



Missouri

NATIONAL GUARD

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Local collaboration with Missouri Guard brings clean water to Panama

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JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – Recently, the Missouri National Guard, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, via their Civil Affairs Team, and Panamanian Rotarians, installed three donated water purification units in the Republic of Panama as part of Missouri Guard’s State Partnership Program.

The State Partnership program collaborated with the Missouri Rotary District 6080, who offered the three purification units and other goods to Panama’s Rotary District 4240 as part of an international service project.

“This type of relationship is corollary to the State Partnership Program and is a testament of its success,” said Lt. Col. Rebecca Segovia, the Missouri Guard’s State Partnership director. “The Missouri National Guard provided the link that brought together two organizations and created a unique synergy that will continue to develop and grow well outside the Missouri National Guard.”

Coordination for the effort began in 2009, but was formalized when the Missouri and Panama Rotary Districts signed a memorandum of understanding in the fall of 2011 with the Missouri National Guard mentioned as a key facilitator and coordination partner. The agreement has provided opportunities for the Rotary clubs of District 6080 to support international service projects that benefit the needy of the Republic of Panama, in cooperation with the Rotary Club of Panama.

Jim Wieberg is the chairman for the Missouri Rotary District 6080’s Panama Project Committee.

“It’s a step forward,” said Wieberg. “The major hurdle, though, is getting 300 more of those water systems to Panama in a cost-effective manner.”

Segovia helped facilitate the transportation of the delivered purification systems, 300 well woman/infant kits and 35 hand-propelled wheelchairs earlier this year through a Navy program called Project Handclasp.

“Project Handclasp told us when and where to have the goods. Then, they shipped them,” said Wieberg. “Thirty days later, the goods were being used in Panama at no cost to the Missouri or Panamanian Districts.”

Rotary District 6080 is in the process of completing an application to utilize another federal program. Similar to Project Handclasp, the Denton Program is a federal transportation program that allows U.S.-based, non-governmental sources to transport humanitarian aid at little or no cost to the donor, while simultaneously putting the extra space on U.S. military transport assets to good use.



Hoping to use the Denton Program, the Missouri Rotary districts have continued their efforts to help Panama. In addition to the 300 purification units that are ready to deliver, Wieberg says the organization has five pallets of clothing and 10 more pallets of the wheelchairs that are made for rough terrain. The installed water purification systems will prove to be beneficial to Panama's citizens. Each of the three systems will provide water for 10,000 citizens in the vicinity.

In January, members of the Missouri National Guard provided information on the fundamentals of establishing potable water and provided oversight for Panamanians to repair two water systems and to install additional donated water systems along with the Special Operations Command – South. Then in March, the Special Operations Command – South, Panamanian Rotarians and members of Panama's public forces Border Patrol, SENAFRONT, installed two more donated systems.

In a recent gesture, Brig. Gen. Sean Mulholland, commander for the Special Operations Command – South thanked the Missouri Rotary District 6080 and District Governor Mark Pearce for their dedication and support. The donated goods and support of the Panamanian Rotary Club established an impressive partnership, said Mulholland.

The Missouri National Guard officially became Panama's state partner in 1996 and has since conducted over 26 overseas Deployment for training missions and over 79 State Partnership Program events.

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