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Informative Choice

The CMU undergraduate must choose. It's the late 1970s, and [Nancy Wolk](#) is vacillating between a major in finance or one in technology and business. She values the advice of her father, a CPA, who says that burgeoning computer technology might change the way businesses work, which means there will be a demand for people who understand technology. Wolk agrees. She's also intrigued with solving problems using technology. She graduates in 1980 with degrees in applied mathematics and management sciences, marrying the two interests. More than three decades later, she's still combining those interests—as chief information officer for [Alcoa](#), the world's leading aluminum producer, which employs approximately 61,000 people in 30 countries. Wolk was recently honored for her work when [Computerworld](#) named her one of the Premier 100 IT Leaders in 2013.

—Lorelei Laird (DC'01)



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Forbes' Field

Most Haitians use kerosene and charcoal for lighting and cooking, but both are disproportionately expensive, are bad for human health, and have deforested the island so much that it's susceptible to catastrophic floods. [Daniel Schnitzer](#) believes that Haitians' lives would improve if they had access to the solar-powered LED lamps he's bringing as the first project of his nonprofit social enterprise, [EarthSpark](#) International. He goes to the island to test the market, believing that customers will pay the higher initial cost when they see the long-term energy savings—the lamps pay for themselves after about three months.



But after he explains the lamps' advantages to one woman, she says, "Mon chérie, c'est ton cher" (My dear, it's too expensive). That's a problem shared by many in the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. He's not optimistic about market acceptance.

The 2008 experience teaches Schnitzer a lesson: innovative technology is not enough. To help Haiti and other energy-poor societies, he must make the technology instantly affordable. Today, EarthSpark sells products like solar lamps to its network of over 75 local retailers, develops country-level supply chains to serve them, and provides micro-financing to make the products affordable. And in the Haitian community of Les Anglais, EarthSpark installed a microgrid electrical system that sells pay-as-you-go electricity.

The experience has also guided Schnitzer personally as he pursues his PhD at Carnegie Mellon's Department of [Engineering and Public Policy](#) by researching the comingling of poverty and energy access.

For his efforts with EarthSpark, the graduate student was honored in the energy category of *Forbes* magazine's most recent "30 Under 30," which included 30 "up-and-comers" in 15 categories. In addition to Schnitzer, *Forbes* also spotlighted four Carnegie Mellon alumni:

- [Lily Liu](#) (DC'05, HNZ'06), Social Entrepreneur category. She is CEO of PublicStuff, a startup that connects citizens with municipalities through mobile-phone apps.
- [Scott Heimedinger](#) (DC'05), Food & Wine category. He is director of applied research and chief evangelist at Modernist Cuisine.
- [Eric Koger](#) (TPR'06, '07) and [Susan Gregg Koger](#) (TPR'06), Art & Style category. The married couple cofounded vintage-inspired online retailer ModCloth.

—Lorelei Laird (DC'01)

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Branching Out

When Carnegie Mellon [Silicon Valley](#) broke ground, dot-coms were booming. But when the first class in 2002 was welcomed, the bubble had burst. Nevertheless, as the tech industry struggled to regain its footing, CMSV students thrived. During the following 10 years, more than 700 degrees were earned in fields that encompass computer science and entrepreneurship, as well as a desire to solve problems. Not only did CMSV survive the dot-com bubble, it was recently ranked the best branch or satellite campus by [thebestcolleges.org](#).

—Elizabeth Shestak (DC'03)



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