



ACTS Newsletter

Americans Caring Teaching Sharing



www.actshonduras.org

Fall, 2017

Greetings! Last month as I sat down on the porch in Honduras to write this newsletter, this father and son with an ox cart caught my eye. It's emblematic of the strong family ties, work ethic and resilience we see in Honduras every day. I hope you'll enjoy reading about what ACTS has done and decide to help by funding this work in 2018. To learn more, drop a note at Info@ACTSHonduras.org, check Facebook or see the website at ACTSHonduras.org. We also have an e-version of this report. Let us know if you'd rather get an electronic version next year.

Thanks, Linda

GREETINGS FROM ACTS HONDURAS

We are a multi-disciplinary group of professionals dedicated to community development in rural Honduras. We define community development as helping people to help themselves to have food security, safety, choices and dignity. For more than 30 years, we've worked in the El Rosario area and each trip back there is a visit to a special place.

This useful and important work is supported by generous friends and neighbors like you.

When you have a simple problem, you can have a simple solution. But in low income countries like Honduras, where ACTS works, even the low-hanging fruit can be out of reach to the poorest people. This is our focus and in our third decade, the ACTS Honduras team is really picking up speed. To be sure, the first 30 years working with the community of El Rosario and surrounding villages was productive and life-changing for thousands of residents. The difference is that our relationships with Hondurans have grown exponentially and in genuine partnerships we leverage our strengths and theirs. This builds capacity and our human infrastructure continues to improve.

To be clear – we don't own any property or have any employees. The infrastructure is relationships, know-how, talent, experience and goodwill. When in El Rosario we stay at a bunkhouse that's part of the Health Clinic complex and with various partners it becomes a beehive of activity on topics including public health, dentistry and primary care, improving math teaching, the library and computer and sewing classes. Others are working on reducing agricultural chemical exposure, better water and micro banking. You might think of ACTS as a bona fide "liberal arts" approach to community development.

VERMONT

Did you know that Vermont has been partnered with Honduras for 50 years through President Kennedy's Partners for the Americas program? This year we convened 8 Vermont organizations working in Honduras for a conference funded by Partners of the Americas and the Ben & Jerry's Foundation at Vermont Law School to share concerns and solutions.



STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Jinny Brack, pediatrics and primary care, Fairlee VT
- Suzanne Burgos, primary care, Bethel VT
- Molly Drummond, photography Hartford VT – new in 2017
- Judith Wallick Frothingham, fundraising, Grafton, NH
- Michael Harris, educational administration, Etna NH
- Robert Keene, global health, dentistry, Etna NH
- Linda Kennedy, global health, cancer prevention, Thetford Center VT
- Ethan LaRochelle, computer technology, Hanover NH
- Betsy Rybeck Lynd, education, Cornish NH
- Kayla Marra, external relations, Enfield NH
- Peter Mason, primary care, public health, Lebanon NH
- Theresa Mundy, education, Lyme NH
- Sheldon Novick, legal affairs, Norwich VT – new in 2017
- Juliana Ortego, teen leadership, Palo Alto CA
- Jennifer Randolph, organizational data, Hanover NH
- John Sanders, medicine, Lyme NH
- Dan Saulnier, water systems, Boston MA
- Dean Seibert, public health, Norwich VT
- Hart Silverwood, treasurer, Bow NH
- Brad Taylor, agriculture, Canterbury NH
- Helen Whyte, community organizer, Manchester, VT

HEALTH

In late 2016, we made our most significant commitment ever to public health in Honduras. We leapt from a small health outpost model to a Health Center staffed by Honduran professionals: a nurse, doctor and dentist. The reception has been enthusiastic and local people have the highest praise for the staff. In just ten months, there were 900+ medical consultations.

This commitment is \$1,000 per month

Nurse Nolvía moved to El Rosario with her family to take this job and in a few short weeks she became a trusted and valuable resource for health. She staffs the clinic and pharmacy Tuesday-Saturday and makes house calls 24/7. Often, she travels by bus to other community schools to do well-child checks and manage the vaccine program.

Doctor Alyssa works full-time in the Yoro Hospital 90 minutes from El Rosario and in our Health Clinic every Saturday. Her joint appointment has been very helpful to community residents who need referrals for more advanced care. Knowing that they will have “their” doctor receive them in Yoro is important.

