

The RIM Newsletter

Rotary InMotion



Club 16 (2809) District 6290, Chartered May 1, 1916
<http://www.muskegonrotary.org>

Is it the truth?

Is it fair to all concerned?

Will it build goodwill and better friendships?

Will it be beneficial to all concerned?



Celebrating the people, events, and actions of the Muskegon Rotary Club, April 9, 2026

April 16, 2026, 12 – 1:30pm — Pasta Bar at the Delta
Program – Pure Michigan/Sappi Property Sale

What's Coming

April 23—Muskegon County
Composting Grant

April 30—Muskegon Area Arts &
Culture Coalition

May 7—Student Law Day Contest
Winners

Upcoming Birthdays

April 14 Mehean Quinn

April 18 Michael Poulin



Caring Connections Fund

[Click here to donate](#)

Stage Manager This Week

Ammy Seymour

Greeters This Week

Lisa Tyler

Reflector This Week

Bill Loxterman

RIM Reporting this Edition

Photographer – Emily Morgenstern

RIM Reporter – Sue Samaniego

RIM Editor – Ginny Sprague

Reflection



Bill Loxterman presented his thoughts on grief, grieving, memory, love, and loss. To hear the Reflection and the rest of the meeting, watch the Muskegon Rotary YouTube video:

Muskegon Rotary 4/9/26
YouTube: [Click Here](#)

Muskegon Rotary Board

Dave Alexander, President

Roger Morgenstern, President-Elect

Lisa Tyler, President Nominee

Tim Arter, Past President

Kimberly Taylor, Treasurer

Jane Clingman-Scott, Secretary

Kim Boersema, Club Coordinator

Directors:

Esther Ricco

Brandon Turnbull

Melissa Moore

Samantha Scott

Arlen-Dean Gaddy

Dimitri Poland

Sarah Rinsema-Sybenga

Lisa Kraus

Please email Club Board Members
through this [link](#):

President Dave thanked Tennille Woodard for agreeing to coordinate volunteers for Kids Food Basket. Volunteers are still needed for Kids Food Basket and the Muskegon Rescue Mission dinners.

Visitors & Guests



John Selmon introduces his guest, Tucker Brown, MCC Provost and Chief Student Services Officer.



Sue Samaniego introduces her guest, Kristin Tank, MCC's Chief of Marketing and Communications.

Visitors & Guests continued



Susan Besteman introduced her daughter, Sofia Besteman, a North Muskegon 6th-grade student and Muskegon Rotary volunteer, and Brazilian Exchange student, Manuela "Ella" Freire Lugon Ribeiro, who attends Reeths-Puffer HS.



Mehean Quinn introduces his guest and mentor, Jonathan Jelks, a local D.J., who is interested in community engagement.



Dave Medendorp brought returning guest Aaron Byrne.



Roger Morgenstern with his guest, The Corner co-owner Theresa Bernhardt.



Darwin Smith welcomes his guest, Pearllette Merriweather, interim Muskegon Heights. City Manager.



Jim Fisher welcomes **Rabbi Alan Alpert** back to Muskegon Rotary, who introduces Rachel VanDyk, his successor at Temple B'nai Israel.

No student Guests this week!



Kat Hyder welcomes her guest, Jason Borowicz, owner of Lead by Design Associates.



Trevor Friedeberg introduces his guest, Matt Biolette, Fleis & VandenBrink Engineering.

RIM Reporting Team

Editors: Susan Besteman, Jackie Farrar, and Ginny Sprague

Reporters: Kathy Moore, Roger Morgenstern, Meredith Smillie, and Sue Samaniego

Photographers: Wyatt Huggett, Brock Johnson, Emily Morgenstern, and Roger Morgenstern



Presenter: Dr. John Selmon and Sue Samaniego

Introduction: Lisa Tyler

Rim Reporter: Sue Samaniego

MCC Transforming lives: Your COMMUNITY College for This Century and the Next

One hundred years ago, Muskegon Community College (MCC) was founded. One hundred years later, MCC continues its long history of providing access—open, affordable entry into higher education for all, and economic mobility, education, and training that enable students to advance economically and socially. MCC’s elected Board of Trustees provides the strong leadership that makes this happen. Four of our seven Trustees are Rotarians: Diana Osborne, Dr. Donald Crandall, Kathy Moore, and Asaline Scott.

