

## Honduras

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1997, and returns each year to build schools, clinics, and do whatever is needed to help families deal with the poverty and illness that pervade the countryside. The first group was admittedly naive.

"We said, 'Hey, why not try an excursion,'" said Prokopchak. "We packed winter camping gear. We figured we'd be in the mountains, right? When we got there we took 40 orphans on a bus to the Burger King in the San Pedro Sula, but many kids became sick because their stomachs were not used to eating much more than a cup of rice."

Also along for that trip were Jim Davenport, Ed Thomas, Joe Latona, Mark and Matt Petlock.

Despite setbacks like that, the yearly visits and projects continued and the grassroots project has become known in Northeastern Pennsylvania as "Operation Honduras."

So what could Audrey Simpson from Shavertown do? Anything and everything. "I'd give the kids a hug, bring the men water. They can't say the name Audrey so they call me 'Simmm-son.'"

The children send her wish lists — letters asking for children's clothing, underwear, shoes, toilet paper, and medicine. "I know they don't have pillowcases, so this year I'm asking everyone for donations of pillowcases. I'm putting a drop-off box for clothing in the food stores," she said.

Simpson can be found scrounging for good pieces of children's clothing at local rummage sales and church clothes closets. She packs all clothing donations into 70 lb. duffel bags that are taken on the planes as luggage. "I got lucky today, someone donated a sturdy duffel bag," she said. Simpson visited Honduras in 1999, 2000, and 2001 and hopes to return this February.

The whole project is the brainchild of Jim Davenport, who, having been in the Peace Corps in Africa, was inspired to

*"It beats just giving a check."*  
**Jim Davenport**  
 Operation Honduras volunteer

help the poor in a more personal way. "It beats just giving a check," he said. "The people there can see the hard work and sacrifice directly; and, to some, we are seen as 'gifts from God.'"

That is the case for a woman whose child can now hear because 212 (Starkey Foundation supplied) hearing aids were tested and installed in 2003. "One child just ran around yelling and screaming because it had never heard its own voice before and was so excited," said Prokopchak. Hearing loss is common among children in Honduras because ear infections go untreated.

Prokopchak said the project purchases all materials needed from local sources in Honduras and that local Spanish-speaking citizens provide transportation, drivers, and discounts, which help the volunteers complete their projects in a week or two.

A scouting crew left this October 23 to determine the projects for next February's trip. Already planned are dental surgery, audiological exams, an oral surgery unit, and perhaps a solar powered refrigerator to store insulin and drugs needing refrigeration.

The funding for these materials has come from various northeastern Pennsylvania groups including Rotarians, girl scout and brownie troops, Catholic and Presbyterian churches, foundations and private individuals. One contractor donated \$5,000 after installing a ceramic floor, windows and wood trim to an upscale investment property, saying, "Just give my labor fee to the kids."

Says Jim Davenport of this organization, "Every donated penny is exactly accounted for by a local church, but we are very non-denominational."



On their last trip to Honduras, volunteers began construction on a new school.

**To find out more** about Operation Honduras, visit [www.geocities.com/operhonduras](http://www.geocities.com/operhonduras) or send an e-mail to [ophonduras@aol.com](mailto:ophonduras@aol.com).

All of the planned projects and trips have been successful. "We've never had a bad project, all of our talents and resources are fully utilized," said Davenport. "For a person to consider coming with us age or skill level should not be a concern. The volunteers are aged 13 through 73. We'll teach you what we need you to do."

Eric Martin, Shavertown, notes that in 2001 Dallas teachers John Johnson and Jack Roberts came along "and basically did the manual labor, hauling block after block in wheelbarrows to the construction site."

"It was enormous work. We worked from 7 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. in 100 degree heat laying floors, putting in ceiling tile, and all the jobs circulated so that everyone did a little of everything and then we'd collapse into the pool at the hotel."

## Harveys Lake

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n't live alone. "Who is he to tell me that?" inquired Bidgood, "He's only a public servant."

Council President Betty West responded.

"The only way we can act on a police officer coming to your home is if you put it in writing," she said.

West said council would address the situation with the police department and the mayor.

Arlene Suleski of poles 201 and 202 said a neighbor on the corner of May Avenue continuously burns unusual items at his home, causing noxious fumes and smoke.

She said she has reported him six to eight times, and he was cited twice.

"To give you an idea of what he burns, at one point he was burning a couch, with all the chemicals that contains, front and center in his yard," Suleski said.

She said a large amount of smoke is generated which fills her home and prevents her from being able to sit on her dock and swim.

Suleski said the same neighbor has now built an incinerator in his garage and is burning continuously.

"He burns for hours, six to 10 hours." She said when she "really got up in arms about it" she kept a log of how often he would burn. "He burned for 13 days straight after Sept. 5. This is not normal trash from your home."

"It's got to stop."

West said council would address the problem.

In other business, part-time officer Scott Lameroux resigned. West said the Borough secretary would advertise to fill the position immediately. The change leaves the Harveys Lake Police Department with four part-time officers, the chief of police and one patrolman.

The department lost full-time officer Mark Karlonis when he passed away unexpectedly over the summer. Council has not made a decision yet about whether or not to fill that position, said West.



POST PHOTO/CHARLOTEE BARTIZEK

Audrey Simpson scoured the tables at a recent rummage sale, looking for items to bring to Honduras in February.



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