

Rotarians Make House Calls to Mexico

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By Rosanne Greene | Special to the NB Indy



Rotaract Club of Newport Beach volunteers provide free dental services at Los Angelitos Orphanage in Mexico.
— Courtesy of the Rotary Club

The Rotary and Rotaract Club of Newport Beach led six other California Rotary clubs and 85 USC dental students on a philanthropic mission to Rosarito, Mexico, in December.

They joined three local Rotary Clubs in Rosarito to treat over 400 children to much needed dental care over a four-day period. Not only were the children given full-service dental exams and treatments, they were also surprised with a visit from Santa Claus who delivered gifts donated by the Huntington Beach and Placentia Rotary Clubs.

Over 100 Rotary and Rotaract members from California, Oregon, and Colorado traveled across the border to treat children in nine orphanages, one elementary school and all the children of the Rosarito firefighters. Children with severe problems are now out of pain and healthy.

The 135 Rotaract Students and Rotarians were especially impacted by the El Jardin Orphanage. This is a group home of 21 girls ages six through 19 that have been rescued from sex trafficking. The children were so excited and were treated like royalty. For them, this translates directly to love and caring; something they receive little of.

Steve Bender, President of the Rotary Club of Newport Beach and designer of the Building Bridges Through Rotary program, had friends and family concerned about crossing the border in December, but his volunteers were eager to promote peace and friendship during the holiday season.

"We all had a wonderful and safe time volunteering with our Rotary partners south of the border," said Bender.

He thanked all of the participating Rotary Clubs and organizations: Anaheim, Huntington Beach, Laguna Niguel, Placentia, Newport Beach, Newport Beach Sunrise, Mission Viejo, Rosarito, Playas de Rosarito, Rosarito La Mision, Ayuda International, Help in a Box Dental and Vision, The Oral Hygiene Initiative and Steve's Vision.

Special thanks to Marilyn and Less Widd for coordinating all of the volunteers from the Baja Children's Network.

Bender's group plans on returning in the spring to treat 11 additional children homes in their system.

The Rotary Club of Newport Beach will be taking another group to Panama, April 21 – 30, to provide free dental and humanitarian services near Coronado, Panama. They are always looking for dentists, dental hygienists, and Rotarians to join their missions.

For more information on volunteering at local or international clinics, contact Steve Bender at Steve@SteveBender.net.

For more information on the club, visit newportbeachrotary.com