

# SCAW NEWSLETTER



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A registered Canadian charity founded by Margaret and Murray Dryden

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## HONDURAS: September 22 - October 3, 2005: 5,000 Bedkits

**BY LAURIE-BETH  
DAVIDSON  
ETOBICOKE, ONTARIO**

Our SCAW travelling team for 2005 to Honduras has just completed the delivery of 5,000 bedkits to very beautiful, deserving, needy children in the Tegucigalpa and surrounding areas. Dear SCAW donors, it has been a privilege to do this distribution on your behalf. Thankfully the scenery is so beautiful in this area of Honduras; however, the poverty for many is extreme.

Following one of our distributions, we walked up the mountain a short distance on a rough path to visit three families of bedkit recipients.

The first home consisted of three small rooms, but 11-year-old Rosa had already rolled out her bedkit on the top bunk of a windowless room, 6'x6', that she shares with her three siblings. She proudly sat on her new 'bed' for a picture. Her parents were so grateful for the gift Rosa had received.

Seven-year-old Sigio greeted us a little farther up the mountain. He grinned his pride in his new T-shirt and shorts, as he ran to get his mother who was busy hand washing the family laundry. These people have to walk down the rough mountain paths to a central water holder to fill buckets, which they carry back on their heads, in order to provide water for their family's everyday needs! Mother, too, was so happy that her

little boy had received something new, as she had four children and she had been deserted by her husband.



**MURRAY'S DREAM 1,000,000 BEDKITS - TO DATE 786,850!**



**2005 Canadian Travelling Team -**

Jean Cullen, Alan Ingram,  
Laurie-Beth Davidson, Brenda Powrie,  
& Margaret Goodchild

A little further up the hillside, we met Claudia, living in a rough, wooden structure with a tin roof. Her mother makes tortillas to sell at the village market to provide for her young family – she's a single mother trying to make ends meet. The tortillas were being cooked outside on top of an oil drum, with wood for fuel inside the drum. Chickens ran about her feet as she worked. There is no electricity in this barrio. Most of the children eat tortillas, red refried beans and rice as their staple foods. Local fruits may be available for some.

On our distributions we saw a variety of problems obvious to us: many children were blind or visually impaired. About 20 children arrived in wheelchairs previously provided by Rotary Clubs. Other ailments included malnutrition, autism, retardation, fractures and burns. In one area pediculosis was rampant. The children were attractive and varied in appearance – 90% mestizo (mixed Amerindian and European), 7% Amerindian, 2% black and 1% white, and all had beautiful smiles.

One mother came to the distribution to receive the bedkit promised to her eight-year-old daughter who was sick with tonsillitis that day. The family lived high up on the mountainside and this mother had walked for an hour down the mountain and then had to take a bus to get to the school distribution site. She had left at 6 a.m. in order not to miss this precious gift for her daughter. (While it is SCAW's policy not to give a bedkit to anyone other than the designated child, in the event of that child's confirmed illness, SCAW may permit a sibling to receive the bedkit. However, under these extenuating circumstances, it was felt that it would have been heartless not to give the bedkit to this mother.) You see, the average income for most of these families is about \$50 Canadian a month, so your \$30 gift is incredible for a parent to consider for their child. Tears of gratitude, plus many "Gracias!" were directed to you, dear donors, as she left to catch the bus to return to her sick daughter.

*Gracias, Gracias, Gracias* for making a little brightness in the lives of 5,000 children in Honduras!

**BY JEAN CULLEN  
ETOBICOKE, ONTARIO**

Honduras is a land of seven million people, half being children – Honduras' Hope for the Future. Nestled between Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, in Central America, it is a country in which 53% of the population lives below the poverty line. Of these, 65% are women. It is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere with an extraordinary unequal distribution of income, plus a massive 28% unemployment

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(Honduras by Jean Cullen, Etobicoke, Ontario, continued from page 1)

rate. 20% of the population pays 100% of the country's taxes. Honduras is counting on expanded trade privileges, and on debt reduction, as are all depressed countries. Coffee, bananas, shrimp, lobster, meat, zinc and lumber are the main exports, but the *maquila* industry has grown immensely in the last few years (primarily, the assembly of the re-exporting of textiles and apparels). We, in Canada, have noticed many more "Made in Honduras" labels on the clothes in our stores.

In October, 1998, Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras, leaving 5,000 dead and 1.5 million displaced. The effects can still be seen in the Tegucigalpa and surrounding areas where we did our distributions. Miles of green space dot the sides of the mountains, and piles of rubble abound everywhere, where houses once stood. The hardest hit were those living at the edge of the rivers and on the steep slopes of the hills that surround Tegucigalpa. One of our distributions this year was in one such area where the children and their families lost everything and are now living in cardboard structures with dirt floors, which turn to mud in the rainy season. Needless to say, these children appreciated the bedkits, and even the plastic bags that they came in, which they will use as ground sheets to keep out the dampness.



Beautiful and shy!

