

Rotary **Canada**

*A new leaf
Un nouveau feuillet*

*July 2019
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Good deeds in Guatemala

Rotarians from Canada provide educational mentoring and improved eyesight

Off to Oxford

New Brunswick Rotaract club produces back-to-back Rhodes scholars

La magie de Noël

Rotary 

A HUB OF THE ROTARY WHEEL

Vicki Horsfield



After her second year of university, Vicki Horsfield decided to leave school and devote herself full time to volunteering — in East Africa. Because when you're young and unfettered, it's a perfect time to drop everything and begin a life of service in a new country.

History had a funny way of repeating itself for this Canadian Rotarian. "Several years ago, God put it into my head to learn Spanish," Horsfield explains. After studying the language in Montreal, where she was a math and science teacher in an adult education centre, she enrolled for the summer in a Spanish language school — in Guatemala. "I fell in love with the place," she says. "I knew this was home."

Horsfield returned to Montreal, put in for retirement, and told her grown children she was moving to Central America. Back in Guatemala, she volunteered at two nonprofit educational organizations, one in a mountain village that had been hit hard by the country's long civil war. "In Guatemala, kids are cut off from school if they fail, which happened often, because parents can't give their children the help and guidance they need," she says. "Clearly the kids needed help outside of school."

In April 2014, Horsfield launched Creating Opportunities for Guatemalans in San Antonio Aguas Calientes, a village outside Antigua. Initially the organization provided after-school tutoring and school supplies to children of families living below the poverty line. Today its programs have expanded to include vocational training and literacy classes for adults; it also offers English classes

for the 40-plus children the organization serves. "Knowing English gives kids an edge, especially in a country with a lively tourist industry," Horsfield says.

Several locals help Horsfield run Creating Opportunities for Guatemalans, including William Garcia, whom she identifies as the organization's "co-founder and co-director. He acts as a father to a lot of these kids." A member of the Rotary E-Club of Canada One, Horsfield also gets support from Rotary clubs across North America. "My brother, Brian Horsfield, a member of the Rotary Club of Davis, California, encouraged me to join Rotary," she explains. "He said, 'You're already serving, and this way you will have help and camaraderie.' The next time I visited my kids in Montreal, I popped in to a meeting of the Montreal-Lakeshore club. Once I told them what I was doing, they insisted I come back and give them a talk."

"Vicki is just fantastic," says Knud Petersen, a member of the Rotary Club of Montreal-Lakeshore. "She's very positive and full of energy and goodwill. She's also a great speaker. Inevitably you are taken in by her presentation."

Inspired by Horsfield's speeches — she also addressed the International Service Committee of District 7040, which encompasses parts of Ontario, Nunavut, Quebec, and New York state — Petersen's club partnered with the Rotary clubs of Hawkesbury, Ontario, and Montreal West-DNG. "Vicki suggested three things that could make a life difference for the families she worked with," says Petersen. With help from a district matching grant and an assist from the Rotary Club of La Antigua, the three Canadian clubs provided water containers with ceramic filters for the Guatemalan villagers; that reduced the ill effects of drinking impure water that sickened the children and made them miss school. The clubs also provided propane stoves for two dozen families and arranged for toilets to be installed in some homes.

"Rotary is amazing," exclaims Horsfield. "Open your mouth and say you're a Rotarian, and another Rotarian will come out of nowhere and offer to help." In a quick survey, she mentions a network of clubs in British Columbia (Nanaimo Daybreak on Vancouver Island), Ontario (St. Catharines-Lakeshore), California (Valley of the Moon in Santa Rosa), and Oregon (Rogue Gateway in Grants Pass) that have helped Creating Opportunities for Guatemalans. There was also the unidentified Floridian who, with his daughter, has taken one of Horsfield's Guatemalan families under his wing "because he's a Rotarian with a heart to serve."

The same is true for Horsfield. "I'm very involved in these kids' lives," she says. "The children who are in first and second grade now? I want to see them graduate high school." — G.J. 