

ACTS Newsletter

Americans Caring Teaching Sharing



November 2012

www.actshonduras.org

THE MISSION OF ACTS is to promote sustainable programs for health, education and development in collaboration with rural Honduran communities and to foster cross-cultural understanding between us.



Welcome to ACTS

We are a group based in Norwich, Vermont dedicated to *Community Development* in rural Honduras. What does that really mean? Community Development means working to strengthen communities and help people help themselves. Our focus is on the Locomapa Region, a mountainous area in Honduras where we work with ten villages. It all began, 25 years ago, in the village of El Rosario. As life in Rosario improved, our scope broadened. Over each mountain is another village needing help. ACTS work includes teaching, encouraging, and helping people with no hope to set goals and see options for progress. To provide this help, ACTS volunteers pay their own way to Honduras. ACTS work also requires materials like tools, lumber, medicine, and books. To finance this, we seek charitable donations from individuals and foundations.

How Communities Help Each Other



Committees from five villages meet to discuss positive health outcomes from having latrines.

Our success in Honduras is a direct result of building long-lasting relationships with local people. In El Rosario, we helped develop a Health & Development Committee. Committee leaders are now helping six other communities to grow their own “health and development” committees. Living conditions vary considerably from village to village ranging from El Rosario where every family has a water spigot and latrine to the poorest villages where they have neither. As an example, these committees are discussing how latrines make a difference in health and how they can institute latrine-building programs with ACTS’ help. In mid-winter, we will provide the committees from each village with a set of ten tools essential for latrine building. In October, the committees met at the Regional Library and Education Center to develop their own rules about lending tools and keeping inventory.

Fundraising Goal : \$7500 for latrine building materials for three more villages.

Micro-finance

Over the past five years, ACTS has provided funding to start and sustain a local micro-bank of the type that has been run successfully in many parts of the developing world. The goal of this micro-bank, which is managed by its members, is to increase profits from agriculture.



Accordingly, the micro-bank makes loans for purposes that will strengthen individuals' abilities to grow produce or livestock for sale. Loans are for items such as seeds, fencing, or sacks to take cabbages to market. Repayment has been successful. The effectiveness of the micro-bank depends on the amount of capital it has to lend.

Fundraising Goal: \$2500 for additional loans.

Expanding Clinical Outreach

The Clinic in El Rosario, staffed on weekdays by Rosa, a local nurse trained by ACTS, is a critical resource in the Locomapa Region. The Clinic has a pharmacy supplied by ACTS to treat local residents for problems such as pain, infections, hypertension, seizures, and birth control. Five times per year or more, ACTS' volunteers staff the Clinic for ten days with clinicians from the U.S. Rosa puts an advertisement on the radio saying that "médicos" will be at the Clinic and residents come out of the mountain villages to be treated by our clinicians. Programs have been developed to remove any real or perceived barriers to using the Clinic. The Helping Fund pays the Clinic fee for any family that needs help. Outreach clinics in poor and remote villages provide access to care and introduce residents to the medical staff. Home visits to shut-ins provide key wellness checks on vulnerable residents. Bus vouchers help poor families bring sick relatives to the Clinic when the 5-mile walk would be impossible.

Fundraising Goal: \$13,000 for medications and assistance programs.

Dental Health

For years, ACTS has provided dental care but our efforts have been infrequent and unable to meet the needs of the local residents on a consistent basis. A key stumbling block has been the difficulty of setting up a temporary dental clinic. In 2013 we are planning a major initiative to add a permanent dental area to the Clinic in El Rosario. This is a high priority for local Hondurans as many of them suffer from poor dental health. Having a dental area ready to be used will mean that we can encourage more dentists to join our medical teams with the knowledge they will have support and key equipment. The essentials for dentistry are an exam chair and a suction machine.



In lieu of a permanent dental area, kids are treated with fluoride while sitting on the tailgate of a truck.

