

29 November 2015

Dear fellow Rotarians,

The Rotary Club of Kentwood, MI, is partnering with the Rotary Club of Garabito-Paya Jacó in Costa Rica in a project to raise literacy levels for children at or below poverty levels in the country of Costa Rica through church sponsored community literacy programs. This is a humanitarian service project that provides an opportunity for vocational service by clergy from RI District 6290.

Rev. Paul Bergsma from the Kentwood, MI, Rotary Club and Rev. Carl Dickerson from the Cantonment, FL, Rotary Club will lead the clergy vocational service team. The team will place libraries of 200 books each in two churches for use in community literacy programs. They will share in the provision of school uniforms, shoes and supplies to qualified children in need. They will also contribute scholarships for young children to a five day summer camp. In addition to providing these resources for the community literacy projects, the clergy from West Michigan will meet with clergy from Costa Rica to discuss best practices for such church based programs. Please see the below for more detailed information about the project and a cover letter for clergy.

We ask that you share this information with the members of your club. Please encourage those members who are clergy to consider joining the team and ask all members to bring this opportunity to the attention of clergy in your area who may wish to participate. Membership in Rotary is desired but not required.

This project has the approval and support of the Rotary Clubs of Kentwood and of Garabito – Playa Jacó. We have a District 6290 Foundation matching grant of \$4000 for the project. If your club wishes to support this project as a contributing club we are happy to include you. Please consider outfitting one or more children for school or sponsoring a child to summer camp, as well as contributing toward the cost of a Library for Literacy.

Thank you for your help in spreading the word to our clubs and clergy. We ask that those who desire to participate in the group of clergy that will travel to Costa Rica get their application to the undersigned as soon as possible.

Please do not hesitate to respond with any questions you may have.

In the spirit of Rotary,
Service above Self

Paul J Bergsma

President, Kentwood Rotary Club
616-826-0621
pjbergsma43@gmail.com



Rotary Club of Kentwood

14 November 2015

Dear Pastor,

“Come and see,” said one disciple to another.

Come and see what pastors in Costa Rica are doing in church sponsored community literacy projects. Children living in poverty are learning to read. Older children are increasing proficiency in reading and adults are helping young learners read. Many such children are receiving a school uniform, shoes and school supplies.

The Rotary Club of Kentwood, MI, is partnering with the Rotary Club of Garabito-Playa Jacó in Costa Rica to help these church sponsored projects accomplish their goals and to demonstrate best practices in doing so.

We invite you as a clergy person in West Michigan to partner with us in this Rotary project. We invite you to be part of the team that will visit Costa Rica the first week of April to deliver libraries of 200 books each to church sponsored literacy projects in barrios of extreme poverty. In addition the team will share in the provision of school supplies, school uniforms and shoes to children from families living in similar conditions in other barrios. They will also meet with Costa Rican pastors, whose churches sponsor community development projects, to discuss best practices for such projects.

You can be a part of this Rotary service project whether you accompany the team or not. Please consider supporting this project personally or through your church with a gift of \$100, \$250, or as you are able. The costs of each part of the project are described in the pages which follow.

Thank you for your prayerful consideration of this opportunity to make a difference in the lives of hundreds of needy children in Costa Rica through your local Rotary Club of Kentwood in partnership with the Rotary Club of Garabito-Playa Jacó, Costa Rica.

Service Above Self. The Rotary way.

Rev. Paul Bergsma
President, Kentwood Rotary Club
pjbergsma43@gmail.com

Rotary Vocational Service Project for Clergy

Dates: March 31 – April 8, 2016

Location: San José, Costa Rica

Sponsoring Clubs: The Rotary Clubs of Kentwood, MI, and of Garabito-Playa Jaco, Costa Rica

General project description

This project will bring eight clergy from the West Michigan area, whose churches have community service programs, to support Costa Rican clergy and their church related community development projects. The Rotary Club of Kentwood, MI, will partner with the Rotary Club of Garabito, Costa Rica, in support of church related community literacy and development projects. These projects have as their goal to keep in school children of poverty level, often from illegal immigrant families. Such church related community projects provide a support system for the children through programmed after school activities, access to tutoring and reading materials, and summer camps.

There are three specific projects that support child well-being and literacy programs through church related community programs.

1. The first will provide a library of 200 books through the Give-a-Book Foundation for church related literacy projects in Precario Los Pinos, a suburb of the capital, San José, and in the village of Naranjal, Puerto Viejo, near the border with Nicaragua.
2. The second project provides the required school uniforms, shoes, and supplies so that children from families at or below poverty level can attend school and remain in school. In San José a local community micro-enterprise makes the backpacks that are given as part of the school supplies. The Rotary Club of Garabito carries out this project in their canton and the *Educación Plus* Association does the same in San José.
3. The third project provides scholarships to qualified children for five-day summer camps in January. These camps reinforce values and support activities of church sponsored education programs through *Educación Plus*.

