

U student's vision is to bring light

Senior is developing solar lighting for rural Nicaragua

BY PAUL TOSTO
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Patrick Delaney wanted to use his electrical engineering skills to help people who needed them most. He found a calling in the remotest regions of Nicaragua.

A University of Minnesota student, Delaney flew to the Central American nation in 2004 at a colleague's invitation and traveled into the mountains, way off the electrical grid and miles from the nearest utility pole.

Fluent in Spanish, the Afton native asked villagers, "What's the most important thing you might want out of electricity?" They said, "*la luz*," light. In those remote places, the nights were lit by flames from pop bottles filled with kerosene, a dangerous device.

"People without electricity or off the power grid, farmers who live agrarian lives