

Honduras, one of the poorest countries in the western hemisphere, has over 65% of its population living in poverty. Space Center Rotarian Sheryl Berg was made aware of a critical and widespread need of those in poverty when on a personal trip to Honduras in 2010. This came about by meeting a fellow Rotarian, Udo Van der Waag, past president of the Rotary Club of Copan Ruinas, in northern Honduras, who also owned the local hotel. His club, in conjunction with Stove Team International, of Eugene, Oregon, (www.stoveteam.org) had seen the need of many in poverty who cooked over open flames of small stoves in their homes. These traditional stoves used considerable amounts of wood, produced hazardous fumes breathed by entire families and were the source of frequent horrible burns in children who fell into the fires. Because Stove Team International (STI) saw this need, it resolved to help start locally owned factories promote the use of safe, affordable, fuel-efficient stoves.

This year (2011) Space Center Rotary has partnered with the Rotary Club of Copan Ruinas by providing funds for producing these safer "Ecocinas" (portable cooking stoves developed by STI) to be built for purchase. Sheryl's trip May 18-22 afforded her the opportunity to visit the local stove-making "fabrica" (factory), spend time with the factory owner and go into two local areas into which the Ecocinas have been introduced. By meeting and visiting with families excited about their new cooking stoves, the spirit of Rotary was realized.

(p.s. Since returning, Sheryl has applied for a grant to grow the stove-producing capabilities on behalf of Space Center Rotary for the 2010-11 year. Several other Rotarians, including Kippy Caraway of SCR and Carmen Cuneo, Assistant DG, of Rotary Club of Hermann Park, have expressed interest in going on the next trip!)

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