



## **Frequently Asked Questions**

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1) Question: Who is Rancho Feliz?

Answer: Rancho Feliz is a secular, volunteer-based, IRS registered, 501(c)3 not for profit organization. We started our work in Agua Prieta, Mexico in 1987. Basically, we are a group of volunteers who want to share our fortunate lives by providing opportunity to those not born into the same privileges. As a volunteer-based organization, our donors' dollars support positive change, not administrative lifestyles. For greater details, including our projects and programs, visit our web-site at: [www.ranchofeliz.com](http://www.ranchofeliz.com)

2) Question: Why do you volunteer in Agua Prieta, Mexico?

Answer: Agua Prieta is a 4 hour drive from Phoenix and a 2 hour drive from Tucson. Nowhere else on the planet can you find two neighboring countries that experience the disparity in standard of living as exists on this frontier border. For decades, the Mexican economy has fallen short of providing adequate jobs and housing for its citizens. Millions of desperate people continually flood north towards America seeking livable wages. Most are common people searching for a way to provide for their families. While the U.S. has stepped up border efforts to stem this surge of migration, it has caused a rebound effect resulting in thousands of people tumbling back into border towns like Agua Prieta (population 175,000). With a lack of adequate housing, shantytowns or barrios constructed of cardboard and shipping pallets have sprung up straining the city's already overburdened infrastructure. Often several families are forced to live together in one-room, dirt-floor shacks with no electricity or running water. In addition, jobs in Agua Prieta are very difficult to find. Even with a job, the average wage for working in a local factory 6 days a week, 9 hours a day is \$70. That comes to \$280 a month or \$3,360 a year. Yet the cost of retail goods is roughly 80% of what we pay here in the U.S. Surprisingly, they pay more for gasoline, electricity, milk, etc. This creates an untenable refugee situation denying families access to the most basic human needs resulting in an overwhelming sense of desperation and hopelessness. It is Rancho Feliz's mission to provide, not welfare, but opportunity to the poor of Agua Prieta so that they may live and raise their families with dignity in their own country.

3) Question: What is the "Guardian Warrior" Exchange Program?

Answer: Over many years of volunteering we came to realize that traditional charity, hand-outs and welfare, do not work. We also came to understand that there are two very real types of poverty; the most obvious being the material poverty of not enough to eat or no roof overhead. However, equally as insidious is a poverty of spirit, or purpose, often experienced in lives of self-indulgence found here in the U.S.. Through hands-on service to others, the Rancho Feliz "Guardian Warrior" Exchange Program was designed to feed and nourish both sides of the poverty equation. We call this "Reciprocal Giving", givers become receivers and receivers become givers. We feed our souls by helping those not born into the same opportunities. Everybody wins. For greater details, visit our web-site at: [www.ranchofeliz.com](http://www.ranchofeliz.com) and follow the links "Current Programs – Volunteer Exchange Program & Dorm" [Exchange Program](#).

4) Question: How do we participate in the "Guardian Warrior" Exchange Program? Do we need to sign a contract?

Answer: We have no contract per se other than our downloadable [Participation Form](#) on our "Volunteer Exchange Program & Dorm" page on the Rancho Feliz web-site: [www.ranchofeliz.com](http://www.ranchofeliz.com). It's important to note that as a volunteer-based organization Rancho Feliz does not have the resources, nor the desire, to provide a tour and hotel service. Rather we will voluntarily facilitate, support and guide you in certain service

activities. However, you and your group must treat this experience as though you were traveling and staying in the border town of Agua Prieta, Mexico, unassisted. This includes driving your own vehicles, securing your own insurance, preparing or providing for your own meals, etc. What typically happens when we have a group of volunteers interested in visiting is that they go to the Rancho Feliz web-site, study the “Exchange Program” information (including this “Frequently Asked Questions” document), and then they contact the Exchange Program Coordinator – Alejandro Laureano ([alexlaurus@yahoo.com](mailto:alexlaurus@yahoo.com) – 520-227-6253). Alejandro discusses the program, the facilities, what to bring, the costs involved, what to expect and coordinates their visit. If the group wants to proceed they download the Participation Forms, sign them and return them to Alejandro by scan or fax along with a \$300 non-refundable reservation donation and their reservation is secured. (\$200 of this reservation donation will be applied to the total per person, per night, donation amount due upon arrival and \$100 will be kept by Rancho Feliz as a non-refundable cleaning donation.) Most of our volunteer groups come for an extended weekend, but longer visits are also available. The program averages 85 volunteers per month so reservations are required well in advance. The average group size is from 15 to 20 participants though larger and smaller groups can be accommodated. In the case of student volunteers, adult chaperones are mandatory.

