith-based social entrepreneur work in Burundi, India and Nicaragua*

**Seattle, Wash. (Sept. 9, 2008)** — Seattle University and the Opus Prize Foundation today announced three finalists for the \$1 million 2008 Opus Prize, one of the world's largest humanitarian service awards. Guided by faith and an entrepreneurial spirit, Marguerite "Maggy" Barankitse, Krishnammal Jagannathan and Michael Woodard are working throughout the world to give people the tools to transform their lives.

The Opus Prize is a \$1 million dollar award and two \$100,000 awards recognizing unsung heroes creating lasting social change and inspiring others to do the same. The 2008 winner will be announced at a public ceremony hosted by Seattle University on Nov. 18, 2008 at Benaroya Hall in Seattle, Wash. Tickets are available by contacting Seattle University's Office of Government and Community Affairs at 206.296.2634 or [GCA@seattleu.edu](mailto:GCA@seattleu.edu).

"This is a great opportunity for Seattle University, the Opus Prize Foundation and the greater Seattle community to honor faith-based humanitarian work around the world and highlight our mission at the university of educating leaders for a just and humane world," said Seattle University President Stephen Sundborg, S.J. "We are proud to showcase great humanitarians and to provide our students an incredible educational opportunity to meet these inspiring individuals."

Selected for their social entrepreneurship, transformational leadership and commitment to faith and service, the 2008 Opus Prize award recipients are:

#### **Marguerite "Maggy" Barankitse, founder of Maison Shalom in Ruyigi, Burundi**

Maggy Barankitse formed Maison Shalom or, "House of Peace," in 1993 as a safe haven for children and orphans, including children soldiers, who have survived civil unrest and violence in the war-torn country of Burundi. Located in central Africa, Burundi has a long history of ethnic strife between the Tutsis and Hutus. Only recently did Burundi emerge from more than 12 years of civil war, leaving 300,000 dead. Since its beginning, Maison Shalom has grown into a multi-functional service agency including a hospital that has helped in the healing and support of 30,000 young people and families. Maison Shalom is centered on education, health, vocational training and reconciliation and strives to change the lives of children to better the lives of all Burundians.

#### **Krishnammal Jagannathan, founder of Land for Tillers' Freedom (LAFTI) in Tamil Nadu, India**

Krishnammal Jagannathan started Land for Tillers' Freedom (LAFTI) to fight for land rights for the Dalit caste, India's poorest citizens, and encourage self-empowerment among women. LAFTI promotes self-sufficiency to Dalits through training programs that advance wasteland development, self-employment and environmental protection. Jagannathan also teaches entrepreneurialism for Dalits through vocational work including plumbing, tailoring, masonry and mat weaving.

#### **Michael Woodard, founder of Jubilee House Community and the Center for Development of Central America in Managua, Nicaragua**

For nearly 30 years, Michael Woodard has lived and worked among the poor, first in the United States and now, for nearly 15 years, in Nicaragua. In 1993, after 10 years of running programs directed at domestic issues, Woodard formed the Center for the Development of Central America and relocated to Nicaragua where he and a staff of 12 work in Ciudad Sandino, a densely populated and abjectly impoverished city that had become a dumping ground for victims of natural disasters. Focusing on sustainability, Woodard and his team have organized and developed initiatives in healthcare, education, micro-credit lending, agriculture, sustainable economic development and technology.

The 2008 Opus Prize event will recognize all three of this year's award recipients for their faith-based humanitarian efforts and each will be given an award for their entrepreneurial leadership. The three Opus Prize award recipients will be narrowed down to one faith-based humanitarian leader who will be given a \$1 million award for use within his or her organization. The other two leaders will each receive \$100,000 finalist awards. The decision will be announced on Tuesday, Nov. 18, at Benaroya Hall in Seattle.

As part of the Opus Prize 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 finalists 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.

Seattle University's yearlong process to select the three award recipients 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.

For additional information about the Nov. 18 Opus Prize announcement and the award recipients, visit [www.seattleu.edu/opusprize](http://www.seattleu.edu/opusprize).

#### **About Seattle University**

**Seattle University**, founded in 1891, is a Jesuit Catholic university located on 48 acres on Seattle's Capitol Hill. More than 7,500 students are enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs within eight schools. *U.S. News and World Report's* "Best Colleges 2009" ranks Seattle University among the top 10 universities in the West that offer a full range of masters and undergraduate programs.

#### **About the Opus Prize Foundation**

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](http://www.opusprize.org).