

SCOUTS CANADA MEXICO CHALLENGE GOALS

To provide 3 families living in poverty in Vicente Guerrero, Mexico with hope, a home, and a healthier place to raise their family. We have been able to expand the scope of our project to include nutritional sustainability by providing the families with a nutritious supply of fruit, eggs and poultry. We want to move our families from day to day survival to an environment which will allow them self-respect; to be self-reliant and increase their ability to participate effectively in their community.

To create leaders who will care about the world and in turn build a better world.

To raise \$80,000 to cover the cost of building materials, transportation and accommodation.

Residential stability

- Building permanent residential structures with better sanitation to improve health, reduce the stress of being homeless and provide shelter from the weather and vermin. The homes are basic structures with limited furnishings and are accessible for those with disabilities.
- Purchase furniture such as beds, table and chairs, stoves and propane tanks, blankets, pots and pans, dishes and groceries
- Purchase chickens and fruit trees for a sustainable source of nutritious food and perhaps income

Construction

- Support local business
- Build personal skills of our families as they will assist in building their home
- Provide work for local residents as they are hired for lead hands and to pour the cement pads for the homes
- Learn workplace health and safety and carpentry skills – skills that will assist us throughout our lives

Environment

- Improve sanitation
- Plant trees
- Increase awareness of the diversity and the importance of preserving the world's natural wonders and resources

Education and Service

- Research the necessary requirements to ensure a safe journey
- Understand the issues facing those living in poverty; have the courage to step up and make a difference. Identify areas where we can assist and make a difference in our communities and in the world. Increase compassion and respect for people living in poverty and people with disabilities.
- Enable and inspire public to join us in helping those less fortunate
- Increase public awareness of our incredible Scouting youth and Scouts Canada's programs
- Create a program to enable others to follow in our footsteps
- Learn about the Mexican culture
- Appreciate being Canadian – how our lives would be different if we lived in our Mexican families' community

Personal Growth

- Increase leadership and teamwork skills
- Challenge ourselves
- Complete requirements on the Queen Venturer Award – highest youth achievement award in Venturers. This award signifies that a Venturer has the character, competence and skills to be of significant help to themselves, their company and their community.

- Complete requirements on the Duke of Edinburgh Award at the appropriate age and level of difficulty - Bronze, Silver and Gold. Participation represents a personal commitment to a constructive endeavour, promoting qualities of self-discipline, self-reliance and leadership. This award is operated and acclaimed worldwide.
- Unify rural and city communities as well as other cultures – understand and celebrate our uniqueness
- Learn a new language
- Make new friends and connections

Funding

To raise the funds necessary for this journey

STEPS TO ACCOMPLISH GOALS

Residential stability

- Partner with Absolute Leadership - Hero Holidays, an international organization with local presence in Mexico, who have demonstrated success and sustainability in these projects. Hero Holidays works closely with the local government and the Human Rights Department in Mexico.
- Raise the necessary funds to purchase the materials to build and furnish the homes, cover the cost of travel and accommodation
- Establish a system of gift certificates for the giving and receiving of money that will go directly to the purchase of chickens and fruits

Construction

- Hire local contractors for site preparation. Local businesses are used for purchasing materials. Families are involved in building their homes.
- Take the Workplace Health and Safety Courses
- Volunteer at Habitat for Humanity – building homes and working alongside people who will be living in the homes
- Build shelters for Prairie Wildlife Rehabilitation
- Build kiosks, and maintain and build trail for the Scouts Canada's Centennial Trail (which is part of the Transcanada Trail)

Environment

- Digging holes for baños (latrines) to increase sanitation and improved methods of human waste disposal. Assisting and educating our Mexican families in cleaning up the refuse in their yards. This in turn inspires others without homes to do the same. Baños and clean yards will reduce the spread of disease and reduce vermin.
- Purchasing and planting trees which in addition to providing a source of food and income will stabilize the soil and purify the air.
- Visit 2 of the world's natural wonders – Grand Canyon and Yellowstone Park to further inspire us to become aware of the importance of preserving natural resources both globally and locally.

