



Highlights & Happenings

Vol. 3, Issue 1. JAN—MAR 2018

Clean Water: A Logical Expansion of the Mission



San Miguel de Allende’s water source is subterranean aquifer made of volcanic rock. The water table continues to decline while concentrations of arsenic and fluoride continue to climb. Children are at greatest risk, as their growing bodies absorb these dangerous minerals at a much higher rate. Bottled water is simply unaffordable.

Working with San Miguel’s Caminos de Agua organization, the water was tested at every one of Feed the Hungry’s school kitchen locations. As expected, some of the FTH community kitchens have unhealthy levels of arsenic. Fluoride is also much too high in six of the communities.

Aqua Clara International to the Rescue

Collaborating with Aqua Clara International (ACI) and the Universidad de Queretaro’s clean water technology center, ACI’s revolutionary filter system was recently installed in our Los Galvanes school kitchen, selected for the field test because of the high concentration of arsenic in the well water. The installation was performed by engineering students from the Universidad de Queretaro. The equipment was provided by the Harry J. Knopke, Ph.D., president of ACI.



Universidad de Queretaro Engineering Students

The installation was a complete success! The value for the concentration of arsenic in the “before” water was 12 µg/L, well above WHO guidelines and not safe for human consumption. The value for the arsenic concentration in the “after” sample was measured as 0 µg/L. An unexpected added benefit was the reduction in fluoride in the water as well. Now there is clean, potable water, free of contamination, for drinking and cooking.



Lee Carter, Rotary’s VP Community Projects

ACI has agreed to fund installations at two additional school kitchens with high arsenic levels. Residents of the communities will provide the labor necessary to install the equipment. The maintenance of the systems will also be the responsibility of the community, so training will be required. We hope to expand our clean water mission even further, but will need additional funding.

NGOs Working Together to Create Healthier Communities

Feed the Hungry is also working with other NGOs to install cisterns for rainwater harvesting. Casita Linda has partnered with Caminos de Agua to build a cistern at our school kitchen in Palo Colorado.

Rotary Club of San Miguel de Allende Midday, A.C. built a water collection system in the rural community of Alonso Yáñez benefiting the school kitchen there. Rotary funded half the cost and the community provided all of the labor for the school’s system.

Photos in this issue by:

Michael Amici (michaelamici.com), Barry Weiss (barryweissphoto.com), Gary Peterson, Donna Fullerton, and Bere Parra.

feedthehungrysma.org



President's Letter

FEED THE HUNGRY SAN MIGUEL: Who are we, and why do we work so hard to help others?

WE are your neighbors, ex-pats and Mexican, who believe that children should not be penalized by hunger. We also believe that by our combined efforts we can make a material difference in young lives.

Volunteers are an essential part of the organization. Hundreds of people contribute their time and talents to provide FTH's framework. The volunteers include the Board of Trustees, our food packers, and the drivers who use their own cars and gasoline to navigate some treacherous roads to take food to the schools. There is also a sizable group teaching English and providing scholarships to diligent students. Others are on call to fill in wherever needed.

We are also fortunate to have local businesses that support us, such as The Restaurant, sponsor of this edition of our newsletter.

FTH employs a paid staff of 18 at our headquarters and 35 cooks at the schools where we serve. There are also many mothers who volunteer their time and efforts to help in the kitchens.

We, volunteers and staff, are richly rewarded by knowing that our efforts—which provided more than 900,000 hot, balanced meals in 2017—have given 4,200 children nutritious food, better health, and smiles on their faces.

It is worth the effort.

—Al Kocourek, President



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**"So no child shall know the
pain of hunger."**

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By the numbers

School kitchens supported:	34
Charities supported:	6
Pounds of food delivered weekly:	2,000+
Miles driven by our volunteers:	1,000+
Meals served every school day:	4,300+
Meals served in 2017:	925,000+
In service since:	1984

This issue of Highlights & Happenings has been generously sponsored by:

THE RESTAURANT



Díez de Sollano 16, Centro San Miguel de Allende, MX 415.154.7877

Hours: Tuesday—Sunday 12-23 hrs (Closed on Mondays)

3 Volunteers...the Heart and Soul of Feed the Hungry

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Volunteer Packer of the Year: Geoff Thompson

Geoff Thompson and his wife, Jo Kimball, first visited San Miguel in 2012, and moved here from Northern Virginia in 2014. Geoff started volunteering with Feed the Hungry San Miguel in February 2016. A friend of his, John Taniel, also a FTH volunteer, asked Geoff if he could help out during a time when the Monday packing crew needed extra help. Geoff agreed, thinking it would only be for a few weeks.



