

## Mini Honduras Trip Report December 2025

Due to a resident scheduling issue, the Department did not send a medical team to Honduras this Fall. In mid November Doug Stockman went to Honduras to keep the projects going and maintain the relationships with the people. The following is Doug's report on his experience and accomplishments during his trip.

### Travel and Living in San Jose

I was able to fly into the Comayagua airport, which is 2 hours closer to San Jose than the San Pedro Sula airport we usually use. This did require 3 flights on American Airlines to get to Honduras with brief layovers (45 minutes) in 2 US airports. Fortunately there were no delays at these brief layovers. Overall, I experienced no major travel problems.

A smooth experience, however, cannot be said of my living situation in San Jose. Upon entering the volunteer house, it became immediately clear there were guest critters in the house. Rats had infested the house, chewed on everything, and made a mess of the place. Over the next 7-10 days, I waged a war with the rats ultimately removing 9 rats through the use of poison and transport. These battles were not without incidents.

One time, I went to slip on a flip flop and my foot would not fit. A dead rat was wedged in the sandal. Another time I took a plastic bin on to the porch to evaluate the contents for rat damage. When I opened the lid a rat leapt out and onto me before it ran off to a corner on the porch. Another close animal encounter occurred once when showering. I came eye to eye with a scorpion on the shower wall. Fortunately the scorpion was easier to kill than the rats.

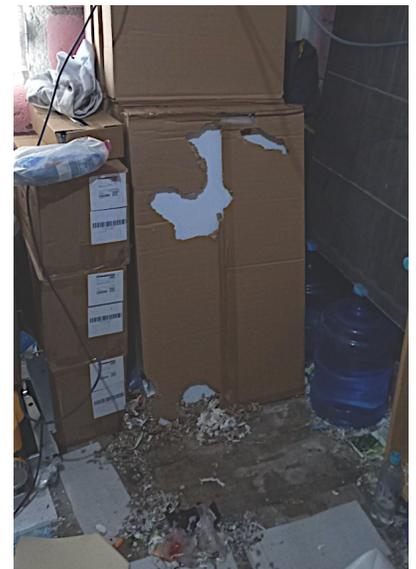
Water access remains a major challenge in San Jose. There is no running water so we rely on catching rainwater on roofs and storing the water in tanks. Our main tank holds over 4,000 gallons but has again started leaking 3 years after we coated the inside of the tank. Although I had enough water for my time in San Jose, I have concerns for the May brigade. The nearest place to get clean water is over an hour's drive away. There are a few natural springs in the area that produce water that looks more like skim milk. Area streams carry water that looks like chocolate milk and is contaminated with coliforms. We are exploring methods to improve access to safe water.

### Solar Installs

Installing more solar systems in isolated mountain homes was a priority for this trip. The majority of the population does not have access to government-provided electricity. We designed a very simple solar system that can power 4 lights and charge a cell phone. I was able to complete 11 installs this trip and has used up almost all the solar supplies we had on site. I will work on shipping more supplies to Honduras. The wait list for people wanting a solar system is over 100 families. To date, we have installed 48 systems. In January 2025, the Unitarian Church of Rochester donated enough money to help us install 30 solar systems in the San Jose area.



*First rat killed at the start of the war*



*Rats made nest in solar supplies in the room where Doug sleeps*

Many of the installs this trip were in a very poor and isolated village called Potrerros. The dirt roads to Potrerros are in awful shape. Even local drivers in 4 wheeled vehicles would not take many of the roads. We try to get as close as we can to a home via a road to minimize hiking, especially when carrying the solar equipment and all the tools needed for the installs. Reaching a house can still require 20-40 minutes hiking up and down mountains using trails about one foot wide snaking along the side of a mountain.

The homes are in varying conditions. All the homes had walls made of adobe. Some homes had laminated metal roofs while others used traditional tile. Most of the homes had only 1-3 rooms. In one very poor home they only had one room and one twin sized bed for 6 people. The roof was constructed with a patchwork of rusting metal scraps. Although these people had so little, I think they have a more positive attitude than many of us do. At least we were able to bring light into their lives.



### Land Dispute Issue

As stated in prior trip reports, there is an ongoing land dispute between ourselves and the area school. In 2009, we obtained a 99-year lease to the land the volunteer house is on following established legal procedures. In 2014 the school claimed the land is theirs. I met with a new Honduran attorney during this trip. She feels we have a legal right to the land but we need to obtain another document from the government. I traveled to Comayagua, a city about 4-5 hours from San Jose and where the airport is located, to meet with representatives from a government agency, INA, to discuss the land issue. It took a while but I found someone who will look into the land issue further. It sounds like most work in this agency has slowed until January. Hopefully we can hear something back in another month or two.

