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Government grant to aid Springfield's Rainbow Network

Chris Wrinkle
Reporter

The Rainbow Network has received a \$40,000 grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development for 1,150 children to participate in Rainbow Network's primary school programs that promote reading, writing and arithmetic, according to Ryan Owen, U.S. director for Rainbow.

"We're continuing to talk with them about something that could be much larger," Owen said. "We're not sure yet on the timeline."

The grant will support the agency's program in 12 communities in the Ciudad Sandino, Nagarote, La Paz Centro and El Crucero networks in Nicaragua. The grant was awarded because of Rainbow Network's history of operating education programs successfully despite the challenges of working in rural Nicaragua.

Rainbow Network's Nicaraguan and U.S. staff worked together to complete the necessary application and to meet with USAID personnel regarding the funding.


"It's really the first time we've partnered with the government like this," Owen said. "We met with officials at the U.S. embassy.

"It was exciting because our goals seemed perfectly aligned."

Owen said the money would be used to purchase school supplies, including notebooks, pencils, crayons and construction paper.

Founded in 1995 by Keith Jaspers, who with his wife, Karen, owns

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Days Inn, Howard Johnson, Red Roof Inn and Day by Day Tours in Branson, The Rainbow Network is a Springfield-based nonprofit that supports efforts to children in Nicaragua.

The Rainbow Network provides financial support but also works in partnership with the Nicaraguan villagers.

Nearly 50 Nicaraguan staff members and a handful of employees in Springfield, at 3834 South Ave., help to keep the operation running smoothly. But the bulk of the work is done by its 2,000 to 3,000 Nicaraguan daily volunteers.

The Rainbow Network controls the funding – about \$2 million is raised annually – but the Nicaraguan staff members make decisions on behalf of the community.

“We’re excited to receive recognition from somebody like USAID,” Owen said.