The Centennial Celebration started with a rebranding of the College, emphasizing COMMUNITY, and of our athletic Jayhawk. The Centennial logo was unveiled during the first Centennial event: An Evening with MCC 2025.

BY THE NUMBERS—MCC’s total student enrollment is 5,534, a 17:1 student/faculty ratio, and 24 student clubs. MCC has a powerful economic and social impact on the Lakeshore region. In the fiscal year 2022–2023, MCC’s total economic impact was

\$249.9 million, contributing significantly to local income, employment, and long-term community benefits.

About MCC

- Mission: Muskegon Community College, dedicated to excellence, prepares students, builds communities, and improves lives.
- Over 600 Graduates Each Year (60 of those become nurses)
- #1 Community College for Transfer On Rate in MI

5,534 Total Student Enrollment	99 Years of Excellence	70+ Degrees & Certificates
17:1 Students to Faculty Ratio	20 Active Programs	24 Student Clubs



MCC is currently creating a new, three-year strategic plan. The 2026-2029 strategic imperative reads: to advance excellence in outcomes for all MCC students and prepare them for success after college. This strategic plan is based on post-college success. The six primary areas of focus: access, workforce, transfer, completion, teaching and learning, and leadership and capacities, from an evidence-based framework developed by thought leaders at the Aspen Institute.

Annual MCC Economic Impact

Total economic impact **\$249.9 million**

OR

Jobs supported **3,426**

Impacts created by MCC in FY 2022-23
Operations spending impact \$33.5 million
Student spending impact \$1.9 million
Alumni impact \$214.5 million

Economic Impact Report published by Lightcast in 2025

There are many ways for students to receive free tuition: Michigan Reconnect (full- or part-time attendance), Michigan Community College Guarantee (full-time students only), Dual Enrollment, Early College, and Senior Tuition Waiver (students 60+). MCC is #1, Leading the Promise in MI! Since the Promise program was established, Muskegon Community College has served 2,368 Promise Scholars.

Dedicated and passionate people work at MCC. As a result, in March 2026, MCC received a National Award for Student Support. MCC was the only college in Michigan recognized at this level. This excellence is positioning MCC for the next 100 years.

MCC has been a good steward of funds and facilities, but there is a need to upgrade and invest in the infrastructure for the next 100 years. MCC continues to pursue grants at the federal and state levels, foundation and local tax support, and tuition and fees to protect the education, workforce, and the economic benefits residents rely on. MCC has been in the current facility for more than 60 years, so it is understandable that it needs some investment.

In 2025, MCC Received the Global Ellucian Impact Award in the Unlocking the Power of Data Category for Student Support and Success. This is due to the number of free supports offered to students, including in-person and online tutoring and mental health support, the Health and Wellness Center, and the Jayhawk Hub

resource center with free bus passes, gas cards, and a food pantry. Community colleges cannot do all that we need to do without help from over 37 key partners. Many of these partners are represented in Rotary. This support helps students transform their lives. Two students from MCC Rotaract were included in the presentation. MCC Rotaract is going strong, with six members consistently involved. Their efforts have totaled 109 hours of service so far this year, including Operation Solo (pet and human food pantry), North Muskegon Microforest, Polar Plunge (also raised \$640), the Jayhawk Hub food drive, and the DKMS stem cell donor drive for blood diseases and blood cancers.



There is a great relationship between Rotary and study abroad. MCC offers study abroad opportunities of various lengths, and financial aid is available to make them possible. MCC works to grow students as global citizens.