As in many large Latin American cities, the poor of the country move to the cities in hopes of making a better life. They set up cardboard structures on the steep slopes of the surrounding hills, without electricity or clean water. Garbage and poor sanitation plague the area. Heavy rains wash the garbage to the base of the hills where it piles up in ditches around the roads below.

The country is struggling to get on its feet, and with the financial aid of many countries, it is progressing toward that end. But what is having the most effect is the work the Hondurans themselves are doing for their country and their people. Many projects are in operation: breakfast distributions for school children, eye examinations, distribution of new stoves that use 75% less wood (which reduces pollution and helps conserve the forests). They also run classes for children who work in the market and can't afford to go to school.

Paul Liebau once said, "People require their own power to assume responsibility for themselves."

Hondurans are taking responsibility, and with help, they will succeed.

Felix Adler wrote, "To care for anyone else enough to make their problems one's own is ever the beginning of one's real ethical development."

Thank you donors for caring!

### **BY ALAN INGRAM PETERBOROUGH, ONTARIO**

Imagine that in your own community you were given the task of finding 5,000 children who met the following criteria: family living in poverty, between the ages of 6-12 years of age, and only one child per family able to receive a bedkit. If successful, now consider scheduling these children during a two week period to attend a distribution on a specific date and time, realizing that the children's homes do not have telephones, mail service or electricity and that many of the children in the 1,000 square kilometre area will have to walk to the distribution centres. That is Task Number One!

If you wish to continue, you will next purchase the bedkit items: mattress, blanket, sheet,



Another beautiful recipient - Aldea Santa Ana

towel, clothes, school supplies, and package them into 5,000 bedkits. Then you must arrange to have the right number of bedkits transported to each site, recognizing that finding multiple storage locations in a country where theft is rampant will be a challenge. You will also have to provide a minimum of twenty volunteers at each of the eight distribution sites. Of course, you are not being paid for this work you are doing!

This, in a nutshell was the task performed by our overseas volunteers, the Rotary Club of Tegucigalpa, to enable this year's successful distribution to take place in Honduras. As a Canadian Rotarian, it is clear to me that in this Rotary Centennial Year, these men and women who were our partners and hosts in Honduras fulfilled the Rotary motto of "Service Above Self". Thanks, Rotarians, for your help and dedication in supporting SCAW in our work in Honduras.

As a first time volunteer, one of the most appealing characteristics of SCAW is the fact that 100% of all donations reach the children. This could not be accomplished without the dedicated volunteers who work daily in the SCAW office, plus the overseas volunteers in the developing countries.



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**BY MARGARET  
GOODCHILD  
ORILLIA, ONTARIO**

Consider doing a photo shoot with a prize. As I sit in this lush, flowering garden of a Central American hotel in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, being totally surrounded by mountains dotted with thousands of brick, tin, clay, cardboard or wooden homes, I have decided to focus my report to you on the duties at each “station” (the teacher in me) that the children had to go through before receiving their “Prize”.

Lining Up: After the children arrived on site they were whisked away quickly to dress in their new outfits from the bedkit. Their personal clothing was placed in a plastic bag. Children then lined up patiently in large groups, but we always took 12 boys and 12 girls closer to the starting point, then three girls and three boys to the beginning. By threes they were led to sit on three buckets behind three bedkits. Laurie-Beth (our team leader) took their picture after a Spanish volunteer told the children to sit up, feet together, hands on knees (this brought much laughter). While changing the film, we had time to play with those next in line with bubbles, balls, puppets, singing or just trying to communicate – Great Fun!

Photo: Laurie-Beth always took the photos. On receiving your photos, I’m sure you will agree that she did a terrific job. Each day when we got to the site, the first thing was to find the perfect spot to set up. Interesting backgrounds, terrain, flow of traffic, sun, distance from beginning to end all had to be taken into account. Imagine her relief after saying “*Sonrean*” (Smile) 5,000 times and having that many beautiful children smile at her in return.

Labels: We all feared this station. Immediately after the children were led away from the buckets, the three donor labels were pulled (removed) and collected to be counted. The count of the labels had to balance with the number of bedkits we gave out each day. 5,000 children had to receive their prize by the end of the week, and somehow we did it! I want to mention here that the labels are made at SCAW headquarters in Toronto. They are sorted, counted and divided into five bundles of

1,000 each, so that each of us carried some in our carry-on baggage from Toronto to Honduras. It was amazing to see the wide span of Canadian donors from B.C. to P.E.I., and others from as far away as Australia and the U.S.A – WOW!

Clothing Check: After the photo shoot, children were led to pick up their bag of personal clothes and a red mark was put on their hands telling the rest of the stations they had had their photos taken. Checking was always important. In the little bag was their school uniform, which was worth “gold”, for it’s necessary in order to attend school.

The Prize – The Bedkit: I began my week of distributions at this station. Wow, we all loved giving your gift to your child. They would run joyously to get their bedkit. Some of the six-year-olds could hardly lift this colourful bag of goodies. These bags arrived on site the day before, guarded by armed guards over the locked classroom full to the ceiling. As the bedkits were handed over, we took time to hug, talk, receive or give kisses, and give blessings to each child – what a joy!

