

MESA Worldwide



A NEWSLETTER OF MESA, A DISTRICT 6600 PROJECT, #15

NEXT MEETING: January 9, 2007
Findlay Ford, 4 PM

Highlights of the November 14th Meeting

Director of Operations: Andrew Timothy stated that the prescreening of incoming donated equipment and supplies is making MESA more efficient, as all donated items received since moving to the new warehouse have already been shipped. There is a great deal more room in the warehouse as excess inventory is moved out. Recent container shipments include two to Belize and four to El Salvador. Two truckloads of equipment were delivered to a new clinic in Heyden, Kentucky. MESA has plans to ship additional containers to Guatemala, Belize and El Salvador in the near future.

Special Report: Bill Ruse presented an overview of the planned creation of a District Foundation, organized as a 501(c)-3 entity. Constituent entities of the Foundation will be MESA, Youth Services and the District Foundation. Each one of the individual foundations will have its own board and rules, but will be under the guidance and supervision of the 'umbrella' foundation.

Uniendo Conference: There is still time to sign up for the Uniendo Conference. You can make travel arrangements through JET International (800 jetintl) and conference registration at the conference website (http://www.uniendo-america.org/main_eng.htm). Currently there are over 25 Rotarians, family members and Rotaractors attending.

MESA's future: In an effort to have MESA be a more effective tool, it was decided to have a brainstorming session. The purpose of the session was to re-evaluate MESA's mission and how to best implement it. The date for the session will be December 9th from 9:30 to 12:30, at Findlay Ford.

Country Reports;

- **Belize:** Bob Haas reported that 22 people are planning to accompany him when he returns to Belize to continue his school rehabilitation projects. See attached report from Father Bob.
- **Zambia:** Bob Haas is in the process of raising \$30,000 for water wells and education
- **El Salvador:** Bob Ruehl is continuing to acquire and ship equipment to the clinic in Santa Ana. See attached report from Bob on the work he is doing providing educational equipment in the Chalatenango area of El Salvador.
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December 9th Brainstorming Retreat

Over 30 Rotarians, representing almost as many District 6600 Clubs met in Findlay Saturday morning to discuss the future direction on MESA. Jerry Skully facilitated the session. He pulled ideas and concepts from Rotarians, many of which had MESA connections for years, while others were attending their first MESA meeting.

In an effort to define the future of MESA we looked at our

- **Mission Statement** (what we do)
- **Value Statement**, (why we do it), and
- **Vision Statement** (what we want to achieve).

Breaking into small groups we came up with key words, phrases and ideas of what we felt MESA should be achieving, not just today, but in the year 2020.

Using the information developed in the session, the MESA steering committee (all District 6600 Rotarians) will put together a plan for MESA. If you would like to be part of the plan, contact Stan Kujawa, MESA Chair, e-mail; owner@findlayford.com, or phone 419 424 0979.

Mel Honig, Newsletter Editor

School Equipment and Supplies to Central America

The Galion and Lima Rotary Clubs, together with Galion Knights of Columbus, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes of Galion High School and St Joseph's Youth Group, sent two semi-trucks of used furniture donated by Galion Public Schools to needy schools in Chalatenengo, El Salvador. The shipments included some 239 student desks, 316 chairs 11 teachers desks assorted tables, book carts erasers and wall coat racks. In addition a classroom of kindergarten furniture from Ladyfield School in Toledo filled out the shipment.

“On the other end we work with the Maquillishaut Rotary Club of San Salvador that coordinates the distribution of the school furniture to various schools in the Chalatenengo area” said Bob Ruehl of the Lima Rotary Club. MESA, an arm of Rotary District 6600 coordinates shipments to Central America for us. We often get a charity rate through Chiquita banana that enables us to double the amount of shipments we make”, he added.

With closing of schools is the area; there is an excess of used school furniture that would be sent to landfill for a lack of need here at home. This opened the possibility of upgrading schools in Central America, the first project being started by Fr Robert Haas, at that time a member of the New London Rotary Club, along with the San Ignacio Rotary Club of San Ignacio, Belize in 2003.

Many schools in Central America, especially the rural areas, lack the basics for a good education. Supplies are at a premium. Some schools even lack electricity. Desks are frequently homemade, and sometimes only the teacher has a textbook.

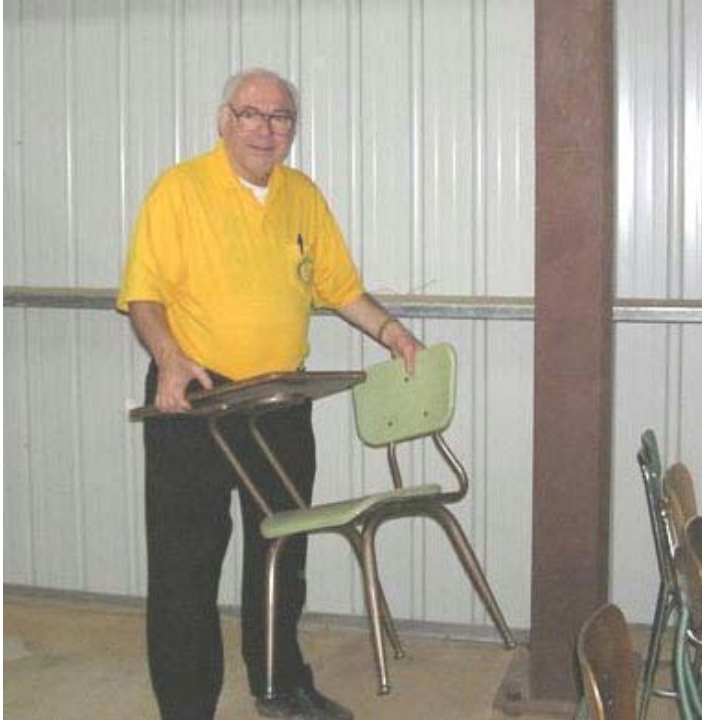
On behalf of the children of Chalatenengo, El Salvador, many thanks to all who helped on that Friday and Saturday.