MCC has a strong athletic history: with 19 sports, soon to be 20 with the addition of Men's Volleyball. Athletics can be a door-opener for students who might not attend college. Skill building through sports extends beyond athletic prowess. MCC athletes have received numerous recognitions at the conference, regional, district, and national levels. In addition, many student-athletes have received academic awards. MCC's Women's Cross Country team finished with the highest team GPA in

the nation: 3.91. Nick Marcinkowski, their coach, was named MCCA Coach of the Year, NJCAA Region 12 Coach of the Year, and US Track and Field Cross-Country Coaches Association Women's Great Lakes Super Region Coach of the Year. Men's wrestling won the Great Lakes District Championship and sent 10 students to nationals. They had two National Wrestling Coaches Association NJCAA All-Americans and 9 NJCAA Men's Scholar All-Americans. Wrestling coach Cody Carpenter, who is a Jayhawk Wrestling alum, was the NJCAA/NWCA National, District, and Regional Wrestling Coach of the Year.

MCC wanted to give back to the community as a big part of their Centennial Celebration, so they partnered with United Way for The Day of Caring. Welcome Breakfast will be on campus, and many faculty and staff from the college will participate. April is both Community College Month and Global Volunteer Month, making this the perfect partnership!

MCC transforms lives at all ages, working closely with K-12 partners. A Day for Me at MCC, Global Awareness Day programming, Discover Manufacturing, free entry to our planetarium and science museum, and many other custom visit days are designed for elementary, middle, and high school students. STEM Camp is offered each summer. Instructors are needed for this year's program. There are people in Rotary who could teach either a half-day or a full-day class. These are paid opportunities. Contact Stephanie Briggs at (231) 777-0456 or stephanie.briggs@muskegoncc.edu for more information. MCC also

participates in STEAM Along the Lakeshore, providing learning opportunities to over 700 children each year. This year's event will be held on Saturday, May 2.

The apex of the Centennial Celebration will be An Evening with MCC on June 20. You are invited to come celebrate. Community colleges are the nation's workforce engine, and they deliver the best ROI in America. MCC - Your community college for this century and the Next! Sue closed her remarks with this video showcasing graduating MCC students.

<https://youtu.be/3NZbfgQCzIq>

President Dave's Muskegon Minute

President Dave reported on the M Live story about one of our own Muskegon Rotarians, Alex Fonseca. The owner of Fresh Coat Painters of Muskegon, Alex, was named the 2026 Fresh Coat franchise owner of the year, a distinction earned among nearly 200 outlets nationwide. This recognition is particularly impressive, given that Alex established his residential and commercial painting business only six years ago. Since then, he has expanded his company to include a staff of ten, which notably includes his wife and co-owner, Brianna. Originally from Brazil, Alex first came to Muskegon as an exchange student at Reeths-Puffer High School. He fell in love with the community and chose to root both his business and his family here. Alex gives back to Muskegon through the Fresh Coat Cares program, offering free and discounted painting services to local non-profit organizations.

Rotarians in Action Jenny McNeil



Circuit Court Judge Jenny McNeil shares how community engagement through Rotary—and initiatives like Parties in the Park—helps strengthen Muskegon from the ground up. Drawing on her experience as presiding family court judge, she explains how many challenges in the court system are rooted in broader community issues, and how collaboration, volunteerism, and connection can lead to meaningful solutions. Discover how Rotary fosters leadership, learning, and service while bringing people together to make Muskegon a better place to live, work, and grow.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSWJd8M3TYk>



President Dave made a few announcements:

1. The next **ReWine** meeting will be Thursday, May 7, at Vault.
2. **Party in the Park** will be on Friday, May 29. Please sign up to help with this major fundraising event for the Muskegon Rotary Foundation.
3. Save the date for Saturday morning, May 2, through noon, for the **Muskegon Rotary Visioning** session. Look for a SignUp Genius next week. This event is open to all Muskegon Rotarians. Dave encouraged our younger members to participate to help create the Club you want going forward.
4. **District 6290's Spring Learning Assembly** is Saturday, April 18, at Meijer Gardens. You can register for this event on the District website.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER!](#)



