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ENGINEERS WITHOUT BORDERS USA
Minnesota Professional Chapter

DONOR REPORT

Building a better world through engineering projects that empower communities to meet their basic human needs. **March 2025**



THANK YOU

A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

As we reflect on the successes of the past year, I am proud of the incredible progress our chapter has made in delivering impactful, community-driven projects. A key factor in our success has been our growing partnership with Rotary, whose collaboration and financial support continue to amplify our ability to create lasting change.

One of the most exciting developments in this partnership is a new project grant program led by the Rotary Club of Chanhassen. As a matching sponsor, Chanhassen Rotary encourages one Minnesota EWB chapter each year to seek donations from other Rotary clubs, with each donation matched by Chanhassen – creating a total of up to \$20,000 of project funds. Now entering its second year, this program has already strengthened multiple projects, including our chapter's Santa Elena Water Project and the University of Minnesota chapter's Simajhuleu Water Project in Comalapa, Guatemala.

I was especially excited for the opportunity to travel to Guatemala with our Rotary partners in February 2025. This trip was a special moment to celebrate the completion of the Rio Azul School Project and visit the construction of the Santa Elena Water Project. Combined, these two projects have received over \$60,000 in Rotary funds. Celebrating the culmination of these multi-year efforts alongside those who helped make them possible will be an incredible milestone – not just for our team, but for the communities whose future has been profoundly impacted by this partnership.

At the same time, EWB-Minnesota continues to make meaningful progress across multiple projects, both internationally and locally. In Chuchurras, Peru, our team is nearing completion of a long-awaited water project that will eliminate reliance on unsafe water sources. In Janko Kollo, Bolivia, our engineers are developing solutions to provide safe drinking water for 30 families, a project that will drastically improve health and quality of life.

Beyond our international efforts, we remain committed to making a difference here at home. Our Minnesota-based projects – including accessibility improvements at Andrew Peterson Farm and Gibbs Farm, as well as outdoor infrastructure upgrades at the Division of Indian Work in Minneapolis – are a testament to our dedication to sustainable, community-focused engineering solutions.

We are incredibly grateful to our volunteers, donors, and partners who share our vision for a world where communities have the resources they need to thrive. Thank you for your continued support and partnership as we work together to build a better, more sustainable future.



Matt Wessale

President

Engineers Without Borders - Minnesota Professional Chapter



12
TOTAL PROJECTS

3 COUNTRIES WITH
INTERNATIONAL
PROJECTS

36 DIFFERENT
DONORS
SINCE 2020

VOLUNTEERS
800
(AND COUNTING!)

OVER **5,000**
PEOPLE IMPACTED BY
OUR PROJECTS

SANTA ELENA, GUATEMALA

Despite having an existing water system, many households in the community are not supported by it, and those that are often face issues with maintenance and capacity. To address these challenges, our chapter and the community have partnered with the local municipality to install a new well, which will increase water availability and support a new water distribution system – designed by our chapter and installed by the community.

During our chapter's initial assessment trip in summer 2022, the project team spent time engaging with the community to understand its unique needs. Using drone technology, they conducted aerial surveys to collect valuable data, which played a crucial role in guiding the design and planning process. Over the past two years, this data has been instrumental in developing detailed project designs and mapping out the future water distribution system.

With all designs and planning now complete, construction is underway and expected to be finished in 2025, bringing the community one step closer to a sustainable and reliable water supply.

SANTA ELENA WATER SYSTEM



Location: Santa Elena, Quiché, Guatemala

Project Type: Water Distribution System

Status: Construction in progress

Total Project Costs: \$110,000

Goal: Design and construct a water distribution system to provide a consistent supply of clean water to the community of Santa Elena.



RIO AZUL, GUATEMALA

The community previously lacked a proper secondary school building, forcing older students to share space with younger students, leading to overcrowding and disruptions.

With the completion of the new school, students now have seven classrooms, administrative rooms, a kitchen, and modern bathroom facilities, creating a safe and supportive learning environment. A new sports court promotes physical activity and teamwork, further enriching student life.

In February 2025, our team traveled to Rio Azul to celebrate this achievement with the community. This visit was an opportunity to reflect on the impact of this multiyear effort, strengthen relationships with our local partners, and allowed us to witness firsthand the difference this project has made in the lives of students and their families.

RIO AZUL SCHOOL



Location: Rio Azul, Quiché, Guatemala

Project Type: School

Total Project Costs: \$115,000

Status: Phase 1 completed 2022, Phase 2 completed in early 2025

Goal: Design and construct a high school for the community that will consist of 7 classrooms, 2 admin rooms, a kitchen, bathroom facility, and athletic court.



JANKO KOLLO, BOLIVIA

Janko Kollo community faces significant challenges in accessing safe, hygienic water. Most households rely on hand-dug wells, which are often unreliable. During the dry season, many wells run dry, leaving families without water. Additionally, contamination from cattle fecal matter frequently compromises water quality, leading to serious health concerns.

This project aims to address these challenges by developing a reliable water distribution system. The new system will ensure consistent access to clean, safe drinking water, significantly improving health and quality of life for residents.

