

Rotary makes a difference globally, working with partners around the world on projects that promote health, economic opportunity and inclusivity. With this news update, the Rotary Club of Milwaukee hopes to keep members and partners informed about the projects we are working on together in Guatemala.

Globally, Rotary’s goals include facilitating universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water and strengthening the capacity of governments, institutions, and communities to develop, finance, manage, and maintain sustainable water and sanitation services.

Since 2010, Milwaukee Rotarians have worked toward that goal by investing time, expertise, and money in nine water projects in Guatemala with two more in the planning stages.

The model developed is proving to be impactful and sustainable. It begins with a Guatemalan community identifying a need and requesting assistance. It develops with technical expertise from our engineering partners including *Ingeneiros Sin Fronteras-Guatemala (ISF-GT)* and *Engineers Without Borders* local university chapter students. Each project includes a water source (well or spring), conduction pipes leading to a storage tank, a chlorination system, and a distribution system of pipes to homes. A power source keeps it running with solar utilized where feasible. And finally, financing is assembled from Rotary Clubs, Districts, the Rotary International World Fund, and individuals.

In March 2024, twelve Rotarians from Milwaukee, Madison, Wausau, Green Bay, Waukesha and Marquette MI, embarked on a trip to visit projects supported by our clubs. The trip led by Jerry Stepaniak and Mike Paddock included stops at multiple sites in the Guatemalan Highlands, the Escuintla hospital water system, meetings with two collaborating local governments and interaction with two host Guatemalan Rotary clubs. Jean Burgener, Asst. Governor District 6220 had this to say. *“Everyday we met with communities and learned from them their needs for potable water. This was not a vacation but an educational and diplomatic trip. For me it was an experience of a lifetime and I would encourage other Rotarians to go as well.”*



Rotarians meeting with the newly elected Alcalde and staff in Joyabaj

PROJECT UPDATES

Las Cruces Pachilip: Historically many families in this community of approximately 500 people obtained water from a hand dug well that dried up regularly or from the Rio Arco river two kilometers away but contaminated from upstream pollution. Pachilip’s Community Development Council made up mostly of four women representing the Auxiliary Mayor, the Indigenous Mayor’s Office, Council of Parents, and midwives requested assistance. A project was formulated and more than 14 Rotary Clubs and five Districts contributed to the global grant received in March 2023.

Working with the Rotary Club of Quetzaltenango Guatemala, in March of 2023, the Rotary Club Milwaukee (RCM) received a global grant to bring clean water, handwash sinks, and hygiene training to the community. The \$200,000 project faced challenges including installation of distribution piping through rocky terrain over a long distance. Would there be enough volunteer labor from the community to trench and pipe? All fears were allayed when a record number of community members joined students from EWB-Marquette to complete the arduous task in record time. The incredible response resulted in project savings which are being reinvested in wash stations, latrines and septic improvement at the community school, enhanced sanitation training and fencing repairs. The improvements inspired a private donor to fund a new community kitchen.



Rotarians Scott Haumersen and Jessica Ace from the Madison Downtown Rotary Club “digging in” to help build latrines

Water quality tests were completed, and the project was dedicated January 5, 2024. More than 100 families now have clean drinkable water at their homes.

Tzitzil is an agricultural community in the Central Highlands of Guatemala. Residents grow corn and beans for their own consumption and coffee to sell. 108 families with roughly 468 people rely upon untreated water from rainwater catchments and some shallow wells. Families' members often walked two kilometers to the nearby heavily polluted Rio Tzitzil for water. In 2020, the community purchased three springs roughly 6.4 km away that could supply sufficient water for the anticipated community growth over the next 20 years.

Under the direction of Jim Cantrill from District 6220 and the Marquette MI Morning Rotary Club, seven districts, 11 clubs, and an anonymous donor teamed to provide funding for a basic water system for Tzitzil. This \$145,000 project will develop a year-round, gravity fed water source for the community. The project design is being completed by the student chapter of EWB—Marquette University with travel to Guatemala in August 2024 to facilitate construction. The Municipality is un-

derwriting a portion of the project materials, and the community will establish a water service fee to assure funds are available for the maintenance and sustainability of the system.

Churunel is a community of 147 families, numbering over 700 people in the northeast part of the municipality and department of Sololá Guatemala. They have requested assistance to design and fund a water system connecting to a new well drilled by the municipality with a distribution system to households.

Inclusion in the system would be open to everyone, including future households who fulfill the connection requirement established by the community. Funds have been committed from seven Rotary Districts and 16 Clubs for this \$150,000 project. Students from the Humanitarian Engineering Club at Milwaukee School of Engineering are completing system layout, solar facility and tank designs. Students will travel to the site in August 2024 to work with the community on project construction.



The Tzitzil Community celebrates the water project with visiting Rotarians Peter Bosch, District 6270 Governor, and Julia Wallace, Past District 6220 Governor



Water from the newly drilled Churunel well

Partnering for Bigger, Bolder, Better water projects in Guatemala

Collaborating with other Rotary Clubs and Rotary Districts has made it possible to take on more and bigger water projects in Guatemala. Many thanks to those who have stepped forward with funding and joined the fight for clean water.

Rotary Clubs of Cedarburg/Grafton, Escanaba Michigan, Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac Morning, Green Bay, Madison Downtown, Madison South, Marquette Michigan Breakfast, Marshfield, Milwaukee, Mitchell Field, Oconomowoc, Oshkosh, Port Washington/Saukville, Sheboygan, Sheboygan Early Birds, Slinger/Allenton, Sycamore Illinois, Sycamore Illinois Rotaract, Vista Hermosa GT, Waukesha Noon, Waupaca, Wausau After Hours, Wausau Early Birds, Wauwatosa.

Districts 4250 GT, 5170 CA, 5580 ND, 5710 KS, 6220 WI/MI, 6250 WI, 6270 WI, 6420 IL.