Education & Service

- Educating ourselves and ensuring Scouts Canada and Absolute Leadership requirements are met. Obtaining necessary medical insurance, passports and vaccinations.
- Educating ourselves on the issues of poverty and planning and participating in activities that make difference in Mexico and our community.
 - Attend Craig Kielburger's Free the Children and from Me to We Presentation – education on issues of poverty and how we can make a difference
 - Review Hannah Taylor's Work - education on issues of poverty and how we can make a difference globally and within our own community

- Participate in the daily debriefing and educational sessions Hero Holiday will provide while we are in Mexico
- Volunteer at Winnipeg Harvest – assisting with collection and sorting of food donations to assist those living in poverty
- Volunteer at Cheer Board – collecting donations and counting cash to enable families living in poverty to celebrate Christmas
- Volunteer at Siloam Mission – to assist those living in poverty in our community
- Assist the Feed My Lambs – to feed the homeless in our community
- Document our process and share our journey with Scouting groups provincially and nationally, with other community organizations and with the general public. This will allow for others to follow in our footsteps, whether they are within Scouting groups or other communities. We have also established a website: www.scoutchallenge.ca. Upon our return, we will hold presentations for those who are supported us and share our experience both as a thank you and to hopefully inspire others. We will also promote and share our trip experience at Scout conferences, through write ups in the Canadian National Scouting magazine – The Leader and through follow up articles in the Winnipeg Free Press and the Herald (local newspaper)
 - Being visible in the community- and clearly identifying who we are, what we are doing and why we are doing this at our events, schools, churches, places of employment and basically to anyone who will listen and inviting them to join us in helping others
 - Developing a program suitable to educate other Scouting groups through Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Venturers and Rovers about the culture and poverty issues in Mexico. This program will also include ways to raise the funds to help make a better life for others. The program has been submitted to Scouts Canada's National Office for publication in The Leader magazine.
 - Research on our Mexican families background and culture – to understand the issues facing our families and to obtain an appreciation of their history and culture.
- Traveling by bus over 4,000 kms, we will experience the diversity of both the people and the land on our continent. An appreciation and respect for the similarities and differences will be fostered.

Personal Growth

- Strengthening our leadership, team building and communication skills through our activities and fundraising efforts by:
 - Being the project manager of the various events and activities,
 - Utilizing team work to accomplish these event and activities and in resolving roadblocks. We have established a committee of adult and youth Chairpersons, Treasurers, Secretaries and event coordinators. Participants encourage and support each other to they give the best they have to offer, to accept differences, to work together, and to have fun
 - Increasing communication skills throughout the project and confidence to make the presentations to the public.
 - being good role models within our Scouting group, community and abroad by providing service and leadership at various Scouting events leading activities, and cooking for camps – Wilderness Challenge 300 people, Klondike 650 people and Scout Amik 150 people and assisting the Lorette Optimist Club in providing activities for children in the community
- Challenging ourselves by:
 - improving skills in the areas of management, organization, communication, budgeting, reporting and financial and administrative accountability. These skills are be an integral part of our journey
 - exploring, expanding and challenging our personal potential by identifying a BIG dream and making it a reality; committing to a large goal over an extended period of time and completing the necessary steps/processes to make the goal a reality
 - living immersed in a new and different culture and language

- participating in a new adventure such as whitewater rafting
- improving/gaining construction skills by working with Habitat for Humanity, Prairie Wildlife Rehabilitation, and Transcanada Trail building homes, shelters for wounded creatures, and kiosks and walkways to promote fitness health and an appreciation of nature
- Gaining confidence as the youth make presentations at our various events
- Working towards their Queen Venturer Award Working towards their Duke of Edinburgh Award. Participants have registered for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Participants have identified and are tracking how our activities are fulfilling the requirements for both of these awards.
- Creating a group composed of Scouting members from 1st Lorette (rural) and 1st John de Graff, 3rd Winnipeg and 163rd Winnipeg (city). We are understanding the unique perspectives of each by working together.
- Learning and practicing speaking simple phrases in Spanish at our meetings and home. One of our participants has taken a Spanish course at school in preparation for our trip.
- Making new friends and connections is the easiest – we are Scouters who are abiding by the Scouting Law and Principles.

