

SCAW



NEWSLETTER

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A charitable organization founded by Margaret and Murray Dryden

November, 2004

HONDURAS: October 29 - November 7, 2004: 4,000 Bedkits



L to R: 2004 Travelling Team -
Laurie-Beth Davidson, Clarence Deyoung, Shirley Gates,
Joan Kirkby and Kristein O'Neil

detail the role of the overseas volunteers. In Honduras, SCAW's partners are the Rotary Club of Tegucigalpa. Their role was threefold:

a) With guidelines from SCAW, the Rotary Club purchased all the items for the bedkits. They brought them all to a central warehouse, where they were sorted and packaged, in a manner to enable each and every

recipient the ability to carry them home. Imagine, starting to pack thousands and thousands of items in individual packages — counting the pens and pencils, this amounted to over 50,000 items that had to be sorted and packaged!

b) Again with guidelines from SCAW, the Rotary Club selected and arranged for 4,000 children to come to the various distribution sites to receive their bedkits.

c) Once the above was completed, dates were selected and a 'travelling SCAW team' arrived to take the children's pictures, make sure the bedkit items were of good [the best possible] quality, and to check that all funds had been properly spent! This is necessary to ensure that we, SCAW, can provide as many good quality items as possible in each bedkit.

After their photos have been taken, the children receive the remainder of their bedkits, (remember they are already wearing some of the items for the photos), and they head off for their homes smiling from ear to ear.

2004 HONDURAS BEDKIT

- 1 covered 3" foam mattress
- 1 pillow
- 1 blanket
- 1 sheet
- 1 towel
- 1 T-shirt
- 1 pair shorts
- 2 notebooks
- 2 pencils
- 1 ballpoint pen
- 1 eraser
- 1 pencil sharpener
- 1 box of coloured pencils

So, when you consider the acquisition of the bedkit items, the packaging of them, selection of children, transporting the bedkits to the sites, picking up the SCAW team at our hotel and transporting us to the various distributions, assisting with the actual distributions, acting as translators, etc., we really could not do these distributions without them. It takes days to just pack the bedkits. We are talking about hundreds of volunteer hours and lots of extra [Rotary] costs as well, for things like rental of warehouse, rental of trucks to deliver bedkits to the sites, etc.

In addition, members of the Rotary Club told us about other projects they had on the go, like: delivering over 200 wheelchairs to people in need; establishing and setting up 400 school gardens where they teach children how to plant and take care of them, so that they can do the same at home to support their families; and, digging wells to provide water to people living in remote villages.

If the over 30,000 Rotary Clubs around the world are as active as the one in Tegucigalpa, they are surely making the world a better place in which to live!

(continued on page 2)

BY CLARENCE DEYOUNG HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

For those of you who may be relatively new to SCAW, and as a reminder to those of you who have been donors before, I would like to explain the different groups of volunteers at SCAW.

The first group is the 'in-house volunteers'. These people do all the paperwork around head office including opening the mail, in-putting information into the computer, printing the labels, sorting and mailing the photos, etc.

The second group is our 'travelling volunteers'. These people travel, always at their own expense, world-wide. They co-ordinate the actual distributions of the bedkits to the children, and take photos for you, the donors.

The third group is our 'overseas volunteers', known as SCAW partners in the respective countries. While all SCAW volunteers are very valuable, I would like to explain in more

D. MURRAY DRYDEN - 1911 - 2004 - AN AMAZING LIFE!

(Honduras by Clarence Deyoung, Halifax, Nova Scotia, continued from page 1)

Gracias, Gracias, Gracias to the Rotary Club of Tegucigalpa, their wives and families, as well as members of the Rotoract Club [junior Rotarians], who helped us make our 2004 Honduran distributions of these 4,000 bedkits possible.

Because of you, our donors, and the hard work of the Tegucigalpa Rotary Club, 4,000 more of God's children now have a warm place to sleep.



BY JOAN KIRKBY ETOBICOKE, ONTARIO

Kids in Honduras are no different from other children around the world – they are delightful, charming and lovable. And, they all have beautiful, big, dark eyes. However, apart from that similarity, they are a great mixture of Spanish indigenous and Caribbean-Indians, and Africans. They range from fair to very dark in colouring.

