



Rotary Pride

ROTARY PRIDE IN GUATEMALA!!

Excerpts from an email by Liz Hosmer, Ceres Rotary President:



On February 15, 17 Ceres Rotarians and friends flew to Guatemala City. We then traveled to Quenxeltenango, (Xela) Guatemala. We visited the local Rotary Club there, who co-hosted our first wheelchair distribution. It was a little eye-opening to me because the Xela Rotary didn't have any women members and I wondered how they would react to a woman club president. They were overwhelmingly gracious and welcoming.

We gave away 55 chairs the next day, attended by several members of the Xela Rotary as well as representatives from Hope Haven International, our wheelchair distributors. Our distribution made the front page of the Xela newspaper--and Xela is the second biggest city in Guatemala. It was truly a 'big deal' that Rotary was there. What makes the Hope Haven connection for wheelchair distribution different is that they have a deep understanding of the nature of disability. The recipients of our wheelchairs were identified, measured and evaluated for type of disabilities before our arrival. Then, the actual chair dispatched was appropriate for that particular individual. We took seating specialists with us, and the end-result--after hours of adjusting chairs to fit--was astounding! From mildly-affected seniors to seriously

impacted cerebral palsy victims, the chairs were custom fitted.

Our Youthact Club at Blaker Kinser Junior High School raised \$500 through hot chocolate sales to send school supplies to a school we have supported over the past couple of years. They were matched in donations by the Turlock High School Interact Club. We purchased calculators, compasses, paper, pencils, color crayons, markers, erasers, rulers, colored pencils, basketballs, soccer balls, classroom materials and other supplies--17-50lb. suitcases full--and delivered them to our school.

“17 people embarked on our trip; 17 Rotarians returned.”

This school can't afford toilet paper for their kids. They have three 'pit' toilets and only one has a seat. The kindergarten meets in a corrugated steel classroom without electricity and with dirt floors.

This is a school in dire need--but it houses the most beautiful, loving children and staff! We took digital photos of the kids and showed them the pictures---a first for them. Their laughter shook the school. I have never had such fun in my life. When we left the school, the kids lined the streets to wave us goodbye--even though school had been out for some time. I can assure you there were many tears on our bus! We decided then and there that we want to be 'the people who came back'. We don't want to be a "one-shot-wonder" for those kids--we want to be their **friends** who check on their academic progress and who care about their future.

The next day we gave away 75 more wheelchairs in a remote village--San Marcos. I will remember to my dying day when a woman **crawled** in with shoes on her hands and a baby on her back. Dave lifted her up and put her in a wheel chair and before our eyes, an entire life changed. There was also a five year old boy whose mother carried him in. (A five year old can be awfully heavy!) We placed him in a chair, the technician showed him how to turn the wheels, and "Adios, Mama" he took off! What an incredible experience we had!



17 people embarked on our trip; 17 Rotarians returned. I don't think we will ever be able to adequately express the emotions involved. But none of us will ever get over what happened to us in Guatemala. We brought school supplies and wheelchairs with us; but that was *nothing* compared with the depth of emotion and experience we brought home with us. It was truly life-altering and incredible. **I thank Rotary for the opportunity to enrich my life like that.**



Share your club's Rotary Pride story by contacting Diana Barden on jerrybarden@comcast.net or 559-674-7138.