Whenever I’m out speaking at service clubs, schools, churches, etc., I’m always asked “How do the children receive their bedkits?” I hope now as you look at your child’s photo, you can visualize a little clearer how your child goes through this maze to get the prize that will give him or her a good night’s sleep. It took the whole TEAM to make it work: you, the Rotarians, Hondurans and SCAW volunteers. As I leave this beautiful country, I realize we are 5,000 children closer to Murray’s dream of one million bedkits by 2010. God bless you and God bless each child sleeping peacefully thanks to you.

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**BY BRENDA POWRIE  
RICHMOND HILL, ONTARIO**

After years of providing donations for bedkits, I decided to expand my role with SCAW and signed up to become a travelling volunteer. I was ecstatic to get the call that there was an opening for a first-timer to Honduras. Having never done anything like this before, I felt great apprehension prior to the trip. Once the plane landed in Tegucigalpa and our team leader, Laurie-Beth Davidson, spotted the Rotarians that were scheduled to oversee our stay in Honduras, I immediately felt comfortable with my new surroundings. This would be home for the next twelve days.

The first two distributions were scheduled to be located in a region southeast of Tegucigalpa called Zamorano. Here I would experience my first distribution for SCAW. We required a day to travel and settle in our rustic accommodations on the grounds of the Pan American Agricultural College. The next day, we travelled to a village called Moroceli. We parked our vehicle outside the school compound and walked through the village streets to get to the site. It was such an overwhelming experience to see hundreds of men, women and especially children cheering and clapping as we walked through the gates of *Escuela Miguel Morazan* (Miguel Morazan School).

I watched as Laurie-Beth observed the grounds and decided on the best path for the children to take at this distribution. The children are required to check in, line up for their photos, and finally to receive their bedkits. This is no simple task. To avoid



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A group of Happy Recipients - Colonia El Carrizal

(Honduras by Brenda Powrie, Richmond Hill, Ontario, continued from page 3)

confusion, our team leader must ensure that there is no criss-crossing of children in this process. Once the set-up was complete and everyone ready, the distribution began. We were scheduled to distribute 829 bedkits.

My first responsibility on the team was to direct each child to the photo area. This became my favourite part as I was able to interact with the kids. We played with the balls, ran around catching floating bubbles and talked with the help of a translator. At this stage, the children expressed many different emotions. Some were very shy and covered their faces with their hands while others had huge smiles, as they eagerly waited for their special gifts. I originally had mixed emotions due to the contrast of each child. After the first couple of pictures, my comfort level kicked in. One of the greatest experiences was feeling their tiny hands wrapped around me as they gave me a kiss and thanked me. These children are so precious and have so little, but you could never tell by the happiness that twinkled in their eyes.

I watched many of these children get their pictures taken, and as I glanced at the donor names I thought how lucky you are to get each particular child. They are all so cute and deserving, and based on the feelings the children were expressing to me, I thank you on their behalf.

The children need these gifts from you, donors, and I had the honour to deliver them. Thank you for allowing me to represent you in Honduras.

## 2005 HONDURAN BEDKIT

- 1 3-inch mattress complete with cover
- 1 pillow
- 1 blanket
- 1 bed sheet
- 1 towel
- 1 T-shirt
- 1 pair shorts
- 2 notebooks
- 2 pencils
- 1 pen
- 1 eraser
- 1 pencil sharpener
- 1 large plastic bag that can be used as a ground sheet

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The cards depicted below are now available from the SCAW office. They are in lovely, bright, living colour, and sell 12 cards for \$10, (includes taxes and postage).



The cards can be viewed in colour on our web site. Each card depicts a simple greeting, suitable for any occasion. Children of Mumbai (left) simply says Wonder and Awe, while Kenyan Boys (below) shows a dove with the single word, Peace.

## NEXT SCHEDULED DISTRIBUTION TRIPS

**November, 2005  
BANGLADESH  
7,000 Bedkits**

**January/February, 2006  
KOLKATA, 6,000 Bedkits  
CHENNAI, 5,000 Bedkits  
MUMBAI, 7,000 Bedkits**

**March, 2006  
KENYA, 3000 Bedkits**

Honduran Photos  
courtesy of  
Brenda Powrie, Richmond Hill, ON &  
Jean Cullen, Etobicoke, ON

All Occasion Card Photos  
courtesy of  
Sally-Jo Martin, Etobicoke, ON &  
Judy Snobelen, Ripley, ON



**SCAW'S GOAL - 1,000,000 BEDKITS BY 2010!**

**THANKS** to the following for their contributions to this Honduras trip:

**Anonymous donors** for providing a myriad of gifts

**Black's Photography** (Humbertown Plaza) for donating 50% of our film & photofinishing

**The Printing House** (Gordy Leong, 5120 Dundas St W, Toronto) for printing this newsletter

**Kay Kelly, Harry Keating, and Maurice Kowanetz** for publishing this newsletter

**Milton van der Veen** for maintaining SCAW's web site

**Donors and volunteers** for their continuing support!