

Reflections on a Wesley Chapel Rotary team trip to Honduras

By Eric Johnson



Hiking through the mountain hills on a very small path. Drips of sweat draining down my face. Stopping to catch my breath..... Entering through a small door into a mud hut... mud floors. Why am I coming up on my 8th trip to Honduras?

Children. Hope. Life.

Children not dying from sickness caused by water. Fathers able to work more to provide for their families. Mothers taking care of their homes.

A bit dramatic? Well no...just real. Very real. And for the people of Trojes Honduras...a daily reality.

As Americans, it's so difficult for us to realize life without clean water. We take for granted that we can wake up and brush our teeth. That we can turn on the

faucet and fill our cups with water that will not cause us to become sick or even worse, be the death of our child. Even for me, after 7 trips to help the people of Trojes, I still take water for granted but I've realized that water is essential for life.

The great news is that there is hope! There are thousands of families in the communities around Trojes that do not have to live with unsafe water and sanitation conditions anymore because of Pure Water for the World (PWW) and the commitment made to the Honduran people. This is all done one filter, one latrine, one wash-station at a time. One child, one family, one school at a time.

Some of my most precious memories I have are from spending time with the children in their homes before we begin installing the water filters. I'm reminded

of why I'm there when I kneel down, look into their beautiful eyes and see them smile. I'm sure it's funny to them how I try to communicate in my broken Spanish....or Spanglish, because I usually get a bunch of giggles from them. The mothers take so much pride in their homes. Painting the walls, sweeping the dirt floors and welcoming us in like they have been waiting for us for years. The community all comes together to see and watch as we begin the process of installing the filters. It's amazing how many people can fit inside a small kitchen or living space as we work with the smell of wood burning on the clay oven. The process for installing the water filter takes about 45 minutes. Washing the small stones and layering them largest to smallest so as the contaminated water flows through it

begins the process of purification. Getting the flow of water right out of the filter is the most important part. Too fast of a flow and the water is not purified. I love that installing a simple water filter changes the lives of a family so much.

So now imagine your children going to a school with no bathrooms or sinks to wash their hands in. Just a simple, open air block structure. No electricity. No running water...can't imagine it can you. Thousands of children attend schools like this in Trojes. When they need to go to the bathroom, they run outside the school to the side of the mountain. Washing hands is not even really heard of and so you can imagine how the bacteria and disease spreads throughout the schools. This is why PWW has implemented it's program to build latrines and wash stations at every school in the Trojes region. Along with the building of latrine comes hygiene

education. I've been in the schools when the PWW representative holds up their hands to show the children how to wash and scrub each finger. This is all part of the amazing change that PWW is making.

A typical trip to Trojes involves 2 days of installing water filters, 1 day of building a latrine and 1 day of handing out de-worming medicines in a community. Water filter days are a little tough with all the hiking through the mountains. Latrine day can be a bit exhausting with all the mixing of cement and making the forms. But at the end of each day, when you are finished, and all the teams come together to tell their stories, you realize that you are there for a purpose.

My Rotary Club, the Rotary Club of Wesley Chapel, is an amazing club! A group of community servants that come together to make a difference! I love

the passion that we have, not only for the Wesley Chapel community, but for the World. In the past 6 years, almost 30 of our club members have given of themselves and served the wonderful families in Trojes. It's not an easy trip. It's full of adventure, sweat and tears, but the feeling you have when you return...is...well...unforgettable.

Another word would be life-changing. Why? Because when you go on a trip to a third world country, you are given an amazing opportunity to see humanity in a different light. To see a different way of living. To come back to America and count your blessings.

But I think Khalil Gibran says it best, "You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give." How can you give of yourself today?

www.wcrotary.com



Eric Johnson