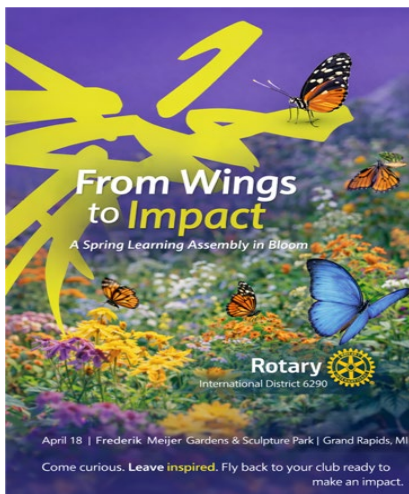
President-Elect Roger reminded Club members about the joint service project with Grand Rapids Rotary on the morning of May 9th at the Muskegon Microforest, and that Harvest Fest still needs committee volunteers.



Melissa Horton announced that the next New Member Coffee Connect will be on April 15th at 8 am at the Muskegon Museum of History and Science.



Arn Boezaart is looking for Food Truck volunteers on Wednesday, April 22, from 4-6:30 pm at Temple United Methodist Church. All are Welcome. Please contact Arn to volunteer.



**Feeding America
Food Truck
Wed, April 22, 2026
4 to 6:00 pm
2500 Jefferson Street**



Kalya Kolbe announced the first Pours event at 794 Kitchen on Wed. April 15 from 5 to 7 pm. Additional parking will be available at Braeburn Wealth Management.



Tara Foreman, winner of BOTH the Men’s and Women’s March Madness Brave Rotarian contests, assisted **Meredith Smillie** with the drawing for two additional Paul Harris Fellow prizes. **John Rupert** and **Randy Lindquist** are the two Brave Rotarian drawing winners.



Dom Bunker is looking for host families. Please contact Dom for more information: [Click Here](#). Cookbooks are still on sale during April.



Carim Calkins reminded members that you can have the Muskegon Rotary logo embroidered on new items. Please bring the items with tags still on to Trophy House.

Rotary Youth Exchange Community Yard Sale May 15-17th

Muskegon Rotarians, outbound youth exchange families, and friends are invited to help our Youth Exchange by donating usable items for the Yard Sale.

Please help by coming to the Yard Sale to purchase items as well. Remember the old saying, “One person’s junk is another person’s treasure!”

Pours Events

Wed April 15, 5-7:00 pm

794 Kitchen & Bar

Monday, April 20, 5-7:00 pm
Unruly Brewing

Friday, April 24, 4-6:00 pm
Wonderland Distilling

Tues., April 28, 7:30-9:30 am, Community House **

Thurs., April 30, 5-7:00 pm,
Muskegon Brewing

** Please note the **April 28** event is a **morning coffee hour** at the Community House.

Thank you to all our sponsors!

[Click here to see the video.](#)



Muskegon Rising

2026 Rotary Youth Exchange Cookbook

Around the Table, Around the World: A Rotary Youth Exchange Cookbook is more than a collection of recipes. It is a celebration of culture, hospitality, and the connections that are built when we open our homes and share a meal.

Inside these pages, you will find favorite dishes from host families around the world and from our current inbound exchange students who are spending the year here in West Michigan. Each recipe represents more than ingredients. It represents a family, a tradition, a memory, and the spirit of exchange that brings people together across languages and borders.

Digital copies are available for \$5, and printed copies can be purchased for \$10 and picked up at Rotary.

Order yours today: <https://bit.ly/2026RYECookbook>



Rotary District 6290 Volunteer Opportunities

<https://ridistrict6290.org/sitepage/open-district-volunteer-roles/>

1. The Spring Learning Assembly will be at Frederick Meijer Gardens on April 18. Sign Up—
[CLICK HERE](#)

2. Saturday, May 16, is the Epic Day of Service, nationwide. Rotarians will partner with local communities and other organizations to complete service projects in their area.

3. Saturday, June 6, Crystal Mountain induction of new District Governor, **Julie Schumaker**.

United Way Day of Caring April 24, 2026



<https://www.unitedwaylakeshore.org/day-caring>

Volunteers Needed! Adopt-A-Highway



Our next pickup date for the Muskegon Rotary stretch of Highway on I-96 will be on Saturday, April 18.

