

VOLUNTEER SERVICE TEAM Travels to Nigeria in November 2006

A volunteer team for the development of international service projects traveled to Rotary District 9110 in Lagos and Ogun states of Nigeria from November 2nd to November 13th 2006. Mary Kessens, a group study exchange team leader to District 9110 in 2002, led the team. Accompanying her were her husband, Thomas Mickelson; Lynne Spielman, from the Waunakee Rotary; Alan Strohschein, from the Columbus Rotary; Bob Trussoni, from the Marshfield Sunrise Rotary; and Kristin Duckart, from the Wisconsin Rapids Noon Rotary. Rotarians from District 9110 welcomed the team with open arms and open hearts. Special thanks must be given to Ike Ugwu of the Rotary Club of Amuwo, Gbemmi Sonuga of the Rotary Club of Ikoyi Metro, and Richard Oguai of the Rotary Club of Amuwo. These fine Rotarians made our District 6250 volunteer team most welcome in their country.

While in Nigeria, the team had an opportunity to visit life changing Rotary projects. These included a school for beggars' children in Lagos, organized by the Rotary Club of Falomo District 9110. Strong connections with the community were evident through the presence of an active Rotary Community Corp. which supported school attendance. Still needed were toilets for the children, and expanded facilities and educational materials. A group meeting of woman entrepreneurs participating in a joint District 6250 and 9110 micro-lending project highlighted how we are helping families afford education, housing, and business development efforts. One woman who was blind can now support her family because of her small loan.

A visit was made to the more rural Ogun State. The team was able to participate in a Governor's meeting with about 400 educators. The need for medical training materials and equipment was highlighted, as well as lessons in the openness of government in Ogun State. A Rotary Saint, PDG Olu Olukoya, took the team to many well and sanitation projects in rural and urban areas. In most cases, the well and borehole projects are the only clean water source for thousands of people.

The Nigerian and American members of the team met with several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) who are involved with community needs assessments, improvement of health care and education, and community development. There appeared to be many linkages, which could be developed to grow a larger Rotary project that might meet multiple community needs.

The team members in our district and in District 9110 will continue to work on the development of joint projects. Team USA is focusing on completing a shipment of books and medical supplies to District 9110, expanding an Education for Life Scholarship fund for the education of girl children and women, and developing joint water/sanitation projects between District 6250 Wisconsin and 9110 Nigeria.

All of the members of the team, whose names and web addresses are at the foot of this article, are available for presentations to Rotary Clubs in District 6250, as well as to other organizations.

Some of our Nigerian friends will be attending the 2007 Rotary International Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah. On their way back to Nigeria, they hope to stop in District 6250 for the welcoming party for our incoming governor for 2007-2008, Mary Kessens. Contact Al Strohschein if you would like to be a host. We are also planning another trip to Nigeria within the next two years. If you have an interest in this experience, please contact one of the team members.

There are many opportunities for Clubs in District 6250 to partner with Clubs in District 9110. All of the members of the volunteer service team that traveled to Nigeria in November 2006 are ready, willing, and able to assist your clubs in linking to clubs in Nigeria. Please contact members of the team for additional information

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