



PROVIDED BY ONE LIFE AT A TIME

Phil Stoker poses with a girl in La Cebia, Honduras. Despite their poverty, the locals were willing to share what little they had, said the co-founder of Stoker Ostler Wealth Advisors in Scottsdale.

# Angels abroad

## Valley nonprofits build homes, schools in Latin America

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**M**any of the villagers in San Pedro Sula make \$2 to \$3 a day working at garment assembly, industrial and cigar factories. Nearly as many are jobless, as the northwest Honduran city faces a 40 percent unemployment rate.

Life in this impoverished metropolis of 900,000 is riddled with hardships. Its people are uneducated and have little or no access to capital.

Two Valley nonprofits are trying to lessen those burdens in Latin America. One is building business schools to help bring families out of poverty. The other is building homes for orphans and widows.

One Life at a Time has raised nearly \$1 million and operates Business Institutes of Technology in San Pedro Sula and Teguci-

galpa, the Honduran capital.

Each of those one-year programs enrolls 150 students, who are learning to read and write in English, basic accounting and finance skills, computer maintenance and Microsoft Office programs.

They also are earning their driver's licenses and learning how to break down and assemble a computer.

The education they receive will increase their income by three to 10 times.

This month, One Life will open a BIT in Managua, Nicaragua — a country with a gross domestic product that rivals Haiti, one of the poorest economies in the Western hemisphere.

“It’s going to change the lives of thousands and thousands of



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A teenager helps paint an elementary school room in La Cebia, Honduras.

# NONPROFITS: Volunteers building schools, homes across Latin America

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families,” said Ross Farnsworth, who runs Farnsworth Holdings and launched the nonprofit One Life in 2004.

## HOMES BUILT IN HONDURAS

Grant Walker, a business and estate planning lawyer with Jackson White Attorneys at Law PC in Mesa, first visited Honduras with his family in 1998 after Hurricane Mitch destroyed much of the country, dropping more than 30 inches of rain in five days. Thirty Valley volunteers, predominantly from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, joined Walker to reconstruct homes there.



Walker

The following year, he established Mesa-based Families Helping Families Inc., which has raised nearly \$1 million. The group has built 26 homes in Honduras and 14 in Mexico. A two-bedroom, 750-square-foot home costs about \$7,500 to construct there.

FHF partnered with One Life in 2004 to develop a free curriculum-for-service model: Students who complete three community projects during the year receive free education at BIT.

Phil Stoker and Creg Ostler, co-founders of Stoker Ostler Wealth Advisors in Scottsdale, in March took their families on a community service project to help students paint and repair school rooms in La Cebia, Honduras.

Dr. Andrew Burrell of Mesa joined them and held a free health clinic there, treating 85 patients in two days. In Honduras, routine health issues can become serious problems because they go untreated.

Despite their poverty, the locals were willing to share what little they had, said Stoker. He said visiting the school was particularly special.

“Being able to see the classrooms, the resources, the teachers and students helped me realize the dreams that are able to come true through the education the students are receiving,” he said. “My family will tell you this was the best vacation they have ever had, because they worked



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Creg Ostler, left, and Phil Stoker, right, co-managing partners of Stoker Ostler Wealth Advisors in Scottsdale, helped students paint and repair school rooms in La Cebia, Honduras.

hard and truly felt they made a big difference in the lives of the people we met.”

It’s not uncommon for BIT graduates to return to their schools and volunteer for more projects. “We’re starting to see a humanitarian program that develops humanitarianism,” said Walker. “The program has been a major success.”

One Life plans to open schools in Panama, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala, and another in Honduras. Schools cost \$40,000 to \$50,000 to equip and \$100,000 to

\$120,000 a year to operate, Farnsworth said. More than 390 students have graduated to date, and each has been placed in an internship.

## GET CONNECTED

Families Helping Families Inc.: [www.fhfusa.org](http://www.fhfusa.org)

One Life at a Time: [www.olaaat.org](http://www.olaaat.org)

Stoker Ostler Wealth Advisors: [www.stokerostler.com](http://www.stokerostler.com)

Jackson White Attorneys at Law PC: [www.jacksonwhitelaw.com](http://www.jacksonwhitelaw.com)