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**FEED
MY
SHEEP**

**Local group
expands mission,
builds homes
in Costa Rica**



Feed My Sheep joins 'Build With Your Company' initiative



— Photos Courtesy of the Feed My Sheep Association

The Feed My Sheep Association has joined forces with Un Techo para mi Pais to build approximately a dozen homes in Costa Rica, allowing some to leave the Triangulo de Solidaridad shantytown.

By JENNIFER R. VERTULLO
For The Corridor

Instead of spending the Thanksgiving holiday in the comfort of his own home, Mitch Zychowski Jr. is giving the inhabitants of a Central American shantytown something for which they can be thankful.

Zychowski, a Brentwood native and South Park Township resident, spends about a third of every year in Costa Rica — as an international businessman tending to the Agua Dulce resort he and partners developed in San Jose, and as a humanitarian reaching out to the community where he does business.

Zychowski first traveled to Costa Rica in 2003, but it wasn't until May 2006 that he became aware of the plight of more than 300 children living in Triangulo de Solidaridad.

During his plane ride back to the States, Zychowski and friend Bill

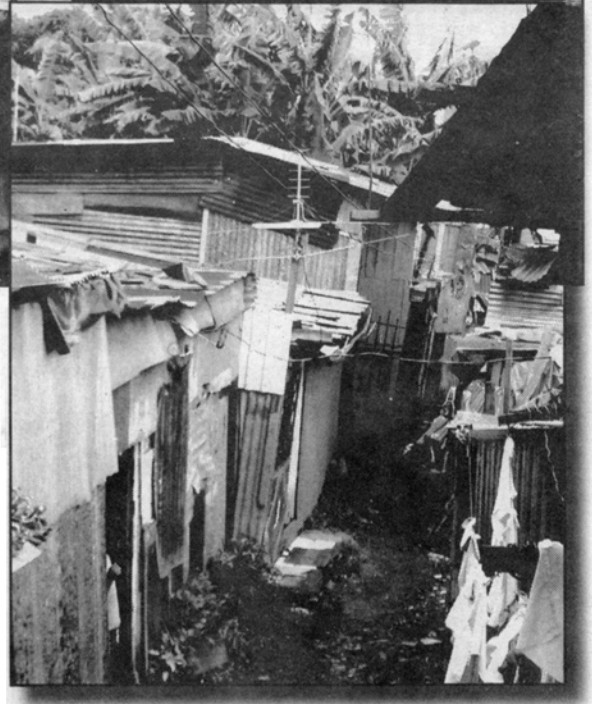
Starkowicz of Bethel Park were reading the Tico Times, an English newspaper circulated in Central America.

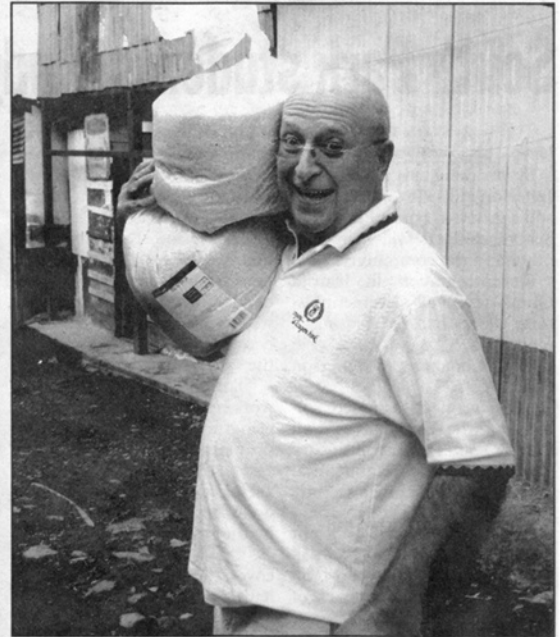
"I was reading an article in the Tico Times about poverty," Zychowski recalled. "It broke my heart, myself and Bill. We were both crying on the airplane, and people were just looking at us."

He visited the shantytown to see conditions for themselves.

"When I first saw the children at Triangulo de Solidaridad, they had no hope," Zychowski said. "They didn't have food. If they had food, they didn't have a bowl to put it in."

Wanting more than anything to each out to the villagers who touched his heart so, Zychowski formed Asocacion Apacienta Mis Ovejas — Feed My Sheep Association, in English —





— Photo Courtesy of the Feed My Sheep Association

At home, Mitch Zychowski is part of a fun-loving crew that raises funds for the Feed My Sheep Association golf outings through golf outings and other activities.

In Costa Rica, he volunteers in the Triangulo de Solidaridad shantytown, bringing food to a local kitchen that supplies meals for children.

His organization's next project is to partner with Un Techo para mi Pais in building homes for the shantytown's residents.

to bring food and other items that he feels are a human being's basic rights. The association contributes approximately \$2,500 each month to keep a local community kitchen stocked with supplies.

"One hundred percent of every penny we make goes directly to the women and children of this shantytown," Zychowski said. "We have no administrative costs, no airline tickets, no hotel room. It's all volunteer."

By hosting golf outings, seeking help from friends and making personal donations, Zychowski is able to inspire hope and provide opportunity for the children of Triangulo de Solidaridad. This year, he pushed fund-raising efforts one step further.

Feed My Sheep joined forces with Un Techo para mi Pais — translated, A Roof for My Country — to construct a temporary village with sturdy structures, water and other utilities that developed nations often take for granted.

Un Techo para mi Pais was established in 1997, when a group of university students sought to eliminate extreme poverty in Latin American settlements. They saw a lack of opportunity for the children of shantytowns. They saw a cycle that young adult residents didn't know how to break.

The organization works within the it-

takes-a-village-to-raise-a-child effort already put forth in so many of the settlements. Volunteers contribute to the town and build temporary housing funded by donations. They reach out to businesses as well as the government and media of host nations.

"They're all college students, and what they do is so amazing," Zychowski said. "They go where nobody else will go, where the government doesn't go or help."

To date, Un Techo para mi Pais has successfully built villages in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

Un Techo para mi Pais has been working in Costa Rica since 2006, and approximately 150 houses have been built there.

Zychowski said he is excited for the opportunity to extend his graces at Triangulo de Solidaridad. He has been happy to offer food for some time, but he said it's not enough.

Today, the settlement's residents live on dirt floors, surrounded by cardboard and aluminum walls. And it's not tucked away in a rural region of Costa Rica. It's in the heart of Tibas, just north of San Jose.

"It's right outside the capital city," Zychowski said. "It's like the South Side is to Pittsburgh; and there's no water, no elec-

tricity. They catch rain water in 50-gallon drums and use that."

By building homes, Zychowski said Feed My Sheep is giving the people of Triangulo de Solidaridad a chance in life.

"It's the first stage in a three-step process," he said. "We can change their lives. We can teach them a trade. We can teach them to be self-sufficient."

Zychowski's group raised \$29,275.05 during a Sept. 28 golf outing — enough money to build about a dozen homes. For this third annual event, the presenting sponsor was Enjoy Coupon Book, dinner sponsors were Flynn Construction and The Theme Lounge, the registration sponsor was Louise and Perry Dick Foundation, the golf cart sponsor was Knepper Press, the putting green and beverage sponsor was Duke's Station III, and lunch sponsors were Jack Shook and Frank Carolla.

"Even though we've raised all this money to build houses, there are still children we have to feed," Zychowski said.

To give funds to the Feed My Sheep Association, mail donations to 2403 Sidney Street, Suite 200, Pittsburgh, 15203. The tax ID number is 26-29-89478. Additional information is available by calling 412-973-1120.