Funding

- Putting in lots hard work and time coordinating various fundraising events to raise the necessary funds to support this project. We are holding garage sales, golf tournaments and dinners, Bud Spud and Steaks, coordinating fundraising events at our schools and churches, donating our weekly dues and holding other Scouting events, selling, hauling and delivering 9,000 bags of water softener salt, selling gift certificates, popcorn, homemade muffins and cookies, recycling pop cans and delivering flyers
- Applying for 3 grants – Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC), Carpe Diem 88 Inc and Scouts Canada's Brotherhood Fund.
- Requesting corporate donations from local businesses, Mike Holmes and Extreme Home Makeover.

BENEFITS

Direct beneficiaries

- for our Mexican families – shelter, health, source of food and income as well as hope for a brighter future. A typical family that is supported by this project has one or more family members with some form of disability. With improved health, the family will be more economically stable. This will allow the children to attend school which will further sustain and improve their community. As the family will work with us to build their home, they will also gain some construction skills which may in turn lead to other employment opportunities.
- for the local economy - all building materials, furniture, food, chickens, fruit trees and groceries are purchased locally. The project will help build an economy which, over time will become self-sustaining.
- for the Mexican workers - income for local people hired to lead groups on the house builds and pour the concrete pads for the houses.
 - for our participants (especially the youth) – personal growth and future involvement in humanitarian mission work both within our community and internationally. We are already seeing an increase in confidence, leadership, and teamwork. Progress toward achieving their Queen Venturer and Duke of Edinburgh Awards. These awards contain extremely challenging requirements and give the youth a great advantage which applying for scholarships and employment. An appreciation of being Canadians will unfold as we progress through our education and will be extremely evident during our time in Mexico. The things we take for granted here are a luxury or simply not available/attainable in Mexico. We will experience a change in

values – ie what is really important - relationships as opposed to material possessions. I believe our Mexican families will be educating us in this area.

Indirect beneficiaries

- for other Mexican families in the community – understand that others care and that perhaps they will have a home too. This project shows the local community that with a concerted effort and support of others within and outside their community, things can improve and the future can be brighter. Non recipient families are often inspired to clean up their areas resulting in a healthier environment for all.
- for humanitarian organizations – will benefit from continued assistance from our participants.
- for Scouts Canada members both provincially and nationally - inspire and enable other members to follow in our footsteps.
- for Scouting organization at the community, provincial, national and global levels – excellent publicity through our service and fundraising events – will showcase our amazing youth and programs. This project has already increased the public's positive perception of our youth. This will also result in the attraction of new members and retention of current members.
- for the general public – all people who have joined us in our fundraising and service events have had fun and shared fellowship. Their spirits have been uplifted by sharing in the experience of assisting people living in poverty. This project has allowed us to unite and to make a difference.

PROJECT INFORMATION

This project is urgent in that children and families are starving and/or dying due to the impoverished conditions that they live in.

This project is innovative in bringing people closer to those in need and is a conduit for positive sustainable change moving forward. The impact of helping others is magnified by living and working alongside the people we are helping as opposed to simply sending financial aid. Within our group, we have participants who have gone back for multiple years to continue building with this program. We hope our youth will continue this type of work throughout their lives. It is innovative in that it is youth oriented. Youth have the greatest capacity to affect change in the world.

