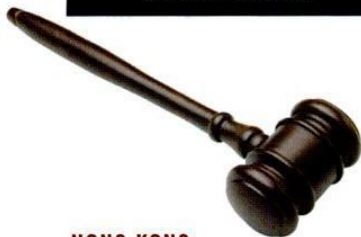


## DISPATCHES



### HONG KONG HOLDING COURT

The Rotary Club of Kingspark, Hong Kong, decided the best way to teach some students a lesson was to take them to court – or at least a mock court.

The club was participating in a project in which 10 clubs in District 3450 (Hong Kong; Macau; Mongolia) teamed up with nine secondary schools to introduce students to various careers. Rotarians talked to students about their professions, gave them tours of their workplaces, mentored them, and organized two mock trials to show students what it's like to be a lawyer.

Seventy students participated in the two trials. The students were divided into four groups; each group was assigned to either the prosecution or defense teams at one of the trials.

Club members took the students to a local police department, where officers explained how to handle suspects and take and prepare statements from witnesses. Next, lawyers from the Department of Justice in Hong Kong trained the teams of prosecutors while a defense barrister trained the defense teams. These legal experts, some of them Rotarians, taught the students how to examine witnesses without asking leading questions, present evidential materials, argue before the court, and make closing statements. Two police inspectors and an immigration officer played prosecution witnesses, and a real magistrate presided over both trials.

"Although these students had no prior legal training, we managed to turn them into confident prosecution and defense lawyers," says Alexander Mak, a past governor of District 3450.

one of four Rotarians on the board.

A few days after Denning's death, a film about the dump called *Recycled Life*, which includes commentary from Denning, received an Academy Award nomination for Best Documentary Short Subject. The filmmakers later added a tribute to her life.



The Safe Passage story began in 1997 when Denning, who was a teacher in North Carolina, went to Guatemala to improve her Spanish. Two years later, just before she was scheduled to return to the United States, Denning visited the Guatemala City dump and was horrified by the sight of hundreds of women and children picking through endless piles of toxic trash for food to eat and items to sell. Denning (inset, above) went into action and sold her car and computer. With that money plus some savings, she opened a drop-in preschool for 40 children who lived at the dump and couldn't afford uniforms, books, school supplies, and fees required by Guatemalan public schools.

Today, Safe Passage is a haven for about 600 children, ages 2-19. It has 80 staff members in Guatemala and 400 volunteers, including many Rotarians. Its facilities consist of three campuses: a tutoring center for 480 children about three blocks from the dump; a day care

center and occupational training center one block from the dump; and a boarding facility in Antigua for 50 children who were moved from Guatemala City because of dangerous or unstable family situations. It also has an office in Maine. With financial support from Safe

Passage, children attend a local public school each day and then go to the tutoring center for more instruction and help with homework. Safe Passage also offers English classes, medical attention, nutritious food, computer instruction, sports, and guitar and piano lessons.

Several Rotary clubs and districts have been big backers. In the last three years, two Guatemalan clubs and 12 clubs in four U.S. districts received six Rotary Foundation Matching Grants to pay for two 15-passenger vans, two pickups, school uniforms, shoes, school fees, textbooks, and other supplies. The Traverse City club has donated an outright gift of more than US\$30,000 to Safe Passage.

Additionally, Rotarians and Interactors have volunteered in classrooms and collected shoes, clothing, and toiletries. The Rotarian Fellowship of Quilters and Fiber Artists donated 200 quilts to preschoolers at Safe Passage. In Guatemala, area Rotarians helped Denning navigate local government bureaucracy to start Safe Passage and keep it growing. And the Rotary Club of Guatemala Oeste provided engineers and other experts to supervise Safe Passage construction sites.

"More so than any program I've seen, this takes a holistic approach to helping the poorest of the poor," says Safe Passage board member Carl "Chip" Griffin, of the Rotary Club of Boothbay Harbor, Maine. "It does so in a way that empowers the Guatemalans, and it accomplishes this with paid local staff and international volunteers to lift the horizons of these children in an incredibly powerful way – and it transforms us as well."

To volunteer or contribute to Safe Passage, contact Rachel Meyn at [rachel@safepassage.org](mailto:rachel@safepassage.org), call 207-846-1188, or visit [www.safepassage.org](http://www.safepassage.org). Order the documentary at [www.recycledlifedoc.com](http://www.recycledlifedoc.com).

#### Scavaging in the dump is the daily reality for many children.

