

By MARLENE TOSCANO
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The last of a group of five Rotary Club members from the Inland area left Monday for [Uganda](#) and a mission to bring "green" technologies like solar food cookers and biosand water filters to a village on the African continent.

Mark Howison, a Rotarian from Nuevo in Riverside County, said he's often asked why they have to go all the way to [Africa](#) to help people.

To answer, he recalls a mission trip to [Peru](#) where doctors and other Rotary Club members helped to repair maladies in children such as cleft palates.

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Special to The Press-Enterprise

Rotary Club member Mark Howison pumps water on a repaired well in Odoworo, Uganda, during a past trip. The last of a group of five Rotary Club members from the Inland area left for Uganda on Monday.

One of the nurses got altitude sickness, so he was asked to hold a baby that had just had surgery.

"It really changed my whole outlook on things," Howison said by phone. "I found a compassion that I didn't know I had."

Howison said that those children didn't have much.

"They had absolutely no chance without us helping them," he said.

That was the incident that ignited his desire to help people in parts of the world who couldn't really help themselves.

Such an example is the village that Rotary District 5530 has adopted in Odoworo, Uganda. The people there are part of a government that doesn't have the infrastructure to support services that help less fortunate people such as is done in the United States, Howison said. More than 50 percent of the nation's gross domestic product comes from foreign aid, Howison said.

"The poorest people here have it a lot better than those people do," he said.

This project and many others like it all over the world is what Rotary is all about, said Rotary club member [Steve Wallace](#), of Lake Elsinore in southwestern Riverside County..

Since 2005, [Steve](#) and his wife Vicky have been to Uganda 5 times, [India](#) 4 times, Nigeria twice, [Kenya](#) once, [China](#) and Mexico, all at their own expense.

For the Wallaces, the change came during their first trip to Uganda, where they saw children digging through garbage looking for their next meal, people sick from drinking contaminated water, and children with polio crawling on the streets begging, he said in an e-mail.

[Wallace](#), who owns Totally Wired Inc., a Lake Elsinore company that provides wiring harnesses and components for the automotive industry, helped design solar-powered lights with rechargeable batteries that are being tested in Odoworo.

If these lighting systems work, Wallace hopes to sell them throughout the Third World, with some of the proceeds possibly funding other humanitarian projects.

A Web site documenting the district's efforts in Uganda can be visited online at www.helpinguganda.org. Howison's daughter, a Riverside North High graduate, is putting together a documentary showcasing the Rotary's efforts in Odoworo and their potential application in other Third World villages.

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