Prakash Bista has come a long way from his remote village in Nepal to Soka University in Aliso Viejo, where he's a sophomore. Prakash spoke to an enraptured audience of 486 at the leading liberal arts school's 10th annual Peace Gala about growing up in a village that the U.N. says is one of the most underdeveloped in the world.

When he was eight, his father took him to the nearest town, a four-day, 100-mile walk away, where he saw electric lights, cars and kids going to school for the first time. He persuaded his parents to send him to school, and he eventually earned a scholarship to Soka.

But that was after he built the first school ever in his village. Now, he wants to build 30 more in Nepal. He won the $10,000 first prize at a Social Entrepreneurship Competition at UCLA, he's on his way.

Prakash is an example of the kind of students Soka attracts. The university, founded upon Buddhist principles of peace, human rights and the sanctity of life, ranked among the top 50 liberal arts colleges in the nation by U.S. News and World Reports.

The "Celebrating a Vision of Peace" gala, co-chaired by Joan May and Dita Shemke, raised $600,000 for scholarships to the jewel of a school, thanks to lively auctions and fund-a-scholarship opportunities. There was a performance by Broadway star Ivan Rutherford, known best for playing Jean Valjean in Les Misérables, and by the end of the evening the audience, from students to the university president, were on the floor dancing to Motown. --JUSTINE AMODEO

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE. The next Peace Gala, Celebrating a Vision of Peace, will be held on October 10, 2015. The event benefits the Soka University Scholarship Endowment. For more information on submitting an auction item or to reserve tickets for next year, visit the university's website. :: soka.edu :: 949-480-4000