

ENGINEERS WITHOUT BORDERS

UT, Rotary unite to give village cleaner water

Student group gets \$10,000 to build system in Honduras

By MEGHAN GILBERT

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Andrew Jones hadn't seen anything like it.

He'd been on mission trips to places such as Jamaica and Mexico before, but those countries have some luxury tourist areas.

Honduras isn't like them.

"When I landed in the capital of Honduras, my jaw just dropped because it was impoverished and worse than anything I've seen," he said. "It was definitely an eye-opener. I'm a lot more thankful for having running water now."

Mr. Jones, a sophomore in mechanical engineering at the University of Toledo, is one of the several students involved in the school's Engineers Without Borders program that is working to bring water to the village of Los Sanchez in southern Honduras.

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groundwater, said Mr. Hoff, a chemical engineering senior who will graduate this month.

The students designed a gravity-powered system to collect the water and pipe it two-thirds of the way to the village, where it will go into a storage tank.

From there it will be piped to the village, with multiple faucets for access.

The university's college of engineering sponsored the visit

The students traveled there in May to plan the gravity-powered system. They will return in January to get the project started, and will go back again in March to help with the final touches.

Today, they're getting help to turn their plans into reality.

The Toledo Rotary Foundation is giving the students \$10,000 to aid their effort to raise \$25,000 for travel and project costs.

"We thought it was a great project," said Joe Tafelski, executive director of Advocates for Basic Legal Equality and the chairman of Toledo Rotary's international service committee.

"The students at the university had done significant assessment and work on the project when they brought it to us, so this wasn't just a vision or an idea they [had] come up with," he said.

Mr. Tafelski said the Rotary interviewed the students and was "totally impressed" by their knowledge and commitment.

The students will be given the grant check today at the weekly Rotary meeting.

in May to Honduras, and the gift from the Rotary Club will help pay for the return trips, Mr. Hoff said.

"You can take a pretty big sigh when you take out such a large part of the fund-raising," he said.

Engineering Dean Nagi Naganathan said the students are passionate about their work and it is a huge benefit for them to learn first-hand how to do such a project and work with other cultures in a global economy.

"We know that a full educational experience is more than classroom education and career

preparation," he said.

"We want them to realize their impact on the community at large."

Mr. Jones said he is excited he will be able to continue the hands-on work in Honduras when he and other students return to the country next month.

"It will definitely be interesting to see the climate change the village and the community and see how they are doing," he said. "And to actually see the project starting, I'm looking forward to it."

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The village of Los Sanchez, located in the Department of Choluteca, gets water from a small stream about a half-mile away.

The stream is used for both cleaning and drinking water,

After an initial trip to Honduras in May, UT students with Engineers Without Borders will return in January to help the water project get started

and is not a pure source because it's crossed by people and animals traveling to the village, said Ben Hoff, president of the UT chapter of Engineers Without Borders.

The village has about 180 residents, most of them children, who take their clothes to the stream or carry the water back.

The villagers had been trying to get cleaner water from a spring a little over a mile away. They saved money and purchased land to access the new water source, which is cleaner

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