

Bringing light to a Nepal village

*Davis Project for Peace award enables three
Trinity students to promote global peace*



Left to right:
Matthew Phinney '10,
Michael Pierce '10 and
Vinit Agrawal '10

by Lauren Turlík '09

Three Trinity first-year students have been granted \$10,000 in order to implement their proposal to promote global peace this summer. Vinit Agrawal '10, Matthew Phinney '10, and Michael Pierce '10 constitute one of the 100 groups that received the grant as part of the Davis Projects for Peace award. The three students will focus on installing solar tukis (which means “lamp”

incorporate a high degree of vision, compassion, and practicality and could take place either in the United States or at another international location. The main objective, however, had to “press the boundaries of our current views of achieving world peace,” said President Jimmy Jones in a public invitation to submit proposals.

Agrawal, Phinney, and Pierce hope to show how

are caused for oil and other petroleum products; switching from non-renewable energy source to renewable is compulsory at this stage. Our project deals with such a switch in use of energy sources in rural parts of Nepal: a switch from kerosene lamps to solar tukis,” said Agrawal, who is originally from Kathmandu, Nepal.

The solar tuki is a light-emitting diode (LED) solar lighting system consisting of two 0.3-watt lamps with built-in nickel metal hydride rechargeable batteries, which are charged by a three-watt solar photovoltaic panel. It is a safe, efficient, inexpensive, low-maintenance light source that provides eight hours of continuous light and runs on renewable energy. The solar tuki provides a clean alternative to kerosene lamps.

The most unique aspect of the group’s proposal is their creation of a community charging center. They plan to group the solar panels together, rather than installing separate panels in individual homes, which will reduce costs by 20 percent. Panels will be grouped near a school in order to encourage local residents to send their children to school, thus also increasing literacy rates.

Currently, there are 2.6 million homes without electric lighting in Nepal. The group hopes that by installing solar tukis it will

allow for extended light hours, which will increase time for studying, reading, and income-generating activities.

Agrawal, Phinney, and Pierce will travel to Nepal in late May and will stay until mid June. Once they have arrived, they will use public transportation to reach Banepa and will walk eight miles to reach their project site. The group will educate local citizens in the operation and maintenance of the solar tuki, implement the first solar tuki in Kavrepalanchowk, and create a documentary of their work to share with the Trinity community.

The proposal projects that this project will directly help more than 1,000 individuals, but the national and international recommendations could help billions. “We hope our project will vastly improve the standard of life in this village, but more importantly, we hope our project will serve as a model,” said Pierce. “I think it will show that the Third World can lead in changing over to sustainable energy solutions, and that a small increase in the quality of life for some of the world’s poorest citizens can go a long way in terms of promoting peace. We hope our project will get replicated all over the world.”

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in Nepali) in rural parts of Nepal as part of their “Community Approach to Solar Lighting” project.

The Davis Project for Peace award is made possible by Kathryn Wasserman Davis, who has funded the \$1-million initiative in celebration of her 100th birthday. “I want to use my 100th birthday to help young people launch some immediate initiatives that could bring new thinking of the prospects for peace in the world,” said Davis.

Trinity Chaplain Daniel Heischman headed the selection committee. Students from 76 institutions around the country were eligible to submit proposals. The proposal had to

peace can be achieved in Nepal with a community system of solar-powered lights. “As first-year students, we were honored to be one of the teams selected for the grant. I feel that it not only provides a wonderful opportunity to help some of the poorest citizens of the world, but also a chance to experience different cultures,” said Phinney.

The group focused on current trends in economic inequality and competition over non-renewable resources, but more specifically at these aspects in relation to the Maoist insurgency that has disrupted peace in Nepal for over a decade. “As we can see, most of the international conflicts