Dentists Reina and Luis work one 3-day weekend each month, spending Fridays in the schools on prevention techniques and two days in the fully outfitted dental clinic at the Health Center doing restorative dentistry.

Recently, the dental clinic was named in honor of ACTS’s dentist Bob Keene whose vision, leadership, teaching and perseverance were essential to initiation and completion of the dental clinic.

Stocking the dental clinic with materials and supplies is \$300 a month



The Dental Clinic is set up as a teaching facility with 3 chairs and Honduran dentists have been enthusiastic about learning progressive techniques.

PHARMACY

The Health Clinic’s well-stocked pharmacy is a boon to health locally and the formulary ranges from common over the counter pain-killers to contraceptives as well as statins, antibiotics, anticonvulsants, insulin and anti-hypertensives. Some patients pay a small amount for their medications; many receive their medications free. There is no hassle for those who need free medications. As Nelson Mejía, the president of the Clinic Committee says kindly, “We know everyone and take care of anyone unable to pay.”



Many families like this one receive free transportation, medical treatment, and prescriptions at the Health Center.

Stocking the pharmacy with medications is \$800 a month

CANCER PREVENTION

It would be an exaggeration to call cancer prevention in Honduras “hit or miss,” because there are very few hits. There is no public health outreach for cancer screening and consequently the cancer burden is very high in Honduras. For those living in rural areas, there is no screening.

Following the model of two previous large-scale cancer screening events in El Rosario for women, this year we were thrilled to host the first large cancer screening and research study for men in Honduras. Norris Cotton Cancer Center at Dartmouth and the Honduran Liga Contra el Cancer (League Against Cancer) partnered for a weekend-long free event that screened 329 men from 31 communities for five cancers: prostate, colon, testicular, oral and skin. Clinical follow-up was provided at the Liga and lives were saved.

Cancer Screening research projects are funded by the Norris Cotton Cancer Center



19 men donned their best hats and crammed into one pick-up truck to travel more than an hour over bad roads for their first-ever cancer screening.

CLEAN WATER

GOOD water is essential for health and we continue to partner with Engineers Without Borders Northeastern University expanding to needy communities surrounding El Rosario and beyond.

ACTS funded water projects were \$3000 in 2017



Our partners Engineers Without Borders Northeastern University bring good water to poor communities.

VISION SCREENING

There's a good chance if you're reading this you're over 40 and wearing glasses. Our next big project is Vision Screening in March 2018. In a crazy-big outreach program we are inviting everyone over age 5 to a vision screening that will take over El Rosario for a weekend. We expect to screen 1,000 Hondurans from more than 30 communities and for virtually all of them, it will be their first opportunity to have their vision checked. We've been advised to expect that 100% of people over 40 will need reading glasses and 20% of school children will need glasses or classroom accommodations like preferential seating.

The Zondervan Foundation is funding basic glasses at the Vision Screening.

We will have \$5000 in other costs for referrals to vision specialists, prescription glasses, and transportation to those appointments.



Computer classes are fully subscribed and some students walk 90 minutes each way to attend class.

EDUCATION

Education can make the difference between having choices and being trapped in a cycle of rural poverty. Until about a dozen years ago, 6th grade was the highest offered around El Rosario. We facilitated participation in a workbook-based middle school with a traveling teacher who rotated through every 17 days. This was helpful for kids who wanted more schooling beyond 6th grade. Three years ago, The Children's Initiative opened a 9th grade classroom and a grade was added each year. In December 2017, the first class of high school students will graduate and this marks a turning point for the community.

ACTS has been a key partner in supplementing the in-school experience for children of all ages. They swarm our library after school to use the reference materials for homework assignments and borrow books to read at home. They use our computers and intranet for research and more than 100 have earned a certificate for graduation from our 6-month computer course that teaches the entire Microsoft Office suite with the goal of preparing teens for employment.

Funding the library and computer classes is \$5000 per year

Now in its ninth year, the teen program Fuerza para el Futuro (Force for the Future) has focused on leadership skills, spreading the ethic of volunteerism and building a network of future leaders throughout the communities. Each year Dartmouth students serve as counselors, which benefits their own development while teaching local teens. We saw the multiplier effect in full force last spring when the most experienced Fuerza students, dubbed Fuerza Arriba (Top Force), created their own curriculum about preventing sexually transmitted disease and delivered it to kids in two indigenous communities. It was thrilling to seem them take what they had learned, from problem solving to public speaking and apply it so appropriately.