Hero Holiday staff live on site in Vicente Guerrero and are in constant communication with their Canadian Office in Hamilton, Ontario. As a result, Hero Holiday can be flexible in best meeting the needs of the community and quickly and effectively capitalizing on whatever opportunity is presented. All projects are approved on the basis of urgency and sustainability and are assessed on the following priority based system:

Priority 1 – projects that will benefit the entire community such as schools for children and the disabled, day cares, and clinics. Education is a key to resolving the issues of poverty. Identification documents were not available in Oaxaca, the home town of our Mexican families. With no birth certificates, these children are not able to participate in the government schools. Hero Holiday schools will provide education for the children with no birth certificates. Lack of birth certification is also problematic for the adults as well. The pesticides used on the ranches also affect the health of the workers causing permanent disabilities to the young and old as well as causing miscarriages and impairing fetal development. Families often support one or more persons with disabilities caused by poor health and pesticide use. Schools for the disabled children provide them with an opportunity to contribute to their community. Day cares provide safe places for the children too young to attend school. The day cares also allow the older children to attend school instead of remaining home to care for younger siblings while the adults work in the fields. In Mexico, children as young as 6 years of age often care for younger siblings and the elderly while their parent works. Children as young as 7-9 years of age will work in the field if extra income is needed. The children work the same hours as an adult but are only paid ¼ of the adult wage as work is based on piece work and they cannot work at the same pace. In

Mexico, the elderly are as vulnerable as the young. Clinics assist in improving the health of the young, pregnant women and elderly in addition to caring for and supporting the wage earners.

Priority 2 – houses for families with 2 or more people with earning potential. People with earning potential will include older teens of 13 and 14 years of age. The sizes of the Mexican families are often large – some having as many as 10 children. Forty percent of the children do not survive past the age of three. As many children don't survive long enough to support the family, the goal is to have as many children as possible to help support the family. A proper shelter will improve health and as a result increase income potential. With increased earning potential, the families will have food and will be successful in purchasing land, obtaining a home, paying the mortgage and retaining their home. Families with dependent young children, disabled and elderly will receive high priority.

Priority 3 – if there are insufficient funds for a house, side projects such as paint for schools and day cares and other small projects in the community will be completed.

We have been advised that we will be building 3 houses for 3 families. We will not know the families we will be assisting until 1 month prior to our departure as the families are assessed based on the urgency of the situation. In the home build project, the Mexican government buys the property, subdivides it and sells it with a low interest rate to our families. Our families must undergo a credit check, background check and show good integrity to be accepted by Hero Holiday. Our families must then purchase their property for \$2,500. The families can then apply for a low interest mortgage once the house is built. Many workers only make \$10 a day and often go months without work – the average income is less than \$5 a day. Our Mexican families have a daily struggle to survive and yet manage to save this enormous sum of money to make a better life for their family. This shows a dedication and commitment to improving their lives.

Each house is a simple 20' X 22' wood structure with no electricity or running water, as there is very rarely access to either one. When needed, a baño is provided for the family and occasionally an outside shower as well. The homes we build will improve the health of our families and alleviate some of the daily stress caused by being homeless, nightly battles with the vermin and the challenge to stay warm and dry due to sleeping on the ground or on old moldy cardboard. These homes allow for better quality of life for disabled, elderly and women and children. Increased health will assist the families to become self-sufficient by allowing the adults to work more. As a result of the sacrifices made to purchase the land for their house and the resulting improved health, the Mexican families take excellent care of their new homes. These projects are not short term solutions that require continued funding to sustain. The families' lives were changed once they were assisted in obtaining a home. Subsequent visits prove the earlier recipients of these homes continued to live improved lives. Some families even rent out their former shack to newcomers. Increased health and income, allow our families to prosper. The families now had vegetable gardens, chickens and the occasional pig. The homes, built together with the families and volunteers, remain clean and well maintained.

This provides proof that the aid provided allowed the families to become, maintain and sustain their independence. We plan to purchase chickens and fruit trees which will further assist our families by providing an additional source of sustainable nutritious food and income. The poultry consists of laying hens and eating chickens plus fencing and food. The eggs can be also sold and/or hatched to raise additional poultry. The fruit trees are limes, mangos and pomegranates. We implemented a program of giving/receiving gift certificates at Christmas and other special events indicating a chicken or trees has been purchased in the recipient's name. The money collected will be specifically used to purchase the chickens and fruit trees in Mexico. We will take pictures of the actual chickens and trees and the Mexican families receiving them for our recipients at home.