At FTH's annual Volunteer Appreciation picnic, sponsored by Hacienda Santa Clara, Geoff was awarded Monday Warehouse Packer of the Year.

As Geoff tells it, "After understanding FTH's mission, the immensity of the undertaking, and the commitment of other volunteers, I became a believer." Then last Christmas, Geoff and Jo helped distribute Three Kings' Day gifts of school supplies to some of the children Feed the Hungry serves. "Seeing their beautiful smiling faces sealed my commitment to the organization."

Wanting to do even more, Geoff and Jo became Founding Donors, enabling Feed the Hungry to open another new school kitchen in September 2016.

Although everyone who volunteers with the Monday packing group is equally committed to FTH, Geoff stands out as a leader. He jumps in, immediately filling any and all gaps when we happen to be short-handed. When first-time volunteers come to the warehouse to help pack food for the school kitchens, he gladly takes the time to explain the process and help these newcomers experience the "team camaraderie" that makes this group so special.



Food Is Essential to All Life — Including Goats!

Trimmings from lettuce, cabbage, and cauliflower that are not suitable for school meals don't go to waste! With help from other Monday packers, volunteers Jonna Stratton and Ray Fairchild bag it all up and feed the 20 hungry goats in their neighborhood.



HOW TO VOLUNTEER

Feed the Hungry couldn't function without our staff of dedicated volunteers, filling needs in a variety of ways and in many different capacities. One of our biggest needs is for **regular and substitute drivers** to deliver food every Tuesday of the school year to our FTH schools and charities. Our drivers wouldn't have anything to deliver were it not for the corps of **food handlers and packagers** who donate their time on Saturdays and Mondays getting food ready to be delivered.

Individuals with skills in areas such as **event support, database management, writing, graphic design, and photography** are often needed as well.

If you are interested in any of these volunteer opportunities, please contact Volunteer Coordinator, Jonna Stratton:

jonnainmex@gmail.com

Get to Know...

Dianne Walta Hart, Advisory Board Member

Dianne spent her childhood in South Dakota, went to college in Minnesota, lived in Europe, taught English in Los Angeles, and moved to Corvallis, Oregon after her husband, Tom, finished his OB-GYN residency at UCLA. Once the last of their daughters started kindergarten, Dianne went to Oregon State University (OSU) for a master's degree in Spanish and Linguistics. This led to a faculty position at OSU, teaching Latin American Culture/Spanish. She also administered a statewide program in Ecuador, OSU's international degree program, and in 1992 she became the Latin America director of OSU's international internship program. This was also the year when Dianne and Tom started coming to San Miguel de Allende. Tom began volunteering at the maternity hospital connected with Centro Para Adolescentes de San Miguel (CASA), and when they retired in 2000, they began spending even longer periods of time in Mexico.



When a Feed the Hungry San Miguel board member asked her to write articles about their cooks in the rural kitchens, Dianne jumped at the opportunity. Her academic research had included two oral history books of Nicaraguans coping with war and later as undocumented immigrants in Los Angeles. FTH wanted to know more about their communities, and as far as Dianne was concerned, what could be more fun?

It took her at least two trips to a kitchen to get the stories. On her first trip to a community, someone from FTH accompanied her. After sensing that the cooks were beginning to trust her, she and Tom would make the second or third trip without FTH, and she quickly learned that each village had its own culture, its own expectations, its own history. A tradition in one rancho did not necessarily mean that same tradition was followed in the next one.

About the same time, the Michael Chadwick family stepped up to support a new kitchen in the Los Ricos de Abajo community, and made a commitment to support volunteer-led English classes there. Inexplicably, Dianne found herself drawn to this remote place on a hilltop and returned over and over to conduct interviews, to explore the history of the area, and to occasionally substitute in the English classroom. The following year, she and another volunteer led the teaching program, determined to keep the promise made to the residents of Los Ricos. The promise continues to this day. She served seven years on FTH's board, is now on the advisory board, and wrote a history of FTH's founders.

