

Rotary wishes Thailand a well

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by Emily Canning-Dean

Reporter

Twinsburg -- Nearly 2,000 students and 1,300 villagers in northern Thailand will benefit from clean drinking water, thanks to the Twinsburg Rotary Club and their international brethren.

The Twinsburg Rotary Club, which took the lead on this international project, contributed \$6,100 to a \$36,000 campaign to fund the construction of water wells, underground water systems and water filtration systems at four schools in Northern Thailand and a six-unit toilet building at another northern Thailand school.

The Case Western Reserve University chapter of Engineers Without Borders, students from Chiang Mai University in Thailand and members of Rotary clubs of Nordonia, Bedford, Chagrin Highlands and Strongsville partnered with the Twinsburg Rotary on the project.

"Much of the northern area of Thailand is in desperate need of clean water," Twinsburg Rotary President Philip Weiss said. "[The project began] after a former member [Nick Wing] learned about the need from a Thailand native he knew from college."

Wing said he met Supari Chatkunyarat, a Thailand native, a few years ago when he was attending Ohio University.

"I kept in touch with her ... when I was joining the Twinsburg Rotary, I learned that she was the incoming president of her Rotary Club in Thailand," Wing said. "I asked her if there were any projects in Thailand we could contribute to and she told me about the water project."

Wing said clean water is hard to come by in northern Thailand because of development in China and Burma, which pollutes water sources that flow downstream into Thailand.

At the time he learned of the project, Wing was studying non-profit management at Case Western Reserve. He went to the campus' chapter of Engineers Without Borders and got that group on board. Members of the group traveled to Thailand to complete pre-construction work at the water source sites.

Wing left the Twinsburg Rotary Club when he moved to Tennessee, but said he is proud of the organization's involvement in the project.

"The club has contributed to numerous other projects, but this is the first time the Twinsburg Rotary has taken a leadership role on an international project," he said.

Weiss said the local chapter contributed \$6,100 to the project, and more than \$36,000 was raised overall with help from the other Rotary clubs and larger Rotary organizations.

Weiss explained that the Twinsburg Rotary Club belongs to Rotary District 6630, which encompasses most of Northeast Ohio. He said the district agreed to match Twinsburg Rotary's donation dollar for dollar. Rotary International then agreed to match the district's donation dollar-for-dollar.

Weiss said construction on the wells began in June and should be complete by December.

"At each of these sites, the villagers will be trained on care and maintenance of the water and sanitation systems to keep a continuous source of clean water," Weiss said.