RESPECT FOR ALL PERSONS

Both Hero Holiday and Scouts Canada believe that everyone has the ability to contribute. All people are welcomed, encouraged and supported to be the best they can be and respected and valued as individuals. Our programs and work are adapted to meet the challenges faced by people with disabilities.

In Mexico, it is likely that we will be working beside children, parents or elderly with disabilities. They will be equally involved in the selection of various options for their home and will be assisting in the build itself. Every consideration is given to ensuring that people with disabilities have equitable access to services. As much as possible, equal participation and benefit goes to both genders. Both male and female will have equal access to services as the homes will be built for those families in need. The assessment is based on a priority system, whereby the entire family's needs are assessed. However, over 50% of the families are supported by a single female parent. Considering the desire to always service the most vulnerable first, Hero Holidays often helps the single moms supporting children on their own. The title to the property and the mortgage on the Mexico home is in the female's name. This is done intentionally as the women are found to be the key to the family network lifeline. Many of the women "don't exist" according to banks and other institutions due to nonexistent or inaccurate birth certificates. By having a mortgage in their name, the women are able to establish an identity.

The Manitoban participants, youth and adult, male and female are actively involved in all aspects of this journey. Each participant shares their unique opinions, gifts and abilities.

SUSTAINABILITY

Our project is sustainable both in Mexico and in our own community.

Mexican Community

We have partnered with an organization that has a long term commitment and a permanent residence in the Mexican community. Absolute Leadership and Hero Holidays' proven methods create real-world solutions for developing economies and improve the lives of families living in poverty. By educating and building partnerships with the youth, local government and community; and through constant evaluation, Absolute Leadership's innovations in have resulted in sustainable contributions toward the alleviation of poverty. A society will really develop when its members take it into their own hands. Absolute Leadership and Hero Holiday inspires self-respect, self-reliance and community empowerment.

The work that our group will be doing in this community (ie building 3 houses) is part of a bigger sustainable plan that Hero Holidays has partnered with the local Mexican government. Previously, the Mexican government ignored the plight of its people in Vicente Guerrero. Due to the efforts of the Hero Holiday program, the Mexican government began assisting this community. When Hero Holiday built schools, the government provided teachers for the children and disabled. When Hero Holiday built a clinic, the government paid doctors to visit weekly instead of monthly. When Hero Holiday built a day care, the government paid for the staff. A Human Rights Office is now located in the area to assist in advocating for the families. Hero Holiday operates on a community building approach and will build about 20-30 houses to make a presentable difference in the community. In doing this, other people are inspired to clean up their yards, dispose of garbage and care for their shelters even if they do not have homes. Hero Holiday teaches our Mexican families about the caring for the environment and the Mexican families then will lead others by their example. Our purchases of chickens and fruit trees will provide an additional source of food, income and stability to help offset the sporadic work in the fields. Hero Holiday purchases building materials and furniture locally to support the business economy and employs local people. Hero Holiday has also partnered with a few of the families as they attempt to run local businesses such as a local store, newspaper, and photographer. All this feeds into an incredible impact on the overall community and education of entire generations whom may not have ever had the opportunity to own and run their own business. By assisting in building their home, our families experience dignity which will further empower them to help their family and their community. In summary, these projects increase the health and education of the Mexicans as well as providing additional sources of income and sustainable food. Continuing efforts through programs like Hero Holiday will improve the community by offering hope and increased support from the Mexican

government. This is more beneficial than simply giving financial aid. Hero Holiday's goal is to give the Mexican people a hand to move forward in their lives.

Our Community

Through our research, we have an increased awareness of the issues of poverty and the opportunities make a difference within our community as well as in Mexico. We will continue to provide assistance to these humanitarian organizations. By documenting our program, we hope to enable and inspire others to follow in our footsteps. We are amazed at this early stage of our project, the impact and the assistance we have been given from people of all levels of society and ages ranging from young to elderly who have joined us in supporting this humanitarian mission. The increased personal skills in carpentry, confidence, leadership, communication, teamwork and goal setting will serve our participants well in all areas of their lives and by extension their community and future generations. The positive publicity generated by our presentations and actions will increase membership in Scouts Canada's programs as people will see the value and the opportunities that are available for youth. Opportunities such as these will increase retention of current members due to the level of challenge, chance to explore a new culture and location and the incredible personal growth involved. An increased Scouting membership will further serve the communities and our world as Scouts Canada is dedicated to improving the lives of our youth and providing service at home and globally.