Educating a Village

The mission of Feed the Hungry is to nourish the children, but nourishment can have many forms. For example, the ongoing English language program at the Naciones Unidas School in the community of Los Ricos de Abajo, which began in 2007. The program is under the direction of Dianne Walta Hart.

The program was started by Feed the Hungry board members and volunteers. With the enthusiastic support of the school's director, Maria de la Luz Jiménez Rodríguez, they built a school library, a computer learning center, funded a dining hall at the school, and established a scholarship program to encourage continued education. Today a corps of 30-40 volunteer teachers from the US and Canada conduct English classes during the winter months, and a smaller group teaches the students every Saturday all year long.

The teachers have expanded their program to include adults and kindergarten students. The program has made a real difference in the community and the lives of the students.



Volunteer English teacher Bob Bowers with three students who have been scholarship recipients since primary school. They are now at university, obtaining degrees in Business, Tourism, and Law.



A (Wednes)Day in Los Ricos de Abajo

by Jean Degnon

Volunteering with Feed the Hungry San Miguel makes you part of something special. Bonds form within every group of volunteers and there is a unique sense of teamwork and camaraderie, with generosity as its core value. One of the most distinct and driven groups of FTH volunteers is that of Los Ricos teachers: a volunteer group that teaches English to children and adults in the community of Los Ricos de Abajo, and that also raises funds for a Scholarship Program.

Los Ricos de Abajo is a rocky hilltop community located near Atotonilco. The first vehicle carrying five volunteer kindergarten teachers rolls out of Plaza Pueblito on Wednesdays at 11:00 AM and it arrives a while later at Escuela Naciones Unidas in Los Ricos, where there is a Feed the Hungry San Miguel school kitchen. The kindergarten is in a separate building above the school.

The little children are energetic and enthusiastic. After an hour or so of Hokey-Pokey, Wheels on the Bus, and Colors and Numbers with the 3, 4, and 5 year-olds, the remaining five SUVs carrying the rest of the volunteers (25 or so) pull in. We are never quite sure if they will make it up the steep, rutted hill. Some cars park at the nearby monastery and the volunteers are shuttled over in cars with higher clearance. One year, when the Río Laja was flooded, we all walked from the monastery across the swinging bridge. Lucha, the dauntless director, occasionally has kids out on the road hauling rocks with her so that the intrepid drivers can make it up the hill.



After all the volunteer teachers have arrived, they teach English lessons for primaria children and also to a handful of adults (aged between 17 and 45) who want to learn English to help their kids with their homework or better their chances for employment. The lives and circumstances of these grown-ups could fill a book!

Each class goes to the school library and gets to take out a book – a high point of the day. After class, the mothers feed us a delicious comida: their way of thanking us for our time with their children. After lunch, the middle-schoolers arrive; hot and tired after walking from their school in Atotonilco. The volunteers tutor them in English, to supplement their lessons at school. We head back to San Miguel at around 4 PM, hot and tired ourselves.

