

Our Basic Needs

February 2019

“Don’t drink the water!!” The number one piece of advice offered to people making their way across the border to Mexico. But what if you could drink the water? And what if we could help some of the people we work with to ensure that they have clean water to drink? Of course, the need for water is one of our essential human needs. And it presents yet another way we can be there for the people we love and care for in a real way, further relationships, earn trust and open doors to share about Christ.

Recently we received a call from an old friend, Taysia Schaffer who came with her dad and served as a little girl with Spectrum. Now Taysia is getting ready to embark on a new undertaking, traveling to nine different countries in the coming months to distribute water filters to people who need them. She decided to start right here in Tijuana and partnered with us to bring water filters to the Tijuana dump.

Taysia has provided Spectrum with thirty water filter units to give out as we see fit. Each small unit provides enough clean water for fifty people a day. We give instructions on how to both use and maintain the filter to ensure it lasts and pumps clean fresh water for families for years to come!



Girl from tent city receiving a meal at the church. The water tanks for the community are behind her.



These water filters can purify enough water for fifty people a day!

Now some of these filters we’ll bring to households we know in our neighborhoods. These are families who without a vehicle, struggle with the costs and the issues that come with purchasing and transporting clean water for their large families. However, because of the conditions that exist at the dump, we decided that’s the place we should start.

Just outside the dump, there’s a small community where people live. Built with pallets, cardboard, tarps and other scrap wood, we’ve taken to calling the place tent city. In tent city, toward the back of the territory there’s a small well where for years people would go to get water. Because of its close proximity to the dump, the well would at times be known to percolate and bubble, evidently because of the toxins that run down the hill and permeate the soil.

To solve this problem several years ago Carlos (Spectrum staff) spearheaded an effort where we partnered with several churches in the States to purchase large water tanks for people to come and get clean water. We built a concrete base to set the tanks on, located in the small church we work with in the community. Carlos helps pay for



Daniella and her boys who live at tent city

the water truck to come each month and fill them. The funds he uses are given by our Spectrum groups that come and serve at the dump. The pastor at the church then, maintains the tanks and ensures the water supplies don't get too low.

These tanks have been an incredible blessing to the people of the community. Problems still exist however in that the water is limited. It's rationed to only be given out three days a week. On top of that, the church was really the only viable place to keep the tanks and it's a great way for the church to build relationships. But a funny thing happens when you work in the trash all day long. You begin to feel like trash. Some of the people because of the life they've lived don't feel worthy to go into the church to get the water they need. No matter how much we tell them otherwise. So they continue to go to the old well. Sounds like human nature right?

Without an understanding of what Christ has done for us and how He sees us, we continue to go back to the toxic things in our lives that do us so much harm!

So Carlos and I took Taysia and her fiancé Daniel to the dump and we handed out eighteen new water filters to people who needed them. Some of the people were families who lived in tent city who now can provide clean water for their kids. Some were workers who lacked drinking water throughout the day as they sift through the piles of garbage, looking for items they can reuse or sell. We gave one to a local entrepreneur who from a makeshift shack, has become the resident food truck for workers to buy small tacos and burritos as they work. The problem was that they weren't using clean water for cooking or washing the dishes!



Taysia, Daniel and I with folks who received new water filters!

In the end, our goal is to help meet both the physical and spiritual needs of the people we work with in Tijuana. Often the two are connected. You can't simply preach at someone who is starving. And to give someone food or clothes without attending to their spiritual needs is something we would regret for all of eternity. We're beginning to see fruit from these efforts. In fact just recently, five men who work at the dump came to church at the tent city and are now leaving the dump to go to a rehab center to treat their drug addictions! Your giving and prayers allow us to continue to go and build relationships with the people at the dump, and we are so grateful. Through these relationships we show them that they have worth, we help them with their physical health, and we have open doors to share the Gospel!

From all of us at Spectrum,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Kooi'.

Matt Kooi
Director of Spectrum Ministries

*"On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice,
"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink." - John 7:37*