

WEST EXTRA

Churchville-Chili grads elevate their passion for Nepal



West Extra

Caurie Putnam

Guest columnist

Although Dan Maurer and Anthony Mancini grew up a mile apart in Chili, a nation 7,000 miles away cemented their friendship: Nepal.

Maurer and Mancini, both 2005 graduates of Churchville-Chili High School and 2009 graduates of St. Bonaventure University, visited the South Asian nation together for the first time in 2011. They had studied abroad together in Australia as college juniors and connected over their passions for travel and business.

"I had to look Nepal up on a map," recalled Maurer, when Mancini suggested a backpacking trip to the nation located mainly in the Himalayas. "He wanted to see a different part of the world; someplace dramatically different."

The two loved their three-month trip to Nepal and thought about possibly starting an eco-tourism or cultural immersion business there, but those ideas changed April 25, 2015, when a devastating earthquake hit the country killing about 9,000 people. Maurer and Mancini were not in the country at the time, but the natural disaster resonated with them.

"The earthquake shook us awake," Maurer said. "We said, 'Now is the time. We're going over to help.'"

With \$8,000 they raised through crowd-funding, Maurer returned to Nepal a few months after the quake and built 50 temporary structures. Those structures were the beginning of Elevate Nepal, Inc., a Nepalese and American registered nonprofit that Maurer and Mancini created to help the Nepalese people rebuild from the quake and develop sustainable communities for



Shown in Nepal are the leaders of Elevate Nepal. From left, co-founder and Chili native Dan Maurer; in-country coordinator Resham Lama Bal of Nepal and co-founder and Chili native Anthony Mancini. PROVIDED

the long term.

"Even today there are still tens of thousands of people in temporary shelters, roads and schools that need to be repaired and lots of work that needs to be done," Maurer said. "We have projects for the next 30 years lined up here."

Since Maurer and Mancini started Elevate Nepal, they've done impressive work. They've built six permanent homes in the village of Kholegaon, rebuilt and improved the sanitation for

Patelshor Primary School and are currently building a 9,000-square-foot school for 700 children to replace the heavily damaged Sarsyu Primary School. They're also planning a medical camp that will bring American doctors to Nepal.

The business partners live and work in Arizona (Maurer in the renewable energy industry and Mancini as a hiking guide in the Grand Canyon), but have an office, apartment and in-country coor-

dinator in Nepal (Resham Lama Bal). They travel to Nepal several times a year, but work on the nonprofit's projects year round.

"The people of Nepal are what kept me going back and keep me coming back," Maurer said. "They're unbelievably welcoming, kind, humble and hospitable."

Elevate Nepal, whose funding comes through donations, grants and selling products, has also recently begun importing Nepali coffee to fund projects and create opportunities in remote villages.

The coffee is roasted in Phoenix, Arizona, by Rochester native Damian Serafine of Serafina Coffee Roasters, and available on the Elevate Nepal website. One hundred percent of the coffee proceeds are returned to Nepal for humanitarian efforts.

To learn more about Elevate Nepal, go to elevatenepalinc.org.

Pick of the Week

Lovin' Education — a benefit concert that will provide support to Rochester City School District music students through the Rochester Education Foundation — will take place from 6 to 8:30 p.m. Sunday, April 28, at Lovin' Cup Bistro and Brews, 300 Park Point Drive, Henrietta. The Melody Masters Big Band, directed by Marcia Bornhurst Parkes, and friends will perform. Tax-deductible donations will be accepted at the door via cash or check (\$10 for adults is suggested). Gently used wind, brass, percussion and string instruments may be donated at the event. For more information, go to rochestereducation.org.

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