



ACTS Newsletter

Americans Caring Teaching Sharing



www.actshonduras.org

December, 2014

Welcome to a window on ACTS' community development work in rural Honduras. With 25+ years in the same region, we have strong local partners and continue to make progress to help Hondurans make their communities stronger. For an expanded view with many more photos please visit our website www.ActsHonduras.org

EDUCATION



Teachers bring their students to the Library for access to books

Before we initiated the Library Project, there were no books of any kind outside of the elementary schools. Now the thriving Doctor Dean Library is open Monday-Friday and is a hive of activity for school children that come with their teachers to supplement classroom instruction. ACTS' guru for all things technical including computers is Ethan LaRochelle, and under his guidance we try to keep the computers in working order. The books have been catalogued, and kids have access to a static copy of Wikipedia that Ethan updates when he is in the village. With only dim prospects for access to the Internet, Ethan's idea for the static Wikipedia provides access to vast amounts of information. In the coming year, we hope to provide computers that are repairable in Honduras and are similar to PC systems common in workplaces in Central America.

Our computer and technology budget each year is \$5,000.



Ethan in the Library teaching computer skills to teachers



La Fuerza with Jules and Christine after making the map

If it's March, La Fuerza para el Futuro (The Force for the Future) is in action. Jules Ortego, Christine Averill, and Mike Harris who formed our partner organization, Dartmouth Alumni & Students for Honduras, or DASH, lead the teen leadership program. Following Fuerza tradition, they recruited teens from eight villages to spend a week putting leadership into

action for the improvement of the communities. Everyone was astounded as an 8-foot world map that was just a sketch on paper at the beginning of the week filled a wall in the Education Center by week's end. The map was one of many community projects that week, and ACTS provided funding for the materials.

The Fuerza projects each year are budgeted at \$8,000 for materials and equipment.



Nely and her proud sewing class at graduation

Key to the success of the Education Center is learning opportunities for people of all ages, and Nely's sewing classes are a prime example. We've known Nely for 20+ years as an active member of El Rosario's Health & Development Committee. Lately she's emerged as an outstanding teacher. Dean Seibert was there for the first graduation of a sewing class of 12 women dressed in identical outfits they had stitched, and the entire Education Center was decorated with examples of their work including buttonholes, embroidery, and basic sewing. Nely's class is about core sewing skills a woman can use in her household. ACTS provided sewing machines and funding for materials used in classes.

Classes and infrastructure at the Education Center cost \$2,500 annually.

PREVENTING CANCER



Women wait at the Clinic for Pap tests

We are honored to facilitate the partnership of Dartmouth-Hitchcock Norris Cotton Cancer Center and La Liga Contra el Cancer in their work to prevent and screen for breast and cervical cancer. Just a year ago, they screened 472 women for cancer on one weekend. We provided transportation for the women who needed follow up care in San Pedro Sula. This fall, the women with HPV were called back for more testing and the direct connection with La Liga means women who test positive for cervical cancer are connected quickly with oncologists in San Pedro Sula. Previously, women from this rural area had no access to cancer screening or follow up care.

Our transportation fund for women to see oncologists is \$1,000 annually.

AGRICULTURE



Ronis and Osman with their sons in the plantain patch

Wrapping up the first full year of the new micro bank, Born to Grow, the partners reached out to another 15 families who became part of the unique agricultural education and lending system. ACTS provided core funding for the loan program and additional funding to bring Honduran experts to the area for 1-2 week courses on specific topics such as how to manage a poultry flock. The micro bank leverages the power of its group by aggregating members' orders for seed and other supplies to take advantage of wholesale pricing.

VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE
(Online Donations Accepted here)
www.actshonduras.org

Last year, all of the families worked cooperatively on a one-acre demonstration field where they tested new planting methods, intercropping, and pest management while growing a stronger strain of corn that became their seed corn for this year. Ronis, who is a leader in Born to Grow said, "The demonstration project is by far our most successful project because everyone worked together to learn the new methods and had a hand in the success. Now they know for themselves that these ideas work."

Currently, the micro bank and farmers throughout the region are coping with the devastating results of a drought that greatly reduced the corn harvest. As Ronis told us in October, the best farmers managed to eek out a crop, but the less-skilled farmers had no success producing a crop and the reality is that people will go hungry for the next year until a corn crop can be harvested.

On average, our support of the micro bank is \$7,500 annually for education and supplies.

OUR ORGANIZATION

This is the 50th anniversary of Partners with the Americas, an initiative that paired areas in the U.S. with partners in Central and South America. Vermont was partnered with Honduras. That pairing was prescient, because both have green mountains and small agricultural communities that are family-focused.

Visit our new website www.actshonduras.org. Helen Whyte directed the project to create a contemporary web home for ACTS Honduras where our stories, photos, and ongoing needs are shared all over the world.

The ACTS Steering Committee reached out this year to include four new and dedicated members who bring long-term commitment and needed skills to our group. Please welcome:

Brad Taylor, a veterinarian, is heading up agricultural education and envisions an education program for veterinary technicians who would be trained at the Education Center.

Ann Taylor, an accomplished accountant, is teaching bookkeeping and setting standards for the financial recordkeeping of village committees

Ethan LaRochelle, a talented engineer and software designer, is responsible for technology in El Rosario with a focus on sustainable machines that can survive in a hot, dusty environment with beginning users and no onsite tech support.

