



STAFF PHOTO ALLAN BENNER
Dr. Bert Rappole, a surgeon from Jamestown N.Y., and Sue Dolan, an infection control nurse from the Welland hospital, were at the Welland Rotary Club's luncheon meeting at the Welland Club to tell members about programs in Central America that need their support.

Medical team appeals for Rotary's help.

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SERVICE Above Self

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During their visit to Central America this spring, Sue Dolan and a team of medical professionals studied more than 100 different projects designed to help the people of those developing countries.

They were part of a group study exchange from Rotary International District 7090 to determine which of those health-related projects would most benefit the people, and to determine which projects local Rotary Clubs should support.

On Tuesday, Dolan, an infection control nurse from the Welland hospital and Dr. Bert Rappole, a surgeon from Jamestown N.Y., presented their findings during the Welland Rotary Club's luncheon meeting at the Welland Club.

Each of the team members, which also included a nurse, a dental hygienist and a paramedic, had a favourite project.

But regardless of their personal preferences, the projects needed to be evaluated based on criteria including the benefits they offer to the people and "how much of a bang are we going to get for our buck," Dolan said. "we looked at the bigger picture and how many people would be impacted."

On Tuesday, they presented a list of six projects designed to address issues ranging from contaminated drinking water in Honduras to using education to help people who are literally living in a dump in Guatemala.

■ There are hundreds of homeless children living on the streets of El

Progreso. They range in age from four to 16, and besides living on the brink of starvation, many of the children are addicted to sniffing glue.

"Imagine a four-year-old on the street addicted to glue," Dolan told the Rotarians.

A program called Pronino has been set up to help these children. It offers a soup kitchen, shelter, a detoxification program and education.

■ Malnutrition is a major problem in Central America, Rappole said.

A program developed by a Rotary Club in San Pedro is designed to help the children attending a rural school get the nutrition they need. It's called the One Egg a Day Project.

A hen farm is being set up to supply each student at the school with one egg every day. They're planning to expand the program to up to 18 schools with about 200 students at each of them.

■ In many parts of Honduras, Dolan said fresh water is in short supply, and people use the same water for bathing, swimming, washing their clothes as well as cooking and drinking. It's led to serious parasite infestations among many people.

Pure Water for the World is a project which uses slow sand filtration units to make the water safe to drink. Dolan said the project has received "fairly decent backing," however, no Canadian clubs have supported it yet.

■ In Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, the Ak' Tenamit project is essentially a village set up in the midst of the jungle complete with a medical clinic, a school and programs to teach the villagers about tourism and agriculture.

Rappole said it's designed to help

the Q'eqchi' Mayan population learn to help themselves.

■ As in the Honduras, malnutrition is also very prevalent in Guatemala, Rappole said, showing a photograph of a badly undersized nine-year-old girl with sunken eyes.

"There are many children who look like this," he said.

But the Seeds of Hope Hospital in Teculután is involved in a program to reach out to children living in surrounding villages to help ensure they have shelter as well as the nutrition they need.

■ The Guatemala City Dump is one of the largest one of the largest garbage dumps in the world.

And within the dump, thousands of people struggle to make a living on the items that have been thrown away. In many cases, families have lived there for generations.

"About 15 to 20,000 people live and work in the dump. It's amazing what people can do with what they have," Rappole said. "All the things we throw away, they could find a way to use somehow."

Safe Passages is a program designed to help children escape. It offers education, meals and vocational training to children of families in the dump.

Overall, Rappole described it as a life-changing trip – one which opens your eyes to the plight faced by people everyday in developing countries.

People in North America are tied up with their own petty concerns "and they don't understand what the rest of the world is struggling with."

More information about the programs is available on line at www.wellandrotary.org.