

# Group heading far and away on summer trip

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — High school students who get to venture abroad during the summer are generally considered the lucky ones.

Yet in this case, the fortunate folks will not be so much the travelers as those they plan on visiting.

Seven students from Aquinas Institute are planning a volunteer project that will take them to Nicaragua Aug. 6-20. Eight adults from the Rochester area are also making the trip to the Central American country.

Most of this group's time will be spent in Chacraseca, a rural village located just outside Leon — the country's fourth-largest city. The Rochester travelers intend to help villagers by not only bringing supplies, but also by performing physical labor.

Aquinas students for the last month have been gathering donations of clothing, toys, medical and school supplies. The goods will be transported miles to Chacraseca in a 24-foot truck driven by two volunteers.

Barbara Ann Homick, director of admissions and public relations at Aquinas, reported that more than 200 boxes of goods have been donated thus far.

The group is also using the journey to help village residents with various building efforts. Over the nine-day period, the Rochester contingent plans on installing a water-purification system, building a playground and helping refurbish the village church.

Turbulent times have been the rule in this mostly Catholic country over the past decade. Nicaragua has been torn by internal strife stemming from a civil war in the 1980s, during which the United States backed contra rebels against the Marxist Sandinista government. In a February, 1990 national vote, the Sandinista government led by Daniel Ortega was succeeded by the insurgent National Opposition Union (UNO) and its leader, Violeta Chamorro.

Less than one month after the election, President George Bush announced he would lift a five-year economic embargo against Nicaragua and would plan to begin sending aid to the country.

Despite these efforts, Nicaragua has been slow in recovering from its economic difficulties.

"It's still an extremely poor country," said Homick. "In the village we're going to, people own one set of clothing and sleep on the floor in their huts."

Katie Williams, one of the AQ students making the expedition, has never traveled outside of North America but "became interested right away" when she heard about this visit.

"This is something I have to do because I have so much, and other peo-



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor  
These Aquinas Institute students gathered at a warehouse in Rochester on June 13 to sort and pack supplies donated to help the villagers of Chacraseca, Nicaragua. Mike O'Connor (from left), Katie Williams, Amanda Draper, Matt Underwood and Mike Lum are part of a team that will travel to Nicaragua Aug. 6-20 to deliver aid and work on development projects.

ple in the world have so little," remarked Williams, 17, who will be a senior this fall.

She added that the country's recent strife doesn't faze her. "I have personal fears, like getting heatstroke from the sun (temperatures average about 100 degrees in late summer). But I'm not really afraid of going down," Williams said. "We were told that the people there are so grateful for what we're doing that if there's any political unrest, they would give up their lives to protect us."

Other AQ students heading to Nicaragua include seniors Matt Underwood and James Sherron, and juniors Mike O'Connor, Amanda Draper, Mike Lum and Carl Justice.

Dr. Richard Streb, an Aquinas alumnus and retired professor from Columbia University, will serve as the group's director. The group will also include Dr. Streb's nephew, Mitchell Streb, a graduate nursing student; Barry Jordan, landscape designer; James Dowdell, architect/technician; Jaci Domin, videographer; Bolgen Vargas, linguist/teacher; Homick; and Kevin Mooney, a 1990 Aquinas graduate.

Homick emphasized that the group is financing the entire trip, which costs about \$900 per person. Money to buy construction materials for the building projects is also being raised by the group. In order to raise funds for the trip, the contingent will sponsor a car wash at Buckman's (Stoneridge Plaza, corner of Stone and Ridge roads in Greece) from 3 to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, July 21.

EDITORS' NOTE: Those interested in helping defray expenses with tax-deductible contributions may contact Homick at 716/647-2990, or make checks out to Veterans for Peace Aquinas Project and send them to Homick at Aquinas Institute, 1127 Dewey Ave., Rochester, N.Y. 14613.

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