Volunteers will meet promptly at 8:45 am for a short safety talk and then head out on the road to pick up Trash. We will finish no later than 11:00 am or sooner with more help. We also need two volunteers to drive alongside the volunteers picking up trash.

If you can help, please contact **Esther Ricco** at riccoe@gvsu.edu, and she can provide more details.

Please be a part of keeping our adopted stretch of highway clean and taking action to keep our environment clean.

MUSKEGON COUNTY RECYCLING EVENT

Saturday April 25th, 2026
from 9am-1pm



RAIN OR SHINE*

FREE TO COUNTY RESIDENTS ONLY

BUSINESS WASTE AND REGULAR TRASH NOT ACCEPTED*

~~SCRAP TIRES~~ **NO TIRES WILL BE ACCEPTED**

Due to a delay in the EGLE Scrap Tire Cleanup Grant, NO tires will be accepted at this event. Please see www.muskegoncounty.net/1954 for more information on future tire events.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Including mercury, petroleum products, antifreeze, pesticides, herbicides, acids, bases, CFL and fluorescent light bulbs, and oil base paint products. Must be in containers no greater than 6 gallons; NO drums of any kind. Latex paint will not be accepted!

ELECTRONICS

Including computers, peripherals, TV's, and other electronic devices.
Visit: www.muskegoncounty.net/777 for a link to a full listing of accepted electronic items.

*Please note: CRTTV's WILL be accepted for this event

*Severe weather may cause a halt or shut down of the event as determined by the event coordinator.

*Event staff reserve the right to limit any collected materials and refuse apparent business waste.



VISIT: WWW.MUSKEGONCOUNTY.NET/777 OR CALL: 231-724-6001



Funding for this event:
Muskegon County Solid Waste, Muskegon County Sustainability Office
Michigan Department of EGLE Scrap Tire Clean-Up Grant



Notes from El Salvador Day 5

Hello everyone! We are still rocking and rolling down here in El Salvador. We had a great full day of work and excitement today. As you will hear from the students, we started in Talnique, and it was time to start filling in the cracks of the walls with mortar. One of the 7 houses already had its roof on, and the roof was being put on two more today. The bonds are growing stronger between our group and the families moving into the houses. You will read from the students and chaperones that, after working, we had the opportunity to attend a professional football game in San Salvador. The atmosphere was very exciting as it was a game between division rivals. The last thing I want to say is "Thank you!" to the parents of the students here. We have such a great group of people. They all listen well, are hard workers, are polite, have fun, are always ready to go with the flow, and are ready when I ask them to be.

- Jason

And now from the Students and Chaperones:



Payton Kue, Rockford High School
Sup peeps! I'm having loads of fun here in El Salvador. Today we went to Talnique to mortar houses. My group was able to complete a large portion of the house (most of the inside and half of the outside). Although mortaring is not my favorite thing, it made the house feel closer to completion. The next event is to watch a football (soccer) game.

Selah Kobylak, Spring Lake
We woke up to another wonderful breakfast, today it was French toast, and then we headed to Talnique to mortar the houses we have been working on. I got to join some other work groups where we got a lot of the house done! It was fun to work alongside the families who will be living in the houses, and it was fun to try to squeeze into tight spaces to get to certain walls. We are having an early dinner and then heading to a soccer/futbol game!

Kate Beda, Whitehall
Hola! Today has been very busy and tiring, yet very fulfilling. It began with a semi-sleep in the morning, followed by a very nice breakfast and then the bus ride through the mountains, with some jams to Talnique. With today being the first day of mortaring, we got straight to work. Mortaring can be very tedious, especially in this heat, but it's easy to flip your mindset and stay positive when you are working alongside the families who will be living in these houses soon. We combined groups today to be more efficient, and it worked so well. Now we have an early dinner followed by a soccer game, which I am so excited to see!