In the event the land dispute does not end in our favor, I have started searching for other land nearby. The owner of land adjacent to our leased land does not want to discuss selling. There is another plot of land we could buy that is about 2 acres in size, quite flat relative to most land in the area, and even has a tiny spring (water) that could be used to flush a toilet or create a demonstration garden or small fish farm. Unfortunately, the price is much higher than I anticipated (possibly the gringo price). Hopefully the land dispute will end in our favor and our Program can expand on the leased land.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

We have been staying in San Jose and partnering with the people for 20 years. To celebrate our 20 years of collaboration we had a fiesta for the local people. An area leader, Roney Amaya, and the interpreter Melissa planned the event. A number of local women along with Melissa did the cooking. At least 150 people attended and all seemed to have a good time. We started the afternoon off with a

slide show of people in the community from the past 20 years. Then Roney and Melissa re-introduced our partnership. Individuals gave testimonials of how the collaboration has helped them. Doug discussed how we chose to partner with the people of San Jose, what we have accomplished, and what we hope to do in the future. Following this presentation, a local band led by one of our scholar graduates, Wilmer, provided music to accompany multiple fun games and even a piñata for the children. The food was what they call “chop suey” and, of course, a tortilla. Adults got cake and the children got candy for dessert. Various people reported to us after the event that this was one of the best party’s ever.

We have updated the San Jose Partners web site to include a page celebrating the past 20 years. <https://sanjosepartners.org/20th-anniversary/>. There are group photos of past participants, photos of brigade members as they lived and worked in San Jose, photos of community members, and photos from the fiesta in San Jose. Some of the photo links are password protected, which is: celebrate20.



Making over 200 tortillas



Games and band playing



Piñata scramble

**Politics**

I was in San Jose during their national elections. People got to vote for the president of Honduras, the mayor for the county they live in, and their congressional representative. It is quite clear that what you get from the government, both local and national, depends on which political party you identify with in relation to who is in power. We continue to educate people that politics, race, religion, etc. does not matter to us. We help people who work with us in an honest and friendly manner.

**Computer Education for Children**

The vast majority of the San Jose population is poor, often living on less than \$2/day. When you encounter someone with money either they received a good education or they have family working in the US sending them money. We see education as the primary path out of poverty for many of the children of San Jose, hence our scholarship program in collaboration with the Unitarian Church of Rochester. Educational resources at the local level are quite limited. We hope to offer educational opportunities the children don’t otherwise get. A student who hopes to enter the 9<sup>th</sup> grade told me they don’t get trained in computer use at the school in San Marcos. Even in Honduras, having computer skills is necessary for many jobs in bigger towns. I brought a mini-computer this trip to explore providing very basic computer education to children and held a few classes with children. Although they struggled with even basic skills such as using a mouse and a keyboard, they are interested and want to learn more. The children definitely need



*Cindy Lou made great progress learning computer skills*

hands-on time with a computer along with guidance to gain needed skills. We hope to bring a few more computers in the near future and set up more formal educational opportunities. Enlisting the help of a bilingual educator who has experience with elementary school level new computer users will definitely improve the chance for success.

### **Coffee Farmers**

I met with the coffee farmers who supply us with the coffee we sell in the US. I paid them the money made from coffee we sold earlier in the year. This year's coffee harvest is just starting. I decided to not bring coffee back this trip given we could only transport about 50 pounds of green coffee and the coffee would most likely not be ready from the roaster until after Christmas. We should have more coffee to sell in late May 2026.

Many of the people in the San Jose area leave home to work on larger farms picking coffee in other parts of Honduras at this time of year. According to one worker they are hired for 15-day blocks of time and work all day for those 15 days. An efficient worker can make about \$380 in those 15 days. That works out to a bit less than \$3 per hour and is by far the most money the people in the area can make. Coffee harvest can last about 2-3 months in a year.

### **Summary**

Thanks to everyone who supports our work in San Jose. Through our combined efforts over the years we have helped thousands of people. With your continued support the positive effects in San Jose and beyond will continue to grow. Thank you and Happy Holidays.

Douglas Stockman, MD  
President, San Jose Partners

Consider visiting [www.sanjosepartners.org](http://www.sanjosepartners.org) to learn more about our efforts in San Jose. Our InstaGram account, @sanjosepartners, has additional information. If you would like to support our work in San Jose, visit the [Donate](#) page on our web site and make a donation.

### **Additional Photos from the Trip**



The home owner mounting the solar panel on the roof of their home.



Volunteer house porch becomes a factory where the battery boxes for the solar systems are built and wired.



*Delmi, the young lady, kept after Doug for the past few months using WhatsApp to ensure she and her interested neighbors received solar systems this trip.*



*This family was so hospitable, cooking Melissa an egg to eat while Doug installed their system.*



*Another poor family who will have lights for the first time this Christmas*



*Sonia is another woman who kept after Doug until their system was installed.*



*Although people lack creature comforts they definitely have spectacular views from their homes*



*Doug dancing with Cipriana during the fiesta*