

Calgary couple's gift: Clean water for poor

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*Part 2 of 3: **SUNSHINE SAMARITANS***

Just call them "social entrepreneurs." Such is the simple definition **Rod and Ingrid McCarroll** provide for what they do, a term that belies the scope and impact of the charity work to which this longtime Calgary couple has devoted the past decade of their lives. If you're looking for self-promotion, you won't find it here. "It's time for retirees to get off their duff, not just golf all day," says the 65-year-old Rod, a former real estate developer. "Use your retirement to find a life that counts, change your mindset about what you can offer in this phase of life." The McCarrolls don't think they're doing anything special, or for that matter anything that anyone else couldn't do. But in fact, this adventurous couple – 3 years into their marriage in 1966, sold all their belongings and travelled around the world -- has made an impression on people far and wide.

Stroll into any charity in *Mazatlan*, Mexico, and someone is bound to ask: "Have you spoken to Rod and Ingrid of Calgary?" That's because the McCarrolls, who were in *Mazatlan* in 2005 and for several months in 2006, have done a great job of introducing a made-in-Calgary technology that makes a big difference in the lives of Mexico's poor. It's called a biosand water filter, a simple but highly effective technology created by University of Calgary professor David Manz. Each one of these filters, which costs only about \$50 to make, eliminates over 96 per cent of waterborne diseases and produces up to 45 litres of pure water an hour, for no cost other than startup. The McCarrolls, who learned about the filter from a Calgary Herald article, received training from the Calgary-based **Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology** and quickly went to work, taking it to Mexico's poor. "Anyone who's interested can call up (the centre) and learn how to do it," says Rod. Proud Christians, the McCarrolls prefer to work with other faith-based charities in their travels.

That's why when they went to *Mazatlan*, they teamed up with the non-denominational Vineyard Ministries. Last year, they placed several of the filters in *Mazatlan* orphanages, schools and community centres. They also installed -- and trained the locals in the proper use of -- filters in Santa Rosa, a poor neighbourhood in the city of Guadalajara. "We set up shop for six months in Francisco I. Madero," says Rod, referring to *Mazatlan*'s "tolerant zone," or red light district. "The people there were wonderful." The McCarrolls are passionate about giving their recipients a hand up, not a handout. Wherever they are, they also help to set up the local manufacture of the filters, with local materials and labour. "They're now manufacturing their own filters in Mexico, and doing it cheaper than anywhere else in the world," Rod says proudly.

"There are 5 million people in Mexico outside the electrical grid," says Rod, who operates under his own registered charity, Friends Who Care (www.friendswhocare.ca). "And most of them also don't have access to clean drinking water." Recently, the McCarrolls expanded their charitable

work to include another made-in-Calgary technology -- ultra- efficient, durable and nearly permanent white-light-emitting diode lighting. The technology, developed by U of C electrical engineering Prof. David Irvine-Halliday, improves on a white LED created by a Japanese company. Irvine-Halliday, realizing this new, affordable lighting technology didn't require users to be on the electrical grid, in 2002 formed the non-profit organization **Light Up the World**, to bring it to the world's poor. To date, it has lit up more than 14,000 homes in 42 countries. Last month LUTW visited Peru and lit up three villages in the jungle. Working with Light Up the World, the McCarrolls will take the technology to Mexico in April 2007

They're now preparing for a trip to Mexico, where they'll continue their humanitarian efforts. "It changes you, big time," says Ingrid, 64, of the work that has kept the pair busy in their unique retirement. "It's a pivotal point in your life, when you go from me-centred to people-centred." "We've been very successful, so now it's time to give back," says Rod. "It's just not for us, that whole idea of biding our time till we die. That's no way to enjoy your retirement years."

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