



Photo courtesy of Citta.org

Site of current project in Nepal.

CREATING SOLUTIONS

Joe Gonzalez '94 knows what community service is all about. A theatre/lighting design major, Joe is a creative soul with a big heart. During his time at Franklin Pierce, Joe says, "There was little to no community connection or interaction." But he set out to change that!



Photo by Jeff Lazell

When Joe found out that the elementary and middle schools in town had no theatre program of any sort, he and his friends decided to develop a program: Drama Outreach. They created a weekly drama club at Rindge Memorial and Jaffrey-Rindge Middle School, which culminated in original productions in both schools. From there, they expanded their efforts to include workshops in other schools in New Hampshire and Vermont, introducing theatre to more than 1,500 students in the region.

The success of the program only fueled Joe's passion to contribute. He got involved in other aspects of community

service and was ultimately given an award through NH Partners in Education in recognition of his volunteer hours and initiative. Joe was intimately involved in the creation of the on-campus Community Relations Liaison position, initially held by Marabeth Farmer. His passion for service was infectious, and community members soon began to ask for student volunteers to help with their programs.

Joe graduated and embarked on a career that involved all aspects of theatre and TV production and management. He currently lives in New York, where he continues to do freelance work in those fields. The community service aspect of his life has also continued to thrive.

"I spent more and more time educating myself globally about the scope of issues everyone is facing around the world," Joe says. He would often discuss his ideas with his friend, Tara Bracco, over dinner. What emerged from those conversations is The Project Solution, a nonprofit that they co-founded to encourage philanthropy and create quantifiable change in distressed

areas of the world. The organization is based on a model that allows people with small gifts of \$25 or \$50 to see the impact of their contributions.

In just over three years, the organization has funded seven infrastructure projects in Cameroon, Zambia, Uganda, India, Nicaragua, and Haiti, serving nearly 4,000 people. They are currently working on a new project in Nepal. All of the projects selected by The Project Solution are "shovel-ready" and 100 percent of the donations go directly to them; those with a heart to give no doubt find these projects very compelling. "We want our donors to feel part of the community project," Joe says. "And you deserve to know where your money is going."

The Project Solution website states that people without significant means are given the chance to "be the solution," embracing the idea that a little effort from a group of people can lead to social change. Franklin Pierce is proud of Joe; he sees needs in the world and he creates solutions. Visit the website and be inspired:

www.theprojectsolution.org

