

Lawrenceburg Rotary Leads District Effort to Light Up Villages in Honduras

Article by Bill Phillips, RC of Lawrenceburg (TN, USA – District 6760)

As Rotary International President Elect Gary C. K. Huang urges Rotarians across the globe to Light Up Rotary, the Lawrenceburg (TN, USA) Rotary Club is leading District 6760's ongoing effort to light up villages in a more literal sense. For well over a decade, District 6760 has been working with the Rotary Club of Choluteca, Honduras to provide water systems, electricity, and other services for remote villages around the city of Choluteca. Lawrenceburg Rotary signed on to the project in 2006, and assumed a leadership role in 2008. This was initially a water project, however in order to run well pumps and other equipment, it became necessary to provide electricity to remote villages. While performing a needs analysis for additional opportunities, the project teams quickly discovered that bringing power to these villages was a far greater service than the initial water projects; therefore a decision was made to shift emphasis into electrification.



According to team leader PDG Jim Johnston, teams from Lawrenceburg, Dyersburg, and Spring Hill with significant participation by Rotarians from Martin and other clubs completed the following projects in 2013:

Wired 29 houses, two schools, a clinic and a church in the small remote village of El Tapaci de Linaca about 25 miles outside of Choluteca.

Held a dental clinic that treated 101 patients in Jayacayan.

Completed a small water project at El Zapote de Linaca.

Spring Hill Rotarians wired 5 houses at Las Palmas and 10 houses at Barranquilla.



In February 2014, the Lawrenceburg Team will return to Honduras with plans to wire the remaining 41 houses at Barranquilla, 5 houses in El Zapote and a new building in Choluteca's Colonia Rotaria Housing Complex. As in past years, this will be a hands on effort with Rotarians and villagers working together to install simple wiring and electrical fixtures in their homes and other buildings. Installation will be overseen by John Pillow, a retired master electrician from the Lawrenceburg Power System; and Lawrenceburg Rotarian Charlie Brewer who is a degreed electrical engineer. Local villagers will be trained to maintain the internal wiring, and will be left with the tools to do so. A fee system and support from

the Honduran Electrical Authority will further ensure the project's long term sustainability. Follow up visits to previous installations have shown that these projects are not only sustainable, but have clearly resulted in significant community development and growth in the villages served. Representatives from over 40 nearby communities have requested Rotary assistance with future projects!



Participating Groups in 2014

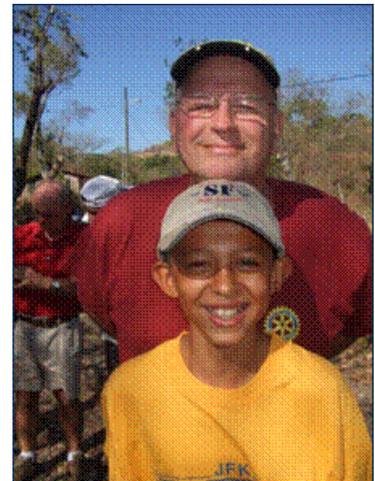
Lawrenceburg (Lead Club)
Lawrenceburg RoAnns
District 6760 (District Grant)
Spring Hill, Martin, Pulaski
Jackson, Humboldt, Camden
Clifton, Brentwood Morning
Waynesboro , McKenzie
Columbia Noon , Selmer

Dyersburg Breakfast (2nd Lead Club)
Dyersburg Noon, Union City
Brownsville, Ripley, Newbern, Trenton

Lawrenceburg, KY (Sister Club)

The budget for the 2014 Honduras Project is US\$ 36,000. Although the project has qualified for various Rotary Foundation Grants in previous years, new rules implemented under Future Vision have limited TRF assistance to locally administered District Grants. District 6760 has provided a generous \$10,000 District Grant to assist in the 2014 effort. Lawrenceburg Rotary has contributed US\$ 10,000 from its club treasury, and (to offset the loss of TRF funding) local Rotarians and RoAnn groups have conducted a Steak Supper / Auction and other activities to raise an additional US\$ 8,100. Direct contributions from other clubs in District 6760, our sister club in Lawrenceburg, Kentucky, and personal contributions by individual team members will make up the balance.

Under the leadership of PDG Jim Johnston, numerous Lawrenceburg Rotarians, family members, and Rotarians from across the district have joined with Mark Hayes and a second team of Rotarians from the Dyersburg Breakfast club to provide project labor. Team members have reported their efforts to be life changing experiences. During a recent conversation at our weekly club luncheon, Bert Spearman stated “I went to Honduras as a member of the Lawrenceburg Rotary Club, and came back a Rotarian”. Their enthusiasm has spread throughout their clubs, and this has, at least in part, encouraged eight Lawrenceburg Rotarians to become Rotary Foundation Major Donors. While Lawrenceburg Rotary is primarily a Community Service oriented club, we have now become a district leader in International Service. Three Rotarians (two from our club) have received RI’s Service Above Self award as a direct result of their work in Honduras.



Because of personal involvement in the villages, team members often find unexpected opportunities for service. During one of his visits, PDG Jim met Marlon Herrera, a six year-old



boy from El Limon de Linaca who had a crushed and dislocated hip. With help from Rotarians in Choluteca and District 6760, he arranged for Marlon and his mother to travel to Tennessee in order to have corrective surgery at Vanderbilt Children’s Hospital. Vanderbilt and Lawrenceburg’s Crocket Hospital provided gratis medical and support services. After a successful operation and six weeks

initial recuperation in Jim’s home, Marlon is now back in Honduras and continuing his recovery. The doctors are optimistic that he will walk again.

Rotarian and former team leader Neal Beard summed up the project team's experience in 2010. His thoughts are as true today as they were at the time.

“It's so easy to live in ignorance of how millions of people at our doorstep live everyday of their lives. But to be there and see how much something as common as a water well, or simple electrical wiring in a home, or a few books, pencils and paper can change lives, is unbelievably amazing. Our experience in Honduras has certainly changed our lives forever”.

Lawrenceburg Rotary, District 6760, and our partners in Choluteca and other clubs are truly “Lighting Up Rotary” one village at a time.

