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Rainbow Network kids to make visit

Beneficiaries of charity to meet local organizers.

LINDA LEICHT • NEWS-LEADER • APRIL 10, 2008

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For nearly 13 years, Rainbow Network has been taking Ozarkers to rural Nicaragua to see the work being done there by the Springfield-based humanitarian organization.

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This month, Rainbow is bringing Nicaraguans to the Ozarks.

Area residents will have several opportunities to meet eight recipients of Rainbow Network's outreach programs in Nicaragua, as well as staff from Nicaragua and the United States.

Called the "Celebration of Miracles Tour," the entourage is also visiting communities in Oklahoma and Nebraska.

Keith Jaspers, founder and president of Rainbow Network, explained that the tour is intended to show people "that Rainbow is changing lives, that the work of Rainbow is answering prayer, that sometimes the hands of the Rainbow staff actually deliver a miracle to some families."

Among the visitors from Nicaragua will be Hilda del Socorro Mendoz, whose daughter was blind and now can see, and Victoria Castro Orozco, who was lame and now can walk.

"Of course, these are Christ's miracles," said Jaspers. "But Christ is using the hands and feet of Rainbow workers to deliver those miracles."

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Founded in 1995 by Keith and Karen Jaspers, Rainbow Network is a faith-based ministry that is recognized as a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Nicaragua.

Rainbow focuses on four areas of assistance -- housing, health care, education and micro-loans.

The self-help programs are brought to communities that commit to working together to make permanent change. Local volunteers staff feeding centers, teach, provide space for medical clinics, administer the loan bank and help build houses.

The Nicaraguan visitors will share their stories of how Rainbow Network has changed their lives and life in their communities, said Ryan Owen, communications director.

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"Telling those stories is a pretty important part of what we do," said Owen. "It changes people."

Jaspers said Rainbow Network has several thousand donors in 48 states.



The Rainbow Network feeds more than 11,000 Nicaraguan children each day and operates more than 540 elementary schools.

(The Rainbow Network)

ABOUT RAINBOW

Rainbow Network has eight regional offices and 70 employees that serve the 124 Rainbow communities in Nicaragua. Their accomplishments include:

- More than 11,000 children are fed each day at 155 feeding centers.
- Nearly 600 homes have been built through a program that requires participants to help with the construction of all the Rainbow homes built in a community. Interest-free loans are repaid by the homeowners so more families can participate.
- Rainbow operates more than 540 elementary schools that serve more than 8,400 students, and about 1,500 students are enrolled in high school through Rainbow scholarships.
- Nearly 49,000 patients are seen by Rainbow doctors each year. They pay about 65 cents for the visit, if they can afford it. For many, it is the only doctor they have ever seen.
- About 4,000 families in Rainbow communities participate in the micro-loan program at any given time. The interest-free loans are administered by a community bank.

WANT TO GO?

Area residents are invited to meet Rainbow Network recipients and staff at any of the following events:

- New Creole Jazz Band Concert and Auction 5 p.m. Saturday at Remington's Event Center, 1655 W. Republic Road. Cost is \$10.
 - Coffee at Kaldi's, 900 E. Battlefield Road, 7:30-9 a.m. Monday.
 - Open house at Rainbow Network, 3834 South Ave., 3-6:30 p.m. Monday.
 - Dinner at Mr. Yen's, 4117 S. National Ave., 6:30-8 p.m. Tuesday.
 - Breakfast at Perkins, 729 W. Sunshine St., 7:30-9 a.m. Wednesday, April 16.
 - Workshop on micro-loans by Ryan Owen at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, April 17, at Drury University, Lay Hall.
 - Coffee at Kaldi's, 900 E. Battlefield Road, 3-4:30 p.m. Thursday, April 17.
 - Reception at Panera Bread Company, 500 S. National Ave., 7:45-8:30 a.m. Friday, April 18.
- Nicaraguan guests
To read about the eight Rainbow Network recipients who are visiting the United States, visit:
www.rainbownetwork.org/2008AprilMiraclesGuests.html

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"People need to understand that their money is being used well," he added. "Through Christ, their money is delivering answers to prayer."


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