Mini Honduras Trip Report
February 2026

In February 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

Due to a winter storm near the end of January I left 5 days later than scheduled. After about three weeks in San Jose I realized I could not complete all that I wanted to accomplish so I changed my flights back to Rochester to add a few more days. I had no issues flying into Comayagua and flying out of San Pedro Sula or with travel to and from San Jose.

Back in November, the volunteer house was over run by rats. Fortunately this trip we did not have a rat problem. No scorpions were seen either.

The volunteer house is connected to the Honduran national grid for electricity. Unfortunately, the grid is not reliable. Almost every day the electricity would go off for hours or as long as a day. The biggest concern with this instability is food spoiling in the fridge. We did not lose food this trip due to electrical outages. We have installed a temporary small solar system so we can run a computer for a few hours a day as needed.

Solar Installs

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 and is highly requested. In early January we shipped more solar equipment to Honduras given we had depleted our supply in Honduras during my previous trip in Nov-Dec. I was able to take delivery of the shipped solar equipment early during my stay in San Jose.

Installing more solar systems in isolated mountain homes was a priority for this trip. We installed 14 systems this trip. To date, we have installed 62 systems. In an effort to keep costs down, I have been building the boxes that hold the battery and controller for the solar systems and built 17 boxes this trip. I may have located a carpenter willing to build the boxes at a reasonable price. A prior carpenter we worked with decided to double the price he charged without any explanation.

In January 2025, the Unitarian Church of Rochester donated enough money to help us install 30 solar systems in the San Jose area. We have installed 27 systems so far using the Unitarian Church money.

Many of the installs this trip were in a very poor and isolated village called Potreros. The dirt roads to Potreros are in awful shape. Even local drivers in 4-wheeled vehicles would not take some of the roads. We tried to get as close as we could 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 1-2 feet wide snaking along the side of a mountain.

Homeowner and friends installing panel on roof

Doug educating on how we will attach panel

Family with new solar system

The homes in Potreros are in varying conditions. All the homes where we did installs in Potreros have walls made of adobe. Some homes had laminated metal roofs while others used traditional tile. Most of the homes have only 1-3 rooms. A few of the homes had new roofs. These people had a family member in the US who could send money back. Otherwise, people in this area cannot afford home improvements such as a nice new roof.

In addition to the installs in Potreros, I installed a solar system in the school located in Delicias Pilas. Pilas is very isolated and does not have electricity in the area. The four teachers in the school actually live in less isolated communities during weekends but stay in Pilas, where they rent rooms, during the week.. One of our former scholarship students from San Jose Centro, Maria Justa, is now a teacher in the Pilas school. Maria Justa asked for our help. They used to have a government-provided solar system but that was hit by lightening more than a year ago. Although our system is tiny compared to the government system it will allow the teachers to charge their cell phones and for school functions to run a lap top and printer now and then.

The road to Pilas is barely passable. It took 90 minutes by truck to reach the school, but at least we did not have to hike to the school. There were no problems with the install and we had a nice chat with the teachers and a couple community members. Hopefully they will take care of the system and it will serve them well for many years.

Battery boxes on porch ready for wiring

Hiking to next install

Typical adobe house

Land Dispute Issue

As stated in prior trip reports, there is an ongoing land dispute between ourselves and the area school. In 2009, following established legal procedures, we obtained a 99-year lease to the land the volunteer house is on. In 2014 the school claimed the land is theirs. We hired a Honduran lawyer last year to work on this issue. This trip we drove to the town of Camasca, which is about an hour south of San Jose, to meet with the lawyer. The only road between San Jose and Camasca is in terrible shape. This is the main road for the entire region but we often could not drive faster than 15 mph because of the condition of the road.

Previously the government database of land ownership did not explicitly state who owns the disputed land. The prior leaders of San Jose stated the government agency who grants land to indigenous people had given the land to the community but there were no written records. We had visited that government agency, INA, in December to discuss our case. While meeting with the lawyer in Camasca she showed me that the government database now confirms the land is owned by the community, not the school, and that we have a 99-year lease on that land. The next legal step we must take is to obtain a directive from a regional judge to force the local school teachers to stop their claims. This information, combined with a new local government, which is scheduled to come into power over the next few months, should allow us to continue to work in the San Jose area without concern that the school system will take over anything we build on the land. Hopefully, by later this year, we can expand our efforts to help the poor of the area.

