

Poverty Alleviation in Panama

Report by Bill Grimes, Hunger Plus, Inc. Director

In March of 2003, President Bhichai convened A Presidential Conference In Panama City, Panama with Vocational Training as a Theme. A matching Grant was approved and funded for \$80,000 dollars to provide vocational training for the poor of that country. The following Rotary Districts in the United States have provided the funds for the project: Districts 5670, 5710, 5420, 5550, 5770 and 5690. The named Districts provided \$40,000 dollars and The Rotary Foundation funded \$40,000 dollars.

I was in Panama last week and this program is up and running with four vocational schools, either completed or near completion, with over 300 poor of Panama receiving training for a future way of life. Dr Gustavo OBaldia, former Director of Rotary International, is in charge of the Grant Program. Also while in Panama last week, nine Rotarians from Districts 5710 and 5670 , participated in a medical-dental project in the community of San Francisco in Veraguas Provice, in which 9,000 people of little or no means showed up for medical and dental treatment. They also were given food and presented with clothing. I personally extracted over 50 teeth on Saturday morning.

The group also visited a project of the David Rotary club along with Kansas District 5670 to construct low cost housing for the poor of the David area. At present they have eight houses under construction. The cost of the houses average \$2,000 US. Another project was a visit to the OBaldia Hospital where District 5710 had provided a ship container of medical equipment for the Hospital. The hospital also received a ship container if medicine from Rotarians in District 5710.