They arrived at the distribution sites dressed in their school uniforms: some spotless, others in need of a wash. Their shoes ran the gamut from sneakers to flip-flops, from nearly new to badly worn, from clean to muddy, from boots to oversized shoes obviously belonging to someone else.

Some of the younger children were no larger than the bedkits they would carry home. Their size may be partly due to malnutrition, since, we were told that, some of the families have only one meal a day.

One of the things that was difficult to assess is the 'neediness' of the recipient children, however, some of the signs indicating their poverty levels included obvious health problems like ringworm, lice, skin sores, and dreadful teeth, as well as their previously mentioned diminutive stature. However, seeing the homes in the distribution areas, left us in no doubt at all regarding how desperate they really are.

The homes were small shacks, cobbled together from pieces of materials 'found about'. There was no electricity and few windows, these structures were dark; had no running water, and little cleaning can be maintained, as these areas are always dusty from the nearby badly rutted mud roads.

Children are allowed to start school at five years of age (kindergarten), but are obliged to attend at seven; although there are still children who are kept home by their parents to work. Students are expected to complete grade 6, and many stop school at this point. High school is four years, and some do go on to university. Hondurans do recognize that to raise their standard of living, they must improve teacher training and school facilities, including supplies such as books and maps.

Most schools are public, but there are several private schools, some expensive, but some run by religious groups that subsidize the costs. We did a distribution in a private Santa Clara school established by a Spanish priest, Father Patricio. The children are poor and are selected by him. They are not charged for their schooling, and their uniforms, which include sturdy shoes, are paid for by him if necessary. Sixty percent of these children come from homes with single mothers. Interestingly, Dr. Simone of Etobicoke, Ontario gives much aid to this school.

Because weather is not a problem – daytime temperatures range from 20°C to 30°C all year – the schools are quite open with courtyards and halls exposed to the elements. For security, the walls surrounding school compounds are topped with barbed wire, glass shards or nails, and have locked gates. However, it is common to see stray dogs, which are thin enough to get through the bars in the gates, walking through the open areas.

A big thank you goes to Clarence. Because this was his fourth trip to Honduras, he was able to give us a lot of guidance. As Clarence, who repeats things three times for emphasis, would say, "The great reward was in seeing the children's happy smiles ... absolutely, absolutely, absolutely".

BY KRISTEIN O'NEIL STAVELY, ALBERTA

"Welcome to Honduras!" is the greeting I received when I landed in Tegucigalpa. Being a newcomer to SCAW, and to travelling on my own, I was nervous when I walked out of the airport. The first thing I saw was a Rotarian with a sign saying "Kristein O'Neil". Instantly, my anxiety was gone.

Honduras was 'an experience', right from that moment when I landed at that tiny airport, to the last day of being in the country.

It started with the ride to the hotel where I received some information on the city: eight million people, approximately 40% unemployment, minimum wage being approximately \$120US per month, and definite poverty.

Being in a 'developing' country was a culture shock for me, as well as a positive eye-opening experience. Working with SCAW allowed me to experience it first hand. I worked with the team delivering 4,000 bedkits to children who are in need, and who will utilize the bedkits to their full potential. What I witnessed was the patience and faith in every face, as well as their grateful smiles and "Gracias" when they received their bedkits.

I leave with the wonderful memory of looking into the faces of these beautiful children — their beautiful eyes and the happy smiles. I know the abundance of photos I took will keep those memories at a standstill for me.

The distributions took place in schools in the city and surrounding areas. It was different to see schools with locked gates, no glass in the windows, and no playground equipment. Even without the playground, the children laugh and play just as well. The distributions were busy, noisy, and at times, confusing for me; but due to such a great team with experience and patience, I believe they went smoothly for all of us. What I do know for sure, is that each night, I felt happy knowing that the recipient children slept well that night too.

During this trip, we also took the opportunity to visit previous recipients' homes in the area. We took a tour through one family (three children, a mom and dad, and grandma's) home. I felt very honoured to have their son, Charlie, give me a tour, telling me in the very few English words he knows, about his home. Their one bedroom had three beds and very few belongings. The other room had their wood stove, a couch which Charlie slept on, and bags of plantains. There was also a squirrel cage and a bird cage — these animals are for eating. Charlie then took me outside and showed me where he does laundry and where he houses chickens when they have them. He was

proud, and showed excitement in giving me the tour.