Bob Ruehl, Lima Rotary
Father Robert Haas, Galion Rotary

A Brief Note on the Following Article

In the year 2003, Father Bob Haas attended a Uniendo Conference. On becoming aware of the need to improve the Belizean educational system, Father Bob has worked tirelessly towards that end. Below is Father Bob's story as told in his own words.

Mel Honig, Newsletter Editor



Father Bob working helping load desks in the MESA Warehouse.

Belize Literacy Project

While attending the Rotary Uniendo Conference in January of 2003, I was attracted to a project to upgrade and improve schools in Belize. Like in many third world countries, the schools there are grossly inadequate by our standards. Classrooms are dark, uncomfortable, hot, and at times smelly. The president of the San Ignacio Rotary Club there, after his daughter came home from school and said she did not want to go to school anymore, asked her why.

She complained of the lack of proper restrooms and books, very uncomfortable desks, hot classrooms, and poor equipment. Looking further into her complaints, he too found not only the school she attended inadequate, but other schools he looked at were similar.

At the Uniendo Conference, a project fair sponsored by Rotary Clubs in Central America, that rotates from country to country, the San Ignacio Rotary Club presented a proposal to upgrade schools. Their original intent was to make on model classroom in three different schools. After some negotiation, I proposed to remodel a whole school instead, thus saving on transportation, movement of tools, etc.

In January 2004 I returned with a team of eight to rehab St. Vincent Pallotti School in the village of Unitedville. Like 90% or more of the schools in Belize, this is a religious school. The government pays for the teachers' salaries, some electricity and some textbooks. The sponsoring group provides all the rest. St. Vincent's had an enrollment of 92 students, kindergarten through 8th grade.

The school was dark (3 two foot florescent lights per classroom), smelly (from the bat droppings above the drop ceiling) had home made desks, did have black boards, but no bulletin boards, some ceiling fans. It needed to upgrade the outhouse, put in sidewalks, improve the playground, upgrade the principal's office, and obtain more office equipment.

We found that students from that school had never gone on to high school (12-30 miles away), had poor test scores, and a high rate of tardiness and absenteeism. A number of the students were going to school without eating in the morning, and sometimes fell asleep at their desks late in the morning, and would not return to school in the afternoon.

Our plan was to upgrade the school so that the students would want to attend. And so, with the help of the San Ignacio Rotarians, we had the drop ceiling and bat droppings removed, insulation sprayed in, installed ceiling fans in each room. Upgraded the lighting to four fixtures, each having two four foot fluorescents, upgraded the blackboards, painted all the rooms, installed bulletin boards, made bookcases for each of the rooms, provided new desks and established two \$500 scholarships so students could go on to high school.

At the rededication ceremony, the representative from the Ministry of Education told one to the Rotarians, "Usually when we are asked to visit a school we are presented with problems. You have shown us solutions".

When we returned the following year, we found that the enrollment had jumped to 125 students, seen of the eight 8th graders wanted to go on to high school, and students were coming a half hour early some days to study so they could get a scholarship. The village continued to improve the school by upgrading the outhouse, putting in sidewalks m adding play ground equipment, adding an outside drinking fountain, finishing the principal's office and adding a cafeteria area.

The following year the school added a feeding program that has not only helped attendance, but greatly improves the children's ability to concentrate in class. Test scores likewise have improved.

In 2005 a team of 20 returned to Belize and rehabbed 12 classrooms of Santa Elena Grade School. The school has nearly 1,000 students. We helped to pay for the addition of 6 classrooms on the second floor. Again we had insulation blown in. put in fans and lights were formerly there was no electricity in that wing of the building, painted all the classrooms, made bookcases, added bulletin boards. In addition we upgraded a classroom for a teachers' lounge. Before adding insulation, we found that classrooms would sometimes reach 120 degrees due to heat radiating off the corrugated metal roods. The fans and insulation certainly have helped.

In 2006 a team of 17 rehabbed eight classrooms of Mt. Carmel Infancy School in Benque. In addition to the usual renovations, we tiled the bathrooms, and installed new gutters.

Besides rehabbing schools, we have sent over 6000 used school desk and chairs to Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama and Peru. Installed a computer lab in the San Lucas Toliman Catholic school in Guatemala, sent of 60, pencils, 70, crayons, pens rulers, Elmer's glue, notebooks and textbooks. We helped establish video lending libraries in San Ignacio and Benque, provided scholarships in Unitedville, help fund library improvement for Mt. Carmel High School, contributed to the feeding program in three schools, provided 2450 new small plastic chairs for Mt. Carmel, Santa Elena and St. Joseph's schools.

This coming January a team of 21 plans to return to rehab St Martin de Porres school in Blackman Eddy. In addition to the usual rehab, we will add much needed restrooms to the school. Participants pay their own way, this year \$1,500 for airfare, lodging and two meals a day for two weeks. We also try to get in two days of R and R, in addition to the work we do. The San Ignacio Rotary Club, as well as local school staff and parents work with us in these projects. Many others here locally contribute financially to this effort, as well as give school equipment and supplies.

Father Robert Haas, New London and
currently Galion Rotaries

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