Email Recap from Andrea Norris – April 5, 2011

The project last year involved 10 clubs from District 5710, the David (Panama) Rotary Club, two DSGs, and 5 people who made the trip (Jorge Coromac, Dick Meidinger, Deb Rodenbaugh, Dori Milldyke, and Susan Andersen). They took 30 water filters and were able to install 17 during their 4 or 5 days in the Ngobe Bugle Comarca (kind of like an Indian reservation in the US). The David Rotarians installed the rest during the following months. After purchasing the materials, meeting the grant requirements, and reimbursing eligible expenses, our spreadsheet indicated that we had a carry over of $843. Most of the donations had been sent to Stan Teeter and deposited in the Panama Fund we learned the District had been keeping for some years, but the Lawrence Rotary Club kept its funds and accepted some of the contributions (I recall the Jayhawk Club's $1000 and Larry Dimmitt's $500).

This year Dori Milldyke, Deb Rodenbaugh, Susan Andersen, Dick Meidinger, Jorge Coromac, and I had several meetings to discuss how the project should continue, now that the first filters were judged to be a significant success. As you know, we applied for three DSGs, one from each of the clubs represented in the meeting (Jorge's not included), the Lawrence, Lawrence Jayhawk, and Manhattan Konza. When the DSGs were declined, we had several meetings to decide whether we could apply for and get a Matching Grant for the project, something we had planned to do next year after assessing the needs of the community we're serving and consulting with the David Rotarians somewhat more carefully. We decided we should apply and the application was eventually approved, with the help of the District 5710 contribution of $4000.

Deb Rodenbaugh continued to solicit funds for the project and we asked for volunteers, knowing that it would take quite a few volunteers to install 60 water filters in the distant and barely accessible locations where some of them are needed. Volunteers paid a $100 deposit each. They are Tom and Gaye Groene (Lawrence), Bob Schwartz and Susan Andersen (Lawrence Jayhawk), Deb Rodenbaugh (Manhattan Konza), Marci Spaw (Manhattan), David Beck and Rehan Reza (Topeka) and me (Lawrence). Jorge Coromac was our professional leader from Heart to Heart, and is, of course, also a Rotarian. We went to Panama basically from February 12-19 and installed 59 of the 60 filters during that week. Installing the filters involves carrying 50-pound bags of sand, bags of gravel, and cinder blocks as well as the various equipment for the filters. Some of the sites were on roads we in Kansas would consider impassable with huge irregular ruts and crossing streams, then getting to the site required carrying the materials, and sometimes buckets of water up and down paths up to a mile long. Pictures of our activities are available on several Picasa sites (David Beck, Rehan Reza and Andrea Norris posted pictures), although no one photorgraphed the roads because we were too busy clinging to the sides of the pickup.

Many District 5710 Rotary Clubs supported the project financially. Beyond the three leading clubs, Lawrence ($2000), Jayhawk ($1000), and Manhattan Konza ($2500), we had donations from Manhattan ($800), Junction City ($250), DeSoto ($110), Bonner Springs ($1375), Topeka ($750). Baldwin City ($50). And as you know, the Gardner Rotary Club had a fundraiser for the project and raised $2597. Altogether, with the carry over, individual donations, club donations, and the grants, the project raised $22,949, $11,042 of which was the Matching Grant and $1601 is designated for Jorge's expenses. And 10 clubs participated, plus the very active David Rotarians.

As a result of the project, dozens of families and thousands of adults and children in schools, medical clinics, and homes in the area around David and in the far reaches of the Ngobe Bugle Comarca will have clean water for the next 25 years or more.

As soon as the Matching Grant is funded, we will get the funds disbursed, which should be any day now. Although we don't have a single organizing club, most of this will fall on the Manhattan Konza Club, since they are the lead international sponsors of the Matching Grant.

I hope this is helpful information about the scope, difficulty, and effect of the project.

Yours in Rotary,

Andrea

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