Everyday we drove by hundreds of these types of homes with hundreds of families living in them. They all struggle and suffer, and yet I know Charlie is not the only one with pride. I believe that SCAW is aware of that, and I felt honoured to wear my SCAW name tag.

I came home reminded that we are all people, big and small, yet no one of us more important than another. We must take care of each other the best way we can.

The city of Tegucigalpa consists of poor roads with steep inclines, and when it rains they become greasy and dangerous. Driving can be scary and fast with hundreds of vehicles on the roads, [seemingly] all going in different directions at the same time. Driving to and from a distribution, the children and parents could be seen walking in large numbers to the sites: little girls dressed in their Sunday best with fancy dresses, and little boys with greased-back hair. It was definitely a great feeling knowing they were so excited.

Rotary was fabulous, providing five-star hospitality, and so much great help. It is obvious they care about this project, and for their fellow humans.

I am proud to be apart of such a meaningful project, one that is working to aid in the struggles of these children ... one child at a time!

BY LAURIE-BETH DAVIDSON ETOBICOKE, ONTARIO

I invite you to come with me on a visit to a small village following our bedkit distribution at Valle de Angeles. We climbed into vehicles with Rotarians at the wheel to take us up steep, mountainous dirt roads with many ruts and bumps, to a rocky, red dirt pathway. En route, we passed several families with one of the children decked out in SCAW checkered shorts (purple, blue, green or black, of varying sizes) and with a large bedkit bag being carried by the parent or child. They were obviously excited, waving as we passed. Some were resting as the road was

steep, and many had walked four or five kilometers from their homes to the distribution site.

We arrived at our first stop – a home built on the edge of the main road we had travelled – to be welcomed by the nine-year-old girl who proudly displayed her bedkit bag, along with ‘welcomes’ from her mother, grandmother and teenage brother. A younger sister and her father were not at home. We were invited into their three-roomed home. The living room, 6'x10' approximately, had a couch, four wooden chairs, religious pictures on the walls, a few stuffed toys on a shelf, and a large collection of corn cobs on the tile floor. The one bedroom was crammed with a double bed and two single beds for the six residents. The kitchen was located in a separate hut beside these two rooms. On the kitchen door was mounted a squirrel skin. Two cages in the alleyway between the house and kitchen contained a frisky squirrel and a parrot – soon to become dinner for this family. The kitchen was a square room, 6'x6', with a wood burning stove made of cement and stone. The roof was a collection of tin and clay tiles. The interior was dark as there was no electricity available in this area. This was considered the best of the three homes we visited.

We began our walk down the steep, rocky, slippery dirt mountain path. It had rained earlier, and the walking was treacherous. What a blessing to see such beautiful mountain vistas and lush green vegetation of tropical trees, flowering shrubs, banana trees and coconut palms as we wound our way to the second home.

We knew we were near as we met a little seven-year-old boy with a grin so big. He was struggling to carry his new colourful mattress, on his head, up the slippery path to meet us. He led us to the front of his home where his mother and three tiny siblings met us at the door, then posed there for pictures. It's hard to imagine this mother having to carry water in a container on her head down this path, frequently, in order to provide the basics for her young family. Sanitation facilities seemed to be non-existent in all these homes, and certainly no running water was available. They get their water from mountain streams, or in some areas, a water truck goes along the main road and fills plastic oil drums for the villagers to dip into with their various sized containers.

Carrying on down the mountain side, passing several shacks, we came to our third family, which included both parents and two girls, aged eight and eleven – the eight-year-old one being the bedkit recipient. The father was unemployed, but he tries to find masonry work when possible. This home was only two small rooms with a dirt floor. A chicken was tethered outside, and a dog and tiny kitten played nearby. The family seemed very grateful for the bedkit they had received.

As we waved good-bye and began our climb up the mountainside, our final smile came as we again met our happy seven-year-old boy, perched high on a tree branch, playing with two other friends. Our hearts were filled with gratitude for the gift from you, our donors, that allowed a little joy to come into the lives of these three families, and the 3,997 others, whose homes now include new bedkits.