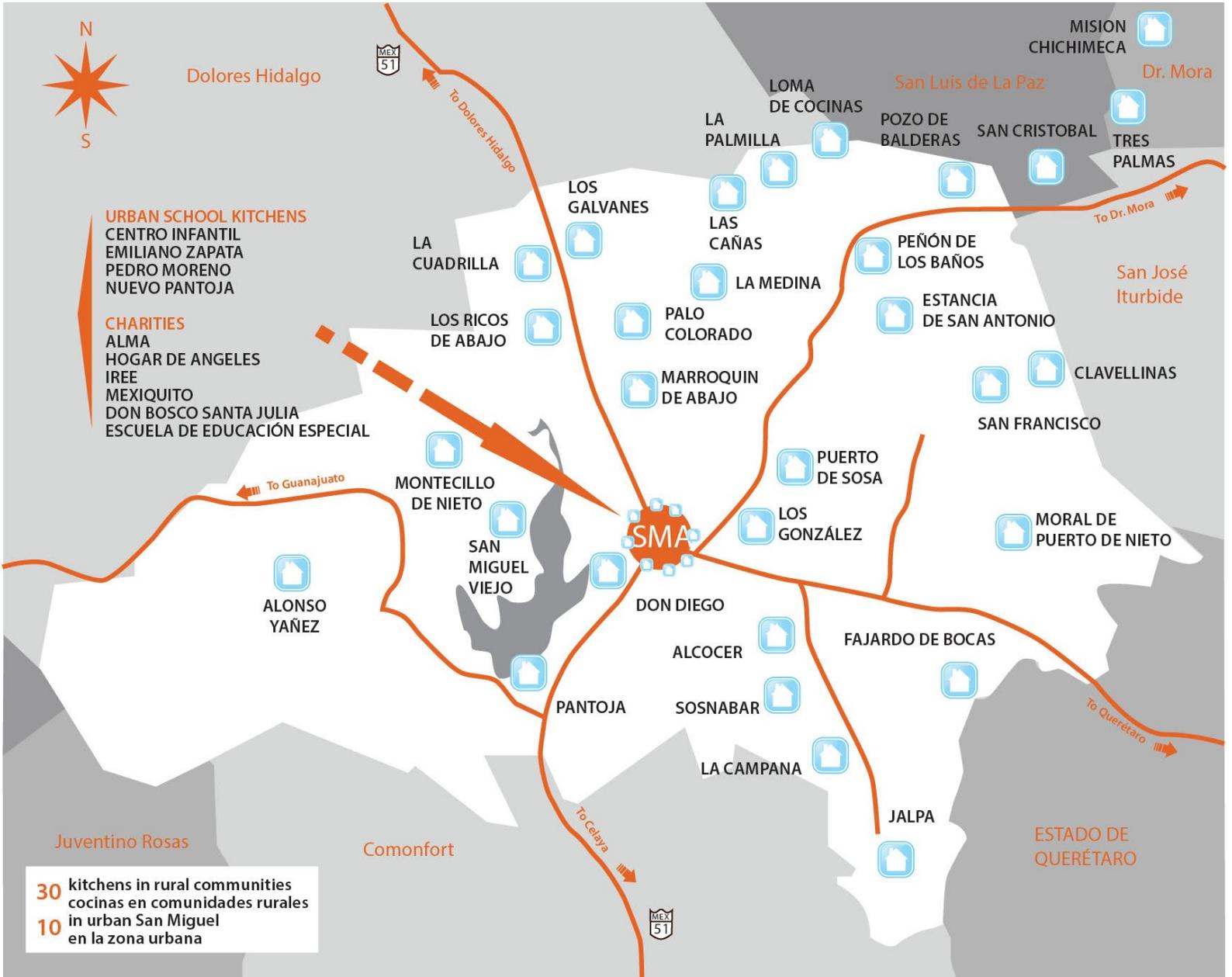


There is always a problem with attrition, as not all parents want their kids to continue with their schooling, or the children find work and drop out. But, with donations from volunteers and their friends, most of the children now continue studying secundaria, many go on to preparatoria, and this year there is a core group of young women enrolled in different university and technical programs. We are so proud of them: they have endured a long journey and they have a promising future ahead of them.

We're so grateful to the comunidad of Los Ricos de Abajo for welcoming us into their life, entrusting us with their beautiful children, and sharing very special days with them during our 12-week teaching program. They have given us back as much, if not more than, anything we have given to them.

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Second Annual "March Magic": A Journey into the Heart and Soul of San Miguel de Allende March 1-8, 2018

Last March, 18 guests from 7 US states experienced a unique week in San Miguel during Feed the Hungry's first annual March Magic excursion. While feasting on the rich sights and sounds of our stunning city, they also contributed to the health and future of children in our poorest communities.

We are pleased to offer another very exclusive excursion, March 1-8, 2018, **limited to a privileged 22 visitors**. You will enjoy a luxurious 7 days in San Miguel de Allende, voted "Best City in the World" in 2017 by *Travel+Leisure* and in 2013 by *Conde Nast Traveler*.

We already have new events and destinations planned for this year. This will be another magical journey into the heart and soul of San Miguel!

