

# Mi Refugio

**One of our own helps the poor of Guatemala find refuge from poverty.**

**I**T IS AT TIMES EASY FOR US TO forget the advantages that we enjoy as Americans and as Union workers: food, clothing, shelter, access to education, medical treatment and a hundred other things that we often take for granted. There are many in this country, and throughout the world, who do not have these things or even the most basic comforts and necessities of life.

One of our own, Brother Bruce Stubbs, a retired member of Local 157, has stepped up to help by volunteering with a program called *Mi Refugio* in San Pedro Sacatepéquez (St. Peter of the Mountains) in Guatemala for the past ten years. Bruce helps to build schools and other facilities for children who live in and around the Guatemala City landfill.

## About Mi Refugio

Mi Refugio (My Refuge) is a non-denominational Christian ministry that provides education, food, clothing and medical assistance to children and their families who live in the Guatemala City garbage dump. Mi Refugio also administers to poor native families in the villages surrounding the San Pedro school property. The ministry provides preschool through high school academic and trade school education that will assist the children to leave a life time on the garbage dump.

In 1995, a twelve-acre piece of property was purchased to house the expanding school and the volunteers. It is on this very property that Brother Stubbs has done most of his volunteer work with Mi Refugio. Unbelievably, thanks to his and other volunteers' efforts, the school today has the capacity for 400 students.

## Giving Back

When a presentation was first made at Bruce's church about the work at Mi Refugio, Bruce knew he wanted to help but, at that time, due to work and family constraints his assistance was limited to monetary donations. As time went on and the call came for volunteers who could help build new facilities, Bruce knew this was his calling; it was the right time for him to combine his God-given talent as a carpenter to help children in need.



Brother Bruce Stubbs with team volunteering in Guatemala. Inset: Local 157 Brother Stubbs at home with one of his chess boards he carved by hand.

On Bruce's next trip he helped to finish framing walls, put up siding and lay flooring for classrooms and medical facilities at the San Pedro Sacatepéquez location.



Bruce stands with students at their new school in San Pedro.

## The Ultimate Goal

Mi Refugio's goal is to give as much help in as many ways as possible to the children of Guatemala. Here, children have a safe place to go during the day; they receive lessons on hygiene and health; they get two meals that they very well might not get otherwise; they have access to medical care; and they attend classes that teach them real-world skills like sewing and woodworking.

Bruce told us, "That's something I'm looking forward to doing with the kids. I'd love to teach the kids stuff. I'm going to teach them [how to make] chessboards and cribbage boards. The more they make, the better price they can get and it is teaching them a skill as well. We're basically trying to teach them skills. They teach them a full school curriculum too."

The work that Bruce Stubbs has done with Mi Refugio is something that he can and should be very proud of, just as we are proud of him for his sacrifice, his selflessness and his generosity of spirit, heart and wallet. As a Union carpenter Bruce has greatly helped to represent and uphold the dignity of workers everywhere as he has worked to save the lives, the spirit and the dignity of the challenged and poor children who attend and benefit from Mi Refugio.



These girls are learning every day thanks to the Mi Refugio volunteers.



A new facility under construction.



The school being built at San Pedro Sacatepéquez.

On his first trip to Guatemala, Bruce witnessed firsthand how poor the conditions in this country, particularly at the city dump, really were.

The first task for the volunteers was to build a new living space for *future* volunteers. "It was rough. As soon as you took stuff out of your bag it would get soaked because of the humidity." Bruce and the others worked for seven days, building the foundation of the new structure. Other groups that came after him completed the interior and exterior framing.

**To send a donation or get more information about Mi Refugio please call or mail to: Mi Refugio  
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