

Transforming hearts

Zion Project founder says change comes by deciding to take a stand



JMU's Be the Change office intern Elizabeth Holena ('07) talks with world changer Sarita Hartz ('02) for *Madison* magazine. Hartz reveals her dedication to transforming hearts and empowering the lives of girl child soldiers in Northern Uganda.

Madison: What is the purpose of the Zion Project? Why did you decide to create this organization?

Hartz: The purpose of Zion Project is to transform hearts and empower lives of girl child soldiers to revolutionize war-affected communities in Africa.

In March 2006, I went to Uganda for five months and saw with my own eyes things I had only read about. I saw the disease, starvation and desperation of communities that are now forced to live in crowded camps because of a 20-year war that the outside world knows little about. I heard the people say they wanted to go back home, and they wanted to work their own land. But what was most unjust were the young girls who were not going to school, but caring for infants as a result of their rapes. I spoke with these girls and found that while some are taken to reception centers upon escaping their captors, most do not receive coun-

seling or care after being returned to their camp. Their neighbors often call them and their children "killers." After seeing corruption in both the government and in aid organizations, I decided to start something of my own to ensure that donors' money would be invested where it was intended — in the lives of those who need it most.

Madison: Tell us about your recent trip to Uganda.

Hartz: Basically this trip was about trying to figure out my next step in terms of setting up a nonprofit in Uganda. I needed to do more research about how this project is going to work and where we are going to begin as well as investigating the process for applying as an organization over there.

I have so many memories of the trip, but one sticks out in particular. I went to an orphanage for children who used to live in child-headed households (raising themselves). That night I saw a room of huddled children on their knees, skinny arms outstretched to the sky, and faces pressed to a dirty floor with tears of worship to a God they truly believed in. I knew then

Sarita Hartz ('02) is transforming hearts and empowering the lives of girl child soldiers to revolutionize war-affected African communities.

'After seeing corruption in both the government and in aid organizations, I decided to start something of my own to ensure that donors' money would be invested where it was intended—in the lives of those who need it most.' — SARITA HARTZ ('02)

that revival is coming to Uganda, and it is coming through children. They gave me hope that Uganda will not always be at war, but that there will be peace, not only for a country, but also in suffering hearts. One boy used to run away when he first came to the orphanage. He was so used to the camps and to loneliness that he did not know what it was like to be loved.

Lives can be changed for the better, hope restored to the destitute, even when peace agreements fall through. The children taught me that.

Given the chance, they can teach their country and the world this, too. People can read my blog to see more about this remarkable transformation at www.zion-project.org.

Madison: What do you enjoy most about volunteer and nonprofit work?

Hartz: It is what I was made to do. I love it because when I do it, I am most fully myself. I also believe I am investing in something larger than myself and therefore it will outlast me. Everyone wants to leave

About the interviewer: Elizabeth Holena ('07) graduated in May with a degree in technical and scientific communication and minor in publication management. She plans to enter graduate school. She completed an internship with JMU's "Be the Change" office last semester.



Zion Project founder Sarita Hartz says, "The children give me hope that Uganda will not always be at war, but that there will be peace, for the country and for suffering hearts."

a legacy, but often it is the simple acts of love to those who are in need that create beauty in the world and set us free from our own selfishness. I love that it always surprises me how much I learn and receive in comparison with how much I give.

Madison: Your blog says you enjoy writing. What do you like to write about? What gives you inspiration?

Hartz: I write poetry. I write on napkins in restaurants and on scraps of junk mail. I write because I have to, and I write about what I need to get out of me emotionally in order to live. I've been published, but it's more about what I get out of it, than it is if people recognize it. Check out www.innisfreepoetry.org/ and click on "Previous Issues, March 2006" and [Sarita Hartz].

Madison: What are your future plans?

Hartz: I just try to take it one day at a time and focus on what I can do to make the lives of the people I love in Uganda a little better. I find that plans are often changed, and we have to be flexible to roll with it. My only plans are just to go back "home."

Madison: How do you see yourself making a difference or "being the change?"

Hartz: We never really know if we are making a difference. We give and we try, but ultimately we have to leave it up to God and the

self-will of each individual to realize that they have the power not only to change their lives, but the lives of others. I just decided that if I wanted the world to be different then I had to stop complaining and do something about it. If I am being the change, it is through standing up and saying that it is wrong that we have children as soldiers in the world. And if I don't do something about it, then who will? I am the change because I refuse to remain stagnant. Hopefully others become connected to me and we pull each other along toward growth. My motto is words by Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." **TH**

Madison professors, students, alumni and donors have been changing the world since the university's founding in 1908.

