

Efficient aid important for Rainbow Network's relief effort in Nicaragua

Written by Roger Ray FOR THE NEWS-LEADER

March 23, 2012

The goal of any charity is to give aid that helps people to become self-sufficient, though the constant threat is either creating chronic dependence or simply wasting money. Sending food to the hungry certainly feeds people in the moment, but it often creates an expectation that food will be provided in the future. Many charities will provide a house, a school or farm animals to Third World communities only to discover that their efforts do not end in positive results.

The unique genius of how Springfield's Keith Jaspers designed the Rainbow Network is the combination of essential services that, when properly administered, can pull an impoverished village into a more humane standard of living and leave them able to sustain that standard of living on their own. Over a period of several years, many of the more than 100 villages served by the Rainbow Network are succeeding in this goal.

Jaspers served on the board of Habitat International and he had seen some of the disappointing

outcomes of providing houses without other services and, by trial and error, he developed the combination of medical and dental aid with nutrition support, education, micro-business loans and housing all knit together by aggressive community organizing and supervision to create self-sustaining communities.



School kids wave to the camera in Nicaragua. The Rainbow Network is providing assistance for residents there.

Over the past decade hundreds of Springfield residents have traveled to Nicaragua for brief tours with Jaspers to see for themselves what their donations are accomplishing. Donors who come to visit can see such things as the dental equipment loaded onto trucks in Springfield that are now located in seven offices where two dentists travel to be closer to needy patients. Houses sponsored by local donors help families to move from unsanitary huts made of mud and sticks into safely constructed homes with tin roofs that protect them from the six months of the annual rainy season. Children in the

schools have shoes on their feet and use books and notebooks sent from Missouri. They have the reassurance that they are a part of a relief effort that is efficient and effective.

About The Rainbow Network

Keith Jaspers, founder of the Rainbow Network, a non-governmental organization doing relief work in Nicaragua, was recently called back out of retirement to give direction to the Rainbow Network as they attempt to rebuild their donor base. Roger Ray is a former board member of the Rainbow Network and a regular contributor to the News-Leader. The two are traveling together in Nicaragua this week, visiting some of the more than 100 rural villages served by the Rainbow Network. Ray will be submitting stories about their travels this week.