Dan Saulnier is an engineer and comes to us from Engineers Without Borders Northeastern University, and has overall responsibility for water projects. His goal is ample and good water conveniently located for every family.



Ann teaching bookkeeping skills

WATER



Women carry water for their families in some villages

Beyond El Rosario where each family has a water tap, there are many villages where women and girls walk great distances carrying water in jugs on their heads to meet each family's basic needs. In those communities, where water is so precious, health is poor. Lack of water to wash people and laundry results in a variety of medical problems such as scabies and parasites causing ongoing sickness and failure to thrive.

Carrezelito is a village on top of a mountain where insufficient water is a 40-minute walk down a steep hill. Dan Saulnier's Engineers Without Borders

Northeastern team spends two weeks over Christmas every year at the ACTS bunkhouse in El Rosario. Their purpose is to solve water problems in villages like Carrezelito. They utilize extensive training, hard work, community involvement, and heaps of ingenuity.

This year, ACTS pledged \$10,000 of support for the water project in Carrezelito. The result will be ample and good water at 50 homes.



The men struggle with key equipment for the new water system



This tap tested Dan's system and it worked!

DENTAL CARE



Nelson and Brad plan construction of the Dental Clinic

For all of our success in improving health in El Rosario, dental care has been the most intractable problem. We are delighted to announce that an anonymous gift through the NH Charitable Trust is making it possible to build the shell of a dental clinic. Our third gift from the Zondervan Foundation will fund key equipment. A partnership with the dental school at the Catholic University in San Pedro Sula will provide a recent graduate that will live in the village and serve as the dentist on a volunteer basis. This is a standard way for newly graduated Honduran dentists and doctors to give back to their country.



ACTS made it possible for Roxana to attend a nursing prep program

To truly promote health requires a comprehensive dental plan, and that involves families, teachers, and community leadership to learn and establish new standards for dental hygiene. Linda Kennedy and Brad Taylor are leading this initiative.

As of mid-November, construction of the dental clinic, named Clinic of Smiles by the villagers, is underway. Rather than worrying about marketing, we're more concerned about how to manage what will be a giant surge of requests for dental care. At the rate of \$4 per patient just for the consumable supplies like the dentist's mask, gloves, and gauze pads for patients, the cost to operate the dental clinic will be substantial and we will look to our generous donors to get involved in making the dental clinic work.

We anticipate an annual expense for dental supplies to be \$8,000.



A father with a sick child heading to the Clinic

MEDICAL CARE

At the medical Clinic in El Rosario, ACTS funds a share of Nurse Rosa's salary, purchases most of the medicines in the U.S., hand-carries them to Honduras, and staffs the Clinic about eight weeks per year with medical providers from the States. Week to week the Clinic is managed by a committee from El Rosario led by Nelson Mejia. ACTS relies on Ann Taylor's bookkeeping expertise to set standards and monitor the records of the Clinic. She said, "I continue to be impressed by the careful and exacting record keeping in El Rosario."

Each patient pays a small "consulting fee" to the Medical Clinic. Any who are unable to pay are funded 100% by ACTS through the Helping Fund. The same families who use the Helping Fund often live in remote areas and utilize the ACTS Transportation Fund for bus fare to the Clinic.

ACTS's expense to support the Clinic that cares for about 3,000 people is \$10,000 per year.

It is uncommon for a local clinic to be operated with a partnership like the one we have with the Clinic Committee headed by Nelson. In April, Nelson received word that another clinic, located hours away, was being turned over to a local committee. Would the El Rosario Clinic Committee agree to mentor the new group? They were proud to be asked and to share their knowledge with new colleagues.

For about a decade, our medical leaders Peter Mason and Sue Burgos with Dean Seibert have been concerned about the health of two children in one of the smallest and poorest indigenous villages. They have skeletal



The Clinic Committee considers strategies for an anticipated crowd

deformities, are minimally verbal with significant cognitive deficiencies, and despite consultation with many physicians, a diagnosis remained elusive. Recently, Greg Tsongalis and Joel Leffert of the Department of Pathology at Dartmouth's Geisel School of Medicine were able to follow up on Dean's hunch that the genetic abnormality called homocystinuria might be the cause. Using newly available whole-exome sequencing at the Mayo Clinic, Dean's hunch was validated. A simple therapy is known to arrest the progress of the disease and it is effective in about half of all cases. Currently, the children are on a trial of the therapy and we hope it may provide some relief.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THESE FINE ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR WORK WITH US IN HONDURAS

DASH Dartmouth Alumni and Students for Honduras,
New York City NY

EWB NE Engineers Without Borders Northeastern
University, Boston MA

Norris Cotton Cancer Center, Lebanon NH

La Liga Contra el Cancer, Honduras

Hanover Fire Department, Hanover NH

Zondervan Foundation, Norwich VT

Department of Pathology, Geisel School of Medicine,
Hanover NH

TCI The Children's Initiative, Portland ME

THE ACTS HONDURAS STEERING COMMITTEE

Helen Whyte

Dean Seibert

John Sanders

Ethan LaRochelle

Dan Saulnier

Linda Kennedy

Sue Burgos

Peter Mason

Ann Taylor

Hart Silverwood

Brad Taylor

Judy Wallick

Mike Harris

Amazon Smiles on ACTS



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