In 2024, student volunteers from the University of Dayton visited the community to gather social and engineering data. This information has since been transferred to our chapter and will support project design in 2025, with construction anticipated in 2026.

JANKO KOLLO WATER SYSTEM



Location: La Paz Region, Bolivia

Project Type: Water Distribution System

Total Project Costs: \$60,000

Status: Design in progress

Goal: To provide water to 30 families in the Janko Kollo community via a new well and water distribution system.



SIMAJHULEU, GUATEMALA

The Simajhuleu Water Project aims to improve water access for 3,500 residents in Comalapa, Guatemala, through leak repairs, improving existing spring boxes, and installing water meters to better understand the system's efficiency and sustainability.

This collaboration between the Minnesota Professional Chapter and the UMN Chapter combines student leadership with professional mentorship. During the initial project assessment in 2024, professional chapter volunteer Alex Behnke provided drone mapping support to identify key improvements (Alex is pictured to the left flying a drone).

To fund construction, the Minnesota Professional Chapter is working with Rotary to secure \$20,000 of project funds through the Rotary Club of Chanhassen's newly created grant program. This partnership ensures the project's long-term success in improving health and quality of life.

SIMAJHULEU WATER SYSTEM



Location: Comalapa, Guatemala

Project Type: Water Distribution System

Total Project Costs: TBD

Status: Design in progress

Goal: To improve water access for 3,500 residents



LOCAL PROJECTS



Above image: The Andrew Peterson Farm site has a storied past with Minnesota agrarian history.

Andrew Peterson Farm Project

Location: Waconia, MN

Project Type: Building improvement

Status: Design phase in progress

Goal: To improve visitor accessibility to three restored farm buildings using ramps while maintaining the historical aesthetics of the structures.

Gibbs Farm Project

Location: Falcon Heights, MN

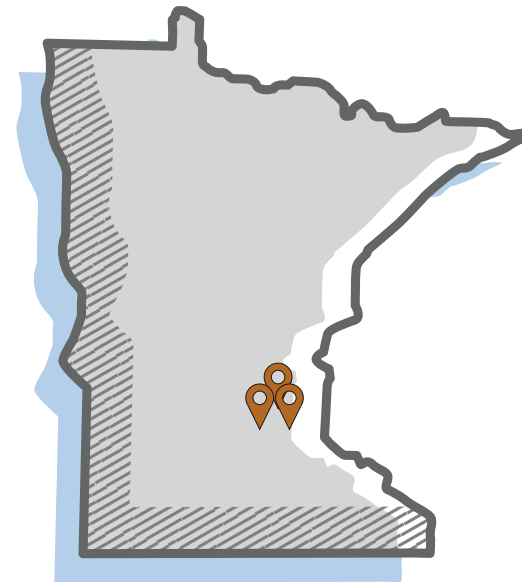
Project Type: Building improvements

Status: Design phase in progress

Goal: Improving accessibility to a historic farmhouse and schoolhouse using ramps to enhance the experience for wheelchair users and all visitors.



Above image: The Gibbs Farm Site in Ramsey County serves thousands of students and families each year through programming centered on women's history, Dakota culture, and life in the 1800s.



DIVISION OF INDIAN WORK

Location: Minneapolis, MN

Project Type: Building improvement

Status: Construction in progress

Goal: To improve outdoor infrastructure for educational and recreational use.

In 2024, the team actively worked on building a rain garden and outdoor program space at DIW. This past fall, volunteers constructed a retaining wall to prevent rainwater runoff, and the area was graded in preparation for the outdoor patio. The team plans to resume construction in the spring of 2025. These features will not only enhance the space's functionality but also create a welcoming environment for outdoor programs and community activities.



RICH REVERING

I got involved with EWB because I was looking to increase connections with others. Getting involved in more communities seemed like one way to do that. I chose EWB because it lines up with my professional experience and my DIY skills, both of which are built on an interest in solving problems for a dollar that any darn fool could solve for two. I chose local projects because I suspected there were unmet needs right here at home and I like to see and touch what I'm working on.



What I notice I enjoy is being able to draw on my experience and practical skills to influence the philosophy of the group and approach to projects. On philosophy, for example, I've seen in my professional career that clients often can't describe the problem they're trying to solve, so instead, requests for help come in the form of a proposed solution. (I've been asked countless times to put up a STOP sign when the real concern is about traffic speeds). I've only been involved in a couple of EWB local projects thus far, but I've seen similar issues. So, I've boringly lectured in our meetings about not diving into the requested solution unless we can first accurately describe the problem we're solving and feel confident the solution is the only or best way to address it completely. I'm also a fan of making do, when possible, and I try to bring that to the group.

At our recently completed patio/rain garden grading at Division of Indian Work in Minneapolis I ventured that one doesn't necessarily need a contractor with a backhoe to dig a hole. It can take as much time to find one, coordinate a schedule, find the money to pay him, and clean up his mess as it does to line up some good folks with shovels and dig it yourself. Even better, with a DIY approach there is a sense of camaraderie during, and a sense of shared accomplishment after, that builds connection between volunteers and with the client. My favorite moment on the project was seeing the volunteers show up with their shovels and wheelbarrows on that first day and not turn away when they realized the work was hard. We worked like dogs, but I'd bet every person that pitched in on one or more of our digging days is proud of what we accomplished.