Fundraising Goal: \$17,000 to create a permanent dental area in the clinic

Our Partners:

Engineers Without Borders

Our partnership with the Northeastern University chapter of Engineers Without Borders has brought safe and sufficient water to several villages. Their work is ongoing with well-supervised undergraduate EWB teams spending two weeks over Christmas each year designing and building water systems.

The Children's Initiative

The Children's Initiative (TCI), headed by Charlie Miller, is building a school, slated to open in February 2013, for 7th and 8th grade students throughout the region. Their only choice before was to travel to a distant community and board with another family, a very costly and generally unattainable option.

Dartmouth Global Leadership Project

Founded in 2009 to help Dartmouth student leaders improve their leadership skills in a global setting while helping others, DGLP has been the backbone of the Fuerza para el Futuro program for teens and the renovation of several key structures.

Training the Next Generation as Capable Leaders

La Fuerza para el Futuro / The Force for the Future is a three-way collaboration between ACTS, the Dartmouth Global Leadership Program (DGLP), and the El Rosario Health & Development Committee. The purpose is to “grow” the next generation of teens who will become the leaders of their villages. In the past four



years, more than 50 local teens have participated each year in culturally specific leadership training and volunteer projects. The 2012 program addressed a dire educational need in Los Planes for grades 1-6. They had one teacher, one dimly lit room, 56 students, five to a desk, and two to a chair. Dave Coker from Orford, NH, on his first trip to Honduras, and Linda Kennedy led the team of seven Dartmouth students and 50 Honduran teens in La Fuerza in a complete renovation of an abandoned building to replace the old school. After six wild days of shoveling, painting, and rebuilding, the new school opened with a moving ceremony with no fewer than 17 speeches by Hondurans!



Fundraising Goal: \$10,000 to renovate another school in an adjacent village

Professional Development for Teachers



Village teachers gaining new skills.

ACTS Steering Committee member Lisa Bisceglia is devoted to helping the Locomapa teachers bring contemporary active learning methods into their classrooms. Working with PIALI, a Latin American organization that promotes literacy throughout Central America, an ACTS group of U.S. teachers and teachers in 9 Honduran village schools participated in dynamic workshops using puppets, stories, games, and art.

Fundraising Goal: \$3000 to sponsor another PIALI workshop

Expanding Educational Experiences

The Regional Library and Education Center, an ACTS inspired renovation project located in the heart of El Rosario, has become a bustling facility serving many purposes: temporary home for the new 7th grade program for 26 students; classroom for the part-time Maestro en Casa school for 50 middle school students; daily library patrons; evening classes in guitar and sewing. Our goal this year is to complete upgrades to the Center's technology and to finish construction on the kitchen set up to teach nutrition.



Fundraising Goal: \$7,000 to upgrade the Center's technology and finish building the teaching kitchen.

Local mason Herman works on the new teaching kitchen.

Special Needs Individuals, Striving for Independence



Here are updates on residents who have more satisfactory lives through assistance from ACTS: **Gloria**, a 4-year old with multiple skeletal birth defects, was fitted with her first set of “arm” crutches in March and she stood carefully and made tentative steps offering her more independence. 26-year old **Carlos**, who had polio as an infant, had never been to school. Three years ago ACTS began providing funds for Carlos to have a tutor and after diligent study he can read and write. His new knowledge in math makes it possible for him to understand his finances and work in a tiny home-based store. **Braden**, a completely deaf 12-year old who attends regular school with no accommodations for his disability was tested by ACTS educational specialist Mike Harris who found that despite no special attention, Braden had learned to read! Mike worked with his teacher and parents to provide extra instruction to further his education. **Lillian**, a paraplegic wheelchair user, continues to sew with a machine modified by engineers at Dartmouth’s Thayer School.

ACTS Steering Committee

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You Can Join Us!

We welcome your energy, ideas, and knowhow. Please contact an ACTS member to talk about getting involved.

Help is especially needed in these areas:

Dentistry • Sustainable agriculture • Web communications • Micro-finance • Teaching how to teach English • Library programming • Sports for girls • Retailing indigenous crafts • Fundraising

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