The Fuerza program is funded by the Byrne Foundation and Dartmouth students' fundraising.

Schools in the surrounding communities are crowded and without hope of government support to expand. Last year we assisted the community of Convento to decompress their elementary school by creating a separate kindergarten. We supplied materials and local men did the construction.

The roof for a school costs \$2500

Like young adults everywhere, after finishing school Honduran teens dream of jobs in a city, at least for a while. Their families need the wages they can earn to participate in the cash economy and pay for items like soap, medicine, clothing and electricity. Our goal is to prepare the young adults to compete for jobs in urban areas and the computer classes are a key step. The Fuerza Arriba program for the oldest teens teaches how to prepare a file of credentials and about culture-specific interviewing skills.

The next major addition will be a dedicated classroom space at the Community Center and the addition of English classes. English is a critical skill to secure a job in the burgeoning call-center industry or to advance to better positions in the textile industry.

Building and furnishing the dedicated classroom space will cost \$6000

Funding the salary for the English instructor is \$3000 year

AGRICULTURE

"This isn't just for our use, this is about building a culture of health throughout the region," said Dionisio Cabrera describing the ACTS-funded facility designed to help farmers reduce their own and their families' exposure to agricultural chemicals including pesticides, fungicides and insecticides. Typically, they use a dozen different products over the course of the growing season and have been doing it without education or protective equipment. The Facility to Support Cultivators includes locked cabinets to safely store chemicals and sprayers away from home and kids, several strong showers to decontaminate themselves, and washing areas for clothing and equipment. The Facility's local manager logs usage, provides education to farmers and data to Norris Cotton Cancer Center researchers who are analyzing farmers' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors pre- and post-opening of the facility. Currently we are researching best choices for less toxic agricultural chemicals.



This farmer showered first, then he washed his clothing, and now he's finishing by washing his equipment before going home to see his kids.

In November, the Dartmouth students and Fuerza para el Futuro will take this pesticide mitigation success on the road to two remote farming communities to teach homebased strategies to avoid exposure of family and home to agricultural chemicals. Using a combination of active learning techniques including skits and hands-on workshops and the train-the-trainer model, the teens will teach the community members useful techniques. We've used this model several times with the Fuerza teens delivering other public health messages via active learning and every time, the community reception is enthusiastic.

Funding for the Facility to Support Cultivators and outreach education is from Coverys Community Foundation and the NH Charitable Trust

SHARING OUR SUCCESS WITH OTHER PARTNERS

Many fine organizations want to work with the poorest people but don't have the connections to get involved. We are proud to partner with and assist excellent organizations from Honduras to New England to help rural Hondurans improve their own lives.

Engineers Without Borders Northeastern University – water systems

Liga Contra Cancer from Honduras – cancer screening and research

Dartmouth's Norris Cotton Cancer Center – cancer screening and research

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Pathology – research partnership to prevent cancer

Zondervan Foundation – library support and promotion of reading at home, vision screening

NH Charitable Trust – facility to reduce agricultural chemical exposure



Fuerza teens wrote and performed skits to educate farmers about how to be safe using agricultural chemicals.

Additional funding to educate families in other communities is \$4000 per year

DONATIONS

Imagine, 24 firefighters and only 3 sets of coat-hat-boots ... Dean Seibert heard about that from the fire chief in nearby Yoro and started making calls to NH and VT firehouses asking, "Can you help?" The answer? Let's just say not much else fits in Dean's barn these days! From the Jaws of Life to respirators, hose, and radios, the donations are overwhelming.

We need help with shipping– this gear needs to get to Norfolk VA where it will be transported the rest of the way for free. Help us get it there – email Info@ACTSHonduras.org



Dean Seibert with new friends and small example of the large amount of donated equipment.

Coverys Community Foundation – education and management to reduce agricultural chemical exposure

Vermont Law School, Ben & Jerry's Foundation, and Partners of the Americas – conference on Honduran-oriented organizations

New Holland Apparel – shipping bulk donations U.S to Honduras

The Children's Initiative – secondary education in El Rosario

Universidad de Catolica San Pedro Sula – academic partner, medical students, institutional review board

The fire departments of Hanover & Springfield NH, Thetford & Windsor VT – firefighting equipment