



News

Dorrance Family Foundation Provides \$300,000 Matching Grant to Rancho Feliz to Complete Dorm in Mexico

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\$300,000 Matching Grant Challenge to Foster Cross-Cultural Service Experiences

Scottsdale, Ariz. – The [Dorrance Family Foundation](#) of Scottsdale has issued a \$300,000 matching funds grant to [Rancho Feliz](#) for the construction of its new “La Hacienda Feliz” volunteer dormitory in Agua Prieta, Sonora, on the U.S./Mexico border – 230 miles south of Phoenix.

By supporting the \$300,000 matching grant challenge, donors will empower U.S. and Mexican volunteers to be housed together at the same time as they build homes, distribute food and care for children and seniors in the area’s slums, fostering cross-cultural service experiences.

“Rancho Feliz is honored The Dorrance Family Foundation is investing in our vision of changing the world by changing consciousness,” said Rancho Feliz Founder & President Gil Gillenwater. “In today’s political climate, we believe it is critical to foster cross-cultural service experiences, helping us to better understand each other. In our new dorm, American and Mexican volunteers will live and serve the community together. This exchange experience will break down the walls of thought that separate us.”

In April 2018, Rancho Feliz, a volunteer-based, Scottsdale nonprofit, broke ground on “La Hacienda Feliz,” \$1.35 million, 20-roomed, 10,215-square-foot dorm to house up to 70 volunteers at a time (1,500 volunteer visits a year). Phase I completion is estimated on December 20, 2018.

To date, Rancho Feliz has raised \$750,000 of its \$1.35 million goal. Once the \$300,000 Dorrance grant is matched, the project will be funded in full. Donors of \$25,000 or more will be prominently recognized on a brass plaque in the dormitory.

“The Dorrance Family Foundation has been involved with Rancho Feliz for over 20 years. Their unique reciprocal giving philosophy resonates with our own. Serving others imbues our lives with purpose – making us better people. Empowering and connecting the human family on both sides of the U.S./Mexican border is an effort we whole-heartedly support,” said Jacquie Dorrance.

Rancho Feliz has worked in Agua Prieta, Mexico for 31 years. Early on, the organization recognized two very real types of poverty.

The obvious: The material poverty of a border town foundering under the weight of a weakening peso and bloated barrios. Here the average wage is \$8 per day – yet the cost of goods is 80% of that in Scottsdale. A tangible sense of hopelessness pervades.

The not so obvious but equally insidious: A spiritual poverty. The privileged in America live in unprecedented affluence. For children and young adults, this presents a unique challenge. With no relevancy, their opportunity-laden lives are often taken for granted.

Rancho Feliz realized that often the privileged and the underprivileged were – paradoxically – dealing with the same negative symptoms, just on opposite ends of the socio-economic spectrum. In response, in 1998 Rancho Feliz created an innovative volunteer program that addresses these circumstances and works for the benefit of all. It is an interactive program that allows both groups to simultaneously be donors and recipients, thereby feeding and thriving off of one another. Rancho Feliz calls this “reciprocal giving.” Givers become receivers and receivers become givers.

Following a service visit to Agua Prieta, volunteers return home with a new sense of purpose and a profound gratitude for their own fortunate lives. This awareness helps reweave the moral fabric of their own communities here in the U.S. It makes the volunteers better people. It makes for stronger families. It makes America a greater country.

Rancho Feliz’s volunteer program is so successful, it has outgrown its existing nearby 4,000-square-foot, 11-roomed dorm. It has hosted over 22,000 student volunteers from across the United States and Canada. Volunteers have built more than 800 homes housing 3,200 displaced people, distributed more than 355 tons of food providing 4.1 million meals to the hungry, funded hundreds of grade school, high school and university scholarships, cared for children and seniors and forged a bridge of respect and friendship between the U.S. and Mexico. The new, larger dormitory will allow Rancho Feliz to continue to grow.