BE *the* CHANGE

Who is making a difference in your part of the world? Nominate a world changer at www.jmu.edu/bethechange/

Bright

[Jeffrey Scheerer]

Designing the Dreamliner

BY KATIE O'DOWD ('07)

Jeffrey Scheerer ('06) is flying high at his first job out of college. Scheerer works as a manufacturing engineer for Global Aeronautica LLC, a startup company developed for the Boeing 787 Dreamliner project.

"The main difference between the Dreamliner and commercial airplanes of the past is that it is primarily constructed of composites instead of aluminum and sheet metal," Scheerer says.

Older commercial airplanes have metal frames wrapped in sheet metal. But the Dreamliner, Scheerer says, is made in sections out of composite materials such as carbon fiber.

"This makes for much easier and faster manufacturing and assembly," he explains. "It also makes it much lighter ..., which makes it faster and more fuel efficient."

Scheerer says the Dreamliner is also designed for better passenger comfort. "In general, passengers will have more room, exposure to better air quality and access to all sorts of technology."

But one feature that stands out, Scheerer says, is the Dreamliner's windows. "They will be much larger than those on traditional airplanes, giving passengers great views of their surroundings."

Scheerer helped manufacture and install all systems in the fuselage for the Dreamliner. After completion, the 787 was returned to Boeing for final assembly.

An ISAT major with dual concentrations in engineering/manufacturing and energy, Scheerer says JMU helped prepare him for the job industry. "ISAT doesn't just teach students a regime of material, but also teaches students how to learn new material and adapt to new situations in a variety of technical fields," he adds.

ISAT professor Jonathan Miles says Scheerer was an excellent student in the program. "He was determined to excel," he says.

The summer after his junior year, Scheerer interned in the Baltimore area with Northrop Grumman Electronic Systems, which he says taught him a lot about the aerospace field.

His internship also helped him land his first job with Global Aeronautica. When Scheerer first heard about the Boeing project, he knew it was something he wanted to be a part of. "I have always been very interested in airplanes and manufacturing, so I knew I wanted a job in the aerospace field," he says.

Scheerer began researching the company and networking through contacts at Northrop Grumman. He eventually got in touch with the operations manager, which led to interviews and a job offer.

Miles says the job is entry level, yet "unusually visible" given the national importance of Boeing and the new Dreamliner. **MI**



Lights

*The professors, students
and alumni who shine in
Madison's constellation*



Jeffrey Scheerer ('06), a manufacturing engineer for Global Aeronautica LLC, is part of the team that designed the Boeing 787 Dreamliner, which debuted this summer.

[Ty Strickler]

Hollywood hopeful

BY CARLY LEDUC ('08)

Ty Strickler ('08) has rubbed elbows with God. Well, not God per se ... but with Morgan Freeman, who played God in the film *Bruce Almighty* and its sequel, *Evan Almighty*, which released nationwide in June.

Strickler, who began working as an extra on *Evan Almighty* during 2006 filming in Waynesboro, Crozet and Richmond, made friends with several producers. "They saw how interested I was in filming and asked if I would like to help on the film," says Strickler.

The camera crew began teaching Strickler the ropes, and before he knew it, he was accompanying the crew to Los Angeles to work on the back lot at Universal City. "I was so lucky," says Strickler. "So many doors opened so quickly for me. I had to leave the *Evan Almighty* production to work on a pre-arranged visual effects internship as a rotoscope artist for the Los Angeles-based Flash Film Works. My internship job was basically tracing — frame by frame — an image shot in front of a blue screen to make it ready for the next level of effects. I did work on *The Guardian* tracing a boat 'crashing' because we couldn't replicate that in real life."

After he finished his internship commitment, Strickler returned to his camera PA job on the *Evan Almighty* set at Universal Studios. "It was a real honor to work under film director Tom Shadyac and the director of photography Ian Baker, a four-time Australian Film Institute award winner," says Strickler. "They taught me the ins and outs of everything

'They taught me the ins and outs of everything from lighting to sound, and they did all this in an inviting, friendly atmosphere.'



Above, Ty Strickler ('08) jump started his career in cinema by spending his summer rubbing elbows with the cast and crew on the set of *Evan Almighty*, including Morgan Freeman. Right, Strickler directs his short film *Tourist Trap*, which was filmed in Melrose Caverns and the New Market Battlefield.



***Evan Almighty* star Steve Carell takes a break from filming with Ty Strickler ('08), who continues to work with the film's director Tom Shadyac on script projects.**

from lighting to sound, and they did all this in an inviting, friendly atmosphere. My task was to make sure the cameras were always ready to go. When you're in the middle of a hot shoot, they can't be waiting for film to reload."