BY SHIRLEY GATES MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO

Our point of bedkit distribution took place in the city of Tegucigalpa and the surrounding areas. Tegus (pronounced The-goos) is short for Tegucigalpa, and is the capital of Honduras. It is divided by the Rio Choluteca with Tegucigalpa, the more affluent district on the east side, and Comayagüelo, a poorer area with cheaper hotels and not quite as well kept area, which was incorporated into the city in 1938, on the Western side of the river.

The word Tegucigalpa means “Silver Hill”. The city is surrounded by mountains and covered with their national ‘pine’ trees. While they enjoy a pleasant climate, it can become very dry during the summer months, making one fearful of fires.

Living in Canada, we are accustomed to, and expect, decent living conditions, good health care, rights to education, cleanliness, jobs with a good wage, etc. Not so in Honduras and/or other developing countries. Many of their people do not have access to even our, “taken for granted”, basic rights of water, food, education or health care. They live with what they can acquire on a day-to-day basis.

(continued on page 4)

(Honduras by Shirley Gates, Mississauga, Ontario, continued from page 3)

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere, next to Haiti, and runs a close second to Nicaragua. There is unequal distribution of income and massive unemployment — at least 40%.

50% of the population is under 24. Unfortunately, Honduras lacks proper educational facilities and supplies. In most cases, the average class (one room, often with a dirt floor) would have only one teacher teaching grades one through six, with little or no supplies.

The country was devastated by Hurricane Mitch in 1998, killing approximately 5,600 people and causing two-billion dollars in damage. Since the hurricane, which also caused the river banks of Choluteca to overflow, plus a mud slide, the country and their people have been set back another 20 years. Three of the main bridges connecting Tegucigalpa and Comayagüelo were rebuilt by the U.S., Sweden and Japan.

Many families have small cottage industries of crafts including wood carving, hammock making, basketry, embroidery and textile arts, leather crafts, and ceramics, in hopes of making enough *lempcias* (dollars) to provide for some of their family needs. Some also become street vendors, peddlers, and/or beg from car to car.

Their main meals, when affordable, consist of beans, rice, tortillas, and fried plantain. For the more affluent, meat, potatoes, cream and cheese might be added.

When talking with some of the local folk, I learned [was told] that 44% of Hondurans suffer from bad nutrition. Also, out of 110 daily deaths, approximately 15% are due to hunger, poverty, malnutrition, bad nutrition,

contaminated water and/or contaminated food.

The average wages for those fortunate enough to have work is \$110/120US per month. Farmers make about \$200US, teachers vary from \$150/500US, cashiers \$250/300US, pharmacy personnel \$400US, and a doctor working with the government about \$1,000/1,200US, all per month. However, monthly rents average from \$50/700US, sometimes reaching \$1,000US for the upper class. Purchasing a condo would range from \$70,000/75,000US.

In closing, the smiles, hugs and “*Mucho Gracias*” from the children are implanted in my memory as I know we brought joy to a few of the less fortunate families. God bless them and keep them safe!

A letter from Comayagüelo, dated November 1, 2004, addressed to: *Sirs* of the Republic of Canada (verbatim)

My best wishes to you. Please receive my cordial greetings. I wish you success in your delicate work. I am a boy in third grade of school. My name is Orlando Josué Moncada Vaguedano. I live in the Canada neighbourhood. I am 8-years-old and study at the Francisco Martínez Maradiaga School. I want to thank you for your nice gift.

I will always have it present in my mind and in my heart. As well, I hope to visit the Republic of Canada someday if God permits it, maybe for study purposes or just as a visit.

I excuse myself not wanting to say good-bye, but until I see you again.

Your friend,

(Signed)

Orlando Josué Moncada Vaguedano

**SCAW's Volunteers,
on behalf of all
little children,
wish YOU the very
Happiest Holiday
Season and a**



*Safe
Carefree
Awesome
Wonderful
Year 2005!*

THANK YOU

for your
contribution to this
Honduras trip

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Donors and Volunteers!

NEXT SCHEDULED DISTRIBUTION TRIPS

January, 2005
KOLKATA - 6,000 BEDKITS
MUMBAI - 7,000 BEDKITS

February, 2005
CHENNAI - 4,000 BEDKITS