

Ecotourism Business for Young Women in Costa Rica
Rotary International Grant # 1978399
Rotary Club of Denton, TX, USA and Club Rotario Cartago
August 1, 2018

This grant will support a network of women-owned businesses called *The Network of Women Entrepreneurs of Sustainable Tourism in Turrialba (RETUS)* in rural communities around Turrialba, Costa Rica by refurbishing a community center house, providing them with a vehicle for tours and developing and teaching leadership, business and social media training workshops.

Turrialba is the home of CATIE Research and Higher Education Center. On the campus is a historical building called *The Sustainability House*. This house is the heart of and central location for meetings and workshops that supports **RETUS**. Built in 1942, the house needs refurbishing.

Rotary volunteers from District's 5790 and 4240, and contractors vetted and authorized to do work on the CATIE campus will refurbish the Sustainability House. Because this house is already a focal point for the community, the potential impact for long-term successful, sustainable commerce for the women is limitless.

CATIE partners and shares faculty with the University of North Texas in Denton, TX. Graduate students from UNT study at CATIE through the Masters in Sustainable Tourism (MIST) program. MIST graduates share their knowledge of experiential/environmental tourism throughout Central and South America and locally, in the Turrialba area. In fact, one MIST graduate is a local Rotarian and on the committee for this grant.

The Network of Women Entrepreneurs of Sustainable Tourism in Turrialba (RETUS) will collaborate with CATIE to develop youth leadership education programs for Turrialba's 200+ young people that focuses on fostering eco-healthy practices, teaching them to be good environmental stewards of their country and in time, support the next generation of women owned enterprises and leaders.

RETUS is currently asking for support:

1. To develop an ecotourism business. This business will conduct tours throughout the area to communities and women owned businesses. The entire community will benefit from money raised from tour packages. Expanding to additional and new services/products will be offered by RETUS as they enroll and train more young women in the area who need employment.
- 2) For business skills and micro-finance training support to Costa Rica's rural women-owned enterprises in areas of eco-tourism, sustainable farming, and agro/aquaculture.

3) For assistance to develop school-linked (field trip) community programs and train Turrialba's teachers to educate students on poverty reduction and rural environmental challenges and sustainable living.

4) Funding to facilitate the creation and expansion of community aquaponic gardens that use local fish to provide both nutrients to the garden and a fish industry for the women of the community.

5). Purchase of a previously owned minivan to:

a) Transport the eco-tour groups around the community to visit the women owned enterprises.

b) Transport the women to their office on the CATIE campus for training, workshops and community events that will be held there.

c) For transportation of elementary and middle school students in the area to the CATIE campus for programs and field trips that educate them on best environmental practices and sustainable farming.

Outcomes:

a) Create “best practices in farming” awareness through education programs at schools and in community groups. Presenters will include CATIE and UNT faculty.

b) Test new vegetable and food varieties from year to year.

c) Meet the increasing demand for nutritious and fresh food.

d) Sales of seeds, plants, and food and fish will create countless economic development, micro and social economic opportunities.

Estimated timeline is July 1, 2018, through June 15, 2019, with a minimum three-year, follow up and inspections.

HOW CLUB MEMBERS WILL BE INVOLVED

Rotarian Participation:

1. Team members will require a minimum of three years participation on the team.

2. Rotarians will volunteer their time and expertise to refurbish the Sustainability House on the CATIE campus.

3. Rotarian volunteers will design a series of Business, Marketing and Social Media training materials for the RETUS. The materials will be in Spanish and English and may include some ESL training modules.

4. Rotarian volunteers will conduct a series of no less than 8 workshops for the women to insure they have the tools and skills to launch their ecotourism business.
5. Rotarian volunteers and Rotaractors from the University of North Texas will mentor the women for 2 years to support implementation and launch phases, giving direction as the business expands.
6. It is expected that within three years RETUS will become an income-generating business and the community will have a well-established ecotourism program.
7. Through RETUS's partnership with CATIE, the Sustainability House will become an "Eco-Hostel" and central location for all ecotourism activities and environmental sustainability education programs in the Turrialba community.

Role of the International Rotarians:

1. International Sponsor will monitor the progress through emails to the Host club, MIST faculty on the progress of RETUS.
2. International Sponsor will visit the community at least once in a year to review the programs and assist in addressing any needs the Host club may identify.
3. International Sponsor will work with the Host club to collectively monitor all activities, making sure the project stays within budget and assisting in the annual audits.
4. Rotary Club of Denton, along with other clubs in District 5790 and across the US including ESRAAG will support this grant. Rotarians, members of Rotaract, Interact and volunteers from UNT will participate to this project's completion.

Grant Amount: \$40,000

Host Club: Club Rotario Cartago, Cartago Canton, Costa Rica

International Host Sponsor Club: Rotary Club of Denton, Denton, Texas, USA

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