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## Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary visits Guatemala to help build house, distribute donated books

Submitted by Thomas Black



A goodwill delegation from Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary, led by Skip and Linda McCowan, left, pose with some of the 5,000 books hand-delivered to Guatemalan children. Photo provided

the enrichment of families affiliated with Common Hope.

The Rotarians, led by Jack "Skip" McCowan and his wife Linda, who live in Lafayette, also volunteered at a daycare center, accompanied social workers on their appointed rounds to affiliated families, and experienced a "day-in-the-life-of" by visiting shops of a woodworker and a metal worker.

While there the McCowans witnessed the high school graduation of a young woman whom they had personally sponsored for years. Her class numbered 160. Five fellow Rotarians have since joined the McCowans in becoming official sponsors of individual children. The McCowans now sponsor two children. Monthly donations help to pay school-related expenses until the child graduates from high school.

Sponsored children graduate at a rate three times the national average. Since Common Hope began its outreach programs in 1986, some 2,000 sponsored children have earned secondary school diplomas.

This marks the second goodwill in the past 10 years by the McCowans. Others were participating for the first time.

Asked about the most meaningful aspects of the trip, Skip McCowan answered, "Presenting the newly constructed house to the family and getting acquainted with the children and their families. Rotary clubs worldwide are involved in literacy programs. It was touching to see how far a few donated dollars can be stretched for the common good."

Info: [www.commonhope.org](http://www.commonhope.org)

A 10-member delegation from Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club has returned from a weeklong goodwill mission to Antigua, Guatemala, where, among other things, it helped to build a new house for a local family and to distribute 700 books aimed at children aged 6-17.

The modest house, measuring 12 feet by 24 feet, was for a family that had earned sweat-equity rights by donating countless hours of their own labor at a local family development center operated by Common Hope, a Minnesota-based nonprofit that promotes hope and opportunity for native Guatemalans. It does so by partnering with children and families in advancing education, health care, housing and family development.

Antigua is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Centre founded nearly 500 years ago by Spaniards.

The books, all in Spanish, were purchased for \$5,000. The cost was shared by Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary and individual donors. The books will be used in the library at the family development center and in so-called suitcase libraries taken to neighboring villages for

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