

Literacy projects paying off



Submitted photo

The Rotary Club of North Bay has provided \$24,000 during a five-year period to the Guatemala Literacy Project, which has provided textbooks and computers for thousands of young students. It's one of 350 Rotary clubs worldwide assisting the GLP, which was founded in 1996 in partnership with the U.S.-based Co-operative for Education.

DAVE DALE
The Nugget

Colin Thacker will finally see firsthand the impact the Guatemala Literacy Project has had on the country recovering from decades of civil war.

The Rotary Club of North Bay member has been helping an educational program in the impoverished Central American country for the past five years.

"It's time for me to meet these kids," Thacker said, adding he receives progress reports and thank-you cards from the students. The North Bay club has become the second highest contributor to the project in North America.

North Bay has contributed \$24,000 in five years, which helps the GLP provide books for 32,000 students. And 15,200 are being trained at GLP computer centres.

Thacker, a retired volunteer co-ordinator, and his wife, Marlene, are joining 40 Rotary members and their spouses on the GLP's tour beginning Feb. 4. They'll be delivering pencils and textbooks while joining the celebration as new computer centres are opened in rural schools.

Thacker said the legacy of 36 years of civil war has damaged the education system in

Guatemala and teachers say the donations of books and computers are helping students stay in school.

"We want to make sure Guatemala comes out the other end and we're already making a difference," he said, giving credit to North Bay residents who support fundraising initiatives such as Rotary TV Bingo, which provides money for such projects.

It's not always easy supporting a far away project for a long period. It's not the same as Rotary's many local projects, where money is raised and spent locally, providing members the immediate satisfaction of seeing their work pay dividends.

But Thacker said he's glad his wife encouraged him to stay involved with the literacy project because helping Guatemalan children get an education will give that country a chance to succeed.

"This is something I wouldn't have become attached to without being with Rotary," he said, adding he'll be making a PowerPoint presentation to the club about his trip during its March meeting — which just happens to be Rotary's literacy month.

On the web:
www.guatemalaliteracy.org;
www.coeduc.org.