

Monday, December 15, 2014

## Sooners return to El Salvador

An energetic group of students with Sooners Without Borders (SWB) spent Thanksgiving week in El Salvador, working on several water projects for a second year in a row. The 11 students spent most of their time installing a solar-powered water pump system and digging and preparing a garden for a school in San Hilario. Because of the new well and pump, the students can now grow fruits and vegetables year-round, even during the dry season. The tank, well, pump and solar panels were purchased using donations from two Rotary clubs in California.



A water tank for garden irrigation is lifted up onto a second platform that was built into the existing water tower at San Hilario.



Everybody pitched in with chopping, hoeing, and planting the garden area.



A solar panel, attached to a nearby roof, will be used to power the water pump in the well.

In addition to the work at San Hilario, students collected data on a major water system that provides water to about 400 families scattered over 4 or 5 villages. They plan to model the system and make recommendations on extending the well water to a second storage tank to supply additional water demand. This work is being led by the Engineers Without Borders professional chapter in Iowa City, Iowa. This tank, as well as the first tank, are funded by a Rotary Foundation Global Grant.



A large water tank in Ceiba Gacha community was constructed last year on top of the highest hill in the rural farming region.



The SWB group is photographed in front of a mural that tells the story of the community of Ciudad Romero.

On the last day of the trip, students were treated to a full day in Isla Montecristo, an island community at the mouth of the Lempa River that is accessible only by boat. There the students played soccer with local boys, visited a turtle egg conservation hatchery, and swam in the mighty Pacific. The highlight of the trip was the symbolic release of a hundred baby sea turtles who made their way into the ocean, to hopefully live a long and productive life and return to the same little island to lay their eggs in the sand once again.



A student marvels at the beauty of a baby sea turtle before release into the ocean.

The SWB group will continue to collaborate with the Mangle Association, EcoViva, EWB-Iowa City, and Rotary clubs in order to further the clean water projects in the Bajo Lempa region of El Salvador.