

Guatemala – Birth Defect

Oct. 8, 2012

To: Rotary International District 5060 STAFF
From: Ed Baroch, Leavenworth Rotary

IF-ROTARY COOPERATIVE EFFORTS

Leavenworth, along with 4 other clubs in District 5060, plus other clubs, has for 9 years been supporting an effort in Guatemala to reduce Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (Birth Defect issues) by prevention, education and treatment of those born with this issue. Our work has shown good progress but there is still a long way to go. We plan to partner in a Global Grant with our associate Guatemala Club, (Guatemala del Este) soon to continue this effort. Hopefully, at the completion of that Global Grant, others will be able to continue it, in the spirit of Sustainability. Several other clubs in 5060 and elsewhere may also join that GG.

Our efforts have not only been financial, though we have participated in six Matching Grants since 2003 and also make some direct contributions. A total of 27 trips have been taken by Leavenworth Rotarians and their families in this effort, including 12 by myself. In no case were any of the travel costs charged to any Rotary organization.

One of our accomplishments was to convince the International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (IF) to hold their annual conference in Guatemala City in June, 2011. This was through the efforts of people from the US, including myself, plus Canada, and Guatemala. People from a total of 13 countries attended.

At that meeting, I met the President of IF, Pierre Mertens, and he saw the Rotary pin I was wearing. The conversation went about like this: "You Rotarians have conquered polio, so now you need a new project, and I think that you should work with us in our effort. We already have many countries involved, mostly in Europe, but also around the world." I mentioned that it is unlikely that Rotary would take it on in the same manner as polio was, but they might be supportive of it in a variety of ways.

Mertens then asked if I would help get some cooperative efforts going, in addition to those already taking place – countries of most nations in Europe, plus others in each of the continents. Such organizations are at the national level as well as state and even city levels. Mertens and Lieven Bauwens, the Secretary General, are greatly complementary of Rotary's efforts and know that Rotary has the human resources to meet any development in the world, just as they have done not only for polio but for many other projects, including

our increase in emphasis on clean water resources.

Thousands of infants are born with spina bifida yearly and many of them die quite soon because of lack of treatment, or even knowledge that treatment was possible. But significant prevention is possible, along with efforts to help those born with SB develop a fairly normal life.

And so, I am informing you of this request, just so you will know what I am doing and what others may be doing. It is not likely that large investments will be required of Rotary, though that may happen through the efforts of individual Clubs and Districts, or through The Rotary Foundation: District Grant process.

If you have any questions or comments on this, feel free to contact me. I will be sending you more information as we progress. Also, if anyone in the District would like me to give a presentation, I believe that this could be arranged.

In Rotary,
Edmund F. Baroch (Ed)

/ 5060 IF Rotary Effort, 10-8-12