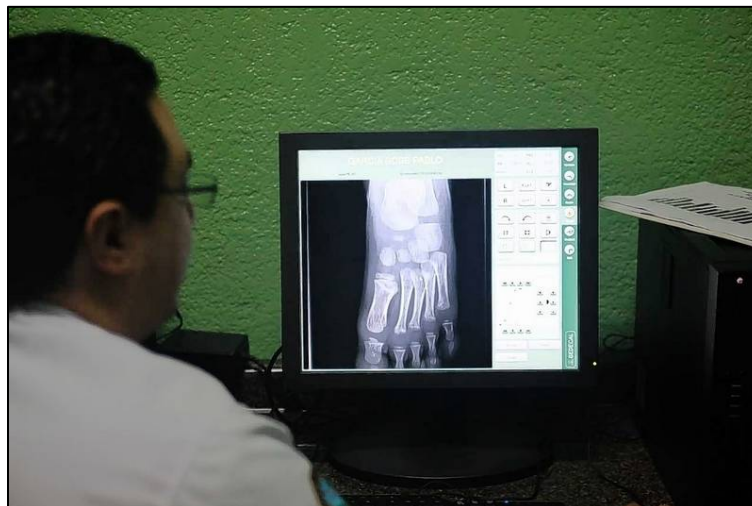


Rotary clubs team to bring X-rays to Guatemala



So far, the first nine X-ray machines have been shipped and installed at remote Guatemalan clinics, with funding for the next three going on now.

Courtesy of Rotary International



Using HealthRays technology, physicians in urban medical centers are able to access digital X-ray images from small, regional clinics serving needy populations in Guatemala, providing diagnosis and treatment options.

Courtesy of Rotary International

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Local residents learned about HealthRays X-ray services during a recent open house at one of the clinics that is now up and running in Guatemala.

Courtesy of Rotary International



Rotarians make sure that staff members at each clinic are trained to use the new X-ray machine. They also visit after the installation to make sure the clinic was rehabbed to their standards and that the machine is being used appropriately.

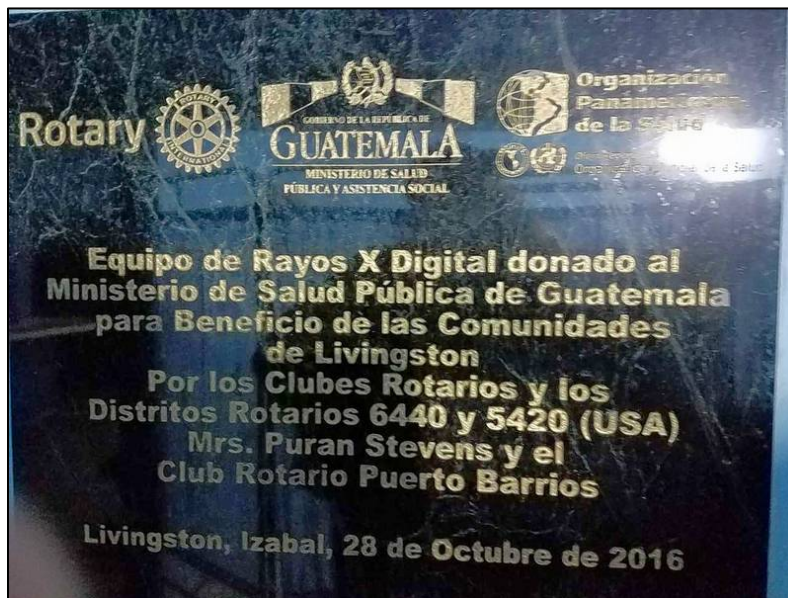
Courtesy of Rotary International

Rotary clubs team to bring X-rays to Guatemala



Suburban Rotary clubs have joined forces to bring digital X-ray systems to rural clinics in Guatemala. These digital imaging systems not only will diagnose fractures and other trauma, but will help capture a variety of other conditions, from heart to degenerative diseases and neonatal skull abnormalities.

Courtesy of Rotary International



Suburban Rotary clubs have joined forces to bring digital X-ray systems to rural clinics in Guatemala. So far, nine systems have been installed.

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Rotary clubs team to bring X-rays to Guatemala

By Eileen O. Daday, Daily Herald correspondent

In a unique show of solidarity, more than 50 Rotary clubs across the suburbs are working together on what has become one of the largest projects initiated by Rotarians in the world: to bring digital X-ray systems to rural Guatemala.

Called the HealthRays project, these Rotarians have partnered with the Guatemalan government and the Pan American Health Organization to provide this kind of image diagnostics to remote areas of Guatemala.

Carlos Frum of the Rotary Club of Northbrook is co-chairing the project with Pam Kerr of the Rotary Club of Wilmette, while Mike Ericksen of Schaumburg has helped to advance the mission through his leadership role with the Rotary District Foundation.

Participating clubs involve those in Cook, Lake, DuPage, Kane and McHenry counties, as well as three Guatemalan Rotary Clubs and 17 other international Rotary Districts.

"We have seen the poverty and squalor in some of these villages, particularly those inhabited by the indigenous population," Frum said. "Some of these people travel hours, and sometimes days, to the nearest X-ray machine."

Rotary officials say Guatemala has the largest population in Central America (16 million) and a national poverty rate of 59 percent. With its extreme poverty in rural areas, they add, Guatemala has some of the poorest health outcomes in Latin America.

But it is the personal testimonies from Rotarians who have traveled there to complete service that drives their respective clubs to contribute.

Ron Crawford of the Arlington Heights Noon Rotary Club and his wife, Diane, have traveled to Guatemala 10 times over the last 15 years, and they have seen the poverty firsthand.

Recently, one of the X-ray machines was installed at a clinic in Livingston, where Crawford often travels to help with a local school.

"Livingston is a several hour trip by boat and car from Guatemala City, where the majority of the hospitals are located," Crawford said. "Having access to an X-ray machine means a lot in terms of quick and accurate diagnosis and treatment for locals."

Rotary officials say this imaging equipment goes beyond detecting fractures and other trauma. They describe it as one of the most valuable tools for diagnosing pneumonia, tuberculosis, infections, congestive heart failure and other heart conditions, as well as tumors, gallstones, kidney stones and metabolic conditions.

Frum says they are one-third of the way toward raising the \$2.5 million needed to install X-ray machines in 29 rural clinics. Since they figure that each clinic serves around 100,000 people, they estimate the project will provide life-changing medical services to nearly 3 million people, when completed.

"A single club could not have tackled it," Frum said. "The members of our clubs have embraced the project because they see the need, and they know that joining together we can accomplish something big."

Ericksen added that the scope of the project drew the Rotary District Foundation to support the mission with matching funds.

"HealthRays was one of the best projects I had seen over my years in leadership, and most likely the one that will have the largest impact," Ericksen said, "and not just for the people of Guatemala, but around the world."

"Once we have completed this highly ambitious task," he added, "we will be able to help other countries with their need for the digital imaging system that can be reviewed anywhere in the world."

In fact, by working together to fill this critical health need, suburban Rotarians say they are fulfilling the goal of Rotary International, which is committed to improving human conditions worldwide.

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