

Riecken Community Libraries Receives Grant to Support Access to Information in Central America

Emerald Hills, CA,- April 7, 2012 – Riecken Community Libraries is proud to announce a multi-year grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support their network of libraries in Central America.

Riecken Community Libraries started more than sixty years ago when a young boy growing up on Cape Cod discovered his public library. The boy's future successes allowed him to start what is now a thriving network of 64 rural community libraries throughout Guatemala and Honduras.

Those remote farm communities have, over the past decade, embraced their Riecken libraries, with over a thousand books each, free internet connections and local democratic governance. The spirit of discovery and community service of the libraries have led teachers to change their teaching from rote to research, opened farmers' markets, promoted internet coffee sales, demonstrated fiscal honesty that has even been emulated by mayors, inspired prison reading groups, and are recovering endangered Mayan languages by publishing their books of their village histories in their ancestral tongues.

The libraries have sponsored youth service groups, nutrition seminars, community radio programming, regional chess tournaments, early childhood development programs, adult literacy and agricultural cooperatives. Most importantly, they have awakened in their youth a hunger for knowledge and an excitement for their future.

Riecken libraries have an unparalleled record for community support, program effectiveness, citizen governance, and youth participation. (See them in action at http://youtu.be/0O5EFW_a8MQ.) The Gates Foundation investment will allow Riecken Community Libraries to strengthen its existing library network while enhancing the sustainability of the Riecken Libraries model.

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