

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.

Twenty Rotarians and friends from the Rotary Club of Milwaukee and partner clubs recently returned from trips to Guatemala where they saw water projects underway, helped to build a bridge, and visited potential new project sites.

Cruz Chich Chumisa Water System

This project represents a unique partnership of two adjoining communities with a large geographical footprint including joint construction, ownership and management of a spring-based water system serving 469 homes and 2,580 people. Partnering to fund the project is a global grant from Rotary International, support from seven districts and 22 Rotary clubs led by the Rotary Club of Elmbrook. Design was done by Marquette University EWB.



The project experienced some difficult trenching issues that were resolved using the community's volunteer manual labor to remove rock discovered just beneath the surface. Work began in 2025 and is 85% complete.

Llano Grande Water System

When completed, the Llano Grande project will bring a reliable supply of sanitary water to 114 homes including indigenous Mayan K'iche and mestizos. The project is 90% complete and includes a solar system to minimize utility costs.



San Antonio Ixoc Water System

The people of San Antonio Ixoc (pronounced Shook) requested help building a water system to serve 130 homes and nearly 700 people. At 1,432 meters above sea level, the area is sloping with rocky terrain and crops planted among trees. More than 140 residents, including farmers, brick layers and seasonal agricultural workers, attended a community meeting testifying that their existing water system was inadequate, providing water only once or twice per week at a high cost.

A team including residents, municipal officials, Rotary Clubs of Vista Hermosa GT and Milwaukee, Ingenieros sin Fronteras GT, and Marquette University Engineers without Borders completed a needs assessment and a plan was formulated. The project's unique design will tap into 12 natural springs located among the highland ravines and forests. The flow from those springs will be merged into one conduction line of 8 kilometers (nearly 5 miles). A distribution tank with chlorination will be constructed with distribution planned in three sectors with taps and water meters at each home, the school, churches, and the community center. Training in system maintenance and hygiene will be provided and a Water Committee established with billing capability to ensure the project's sustainability.



In mid-November 2025, Rotary International awarded a Global Grant of \$83,594. Four Rotary Districts and 7 Rotary Clubs are providing funds. On February 18, 2026, the community, along with Rotary representatives, conducted a stone setting ceremony. Construction begins in April.

Xajaxac Water System

The Xajaxac (pronounced Sha-ha-Shock) water project is in Solala GT and was designed by a newly formed satellite Rotary Club consisting of engineers who are graduates of Milwaukee area engineering schools. When completed, it will serve 251 families with 1,100 people. The water distribution system will be connected to an existing well and include a pump, solar energy system, conduction line, distribution tank, and lines to household connections with water meters.

Rotary International approved a Global Grant for the \$155,680 project at the end of 2025. The Elmbrook Rotary Club is taking the lead and funding is also being provided from 7 Districts and 17 Rotary Clubs. Construction is scheduled to begin this April.

Pacaxol Kitchen

Another project designed by the Satellite Rotary Club and led by the Elmbrook Rotary Club is the construction of a new kitchen adjoining an existing school in Pacaxol GT.



The existing kitchen has partial walls, an adobe stove and dirt floor

The new kitchen will allow for nutritious daily food preparation for children and the community for the first time. The new permanent structure will have brick walls, brick wood fired oven, tiled food preparation areas and floors. Funding to make this project possible will come from the 20 Rotarians who traveled to Guatemala as well as the Rotary Club of Waukesha and others in District 6270.

Flor Blanca Vehicular Bridge

The people of Flor Blanca & Palibatz, in the northern part of the municipality of Joyabaj, in the department of Quiché Guatemala reached out to Rotary and requested assistance with building a vehicle bridge over a river between their communities. They are situated at an altitude of approximately 4,600 feet above sea level in an area of rocky steep terrain.

Approximately 100 families live in Flor Blanca and 132 live in Palibatz with a combined population of approximately 2,000. The communities are separated by a river which is impassible during the rainy season from May to November, cutting off access to schools, the regional hospital in Joyabaj and the markets. In addition to connecting the two communities, a vehicular bridge in this strategic location, improves transportation for another 12 nearby communities.

In May 2025, a team including the Rotary Club of Vista Hermosa GT, Rotary Club of Elmbrook, Rotary Club of Milwaukee, Ingenieros sin Fronteras – GT (ISF-GT), and the Joyabaj municipality, conducted a community needs assessment. The two communities were well organized and willing to provide labor and timber for formwork to construct the bridge. From this meeting a plan was developed. A cast-in-place concrete bridge spanning approximately 75 feet was designed to be constructed over the river providing reliable access year-round. The project will be owned, jointly funded, and maintained by the municipality of Joyabaj.



Work began this January with the community building a new roadway to the site and then cutting upward of 100 trees to construct a wood framework to support foundations, support columns and the concrete deck.



With a large volunteer deployment of US engineers working alongside the community, the entire construction was done within 2 months.

As traveler and Rotary member Tim Hunter stated, “It was incredible to see the life changing impact of the bridge project and the water systems created by the communities and shepherded by Rotary and Engineers without Borders. Connecting communities with a bridge and enabling an education for girls who no longer are tasked with carrying water changes lives forever. It is an honor to be a small part of these efforts.”

If you would like additional information, please

Contact: Jerry Stepaniak at

E-mail: jerrystepaniak@gmail.com

Phone: (414) 745-7744