

HEALTHIER CHILDREN IN EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS: A JOURNEY OF COLLABORATIVE SERVICE

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This past November we were in Cabañitas for three days and Suchitoto for two days, doing teeth and eyes. We had "Team Sight and Bite" t-shirts made up beforehand, which made it a lot easier to keep track of people in the airports and eased passage through customs. We donated approximately \$42,000 worth of dental care in five days to over 300 people. The optometrists saw over 400.

I must say that each of these trips has been very rewarding and everyone feels he or she gets more than is given. We also have lots of laughs and make connections with some really good people in the country.

An Expanding Mission: Providing Clean Drinking Water

Our Rotary Club pursued other projects in El Salvador as well. For example, we sponsored a graduate student intern from Brattleboro's School for International Training to go to El Sitio for 10 months to work with the people. However, because it was difficult to measure the impact of what we had done so far, interest in the El Salvador sister community began to fade amongst the members of my club. In the fall of 1996 I came across a letter in *The Rotarian* magazine that described a solar water pasteurizer suitable for sunny tropical climates. I thought that perhaps our club might want to try making use of this in El Salvador, as the need was certainly great, and the results of such a project would be easier to measure. I got the club board's approval and on the next dental/optometric trip to Salvador I presented the idea to the Salvadoran Rotarians with whom we had been working. They liked the idea and voted to donate \$2,000 to the project.

We began by installing one solar unit in Palo Grande, a village on the side of the Guazapa volcano, near Suchitoto. The Salvadoran Rotarians selected some other villages while we here in the U.S visited Rotary Clubs to raise funds. Several Rotary matching grants were set up to fund the purchase and installation of the solar units. A large group from my club, including several members who had never before visited a third world country, went to Salvador in 1998 to help install the units.

Meanwhile, at home, a small group of us from the Brattleboro club began meeting once a week and decided to propose that the Rotary Foundation address the world-wide problem of contaminated drinking water as its next main project. We called ourselves the Water Rats and named our organization "Pure Water for the World." We created polished brochures, bumper stickers, a Web site, and a very



Dr. Jerry Theberge and Dr. Bill Luring treated patients in Cabañitas, a suburb of Apopa, in 1997.

professional 11-minute video describing the solar unit and its installation, using footage we'd shot during our previous trip to El Salvador. We mailed packets containing these things to our congressmen as well as Rotary International and other powerful organizations.

About this time both hurricane Mitch and the earthquakes hit Central America. These events disrupted many of the solar installation projects as the Salvadoran Rotary Clubs became involved in more immediate efforts to aid the affected people.

The Creation of 'Pure Water for the World, Inc.'

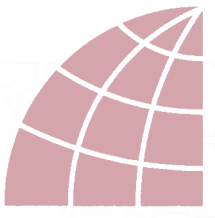
As the success of the mission to provide potable water to the villages of Central America grew, the project could no longer be run solely by volunteers. Pure Water for the World was incorporated as a 501c3 non-profit in 1997. We now have a paid executive director and a board of directors which includes people from outside Brattleboro. The focus has changed from solar to slow sand filtration units in individual households. Because of excellent Rotary Club cooperation in Honduras, the current thrust of our efforts is in that country.

Other Connections: A Sister Parish

I have found another important avenue for interaction with the Salvadoran people. Through the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod, my church has formed a sister parish with a Lutheran Church called El Redentor, located in a suburb of Apopa called Cabañitas. Our friends the D'Alessandros' church, First Church Congregational of Farmington, Connecticut, is now partnered with us in

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staff news

Lejeune Lockett has left the Center for Global Education after seven years of service. Most of Lejeune's career with the Center was spent at the Mexico site as a program coordinator and adjunct professor. Since January 2003, Lejeune has been the acting director and an adjunct professor of the Namibia program. In her new position with the Peace Corps in Namibia as associate director of health, Lejeune will still be based in Windhoek. She will be setting up a new program for Peace Corps volunteers in the health sector, primarily in the areas of HIV/AIDS and community development.

In the Minneapolis office, **Cynthia Truitt Lynch** has departed from her position as study abroad advisor at Augsburg College. Cynthia joined the Center for Global Education staff in 1997. She is looking forward to staying at home with her 18-month-old son Liam.

Also in the Minneapolis office, **Dawn Pisor** has left her position as program associate with the international travel seminar team in order to pursue new opportunities. She served at the Center for close to three years. **Alice Kloker** has been promoted from program assistant to program associate.

Many thanks to the Center's departing staff for their outstanding contributions. They will truly be missed. We wish them well in their new endeavors.

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the relationship. We have visited Cabañitas six times over the years. Jaime Fuente, a Salvadoran Rotary friend, installed a water system in the Lutheran elementary school there, and our churches provide scholarship funds for the parish children's education. In addition, we helped start and support programs in welding, hairdressing, etc., for the older young men and women.

An Ever-widening Circle

This account is, in fact, only a brief and incomplete chronology of my, and many of my friends', calling to El Salvador and the supportive role of the Rotary community. Lots of things have happened over 12 years! The people of Central America and my affection for them keep me going back. I have been responsible for convincing over 60 people to travel to Salvador with me, and many have returned several times. One of the first participants, Jenifer Ambler, has returned every year and now organizes the trips for which I used to be responsible. The experiences provided by the Center for Global Education in 1992 and 1994, and what followed as a result

Pure Water for the World is a non-profit organization that provides clean drinking water to communities in El Salvador and Honduras. Its goal is to prevent suffering and death from the intestinal diseases that result from drinking contaminated water. Children are particularly vulnerable to these diseases.

Pure Water for the World provides households, primary schools, and rural health clinics with slow sand water filters that are extremely effective at reducing waterborne pathogens. The filters require no electricity, have no moving parts, and are inexpensive—factors that make them compatible with conditions in developing countries. Because the slow sand filters are made in the country in which they are used, the project has the added benefit of creating local jobs.

To learn more about Pure Water for the World, visit their Web site at www.purewaterfortheworld.org or write to them at P.O. Box 554, Rutland, VT 05702.

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