ADDRESSING THE CAUSES OF POVERTY RATHER THAN THE SYMPTOMS

Poverty has many causes and is a vicious circle of interrelated factors. Most of these factors are nearly same all around the world. No part of the poverty cycle can be seen as less important than the other.

Poverty is an economic condition in which people lack sufficient income to obtain basic needs for food, housing, clothing, health services and education. Poverty is especially harmful to the children whose biological development and survival chances can also be greatly harmed. Children are the hope for the future. The poorest people typically have little representation or voice in public and political debates, have limited life choices and are vulnerable to other various nasty forms of exploitation including child exploitation. Combined, these things make it difficult for people to escape poverty.

Absolute or extreme poverty refers to the condition in which one is unable to afford the necessities of life, such as a house and food to live on for everyday survival. Our Mexican families are living in absolute poverty.

Businesses consisting of ranchers, producers and consumers are profit motivated. Families living in this area of Mexico are involved in the cheap labor side of the equation. The Oaxacan families were led to believe there will be good jobs, education for their children and better lives for their families. They left their remote villages to come to Vicente Guerrero. Their dream of a better life did not materialize as the work is sporadic. Sporadic work combined with low wages, hard labour of working in the fields and damage caused by exposure to pesticides have resulted in families living in absolute poverty. With no means of returning home or to alert others of their situation, the families have no alternative but to remain in their current situation.

Our project seeks to address the root causes of poverty by:

Providing shelter and safety - build a basic home which will protect them from the elements, give them a safe and clean foundation ie get them off of the ground, and keep them dry and safe from vermin.

Eradicating extreme hunger - provide a sustainable and diversified supply of nutritious food – ie chickens, eggs and fruit trees – increasing nutrition will increase health which will in turn increase the families' ability to work and ability to plant gardens and perhaps purchase and raise other livestock.

Supporting primary universal education – increased health will allow adults to work in the fields as opposed to the children, thus allowing finances and time for the children to obtain an education. Lack of education reduces the opportunity to think big for new horizons and the society remains uncompetitive and poor. Education for the youth will allow them to become agents of change in their communities. Their knowledge is needed to establish economic opportunities which will enrich their community and provide further sustainability by generating more/diverse employment opportunities.

Promoting gender equality and empower women – the mortgage of the home is in the women's name allowing her to establish the identity and credit rating necessary to function within a government system.

Reducing child mortality – providing shelter and nutritious food improves the childrens health, improved adult health also reduces the necessity for the young to work in the fields where they are exposed to pesticides.

Improving maternal health – providing shelter and nutritious food reduces stress of daily survival thus increasing the health of the mothers; increasing the health of the fetus and enabling her to better care for her family.

Combatting disease – building baños to dispose of human waste, educating our families on cleaning up the refuse and proper dispose of waste will reduce spread of disease and vermin.

Ensuring environmental sustainability – involving local government in planning and organizing the infrastructure of some projects; providing sanitary means of waste and refuse disposal. Planting trees will also improve the environment.

Investing in local economy – purchasing building supplies, furniture, chickens and trees from local businesses; hiring local workers, teaching families construction skills.

Establishing a global partnership for development is necessary for the above to succeed. Hero Holiday is committed to presenting the local government with concrete programs of prosperity. And together, Hero Holiday and Scouts Canada are educating and involving the public on issues of poverty and that together people can make a difference and be an instrument of change.

Poverty isn't a one time issue but one that continually needs attention. Around the world, thousands of students are coming together, again and again, as the world decides how it is going to respond to ending extreme poverty. Each time these groups come together, they are sending the message that we can and should end extreme poverty.