Since NY/HELP’s last annual report the group has lost its longtime inspirational leader, medical advisor and humble servant, Dr Gordon Comstock. The group was first formed in 1989 and since then Gordon traveled to Honduras every year for the next 29 years and was loved by the villagers.

At the end of February, 2020, a group of four NY/HELP volunteers (Connie Frisbee Houde, Chelsea Ochoa, Rev Justo Gonzalez and Scott Reinhart) embarked on a mission trip to Honduras. The plan was to visit the clinic at La Laguna and the lower villages where the new Middle School is being built. They were also planning to meet with community leaders, the clinic, and the 4 schools NY/HELP has had a hand in building.

In every meeting/gathering, the group emphasized and encouraged the need for local leadership and locally-based decision-making. These sentiments spurred much discussion. There was certainly widespread acknowledgement and agreement for the need for the tribe to lead the way with initiatives such as the Sewing Project, Judy Project (school supplies), and the building of the new 7-9 grades school.

Wherever the group went, they witnessed an outpouring of love and grief for Dr Gordon by our friends on the mountain. Over and over again we were reminded of how much his work has positively impacted the tribe. During the community gatherings, Mention Dr. Gordon and you heard people saying, “Que Dios lo tenga en su mano y descanse en paz. [May God have him the palm of his hands and may he Rest In Peace.] Rev. Justo spoke eloquently about Dr. Gordon and presided over the dedication of the plaque and the renaming of the La Laguna Clinic the “Dr. Gordon Comstock Clinic”.

Aracely our Sewing Academy Maestro met the group when they arrived. They had planned to see what products the women had to sell in Yoro. As they discussed it with Aracely, they realized that the women were not yet ready for this step. They do not know how to form a cooperative to work for a common goal. So we have committed to see what is available in Yoro that could help with how to create a business model for the marketing of the sewing project’s products. The group was very pleased with the quality of the work that they were seeing.

When arriving in Agua Blanca, the site of the first graduation after a beautiful though a hot walk, the church was beautifully decorated. Their work was hung along the walls for all to see. The graduates were all dressed in black skirts and black and white jackets. Aracely had chosen these colors in commemoration of Dr. Gordon. They really looked quite impressive. The graduates each received a certificate and a pair of new shears. Once the ceremony was completed there was a feast for all who attended.

Stay tuned for more specific requests for the continuation of this program to assist these women to become more self-sufficient through their own skills.
For the second year in a row, two separate groups of teachers received instruction on educational pedagogy and methodology. Last year the primary focus was lesson/unit design. This year the focus was on professional development through the establishment of Professional Learning Communities.

NY/HELP has a new coordinator, Reina Castro. In a culture that features almost exclusively men in all the name leadership roles, we hired a woman as the tribes’ face of NY/HELP. At several public gatherings, Rev. Justo spoke many times about the need for the men of the community to accept and support Reina.

A 2019 attempt to introduce a process for providing necessary school supplies to the children hit some road blocks. Lack of communication and organization prevented a planned 2020 kickoff to a much needed program. During our trip we worked with members of the tribe to fix the issues and are hopeful that for the 2021 school year the kids will have their much-needed supplies.

In the next twelve months, NY/HELP hopes to raise the funds necessary to complete the new Colegio (Middle School) for the lower villages’ school, as well as implement the Judy Project (school supplies).

*This report was submitted by Scott Reinhart and Connie Frisbee Houde. Photos by Justo Gonzales, Connie Frisbee Houde and Scot Reinhart*