Strickler even made the acquaintances of the film's stars, Steve Carell, Morgan Freeman and John Goodman. "A film set is kind of like a big family," Strickler explains. "When you work 14-hour days together, you really get to know everyone. It wasn't unusual for me to be sitting next to John Goodman at lunch. The whole on-the-job experience with professionals in the field was amazing. It was such a big wake-up to the way the film industry really operates. There are things you have to learn — set etiquette you have to be taught — all the things you'll never learn in a textbook."

As a senior School of Media Arts and Design major with a concentration in producing and directing, Strickler doesn't discount the impact SMAD has had in his education.

"SMAD is a great starting point," he says, "It gives you a sample of everything, from writing to camerawork. You can figure out your strengths and what you want to pursue. My professors are very supportive of me and my professional growth. They have provided a great stepping stone into the industry."

This summer, Strickler studied cinematography and film courses at the University of Southern California and worked as a script reader for Tom Shadyac at Shady Acres Entertainment, one of Universal's two in-house production companies.

"This job has helped me to clarify the difference between commercially successful and unsuccessful scripts as I continue to work on my own short film projects," says Strickler.

The Hollywood hopeful will graduate in December and plans to continue his cinematography studies if accepted to USC's graduate program. Eventually, he would like to open up more film opportunities in the Shenandoah Valley. "My goal is two-fold," he says, "to give back to the community that has been so good to me and to never have to worry about where my next job is coming from. But, that is everyone's hope in L.A." ❧

[Joan Kindig]

Children's lit expert judges national awards

BY KATIE KELLOGG ('07)

How long was your summer reading list? Joan Kindig's is never-ending. The reading education specialist will review virtually every picture book that comes out this year.

Kindig's distinguished background in children's literature includes service on the national selection committees for both the Newberry and Caldecott medals.

"It shows her expertise in the area of children's literature, which of course is an asset to us," says Martha Ross, head of the Department of Early, Elementary and Reading Education. Ross also says that Kindig's strong background with literacy education will be helpful as JMU redesigns its advanced licensing program for reading specialists.

At JMU, it has all come together for her. Kindig says that she found her niche when she joined Ross' department in the College of Education in January. "It's just a vibrant and exciting program," Kindig says. "Coming to JMU has just been wonderful."

While serving on the committee of the Newberry Award, Kindig bowed out due to a conflict of interest that arose when one of the authors under consideration for the award thanked her in the book's dedication.

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— MARTHA ROSS, *head of the Department of Early, Elementary and Reading Education*



College of Education reading specialist Joan Kindig has served the national Newberry and Caldecott award selection committees.

Almost as soon as she stepped down from the Newberry Award Committee, Kindig was appointed to the selection committee of the prestigious Caldecott Award. The committee will announce this year's award winner in January 2008.

"It is such a thrill, but also a big responsibility," she says. "I want the winner to be the best book out there because children will be reading this through the ages."

It's as part of her volunteer position on the Caldecott Award selection committee that Kindig will be looking at all the picture books publishing this year. Publishers send her copies of books to review, and when she is finished reading them Kindig has donated them in the past to grateful teachers. Since joining the Madison faculty, Kindig has donated the books to the JMU Reading Center. She estimates that she has already donated close to 1,000 books to the center.

Kindig earned her doctorate from the University of Virginia where she taught graduate students before coming to JMU.

Kindig says that she was attracted to Madison because of the quality of the School of Education, the faculty and the students. "The students have been outstanding," she says. ❧



ONE *of a kind*

Currently on exhibit in the Lantz Gallery in the Leeolou Alumni Center, photographs by Daniel Robinson ('08M) are made using a camera the photographer constructed. "My camera is a large wooden box with a small aperture made in a metal plate by a sewing needle," says Robinson. "The pinhole camera has no lens and is a simple adaptation of the Camera Obscura, the fundamental photographic device. Constructing the device myself makes it not simply a camera, but *my* camera. My pictures, as opposed to more traditional photographic processes, are not prints or additions; the paper on the wall is the same paper that was once in the camera. Each image is made one at a time and is one of a kind. This specific attention to each image changes the way I photograph. Each exposure gets greater attention, the attention I believe it should get, because there is no second chance. I like exploring previously inhabited spaces. Each place I visit causes me to internally re-examine the psychological relationship that all human beings have to their place, be it a home, a business, etc. The very fact that the places I photograph have been abandoned implies a certain amount of trauma has occurred at that place, and what surrounds it has been the witness." ■

M.F.A. student Daniel Robinson creates unique views with his large self-made camera (background). See examples of Robinson's photography in Full Frame on Page 2.

