

As I look at the inception of our club's involvement in this project, I am reminded of the First Principle of Rotary: The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service. It was May, 2010 and my husband and I traveled to visit our son, a volunteer third grade teacher in a bilingual school in a small rural community in northern Honduras. We took a side trip to a beautiful Mayan community near the Guatemalan border—Copan Ruinas. Enjoying the ruins and other sights there, we stayed at Don Udo's a popular tourist destination and struck up a conversation with the hotel's proprietor, Udo Van der Waag. Seeing the familiar Rotary wheel on his lobby wall, we discussed our involvement—he a past president of his club, Distrito 4250, and me, a member of Space Center Rotary. He invited me to view a project with which his club was assisting. It was a nothing more than a simple stove, called an ecocina.

He explained the traditional mode of cooking in most Honduran homes (indeed, much of the world) utilizes huge amounts of wood over an open fire. Smoky, hot and dangerous to not only small children, the toxic emissions from such types of stoves are blamed for low birth weights, pneumonia in young children, COPD, emphysema, cardiovascular disease, lung cancer, cataracts and other health problems. Half of all deaths among children under age five from acute lower respiratory infections are due to indoor air pollution from household solid fuels. Additionally, the large amounts of firewood require daily trips to the mountains to cut down greater and greater numbers of trees, thereby deforesting the slopes and producing more dangerous landslides during rainy season. The solution? Small, portable stoves were developed by Larry Winiarski in collaboration with Stove Team International. And who is this group? It is the blossomed result of a single project of Eugene Southtowne Rotary in Oregon. Stove Team has been profiled in the Rotarian Magazine and founder Nancy Hughes received Rotary's prestigious "Service Above Self" award for her dedication to this mission. What does the Ecocina do?

- It reduces health problems such as burns and upper respiratory ailments
- It reduces deforestation and environmental problems
- It reduces the time and cost of collecting or buying firewood
- It's easy to use and doesn't require resources not locally available
- It's portable so it can easily be moved
- It's sustainable. Stoves pay for themselves in a matter of months

I took Udo's information and my conviction of the worthiness of this project back to my club to request funding. Our club dedicated \$2,000 to the building of the stoves. At \$50/stove, families were requested to pay half, with the other half subsidized by clubs such as ours. In May, 2011, I went back to Copan Ruinas to visit the factory, meet the factory manager and visit several families, proud of their new stoves. Stove Team very wisely supports social and economic development within each targeted country by giving local entrepreneurs the necessary tools and training to then manage the production, marketing and sales of these fuel-efficient stoves. A Stove Team factory creates local jobs, an important factor in Honduras with an unemployment rate of more than 30%. In June, 2011 I wrote and secured a district grant for an additional \$2,500 toward the subsidies of the stoves. Stove Team has recently invited me to join 30 members from Eugene to go back to Honduras in early November of this year. My

Spanish skills, love for the Honduran people and enthusiasm for this simple, yet amazing project has increased my desire to continue to foster the partnership between the Rotary Clubs locally and abroad.

In Rotary Service,
Sheryl Berg,
Space Center Rotary
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