

Tegucigalpa Market Children Program has Roots in the Kootenays



In Tegucigalpa, Honduras, the poorest of the poor families are working in the public markets and in the local dump. The children of the mostly single women working in the markets were not attending school. As these children became teenagers, some of the children drifted into gangs and petty theft or, at best, took over their mother's stall in the market. The Rotarians of Tegucigalpa decided to break the circle of poverty by educating the children under the Tegucigalpa Market Children Program. Since its start in 1990 this work expanded to include Rotarians in Kelowna and Castlegar, BC. Ron and Elaine Ross of Castlegar Rotary have done a remarkable job of funding and managing the program through the H.E.L.P. Honduras Society and its partner agreement with Alternativas Y Oportunidades (AYO) , a Honduran NGO.

School is free in Honduras (including the public University) but children can't attend without a uniform, shoes, books, and school supplies. These children cannot afford these items, so HELP Honduras provides this for

each student as well as other support to maintain success at the highest level possible: tutors, as needed, parenting courses, family activities, preventive health, vocational and educational programs. The philosophy is to look after the whole family so that the student has the necessary support both inside and outside of the family and therefore the greatest possibility to succeed.

Pass rates of the sponsored students in the program are 98%. Children in this project are more likely to succeed in school and receive a better education, allowing them to escape the poverty and crime cycles they would otherwise face.

Any individual, Rotarian, or a Rotary Club can "sponsor" any number of children in any grade. This annual sponsorship program pays for the child's uniform, shoes, books, school supplies and other basic needs.

Sponsorship annual fees are:

- **Primary School Student** \$180
- **Secondary School Student – Santa Barbara** \$250
- **Secondary School Student – Tegucigalpa**
full-year \$300
half-year \$150
- **Vocational Student** \$350
- **University Student** \$350

Unfortunately, several key funding programs are not available in 2016 and costs have increased with the Canadian dollar decline and an increase in older (more costly) students. These programs provided support to the

mothers and families that are integral to the success of the program as a whole. On the positive side, there were over 35 Honduran sponsors.

Rossland Rotary has sponsored these students and encouraged others in the community to do the same since 2008. Today, the Club sponsors 5 students and one of our students recently graduated from high school. In total, 17 students from grade 3 to 13 are sponsored by people from Rossland. The lives of these youth and their families are significantly changed from this invaluable program.

The Club believes this is one of our most important international programs and encourage your participation also. See more information and donate here: www.help Honduras.com or see www.rosslandrotary.org to contact a Rossland Rotarian.