About the artist: *Daniel Robinson ('08M) was born in Kentucky and grew up in Southwest Virginia. He earned a B.S. in art from Radford University and is completing an MFA in studio art with a concentration in photography at JMU. He has studied ceramics, sculpture and photography and is a teaching assistant for Intro to Photography. He has worked for JMU's New Image Gallery and has exhibited work at JMU, Radford University and in Richmond.*



ATLANTA

By Michael Gubser, Ph.D.

Slow. So goddamn slow. Forgive me, Lord.

How can I stay in this house
when every day I see him tumble
down the stairs. He called to me before
he stepped off, his voice earnest,
he simply wanted my audience for his final
fall. When he landed on the concrete foot
of the stairs, I called the ambulance quick
as I could. I stayed
upstairs when the paramedics came,
I was scared, there
was no room for me
on the alcove, the tiny alcove.
I remember his body

pale and sprawled, and the doctors,
the doctors, standing there poking him, diagnosing
a dead man. I told them remove
his body from the machine. He wouldn't want it.
"Life is to be lived," my husband always
said. They pronounced him
dead at the hospital.
It is amazing, but you know what?
The tears just wouldn't come
then. Nothing.
So suddenly here I am. And I'm moving.
What else can I do?
Moving from a house
of memories.

EXPRESSIONS

36 years.
36 years we lived in this house.
27 years we hosted students,
each from a different country. Still
remember them all, some just like my own
children. I remember all
of them. I told them here
I treat you just like home. This
is your home. Don't feel
uncomfortable and don't take advantage.
You just do like you would
at home.
We had one girl from Denmark,
fine looking girl, I can tell you, but boy
she put on
weight, so you know what I did?
I put her on a diet. I did! She was home-
sick. I felt so sorry
for her. That often happens, you know. They get far
from home and they start to
eat. Poor little thing. She walked around the beach,
a little string
wrapped round from back to front, stomach and
boobies hanging out all over the place,
the boys laughing. I
was so embarrassed
for her.

Iced tea?

With sugar?

My husband, rest his soul, always liked
lots of sugar, but not everyone
does. You
know what they call sweetened ice tea down here in the
South? Devil's lemonade.

We had another girl from—where was she from?—
Spain, I think. Absolutely beautiful girl, her looks I mean.
She knew it too. She used to parade around, hours
at the mirror, stay
out till all hours.
It's too bad
when girls get
that way.
Not nice at all,
and that counts for something.
You can be as ugly as home-made
sin and if you're nice you got things going your way.

See that hotel over there?
Most ridiculous place
to build a hotel. I've never seen anything
like it in all my
born days.
A hotel in a subdivision. It's dangerous, too.
Was a crack house for awhile, and you know

what? The guy who built it was running
for office! Trying to get elected! Yes! State senate,
I think. Crazy, corrupt politicians.
My husband, he was angry. He told him
he'd never get elected to office.
"I'm going to tell
everyone I know not to vote for you,"
that's what he said. It's a dangerous place.
I always tell my granddaughter not
to walk out late at night, a pretty girl, let me tell you.
There's always noise,
folks going
and coming in and out
lots of blacks
lots of drugs over there.

Ouch!

Sometimes I get sharp pains in my back. It hurts,
like something pinch a nerve,
like there's a knife up there.
But it goes away pretty quick.
I move along well for my age,
don't you think?

But, you know, you never can judge people really.
I do it, though I shouldn't. My husband,
God rest his good soul, always
helped people out, worked for charity, and for the
church, never made judgments.
After the accident,
I got a card from Jack, the black fellow
who cleans at the hotel. He said "I loved
your husband. It's because of him
I'm a Christian. He used
to come out for the morning paper at sunup,
when I would start my cleaning,
and we'd sit
on the curb,
and he'd tell me
about the Lord,
and about Christ.
I converted because of him.
He was such a good man."
You know, you never can tell what's inside a person.
My husband never judged anyone.
He used to say "The right kind of people
talk about things. The wrong kind of people
talk about people." God bless him.
You really never know what's inside a person. ❧

About the poet: History professor Michael D. Gubser teaches courses in Modern European history, intellectual history and world history. He is also an international development consultant. Gubser earned his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, and has published poetry in numerous journals. This year, he published two books, including the poetry book *Secret, but Kept it Room*. Learn more in the Mixed Media department on Page 59.