The participating clergy from the West Michigan area will meet with their Costa Rican clergy partners to discuss best practices for such projects.

The need

Costa Rica is an immigrant country. A recent census showed that 40% of the population was born outside of the country. Although Costa Rica has a good educational system and a high literacy rate, it is the poorest of the poor who do not have money for school uniforms nor school supplies, and who lack a support system to stay in school. Eighty percent of the children who do not stay in school end up on the street and are more likely to be involved with gangs and drug related activities. A child who can stay in school has an 80% chance of remaining off the street and clean from such activities.

Participants

The Rotary Club of Kentwood, Michigan is the international partner club. The Rotary Club of Garabito, Puntarenas, Costa Rica is the local host partner club, which helps support the designated projects. Eight clergy from churches with community projects in the West Michigan area will be invited to participate. Costa Rican clergy from churches which sponsor the community projects to be supported will also be invited to participate in the best practices seminar, as well as other clergy with community programs.

Project Goals

1. Libraries for literacy. The project will increase the literacy skills of 90 children of poverty level through church related programs in two communities. Each learning center will receive a library of 200 books through the Give-a-Book Foundation. Young children will learn to read, older youth will increase reading skills and adults will gain reading proficiency so they can help the children.
2. Keep the child in school. The project will provide school uniforms, shoes, school supplies and backpacks to 37 children that will enable them to meet the requirements for enrollment and study at school.
3. Child well-being. The project will provide scholarships for 20 children to attend summer camps for boys and for girls through *Educación Plus*.

Budget

This is a one year project that can be expanded by one or two more years as need warrants.

Libraries for two community literacy projects, \$600 each. Books to be provided through the Give-a-Book Foundation, which has completed similar literacy projects in several communities in cooperation with Costa Rican and US Rotary clubs.	\$ 1,200
School uniforms, shoes and school supplies for 37 children, \$120 each. These uniforms will be given to needy children through the Rotary Club of Garabito and through <i>Educación Plus</i> in San Jose.	4,440
Scholarships for 20 children from impoverished families to participate in camps of five days during the month of January. There will be separate camps for boys and for girls organized through <i>Education Plus</i> . \$140 each, \$1,400 for ten boys and \$1,400 for ten girls.	2,800

Total Project Expense \$ 8,440

YouTube video on *Educación Plus*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4BDWmpYxJ0>
Web page English: <http://www.educacionplus.org/english/quienessomos.html>

Rotary support

The Rotary Club of Kentwood has pledged \$4000 for the project. The RI District 6290 Foundation has given a matching grant of \$4000 to this project. This is an international project that will make a significant difference in the lives of school age children from families at or below the poverty level in shantytowns. We ask that each participating clergy please consider asking their church to participate with a gift of about \$500. For clergy who are also Rotarians your club is invited to participate with the Kentwood Rotary Club in reaching this goal. Please contact Paul Bergsma, club president, for more details at pjbergsma43@gmail.com.

Photos

Church of God of Prophecy, Precario Los Pinos



Educación Plus club activity Church of God of Prophecy, Naranjal



Itinerary

Day 1, Thursday, March 31. Travel to San Jose, Costa Rica. Get settled in our apartment lodging in Alajuela, near the airport.

Day 2, Friday, April 1. After breakfast, visit the church in Precario Los Pinos to deliver the 200 library books for use in community literacy programs. On the return to Alajuela receive a short tour of principal sites in Alajuela: Cathedral and town square, Methodist Church next door, Methodist book store, state court buildings, Methodist Seminary and conference center, Adventist University, etc.

Day 3, Saturday, April 2. Travel to Jaco Beach for a social time with members of our Host Rotary Club of Garabito. Learn about their projects to set up the libraries in which we place the package of 200 books and to provide school uniforms, shoes, school supplies and backpacks. Spend the afternoon and evening on the beach with our new Rotary friends.

Day 4, Sunday, April 3. Worship with a Spanish and English speaking congregation in Jaco Beach. Learn about their projects in the community. Return to Alajuela in the afternoon.

Day 5, Monday, April 4. Visit the *Educación Plus* offices to meet staff and see backpacks with school uniforms, shoes and school supplies. Learn about the many *Educación Plus* programs with children in the poorest barrios of San José and the churches that help support these programs. View the evangelical radio station TIFC, Evangelism in Depth offices and the offices of the Evangelical Alliance of Churches, all on the same campus. In the afternoon visit Casa Adobe, a community church with several development projects. Take our bus for return to Alajuela and dinner.