My last observation is that involvement with EWB is about more than solving a problem for a client. It can add richness and meaning to our lives as well. Every volunteer on a project probably moves on to the next EWB, professional, or personal project with at least one new way of thinking about things, and/or a new skill, and/or discovery of an ability or affinity they didn't know they had. They also probably move forward with at least one new friend or a deeper connection to existing friends. These have all certainly been true for me.

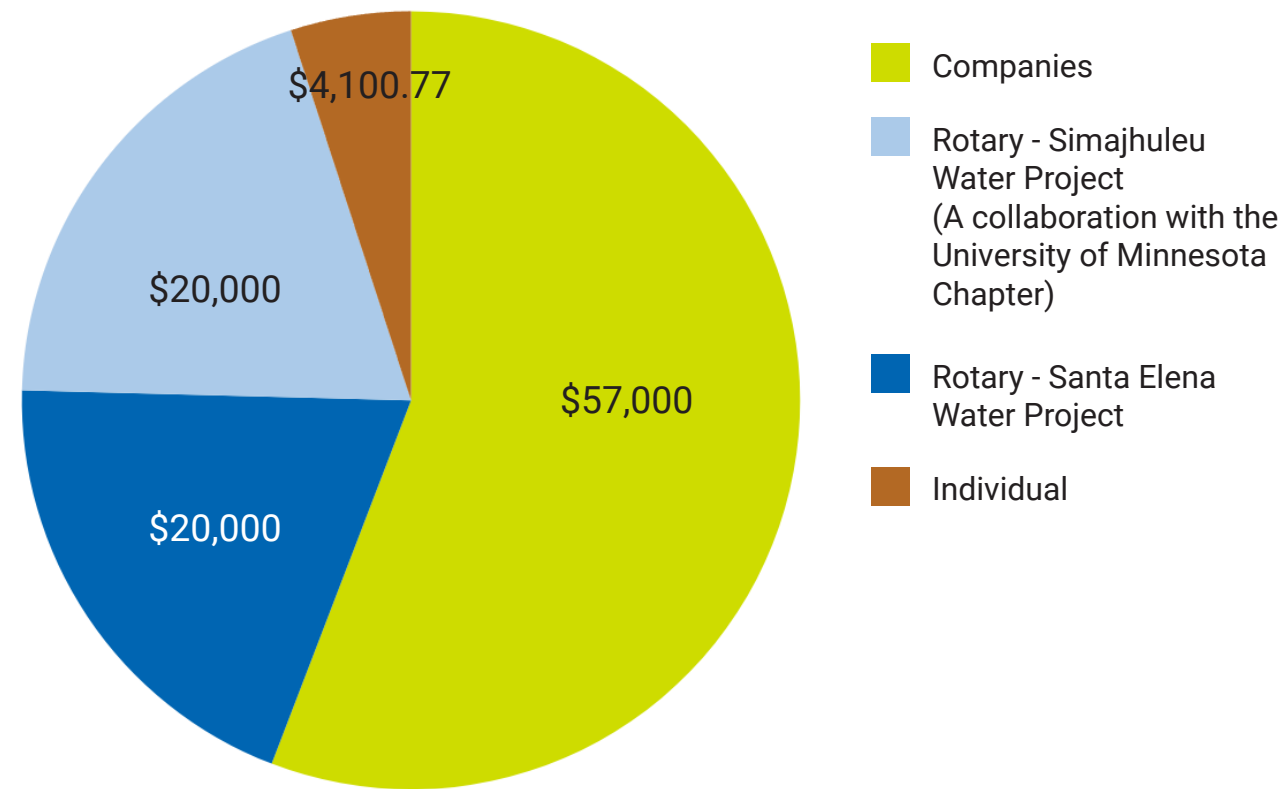


Rich digging holes while volunteering at DIW



Rich with fellow local project volunteers

2024 DONATIONS SUMMARY



TOTAL DONATIONS: \$101,100.77

Fun Fact: In 2024, **42** individual/personal donations were given.

2016-2024 DONATIONS SUMMARY

Since January 2016, EWB-MN has raised **\$583,334.08!**

Of that total, **\$503,719.06** of that has been used to construct EWB-MN led projects. And in 2025 we'll continue allocating funds as we construct Santa Elena, Chuchurras, and Simajhuleu.

Thank you to our donors who helped us raise over \$500,000 donations!

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Thank you to our donors!



We are a group of professional engineers, architects, scientists and others from Minnesota who aim to carry-out EWB-USA's mission. The Minnesota Professional Chapter has project teams implementing solutions for communities in need across the globe while also providing professional mentors for the student chapters in the state.

EWB-USA builds a better world through engineering projects that empower communities to meet their basic human needs and equip leaders to solve the world's most pressing challenges.

Contact Us

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