



Amigos de Guatemala



History and Concept of Amigos de Guatemala

Guatemala is a beautiful country with over 30 volcanoes looming all around, one of the most beautiful lakes in the world – Lake Atitlan, primary rain forests, lush pine-clad hills, and tropical areas replete with mangrove swamps, banana plantations and coconut palms. Hidden behind this beauty is a very poor country that has been racked by civil war lasting more than 37 years ending in December, 1996. Half of Guatemala is Mayan Indian people who suffered greatly during the war and now have needs beyond what their government is able or willing to provide. The primary needs of clean water, basic medical care, and quality education are missing in many of the Mayan communities.

Amigos de Guatemala is a partnership of Rotary Clubs to provide quality international humanitarian service projects in Guatemala. The program began with the Groveland, CA Rotary Club building a school kitchen for a small Mayan community (Jaibalito). What Groveland Rotary began required the support and partnership of other Rotary clubs to continue. Because many clubs - esp. smaller clubs - don't have ongoing international service projects, it was recommended by Rotary International, District Governors, and World Community Service Committees that Rotary clubs work together in partnership to develop quality international projects that make a significant impact on the needs of people in poor and underdeveloped areas.

Amigos de Guatemala was created to develop a multiple club partnership for International Service in Guatemala.

The partnership is designed to:

- Minimize the financial burden on any one club.
- Increase the size and quality of possible projects.
- Involve more Rotarians in direct and indirect international service.
- Increase the chances of qualifying for Rotary Foundations grants.

As of April, 2006 ten clubs are part of the Amigos de Guatemala partnership. Each club contributes in accordance with its size and budget ranging from \$500 to \$2,000

annually. The partnership clubs are as follows:

Groveland Rotary Club
Twain Harte Rotary Club
Angels/Murphy Rotary Club
Sonora Rotary Club
Sonora 49er Rotary Club
Sonora Sunrise Rotary Club
Tracy Sunrise Rotary Club
Marina Rotary Club
Soledad Rotary Club
Blythe Rotary Club

In 2004 Amigos de Guatemala began to focus the majority of their services in the area surrounding Zacualpa, Guatemala. Although this area does not have a Rotary club, they do have excellent and welcoming municipal and nongovernmental service organizations. In [January, 2005](#) 13 volunteers helped build a two room classroom in the aldea (village) of Tunaja. We also furnished these classrooms and donated school supplies to this school and Jaibalito (where Groveland Rotary club built a school kitchen) with a Rotary Foundation Major Matching Grant.

Also in 2005 we began a scholarship/sponsorship program for Jr. and Sr. High School students. We began with 9 students and now have 21 students sponsored to continue their secondary education. Please refer to the [sponsorship section](#) of this web site for more information about the sponsorship program.

In 2005 two Rotary clubs (Marina and Groveland) sponsored District Simplified Grants in their respective districts (5220 & 5230). One grant replaced the damaged water pump and electrical system for the water well at Fe Y Alegria Jr. Hi. School in Zacualpa, Guatemala. The other grant supplied the Jr. Hi. School with a computer and printer system with email connection, to facilitate the Rotary Scholarship/Sponsorship program at the school.

In [January, 2006](#) ten Amigos de Guatemala volunteers helped build a classroom and kitchen for a small Mayan school, finished the building at Tunaja that we built in 2005 with the addition of a cement patio, and finished a stucco type school building in Las Joyas primary school that did not have a floor, doors, windows, or electricity. Both direct (hands-on) service projects were a fantastic experience for all who participated. It is our hands-on project policy to pay only for construction material where ever possible. We expect the local population to supply all labor (skilled and unskilled). We would consider helping with payment for skilled labor but, to date, that has not been necessary.

Finally, during each volunteer aided building project, we distributed a large number of high quality vegetable seeds from the Seeds of Hope project for school and community gardens. The Seeds of Hope is directed by Mel Hansen of the North

Stockton, CA Rotary Club.

In [January, 2007](#) Amigos de Guatemala volunteers will again return to Zacualpa, Guatemala to work on a school building project. Budget permitting we will build a fence around a rural school and repair damage done by Hurricane Stan in October, 2005 to two other school sites.

It is our policy that all money donated to Amigos de Guatemala by Rotary Clubs and individual members go directly to the people in Guatemala. All administrative and travel costs have been paid for by the individual Amigos volunteers. It is our intention to continue this record with future projects.

We welcome the addition of any Rotary Club partners to this exciting and meaningful work done by Amigos de Guatemala. We also welcome any partner club members to join us in our hands-on work in January.