Please visit our website for details and to reserve your space:
feedthehungrysma.org/march-magic.html

Here are a few of the testimonials from our event in March, 2017:

"Without this sort of thoughtful itinerary planned in detail, there would be no other way to get this up-close and personal introduction to the community. Truly unique experience; wonderfully kind and generous hosts; very affordable; the 'field trip' to the FTSM schools was also a very special experience. Wow!"

- Gary J. Becker, M.D., Tucson

"This trip exceeded our expectations. My husband and I so enjoyed all the activities which the trip included. The best part, of course, was the funds it provided to help feed the children in the campos surrounding the city."

- Jane M. Battaglia, Aspen



Touring a World Heritage Site



Visiting a school kitchen



A host's home

See how we sort, pack, deliver, and prepare an estimated 30 tons of foodstuffs for more than 900,000 meals every year, week after week—watch our video: tinyurl.com/z9mqwa6



Ways to Donate

In spite of the rising costs of food and fuel, our operational efficiencies and strong local relationships enable us to maintain the cost of a fresh, well-balanced meal at just around 50 cents.

- ❖ \$20 feeds 2 children for a month
- ❖ \$100 feeds 10 children for a month
- ❖ \$250 feeds 2 children for one school year

By donating to Feed the Hungry, you are contributing **health, hope, and opportunity** to disadvantaged communities in the San Miguel de Allende municipality.

For a US tax deduction:

Donate by check payable to Feed the Hungry San Miguel, Inc.
Mail to Feed the Hungry at either of the following addresses:

Feed the Hungry San Miguel
c/o La Conexión, Aldama #3
San Miguel de Allende 37700
Guanajuato, Mexico

Feed the Hungry San Miguel
Box 636
220 N. Zapata Hwy, Suite 11
Laredo, TX 78043-4464, USA



Or make an online donation: feedthehungryisma.org (click on the orange **DONATE** button)

For a Mexican tax deduction:

Donate by check payable to Feed the Hungry, A.C. Mail to Feed the Hungry at either of the addresses listed above.

For a Canadian tax deduction:

Donate by check payable to Amistad Canada and note "Feed the Hungry Project" on the memo line. Mail to Amistad Canada:

Amistad Canada, c/o The Tax Management Centre 14
2530 Sixth Line
Oakville, Ontario
CANADA L6H 6W5

Or make an online donation: canadahelps.org/en/donate (be sure to select Feed the Hungry San Miguel as your charity of choice)

Make a Legacy Gift

Please also consider Feed the Hungry as a beneficiary when planning your will. Through Planned Giving, you can make a lifelong impact on the lives of children in economically disadvantaged communities.

Visit feedthehungryisma.org/help/giving to learn more.

Sponsor a School Kitchen

We encourage individuals, families, friends, coworkers, and businesses to consider the incredible good that can be done by becoming a Founding Donor or a Kitchen Angel. Sponsorship of a currently unsponsored school enables us to extend our reach to impoverished communities that might otherwise remain on our waiting list for years.

Sponsorship of a specific school kitchen also provides donors with a more personal connection to where their donations go. Founding Donors and Kitchen Angels receive regular updates on progress at their sponsored schools and, if they like, tours of the schools as well. Visit feedthehungryisma.org/help/angel_program.html to learn more.

Make an In-Kind Donation

We are currently in need of: an SUV to be used for regular visits to our remote communities by our staff: 2012 model or more recent - 4 or 6 cylinder - good condition/low maintenance cost - high clearance - current GTO plates • Simple and functional digital cameras • A laser printer/scanner • Auction items (art, products, tours, accommodations at your B&B or hotel, gift certificates for businesses or services) with a minimum value of US\$100. A tax receipt can be provided for the value of your donation.

If you wish to donate any of these items please email contact@feedthehungryisma.org or call 152-2402, ext 103.

Feed the Hungry San Miguel, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) U.S. non-profit corporation guided by a dedicated Board of Trustees, supported by a small, professional staff and a corps of exceptional volunteers.

Feed the Hungry San Miguel, Inc. raises funds and provides guidelines to its Mexican operating entity, Feed the Hungry A.C.

Amistad Canada is our partner for donations from Canadian residents.

Donations are tax-deductible in the U.S., Mexico, and Canada.