

RYS Shares Vision for Peace Park in Honduras

Carol Pobanz
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Tegucigalpa, Honduras—The last three years of work RYS has done in Honduras have all been designed around the idea of sharing culture and building friendship between youth in the USA and youth in Honduras through using communal art. Since 2013, RYS has completed three projects:

The first, a mosaic designed and created by members of the Generation Peace Academy together with Honduran students (who also helped restore sections of two schools and a monastery).

The second, a mosaic designed by American students and WFWP members with Honduran WFWP members, Ambassadors for Peace with their adult children and Honduran students (who also helped repair sections of as well as paint two schools).

The third project was carried out in the USA with three Honduran students visiting Nutley, New Jersey, where they worked together with high school students to design and create a sawdust street tapestry, thereby sharing their cultural tradition with the Nutley students.

Each of these activities has allowed UPF-Honduras director, Mr. Mario Salinas, and Religious Youth Service (RYS) advisor, Rev. Carol Pobanz, both of whom have worked together to organize these activities, to create friends and partners in the local governments and communities. “I believe that we now have the necessary foundation to create a “park [with our Honduran friends and partners],” she said.

From November 4 to 11, 2015, Rev. Pobanz visited Honduras to look for a location where a park could be built, as well as to hand over the key to the city of Nutley, New Jersey that was granted to the mayor of Comayagua, Mr. Carolos Miranda, by the municipality of Nutley, and its mayor, Mr. Alphonse Petracco.

The Park Plan

The actual construction of this park, envisioned to include a wall mosaic, mosaic seating, landscaping, and a central sculpture, is planned to be completed in three phases:

RYS invites aspiring architects and engineers, half from North America and half from Central America, to design the park together. This team will be composed of 4-6 individuals, who will engage in a

discussion and plan their work, over one week. Later, blueprints will be produced in the team members' home countries.

Then, a group of 18-20 individuals, half from North America and half from Central America, including builders, masons and landscape artists, will clear areas, build structures and prepare surfaces for mosaics.

A group of 20-24 individuals, half from North America and half from Central America, including art students and other interested individuals, will create and assemble the mosaic, and invite community members to assist in the making of the mosaic portion of the park.

Sharing the Vision for the Park with Interested Partners

In each of the three cities that Mr. Salinas and Rev. Pobanz visited, they presented the vision for the park to government leaders and representatives and received positive responses. In Tela, a city on the Caribbean coast, they shared this vision with the mayor of the city, Mr. Mario Fuentes, and his planning board; in the colonial city of Comayagua, the mayor of the city, Mr. Carlos Miranda, and his staff; in the capital city of Tegucigalpa, Dr. Ramiro Colindres, an Ambassador for Peace and a diplomat to the Central American Parliament, and former president of Honduras (1998-2002), Carlos Flores.

When Mr. Salinas and Rev. Pobanz described what the park's central sculpture would look like, depicting individuals representing the participating nations creatively chiseling one another into existence from a concrete block, each of these people became enlivened. The sculpture is meant to represent mutual co-creation through the sharing of national cultures and strengths in the development of cooperative friendships, yielding a co-prosperous union of people.

The Results

The mayor of Tela, Mr. Fuentes, introduced Mr. Salinas and Rev. Pobanz to his planning board consisting of five team members, including an architect and an artist. The team was inspired and interested in the project and suggested three possible locations for the park, including a beachfront.

The mayor of Comayagua, Mr. Miranda, invited Mr. Salinas and Rev. Pobanz to dinner with his staff during which Mr. Salinas and Rev. Pobanz presented him with the key to the city, which was originally given to him by the mayor of Nutley. They spoke about creating an official "sisterhood" between the cities of Nutley and Comayagua. He pointed out that he had done this in the past with other cities but nothing had ever developed from it. However, he accepted the proposal and looks forward to future exchange. He was also inspired by and interested in the idea for the park and mentioned that he had a few locations he would like RYS to consider.

Dr. Ramiro Colindres, an Ambassador for Peace and a diplomat to the Central American Parliament. Dr. Ramiro was especially interested in a park that would be dedicated to the cooperation of Central American nations. He brought Mr. Salinas and Rev. Pobanz to Comayagua, where he has donated two buildings to the city and subsequently transformed them into museums. Dr. Ramiro also expressed interest in possibly offering some financial support to the project.

President Carlos Flores is also the father of Mrs. Elizabeth Flores, permanent representative of Honduras to the United Nations, who participated in the Pathways to Peace project RYS organized in Nutley, New Jersey on June 14, 2015. The former President warmly greeted Mr. Salinas and Rev. Pobanz and enjoyed the report on and photos of his daughter participating in the June service project and RYS's activities. He encouraged them to develop the park project and suggested they contact the director of a children's museum, which was established by his US-born wife, Mary Flores. President Flores is the publisher and owner of the newspaper La Tribuna, and offered to interview RYS and run an article on its activities. An article on Mr. Salinas and Rev. Pobanz's meeting appeared the next day in the newspaper, and can be accessed online at: www.latribuna.hn/2015/11/10/embajadores-de-paz-se-reunen-con-el-expresidente-carlos-flores.