Computer Education for Children

The vast majority of the San Jose population is poor, often living on less than $2/day. When a community member seems to have money, they either received a good education and were able to find a job locally (hard to do) or they have family working in the US sending them money. In most cases, the only people who are not very poor have a relative in the US sending money back to help their family. Since this is not sustainable for the community, we see education as the primary path out of poverty for many of the children of San Jose. In addition to our scholarship program in collaboration with the Unitarian Church of Rochester, we hope to offer educational opportunities the children don't otherwise get.

Arlin teaching children about computer use

Educational resources at the local level are quite limited. Even in Honduras, having computer skills is necessary for many jobs in bigger towns. With our recent shipment from the US, we included a mini-computer and a few monitors and keyboards. We now have 2 computers in San Jose for computer education. The interpreter Arlin, who helped me for part of my stay in San Jose, really enjoys teaching children. She did a great job working with up to 7 students at a time teaching basic computer skills. Having never used computers before, the children are learning how to use a mouse and keyboard. These basic skills we take for granted are challenging for the children. We use games to teach them. As their skills improve we teach the use of Office software and how to get help from an AI chatbot. The children happily spent 2-3 hours, each taking turns on the computer. Their computer skills are

improving and they enjoy the experience. In the future we hope to create a more formalized experience given our pilot for educating children about computers is going so well.

Local Politics
National and local elections were held in November 2025. At the county level, the Libre party, which has been in power for the past 4 years, contested the election and would not release some of the ballots for counting. This delayed the transfer of power and resulted in the local government being closed for about two months. Reports are that the issue is finally resolved and the new mayor, a National party member, will start soon. Given the government was closed, we could not work on the land issue at the local government level this trip.

People report that whatever party is in power will only help those of the same party. In a way, this is like buying votes. When the local government gets money for a specific project in a specific community, houses of the people who are registered with the ruling party get the interventions, while neighboring houses who are not registered with the ruling party will be ignored. We constantly remind people our projects are for all people who are willing to work with us in an honest and open manner and not related to political party affiliation.

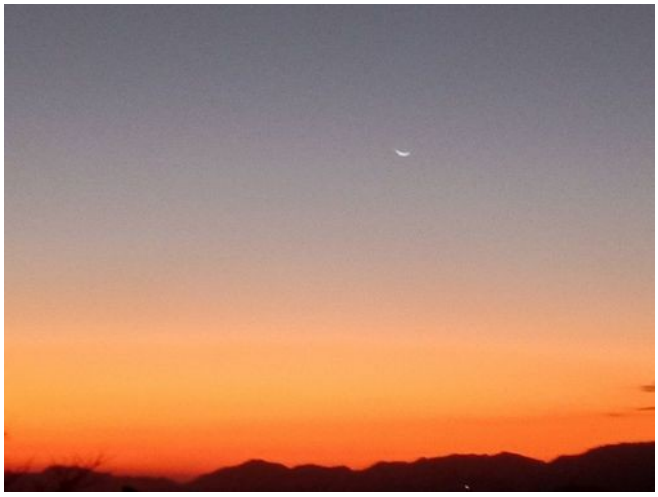
Summary
Thanks to everyone who supports our work in San Jose. Through our combined efforts over the years we have helped thousands of people. With your continued support the positive effects in San Jose and beyond will continue to grow.

Douglas Stockman, MD
President, San Jose Partners

Consider visiting 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

View from the road heading to Potreros



Sunset with moon from Volunteer house

Solar panel being installed on roof

Traditional kitchen

Sorghum drying.

Children enjoying time on computers

Volunteer house porch becomes a workshop for battery box construction

As part of payment for a family getting a solar system, a family member does one day of communal labor. Here men are preparing a site for a water tank.

Family with a new solar system

Solar panel installed on roof by home owner

Elderly woman carrying firewood for sale up the mountain side. This is the only way she has to make money.