

Clean Water – Ed B.

February 1, 2011

Friends of Leavenworth Rotary bring clean water to two special-needs countries.

When called upon to generously assist the people of Haiti and Guatemala – the two poorest countries in the Americas – those who attended the Annual Leavenworth Rotary’s RotaryFest came through. The commitment was for water purification through a newly-developed system which can be used in a wide range of venues, from hospitals and clinics to schools and community centers to individual houses.

The answers came from those attending the RotaryFest was as simple as raising a paddle as a dollar amount was proposed. But when it was over, the citizens of the greater Leavenworth area had contributed over \$8,000!

So what is happening now?

Getting goods through customs in developing countries is often quite complex, even when the goods being sent are for medical care, education, or economic advantage to the receiving county. One requirement is that the importers are not to gain financially, unless an often-high tariff is extracted, and even then with a lot of time being spent waiting for the slow governmental process to occur. Meanwhile, people are growing sick due to drinking and washing in bad water.

We were very fortunate to know that the Wenatchee Rotary Club was already involved in supplying such water purification systems to Haiti and working with medical personnel from Wenatchee who travel to Haiti to perform service works. So we are working with them and, as this is written, over 100 units are about to enter Haiti where they will be rapidly distributed.

Fortunately, Rotary commands a special place with some governments, including Guatemala, so the import will not be a major delay. It has taken a bit more time getting there, but the 100 plus units are scheduled to arrive in February. A very new Rotary Club in Guatemala City had recently asked Ed Baroch, of Leavenworth Rotary, to guide them as they develop their humanitarian efforts and so Ed proposed that they be the main controllers of this project for Guatemala. Also, we have had contact with Dick Rutgers, and American who works with Bethel Ministries in a range of services in Guatemala. When we found that he was already distributing such units, we decided to ask him to distribute some. And he immediately agreed.

The units chosen are of a new design, based on the same principal as that used in kidney dialysis: extremely small holes in plastic tubing through which only water and a few other molecules can pass, leaving behind the “dirt”. Small in size, each unit can generate up to 50 gallons per day of

high-purity water. With over 200 units between the two countries, this means that several thousand people will have access to clean water for drinking and washing.

While this project was initiated and is being controlled by Leavenworth Rotary, great credit is given to those who attended, and contributed to, the RotaryFest events. Along with the good food and socialization, these neighbors of all of you took time to raise their paddle and show their credit cards in order to help make a better life for persons they may never meet. And we should recognize our friends in Wenatchee who made things flow so smoothly there – Dr. Dale Peterson, Rufus Woods, Gil Sparks, Ford Barrett, and Garry Arseneault.

This project is one of over a dozen projects performed over the last ten years in 8 countries on three continents. Our latest effort, just now getting underway, is assistance to a special-needs school in Nepal.

By Ed Baroch
debaroch@charter.net