

St. Simon's reaches out to students in Belize

by Nathan Howes
Special to the Beaver

Oakville's St. Simon's Anglican Church hopes residents will bring their appetites to its annual spaghetti dinner Saturday (Nov. 1) to help raise funds for its next missionary trip.

The local parish is hosting the dinner in support of its fourth trip to Holy Cross Anglican School in San Pedro, Belize in July 2015.

Every other summer, the parish's youth team, accompanied by adults, leads an expedition to Holy Cross to lend a helping hand. The team previously visited Belize in 2009, 2011 and 2013.

"We believe in helping our neighbours. It doesn't matter if it's your neighbour next door or if it's somebody who's thousands of kilometres away. We should all be helping when we can, and who we can," said Robyn Michell, church youth leader.

Sunday School teacher Cheryl Haycraft said St. Simon's has hosted the dinner for several years and is hoping for 100 or more people to attend this year.

"It's been very successful. We serve a full spaghetti dinner with salad, bread and dessert.



Approximately 20 members of St. Simon's Anglican Church are preparing to go on a mission to work with children and help maintain Holy Cross Anglican School in Belize, on the northeastern coast of Central America. Nine of the participants gathered recently, outside their Oakville church for a group photo. Pictured, from left, are: Andrew Davies, Tamara Ferguson, Amy Davies, Rev. Darcey Lazerte, Aidan Ferguson, Cheryl Haycraft, Taylor Hynes, Meggie Haycraft and Robyn Michell.

| photo by Graham Paine - Oakville Beaver (Follow on Twitter @halton_photog or facebook.com/HaltonPhotog)

students.

On previous trips to Belize, the St. Simon's group has been involved in building repair, painting rooms and offering summer classes for students in the mornings, among other activities.

For its 2015 mission, Lazerte said the team will have a "flexible agenda" in terms of specific tasks, but he expects the group will work on any construction projects that need to be completed for the 2015-16 academic year.

The Belize school has added new classrooms, a covered playground and assembly area, an outside playground, sowing room, solar power, improved sanitation and sewers and upgraded its computer labs since St. Simon's first visit five years ago.

"The school works closely with parents of the children to make sure their quality of life at home gets better over time, as it works with parents on everything from dietary needs to medicine," said Lazerte. "As people have worked away, it's gotten a little less treacherous and more established."

He pointed out the trip will cost each person about \$2,300, as a result of the lower Canadian dollar.

Aidan Ferguson, altar server, noted half of the cost for the group of 20 will be covered through fundraising.

In between missions, St. Simon's organizes additional fundraisers to support a specific need or program at Holy Cross. Some of the events have included an auction, raffle, a barbecue and selling pies.

"We also make a donation to the school as part of going there and some of the funds go towards that. We provide supplies as well. During the year, we sponsor some children that go there because there is a cost to going to school," said Lazerte.

The spaghetti fundraiser takes place on Nov. 1 from 6-8 p.m. at St. Simon's Anglican Church, 1150 Litchfield Rd.

Tickets cost \$20 per adult, \$10 per child under 10 and \$50 per family.

To buy tickets or make a donation, contact St. Simon's Anglican Church at 905-845-8351.



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The adults going on the trip are the ones who put the dinner on," said Haycraft. "In the years we're not going to Belize, we send the money from it down to Belize."

The bi-annual mission is "very important" to St. Simon's and its congregation, she said.

"We have a lot of people here who, even though they don't go down on the missions, like to support all the youths and adults going so they take part in the fundraisers we do," said Haycraft.

Rev. Darcey Lazerte noted a couple from Virginia established Holy Cross several years ago in response to what they witnessed in San Pedro.

"They saw a lot of children running around the streets. They wondered why they weren't in school and they found out there were no funds for those children for school," said Lazerte, adding Holy Cross started with 50 children and now has 500-600 Kindergarten to Grade 8