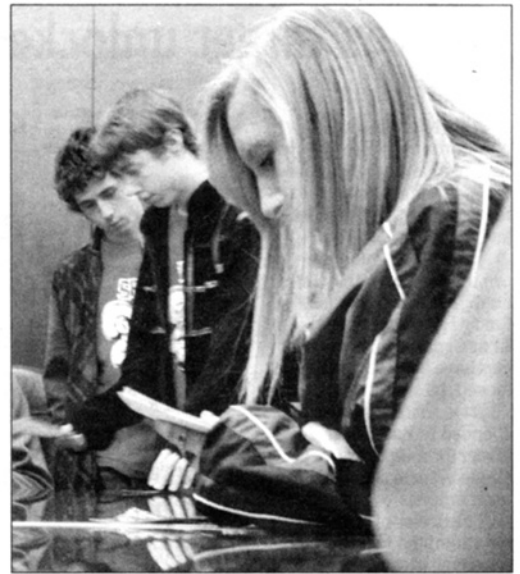




SPANISH CLUB members looking at pictures of the Costa Rican children they are helping are, from left, Kevin Helinski, Mark O'Black, John Obeid, Shane Kastroll, Shane Pasquinelli and Jason Bi-genho.



LOOKING AT pictures of the children are, from left, Sean Brady, Luke Clinton and Shannon Rodgers.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

## Spanish Club raises money to help feed Costa Rican children

BY LAURA VAN WERT  
STAFF WRITER

Outside of San Jose, Costa Rica, there is a small village called Triángulo de Solidaridad. The women and children who live there are indigents from Nicaragua.

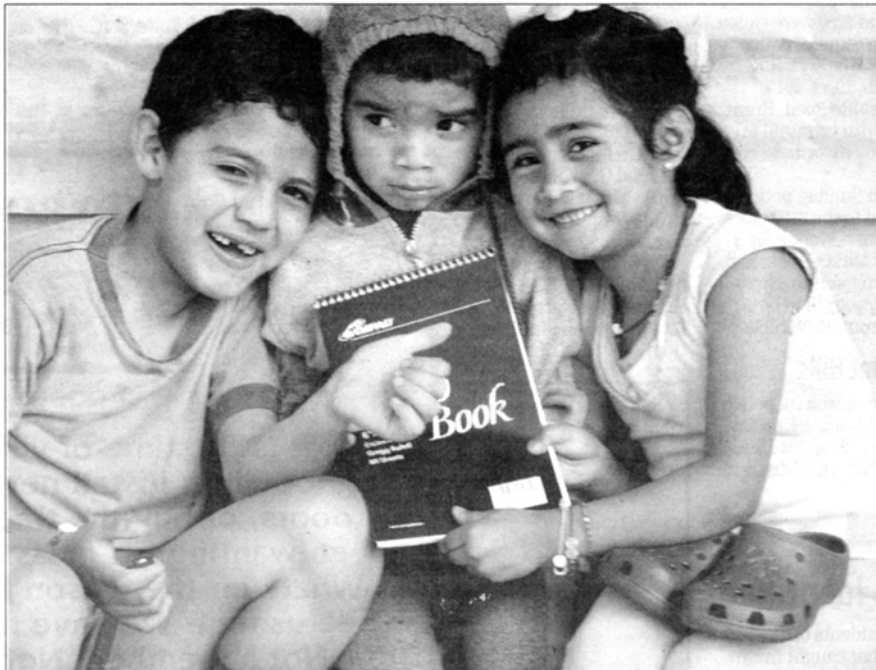
The village is a shantytown, where houses are made of scrap metal and have floors of dirt and furniture of cinder blocks and plywood. But more importantly, there are children in these unsanitary conditions who are starving and uneducated.

"The poorest person in the United States is wealthier than these people," Mitchell Zychowski, president of the non-profit organization Feed My Sheep Association, said.

For the past four years, Zychowski, of South Park, and his friends, Bill Starkowicz, Jack Benson and Steve Layne, have provided food, shelter, clothing and other necessary supplies for the residents. One of the four men travels to Costa Rica once every five weeks. While back in Pittsburgh, all of them work to raise awareness and funding for Feed My Sheep.

The efforts caught the attention of the Baldwin High School Spanish Club earlier this year. The organization donated \$250 to Feed My Sheep and pledged a commitment to continue with its charity work.

"We're looking for a local organization," Leslie Leopold, Spanish Club adviser, said.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

CHILDREN IN San Jose, Costa Rica, enjoy some of the donations made by Feed My Sheep Association.

"When I saw the article, it just clicked for me."

Leopold read about Feed My Sheep and plans to have Spanish Club members fundraise for the association. They will raise money selling fudge.

"I'm hoping this spreads into a large partnership," Leopold said.

Leopold and 18 of her stu-

dents presented Zychowski a check at his office on the South Side last week. Zychowski showed the students photographs of the women and children they help.

"You fall in love with them," Leopold said, as she looked at the photographs. "You just want to take them home."

Zychowski invited the Span-

ish Club to San Jose to volunteer whenever they can. He also told the students his company, Enjoy Coupon Book, is matching the donation.

"There are only four of us, but we're doing the best we can," Zychowski said. "We need more help almost every day."

In May 2005, Zychowski read an article about Triángulo on a

plane ride back from Costa Rica. Zychowski owns several businesses in the area, so the next time he went back, he visited the village. The sight of so many hungry children in such poor living conditions inspired him to do something; he started the Feed My Sheep Association.

"We're committed to these children for the rest of our lives," Zychowski said.

The organization helps feed approximately 400 children every day. One hundred percent of the donations go to the women and children.

As the organization progresses, it goes beyond providing food to receiving shoes and clothing donations from local businesses, such as Payless Shoes and Definitely You in Brentwood Towne Square.

Feed My Sheep also works with local and international organizations such as the Brother's Brother Foundation and Roof Over My Country, which has built more than 50,000 temporary houses.

Zychowski said he is trying to buy enough land or get some donated to build 50 homes and help the residents be more self-sufficient. But doing all of this takes money, he said.

So Feed My Sheep and Enjoy sponsors a charity golf outing to raise money. This year it is July 12 at 1 p.m. at Sam Deepe's Hickory Heights Golf Club. For more details call 412-973-1120.

"This happens to be, I think, where God sent me," Zychowski said.