Day 6, Tuesday, April 5. Leave early for Puerto Viejo to meet missionary Ruth Clowater, the coordinator of the library project in Naranjal. With her assistance deliver the library books to the church in Naranjal for use in community literacy projects. Take a 90 minute boat ride down the Sarapiquí River to the guest house where we will spend the night.

Day 7, Wednesday, April 6. In the morning enjoy the birds and flowers of the rainforest as we take the 90 minute boat ride back to Puerto Viejo. We board our bus to visit the Waterfall Gardens with dozens of different orchids, butterflies and waterfalls. After lunch, view the Poas Volcano and visit a coffee farm. Return to our apartments in Alajuela for the evening.

Day 8, Thursday, April 7. Visit the Evangelical University of the Americas, UNELA, in downtown San José. Meet with Costa Rican pastors whose churches have community literacy and development projects. Through the sharing of projects in West Michigan and in Costa Rica discuss best practices for such projects. After lunch receive a presentation on the Bible Clinic Hospital, in whose facilities the university is located. Take a walking tour of downtown San José just a few blocks away to see the National Theater, the National Cathedral and a museum of pre-Colombian artifacts. Return to Alajuela. After supper conduct a review of our Rotary Vocational Service Project. Then pack for departure in the morning.

Day 9, Friday, April 8. Morning breakfast in our apartments. Farewells and departure.

Personal Expenses

1. Airfare to/from Costa Rica. You may extend your trip either before or after our eight days together.
2. Lodging, meals and transportation are provided through the Mission Volunteer Partners agency. The total cost is \$950 per person. Meals are for eight days from the evening of Thursday, March 31, to breakfast on Friday, April 8. Lodging is dormitory style in two apartments in Alajuela. We will have one night stays in a hotel at Jaco Beach and in a guest house on the Sarapiquí River. Meals are served family style in Alajuela and are the typical “plate of the day” in local restaurants when traveling.
3. Airport exit tax of \$29
4. Entrance fees to excursions, alcohol and tips, as well as any additional food or special dietary needs.

Requirements

1. A valid passport with an expiration date no earlier than six months after the date of return travel.
2. Health insurance is required and travel insurance is highly recommended (see below). Notice should be given of any unusual allergies or special health needs.
3. Since we are making the payment to Mission Volunteer Partners, which is a project of United Charitable Programs , a 501(c)(3) public charity, each participant must complete, scan and email to Carl Dickerson <carldickerson55@gmail.com> the Event Participant Waiver found at the following link.
<http://www.unitedcharitableprograms.org/sites/default/files/UCP%20Participant%20Waiver.pdf>
4. Physical ability to board and to disembark from a boat.
5. Since we will be living at close quarters in dormitory lodging only male applicants may request participation in this project.
6. Because of space limitations on the bus please bring only one suitcase and one additional item such as a small backpack or camera bag.

Recommendations

1. Travel insurance is available at a good price (around \$25) and with good coverage through Mission Volunteer Partners:
https://hybrid.sevencorners.com/insurance/custom/?tracking_code=MVP
2. Dress. The climate in Costa Rica is tropical, although at higher elevations a light sweater or jacket may be useful. Dress is casual and beach clothes are recommended for Playa Jacó on Saturday. The ocean water is warm and perfect for swimming and surfing.
3. WiFi and Skype are available at our lodging facilities in Alajuela. Special arrangements can be made with your carrier for cell phone use, if desired.
4. Your ATM card should work fine and all major international credit cards are accepted in most places. The local currency is called the colon and the exchange rate as of November 2015 is roughly 530:1. Most tourist places accept dollars; however local establishments prefer the local currency.

Bio Information.

Rev. Carl Dickerson is United Methodist Clergy retired, having served for 30 years in the Alabama - West Florida Conference. He is a member of the Cantonment Rotary Club and was chair of World Community Service for Rotary District 6940. He has been involved in numerous Rotary matching grants projects in Costa Rica and Central America. He has led and sponsored mission teams and Rotary service teams to Costa Rica for twenty years,

Rev. Paul Bergsma served from 1969 - 2009 in Christian higher education in Latin America with Christian Reformed World Missions. He and his wife, Barbara, lived in Mexico, Honduras and the last 27 years of their service in Costa Rica. He was Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs with the Evangelical University of the Americas from 1997 to 2009. He is a member of the Latin American Theological Fraternity and served for many years on the board of the Costa Rican Bible Society. He was a member of the Rotary Club of San José, Costa Rica before retiring to Grand Rapids, MI. In 2010 he joined the Rotary Club of Kentwood, MI.

For more information and reservations please contact:

Rev. Paul Bergsma
pjbergsma43@gmail.com
Cell 616-826-0621