

NEWS RELEASE

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Living the Mission: USM Students Head to Guatemala In Search of Making Life Better

*Leavenworth Rotary To Host "Texas Hold 'Em Tourney" Benefiting USM Guatemalan Trip
Saturday, Jan. 28*

(Leavenworth, Kan.)— Have you ever thought of going to a foreign land to aid someone you've never met? For years, a handful of University of Saint Mary students and staff will embark on a journey to Guatemala in search of helping their fellow people. This year, the select group makes the trek March 3-12—during spring break. The reason for the trip—the group will construct a brand-new community building for a local trip. The catch—the students and staff will complete the project in a little more than a week.

A group of eight students & staff including Michael Bean, Melissa Daniels, Candace Hermreck, Courtney Manago, Matt Mayes, Jubilee Paige, Katie Worrel and USM director of campus ministry Kate Faggella-Luby will be accompanied by Side-by-Side Ministries, the non-profit portion of Strickland Construction Co., Olathe, Kan. The eight-person team will construct a community center in just over one week for the Guatemalan village. Side-by-Side Ministries will provide the materials and a few additional helpers.

Faggella-Luby said she got involved with Roger Strickland, owner and founder of Side-by-Side Ministries, in 2004 when Strickland's parent company constructed McGilley Field House, the university's state-of-the-art arena. He invited Faggella-Luby to accompany his staff during their annual service trips to Guatemala. His company funds a significant portion of the trip, and even donates all the construction materials. The building, which will be completely finished during the trip, will be used for adult classes, community and church meetings.

"We go on trips like these to build relationships with people, to share in their life experiences," Faggella-Luby said. "For this particular trip, the way we do that is by constructing a community building in the village. It is hard work, but it really gives everyone the chance to fully understand the true value of service. Without the help of Roger Strickland, it would difficult for us to plan a trip like this to say the least."

For Matt Mayes, this won't be his first Guatemalan adventure. Mayes went with a group last year during his spring break. Mayes, a 2004 graduate of Saint Mary, is currently a graduate assistant with the university. He is working on his Master's in Business Administration which he plans to complete this May. He said last year's trip was a calling, one that he was obliged to uphold.

"It was something I've never done before, and I was looking for the challenge," Mayes said. "Once I saw what the project had to offer, I was amazed with how we were able to touch so

many lives in about a week. Since I had the opportunity to do it again, I couldn't pass up the opportunity.

Mayes said that even though the group will build another community building for a small Guatemalan tribe, he's been told each trip is unique. The social interaction with the tribes people is key. He says you can't duplicate that from year to year.

"Everyone who has ever gone [to Guatemala] more than once has said the experience is completely unique each time," he said. "I imagine the reaction of the people will still be the same, though. Their [the tribes people] reaction is pretty unbelievable. You never realize how much of impact you're making on their lives, but at the end, when the building is complete, they stand with us with tears in their eyes, you can hear the emotion in the voices. Everything they express to us is with the utmost gratitude and respect. That makes it all worth it."

Mayes said he struggled with the language barrier the last time he went to Guatemala, using hand signs and even drawings to communicate at times. He will have some familiar faces to help him out this time. USM students Courtney Manago and Jubilee Paige are making the trip for the second consecutive year while 2005 USM graduate Joni Aukerman is off for her third trip.

Trips like these are anything but easy to fund. The average cost per participant is about \$1,400 to \$1,800. Students and staff have done odd fund-drives in the past, but this year they've received a nice benefit from the members of the Leavenworth Rotary Club. According to club spokesperson Ed Chapman, Leavenworth Rotary will sponsor a "Texas Hold 'Em Tournament" in McGilley Field House Saturday, Jan. 28. The proceeds from tournament will benefit the USM Guatemalan trip.

"The students and staff at Saint Mary are living proof that a value-based mission still exists today. The Texas Hold 'Em Tournament is a just a small way Leavenworth Rotary can help the trip out," Chapman said. It's a great pleasure for our organization to be affiliated with Saint Mary and the mission trips it sponsors."

The Texas Hold 'Em Tournament is open by invitation or appointment only. There are two levels of admission to the tourney, the "Penny Pinchers" can gain admission for a \$25 donation and "High Rollers" can gain admission for a \$50 donation. All proceeds benefit the USM alternative spring break mission trip to Guatemala. Call 913-758-6146 to gain an invitation.

The University of Saint Mary is a private, co-educational applied liberal arts university founded by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. The University of Saint Mary is located at 4100 South 4th Street, Leavenworth, Kan., with additional locations at 11413 Pflumm in Overland Park and inside Providence Medical Center at 8929 Parallel Parkway in Kansas City, Kansas.

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