

Finally, Having an Opportunity to Read

Story Ed Kolybaba

Nov 17, 2021



We think nothing of it! We take for granted that all of our children will be able to read. We know that our children will have an abundance of reading resources. We expect nothing less! But wait, why is it that our children only have this opportunity? What about the rest of the children in our world, particularly the children in the underdeveloped countries?

Rotarians from the Rotary Club of Kelowna Sunrise, along with Rotarians right across the globe, and many others have this same concern; and thankfully, many are taking action to address this concern, albeit unfortunately the concern will continue to exist right across the world well into the future.

One such action is currently taking place in the small town of La Paz, Honduras because of the action of the Rotary Club of Kelowna Sunrise along with the Rotary clubs of West Kelowna, Salmon Arm, Ogoopogo, Lake Country and Kamloops Aurora, and the Chispa Project in Honduras under the leadership of Sara Burkes, the founder of the not-for-profit organization.



While the Sunrise Rotary Club, along with its partner Rotary clubs, have financed many literacy projects elsewhere in underdeveloped countries, this project is special because of having guidance and leadership from Sara who has been very dedicated and successful in creating 65 school libraries throughout Honduras through the Chispa Project; and who is clearly focused on establishing this project and bringing it to fruition.

Under the guidance and leadership of Sara, funds amounting to US\$7685 from the Kelowna Sunrise Rotary club, its Rotary club partners, and a district designated grant from Rotary District 5060 approved in February of 2021, are now being used to develop and furnish a library at Dionisio de Herrera Anexo Elementary School, a grade one to six school with 350 students in La Paz, Honduras. The budget includes funding for 700 books, library materials, shelving, and inauguration expenses. Training will also be provided for staff, parents and students.



Sara's leadership, with the assistance of the newly founded La Paz Rotary Club which has agreed to help with the installation of the library, involves establishing library use policies, implementing a library committee of teachers and parents, planning the layout for the library, communicating with the school community, fundraising to raise funds for the school's five percent of the total cost commitment and providing educational workshops for the staff, students and parents.



During the Rotary Club of Kelowna Sunrise's regular meeting on November 12th, through the avenue of ZOOM, Sara explained how she became involved in responding to the educational needs of children in La Paz starting in 2014 when she began to volunteer in a rural school, which was then followed up to a teaching experience at a bilingual school. Through these experiences, she soon realized that there was a lack of books within the schools. This led her to found the Chispa Project, which to this date has created over 65 school libraries across Honduras, donating over 35,000 books to these libraries. Sara shared that "founding the Chispa Project is a dream come true getting to share her love of reading with children across Honduras."

With heartfelt thanks Sara expressed her appreciation to the participating Rotary clubs for continuing to support Chispa's work over the last couple of years. "It has been a wild ride" acknowledging how covid has affected the implementation of the library project, "and we are so grateful to have partners that want to help out in an area that is otherwise forgotten in many ways," concluded.

This story of successful humanitarian service is only possible because Rotarians from the Kelowna Sunrise club, along with Rotarians from the partner clubs, have made donations to The Rotary Foundation; and "not us not forget that everyone of us as Rotarians can help to make a difference for many more children in the world."