

Future Roots Update

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March 29, 2019

Hello!

I was going to record a video update but decided that a written one would be better. Please share the following with the group however you'd like. Thanks!

Rotary Update

Hello everyone! I realized we will never be able to fit everything into one program. So I'll take this chance to update you about Future Roots, the teacher training project and also share a bit about my experiences in Guatemala.

Future Roots Project is excited to say that we (finally) received our Letter of Determination which was the final step in becoming a 501c3 Non Profit, all past donations are tax deductible. This came at a great time because it opens doors to more funding and allows us to expand to do new projects. While Liz is based in Nicaragua developing creative writing workshops, I have been in Guatemala networking and expanding the teacher training project.

I met with the Rotary Club of Guatemala City Este that successfully collaborated with Crystal, New Hope and Robbinsdale in 2013 on a district matching grant. They were excited and are open to hosting the vocational training project if we decide to apply. They sponsor 10 projects per year and currently have 3 spots open. One board member said they could possibly contribute funds as well.

Rotary Contributions 2018/2019:

Robbinsdale \$2,000

Plymouth \$2,000

Minnetonka \$1,500

Uptown \$750

Golden Valley \$500

Nicaragua:

The model we are using in Nicaragua evolved this year to be more sustainable and suitable for a long term project. What we started in one school spread across many different regions of the country to include over 200 educators, many living and working in rural areas. We had to decide if we would stop expanding or find a way to redesign things so that I could continue to reach new teachers.

Over the past 6 years "leader teachers" have emerged naturally. These women are smart, dedicated, capable, reliable educators and they have been actively participating in my trainings for years. They were the first to seek me out to ask questions, share stories and to use me as a resource for educational strategies. Now they have taken on many of the tasks that Liz and I had been doing: preparing and presenting new topics at teacher trainings, implementing the

new material in their respective schools, documenting proof that the activities make it into the classroom, and coordinating project logistics. This is a sustainable model that empowers local educators to be the sparks of change and I am very impressed at the results. We are in communication weekly via WhatsApp where we exchange photos, videos, files and ideas. I continue to oversee the process, provide resources to the group, and mentor them during my time in Nicaragua. In the future I plan to organize a retreat as a way to cover a lot of material in a condensed time. Here is a picture of 5 of the 10.



We are focusing on Social Emotional learning this year because the political instability in the country is affecting everyone, but especially the children. We aim to teach them how to identify and express their emotions in a healthy way during, invaluable skills during these tough times. Right now things are safe, but it remains unclear how long the current government is going to be in power. Liz is spending most of her time in the autonomous Atlantic region where she is least affected by the situation.

Guatemala:

In less than 6 months I have managed to get connected to the Ministry of Education, train first grade teachers on the topic of literacy and best of all receive invitations from teachers to visit their classes to help implement the new ideas. None of this would have been possible without Asociación Educando Guatemala (and Rotary!). This amazing team of locals is well respected because they have been training teachers for 5 years and also do many other impressive projects on a small budget. It was a match made in heaven and they have been wonderful to me. They arranged everything so that I could give a series of trainings to 50 teachers, but

assure me there are 150-200 total that are waiting to work with me. In Nicaragua it was a process of building everything from nothing, luckily here I was able to plug in easily.



I know that we work among the most struggling schools in Nicaragua, possibly the poorest Spanish speaking country in the world and that we face so many big challenges simultaneously. But it didn't fully hit me until I visited other Central American countries how bad the reality in Nicaragua is and how much I have adapted to those difficult circumstances. Nicaragua really prepared me for anything and in comparison everything in Guatemala has felt noticeably easier. I'll share a few examples: The teachers all have degrees, smartphones, WhatsApp, internet and they are all literate. Being a teacher is a more respected job and they earn significantly more than in Nicaraguan. While the schools I visit here are undeniable impoverished they are still in better condition than Nicaragua: Running water, electricity, plenty of food, bathrooms with toilets that flush, toilet paper, a security guard, enough classrooms, shaded areas, and secured classrooms.

I was inspired to start in Nicaragua because it was the bottom of the bottom, in a complete educational crisis. The bar was set so low that I knew "I can do better than this, we can do better than this, anything will be better than this." In the back of my mind I knew that if we find things that work here, in the most extreme conditions, it's very likely they would be useful in other Spanish speaking countries in similar situations.

Statistically Guatemala has a higher illiteracy rate than Nicaragua and probably because they face an extra challenge because 21 Mayan languages are spoken in addition to Spanish because the majority of the population is indigenous.

The teachers here are very eager to learn new strategies and have made me feel very appreciated, welcomed and needed. After the last training they gave me a very heartfelt, sad goodbye and thank you. Almost all of them signed up to invite me to visit their classes in the future. Many teachers have already used strategies from the training and even sent me pictures of their students doing the new activities.

And that is the story of how in only a few months we were able to easily replicate the model in a new country. The Guatemalan people have been very good to me and I am very grateful for their help. And for yours. Thank you so much for support! This all would have been impossible without Rotary and its members.



Service above self,
Jaime Belden