

ADOPT A SCHOOL



Mike Chittom, District Coordinator for Adopt A School
writes

The Rotary Club of Tulsa adopted the Celia Clinton Elementary School in 1993 and has gradually concerned itself in nearly all areas of the school. Rotarians have made a difference in at least three primary areas.

First is in the process of mentoring. The principal and/or counselor pick a child having problems in reading or another subject. The Rotarian goes to school at least one time per week and works privately with the child. These children are usually the ones with the most problems and need one-on-one attention not possible for the teacher to render.

The Second way is working in the classroom with the teacher. The Rotarian picks the grade level and is assigned a classroom where the children need help in being read to, or completing current assignments or homework. This allows the Rotarian to work with many students of all academic levels.

The Third activity Rotarians are engaged in is as a Helper. This can be nearly anything the teacher believes will help the students. A Rotarian may go out to the school and have lunch with the children, some work in the library, one sorts and organizes clothing that are to our clothes room, others may work on the outside of the donated building planting or maintaining trees, shrubs or flowers. Others come to school for special events such as bringing athletes to talk to the children on the importance of education. Our school is open to about anything if it increases the potential for learning.

Mike says, "I would urge every Rotary Club to get involved in Adopt-A-School. Our school's records show that every child we have worked with have attained better test scores. It is doing the students a lot of good and it is a rewarding experience for the Rotarians.

In the beginning some of our mentors experienced a bit of a culture shock. Especially when dealing with minorities and children of low economic status we were surprised to learn that many of them responded in a way other than anticipated. Poor children can be most appreciative but many carry emotional scars dealt them by adults who have let them down. It sometimes takes a few sessions before they open up as they realize we are really there to help them with no ulterior motive in mind. We may be the first positive force they have experienced. I believe we can offer them hope and let them know there is a world out there which is not against them but rather offers a chance for a better life. We are teaching them to think outside the box. Teaching a child to read and gain quality literacy skills is definitely labor intensive, but most certainly is highly rewarding.