Cole TerHaar, Orchard View

Right now, I am sitting around with some friends waiting for another great meal! Today has been a very hot and fun day! This morning, we went to Talnique to start mortaring our houses. Although it took a good amount of time, along with the sun beating down, it was a great experience. I worked almost the whole time with one of the kids (Marinese, that's definitely not how you spell her name) who will be living in the house. It's challenging to communicate with the family, but I always feel welcome around them, and with the other people of El Salvador I have met. Tonight, we are going to a soccer game that I'm looking forward to! I am sad the trip is almost over, but I'm looking forward to what's going to come in the next few days!

Kenya Blake- Orchard View

Hello! Today was a very hot and eventful day. We started the day at 7:30 to eat breakfast, which was so good. We then headed to Talnique, where we mortared our houses. It was fun because we merged houses today to get more work done. Our house is almost finished. We played music and danced a little with the family. They also gave us some of their native snacks. (They were delicious!) Now we are on our way to a professional soccer game, which I am so excited to see as an ex-soccer player myself. The families here are amazing, and all welcomed us with open arms. I'm looking forward to making more memories with these people.

Makyla Southwick- Allendale

Hey! This week has been so fun but also tiring. We've done so many cool things, and I've experienced things that I didn't think I would. I learned that talking with Spanish-speaking people is very hard after not taking Spanish for 2 years, but as long as I know the basics, it's not too bad. My favorite part so far was going to the girls' school and seeing all the girls' faces light up in excitement and joy. They talked and hugged a lot with me and asked me to write my name on their paper. I think the blonde hair is the main attraction. Other than that, building the houses is more fun than I thought. It's hard work, but it's worth it to see the families' smiles and knowing we are doing something amazing for them. I am looking forward to the other eventful things to come on this trip!

Holden Lee - Greenville High School

Today was an amazing day. We started the day off with an extra 30 minutes of sleep and had an amazing breakfast. In the morning, we worked in Talnique and began mortaring the houses. It felt really good to see all of the work that we have done so far finally seem to be done, and I'm very excited for all of the families in Talnique to see their new homes. We also went to a professional soccer match. El Salvador's soccer culture is amazing, and the fans on both sides were very loud with many different chants

**Grace LaLomia (Chaperone)-
New Orleans, LA**

What a wonderful week it has been so far! This group of kids is so fun, adaptable, and timely like I've never seen before. I have loved reconnecting with students and

chaperones from previous years just as much as I have enjoyed getting to know all of the new faces! This trip holds such a special place in my heart, and I love watching the same thing come true for others. We cannot wait to continue our journey here in El Salvador- thank you for sharing your people with us this week! *Adios!*

**Drew Fogel (Chaperone) –
Royal Oak, MI**

I'm so happy to be able to come back for a second trip to El Salvador. It doesn't feel like a full year since we were last down here! The views and food here don't get old. We're back now from the Salvadoran Primera Division pro football game. Alianza, the San Salvador home team lost 0-2 to the #1 team in the division, FAS, from Santa Ana, another city in El Salvador. The stadium was big, which holds about 30,000 people. For a full 90 minutes, we saw classic soccer dives (acting skills are very good here) and super fans singing, playing trumpets, and banging drums for a full 90 minutes. I know the students here are having fun and making memories that will last a lifetime because I am doing the same thing alongside them.

Subject: El Salvador 2026 - Day 3

Hello everyone,

I think we all woke up this morning a bit sore from our full day of working on the houses yesterday, but that didn't stop us from heading back to Talnique to try to finish getting the walls up on our 7 houses. It is so fulfilling to have the families moving into the houses working right beside us. We only worked until lunchtime, but we got all the walls up on all 7 houses. We worked so hard that everyone deserved to head to the beach for the afternoon. As we travel from Talnique down to the beach, the temperature and humidity increase a lot. It was HOT! We had access to a pool and a black-sand beach. The students quickly found out that the waves in El Salvador put our Lake Michigan waves to shame. Everyone got to experience El Salvador's version of KFC, *Pollo Comparo*, for lunch at the beach. After our long day of work and fun at the beach, we went back to the Alamo Hotel to have a great dinner and companionship. The buzz of friendships gets louder each evening, so I know the bonds are growing. As I type this email, we are actually experiencing rain in El Salvador. This has been very rare during the time that we come, but from what I hear, their "rainy season" usually begins to start around Easter.

