



The Children of the Dump Project – Chinandega, Nicaragua

<https://www.hopeandrelief.org/>

In the remote northwest corner of Nicaragua, just three hours from Houston, Texas there lived over 800 children living off of the garbage of the city dump of the city of Chinandega, Nicaragua. These children were digging through the garbage, with their bodies full of open sores, desperately looking for something to eat. Children were competing with dogs, cattle and adults for scraps of food.



In 1995 a missionary, Padre Marco Dessy, began working with these children by means of a small school where the students also received a hot lunch each day; but he only had room and funds to support about 90 children. A Rotary Club from Humble, Texas began an effort to expand the school and provide additional funds. Then in 1998, Hurricane Mitch destroyed the northern region around Chinandega leaving hundreds of thousands of people homeless with their homes, farms, cattle, tools and everything gone. They also ended up at the city dump compounding the problem. Rotarians from the Houston area responded.

The original School of the Dump was expanded to include all grades from pre-K through high school. A Trade School was also built as well as a live-in school for blind children, a hospital, medical and dental clinics, a pregnant women's shelter and much more.

In 2001, after hearing Father Dessey and Rotarian Frank Huezo speak at the Rotary International Convention in San Antonio, Texas, other Rotary districts from Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska, Colorado, North Texas, Ohio, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, decided to join the rescue mission. Since then many other great miracles have happened for those children in desperate need.

Today more than 1,700 children benefit from our programs. We have seen the miracles of the children of the dump become CPAs, attorneys, doctors, businessmen, teachers ... and more scholars are in the pipeline. We have expanded our programs to other regions of Nicaragua and today "The Children of the Dump" program has become a model for Rotary International on how to help break the cycle of extreme poverty in the world. It can be done and this is the living proof.

We have a U.S. 501(c)(3) foundation, Hope and Relief International Foundation with Board of Directors that

include multiple Past District Governors and Rotarians from several Rotary districts in the USA. This foundation helps us with financial donations for our work and allows donors a chance to help this project.