



DEDE PICKERING '71

Alumni Service Award

Bringing Focus to the Needs of Women

by Linda Maxwell Stefanelli '62

Dede Pickering is motivated by her curiosity, sense of adventure and desire to explore the world. Camera in hand, she has traveled to over 90 countries on six continents and the results of her journey have enriched the lives of countless people along the way. In May, she will be honored with the Alumni Service Award for her tireless efforts on behalf of CARE and Women's World Banking.

Not only an inveterate traveler, Ms. Pickering is a passionate, self-taught photographer. "I shoot from the heart," she says. "My keen interest in photography grew out of my wish to record



what I saw during my travels to the developing world. When I found I could combine my love of travel and photography in a way to benefit humanity, everything changed, my life came together."

Over the years, she became deeply moved by the plight of the women and children she captured through the lens of her camera and began looking for ways to improve their lives. She volunteered for CARE

because she had seen the positive impact of its work in the field and admired its philosophy of offering "a hand up rather than a hand out." In 1998, she co-founded and became the chair of CARE's first Women's Initiative Group in New York.

"It was the first time in my life I was given the opportunity to build something from scratch," she says. "I worked around the clock to raise funds and awareness. I worked harder as a volunteer than I had ever worked in any paying job because I believed in what I was doing."

She headed the Initiative for seven years and helped launch chapters in Boston, Chicago and San Francisco. The group's mission is to link women in the U.S. with those in developing countries and raise funds to create opportunities for people in need. Its main focus is the education of girls, which has proven to be the most effective means of fighting poverty and creating productive societies. Ms. Pickering donates many of her photographs to the cause and speaks from personal experience

to audiences across the country. (Her photographs can be viewed on her website: www.dedepickering.com.)

"While we continue to empower women around the world, they in turn empower us by teaching us about their lives," she says. "We have learned that we have similar dreams for a safer, healthier, more peaceful world for all our families. We can accomplish these dreams if we work together, united across cultural divides."

Ms. Pickering served as a New York trustee for CARE and was a member of the Advisory Committee for its Campaign for Education. In addition, she is on the board of Women's World Banking, a global network of 54 microfinance institutions that provide small loans to enable people, primarily women, to start their own businesses and lift themselves out of poverty. Based on her travels and her commitment to make a positive impact on society, she was asked to join the Explorers Club in New York. She and her husband, Bruce Bossidy, split their time between New York City and Bay Head, N.J. with their springer spaniel Dolly.

Ms. Pickering's humanitarian

continued on page 30



DEDE PICKERING '71

continued from page 18

efforts were foreshadowed by some of her early academic choices. She remembers loving geography and history at PDS, and studied psychology and sociology in college. But it was travel that changed her life. Upon high school graduation, she journeyed to Africa for the summer.

“That trip opened my eyes and changed the way I saw the world forever,” she says. “It was my first real adventure, but there was no way I could have possibly known the impact it would have on my life.”

In the 1980s, Ms. Pickering worked in New York City as an executive recruiter placing senior management. “I found myself in my midtown Manhattan office, staring out the window, wondering what lay beyond the concrete,” she says. “I felt restless and unfulfilled. Interviewing others made me question my own life. I wanted more than just a job. I wanted to make a difference in the world. I felt my life shift in a different direction.”

She has traveled to all corners of the globe and her passport is filled with stamps from such exotic places as Tibet, Bhutan, Cambodia, Vietnam, Nepal, Albania, Patagonia, Peru, Kenya, Tanzania, Mongolia, Rwanda, Uganda, Myanmar, and Antarctica. She has been on humanitarian missions to Guatemala, Kosovo, Ghana, Togo, Benin, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and to India many times.

“My travels led me up mountains, down rivers, through villages and beyond familiar places and comfortable facilities,” she says. “I believe that all the steps I have taken throughout my life have led me to what I’m doing today. I believe that every individual can make a difference for good in this world, that one must have conviction and courage to stand for principle, even against grave odds, and that even the biggest dreams and most ambitious goals begin with the actions of individuals.”