- Jason

And now from the Students and Chaperones:

Rylee McMeeken, Greenville

I have had an amazing experience in El Salvador so far. Today, while we were at the beach, Bailey was swimming, and the lifeguards thought she was drowning, so all four of them went out to save her, but she didn't

really need saving; she was fine. We found another scorpion while working today, but it was alive. We almost got all of the walls up at house #3, but one column was way too small, so they have to cut the bricks for us to finish before we start mortaring.

Haley Delf, Greenville

I've been having such an amazing time here. Today we finished building the walls in the houses, and then we went to the beach. I loved playing with the kids. They are so cute. This is what I love most: helping others. My highlight of my day was swimming in the ocean and hanging out with my new friends I've made down here. I'm so happy that I had this opportunity to come here.

Livie Gregory, Allendale

This is really fun. I feel like the people here are so happy and appreciative of everything they have. I am so sunburned, but it's okay. So, the lifeguards also thought I was drowning and came to "save" me, but I swear I was just swimming. Our house has a lot of sizing issues, but it's been super fun building them. During breaks while building the houses, I play with the kids in house #3. We play catch and soccer; one of the boys is 7, and the other one is 2. Also, today, a little girl made me a drawing of a unicorn and gave it to me. Seeing the way of El Salvador has made me super grateful for my family and my life, but also grateful that I get to help them.

Bear Brewer, Student, North Muskegon, MI

Hello! This trip is very fun, but I was voted to write this email because I was the one winning the card game. Yesterday was probably my favorite

day because we got a lot of work done, and it was very enjoyable. The family was helping out, and it was nice getting to work alongside them and getting to know them. My friends and I also ordered some local food to the hotel, and it was probably the best food I've ever had. Today was a little more relaxed- we finished the walls of the houses we built and went to the beach. It was the first time I went to the ocean, and it was really cool, though the current was very strong. Now we're back at the hotel, and it's fun to relax and beat your friends at cards.

Abigail Miller, Student, Mona Shores MI

Hi. Though being very nervous about this trip, I'm having a great time. I was losing the card game, so it was my turn to write. I really enjoy building more than I thought. The family is really nice, and their kids are super sweet. The beach was really nice, even though the waves were huge. The black sand was new and very hot. Now back at the hotel, I'm losing at cards, but it's really nice to relax.

Levi Jackson, student, Muskegon High School

As I write this email, it is raining super hard, which is not super common this time of year. But today we finished the houses and went to one of the many black sand beaches where most people swam. I don't personally like salt water, so I stayed on land the whole time and enjoyed the sun and relaxed. Now I'm back at the hotel playing a really dumb card game called ERS (I don't recommend it.) Overall, it was a decent day, which was pretty similar to the last two years, which is a good thing.

**Chad Reilly, Chaperone,
Portland, Maine**

What's up, family and friends! This is my fifth trip here, second as a chaperone, and I was a student for three trips in 2013-2015. We are having the time of our lives down here in El Salvador. We got a great group here at House #3 that has continued to stay positive and motivated despite all the setbacks we have hit. I believe we are calling ourselves *Casa de Fiesta*, which means House of Party. We have the privilege this year of meeting the family that will be living in the house we are building. They run a shop attached to the lot and even named their shop after Doug! It's called *Tienda de Mealey*. Jessica is the mother, and Oscar is her partner. They have three children, the youngest being Alejandro, who is the cutest boy you'll ever meet. The grandfather, I believe named *Josul* (My Spanish is a bit rusty), has been the biggest help; he drops *placas* with endless energy. We're all missing you all reading this and will be home soon with lots of stories and maybe a few new cuts and bruises.



**Katie Cervoni, Chaperone,
Corning, NY**

Howdy. Howdy. This is my 6th trip to El Salvador, and I'm so happy to be here. Our group has worked hard over the past two days to build this home in Talnique. The family has been really engaged with the building process, which is so lovely (and very appreciated). Our team has been so willing to jump in, try new things, and have fun while doing hard work. It's a pleasure to get to build and experience this with them.