

Around the Clubs

Women's Shelter in Cuenca, Ecuador
By Irmgard Lafrentz, Rotary Club of Cupertino



A delegation from Rotary International District 5170, Cupertino California, visited a shelter in Cuenca, Ecuador called Foundation Mujeres con Exito/Casa Maria Amor early in August, 2019. Through its Global Giving Initiative, Rotary is providing a \$48,000 grant for improving therapy for abused women and children, improving health through growing one's own food, and installing an improved water system. This is one of the largest monetary grants that Rotary has provided in Ecuador. Rotary Cupertino, Rotary Club Tomebamba, Cuenca District 4400, Rotary Club Chennai KK Nagar - District 3230, Rotary Club Modesto Sunrise - District 5220, and Caritas, Austria partnered for this project.



"Women with Success – a path to independence"

The University of Cuenca and Rotary Club Tomebamba will administer the grant and oversee the disbursement of funds.

The proposed project complies with Rotary's established goals. The "Areas of Focus" in this grant is Peace and Conflict Prevention/Resolution. The club decided to focus on the sustainability aspect, so this grant will provide improvements to the water filtration system and the greenhouse, and an expanded garden. In addition to the obvious benefits of such improvements, working in the garden can provide a therapeutic outlet for the traumatized women.

The champions who will shepherd the project from beginning to end are Irmgard Lafrentz and Dana Stern, both active members of the Cupertino club.

Through her position as youth counselor for the club's student exchange program, Irmgard fostered a friendship with Carolina Tamariz Malo, a student from Cuenca, and her family. She moved to Cuenca in 2016 and returned in August 2019 to her club in Cupertino.



This greenhouse was built by Rotary Tomebamba; the soil, plants, and seeds were funded by Irmgard Lafrentz and friends

Continues on Next Page

Upon her return, Irmgard immediately became active in fundraising efforts for *Casa Maria Amor* and *Mujeres con Éxito*, a partner organization which teaches life skills to the women.

Gabriela Alvarado, wife of president Javier Ordonez from Tomebamba Rotary, wrote the grant application while working closely on the need assessment with the directors of the foundations. Irmgard Lafrentz and Dana Stern, secretary of the Cupertino club, supported the writing and submission process. The grant was approved in June 2019. Dana Stern and PDG Orrin Mahoney were members of the visiting delegation and presented additional cash gifts through “Random Act of Kindness” donations from Cupertino Rotary members.



Random Acts

It is important to note that this grant provides funds for much-needed improvements to the sustainability of the site and its therapies, but it does not address the ongoing day-to-day needs of the shelter. To help provide for these needs, Casa Mara Amor/Mujeres con Éxito regularly hold fundraisers to provide school uniforms, shoes, and supplies to the fifty children that currently call Casa Maria Amor home.

As a result, Casa Maria Amor / Mujeres con Exito has become a place to restart life for approximately 100 abused women and their kids in a given year.



Some Children We Met



Rotary Banner and
Flags of Ecuador



Shelter women bake these cupcakes for fundraisers to sell for \$1