- 5) Question: How long do the volunteer groups stay and what does their schedule look like?

Answer: The majority of our “Guardian Warrior” volunteer groups include students. Consequently, time away from school is limited so most groups arrive on a Friday afternoon (or evening) and depart on Sunday afternoon. (Agua Prieta is a 4 hour drive from Phoenix and a 2 hour drive from Tucson.) However, we have had volunteer groups from as far away as Canada and Europe travel to Agua Prieta to serve. Due to the distances involved these groups typically stay from 5 days to a full week. Custom designed schedules can be arranged by talking to the Exchange Program Coordinator.

- 6) Question: Where will we be staying and what will it cost?

Answer: In 1998, Rancho Feliz constructed a dormitory for its volunteers in Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico (population 175,000). Known as the “Exchange Dormitory”, this facility is located approximately 2 miles south of Douglas, Arizona and the U.S./Mexico border. (See the [Directions](#) link on the Exchange Program page at: [www.ranchofeliz.com](http://www.ranchofeliz.com)) Designed by renowned architect, Bennie M. Gonzales, a floor plan of the hacienda style structure can be seen by following the [Floorplan](#) link on the Exchange Program page described above. Each of the 4 private rooms has its own bathroom and shower and each of the 2 dormitory style rooms has 2 bathrooms and 2 showers. A chaperones dormitory style room also has its own private bathroom and shower. Each room has its own air conditioning and heating system. The property is located in a rural area on the outskirts of town and is surrounded by a 12 foot high security fence and monitored by a 24 hour gatekeeper. To stay in the Exchange Dormitory each participant must sign a [Participation Form](#). This form can be downloaded from the Exchange Program page as described above. The donation amount required to stay in the Exchange Dormitory is \$10 per person per night. This donation amount must be paid in full upon arrival. In addition, a \$300 non-refundable reservation donation is required at the time the reservation is made to secure the time slot. \$200 of this donation will be applied to the total per person, per night, donation amount due upon arrival and \$100 will be kept by Rancho Feliz as a non-refundable cleaning donation.

7) Question: How do we handle transportation?

Answer: All visiting groups are responsible for their own air and ground transportation – in the U.S. and in Mexico. Groups flying into Phoenix or Tucson, Arizona often rent vans. If vehicles are rented in the U.S., you must specify to the rental agency who will be driving the vehicles and inform them that they will also be driven in Mexico. Once in Mexico, your vehicles are driven by your group members usually following an Exchange Program representative caravan style. The various work sites, stores, restaurants, etc. are never far from the Exchange Dormitory.

8) Question: Do we need Mexican automobile insurance on our vehicles to drive into Mexico?

Answer: While it is not required by law, it is required to participate in our Exchange Program. It is inexpensive, easy to obtain, and not worth the risk of driving without. Your existing American vehicle insurance policy may state that it covers you in Mexico. However, it has been our experience that this American coverage is not sufficient when dealing with local Mexican authorities. Consequently, in your own best interest, Rancho Feliz mandates that you purchase specially designated Mexican vehicle insurance. We suggest you arrange for this insurance prior to your trip. You can purchase it by the day from your local AAA or at any number of other Mexican vehicle insurance providers.

9) Question: What is the process that we follow crossing the border by vehicle into Mexico?

Answer: Depending on your pre-determined arrangement, an Exchange Program representative will either meet you in Douglas, Arizona or at the border itself. Sometimes there is a line going into Mexico – so don't be surprised if there is a slight delay. Just before you reach the border going into Mexico, U.S. Border Patrol Agents may ask for your passport and the purpose of your travel. However, this is rare. Usually they just wave you through. When you continue towards the border enter one of the open "Nada que Declarar" (Nothing to Declare) lanes. Here you will come to a short traffic signal where you are required to stop. Soon the light will illuminate either **GREEN** or **RED**. Should you receive a **GREEN** light drive on into Mexico per the Exchange Program representative's instructions. However, should you receive the random **RED** light you must pull over to the right into one of the designated parking bays. Here a Mexican Border Agent will ask you a few questions and may briefly search your vehicle. There is nothing to worry about should you receive a random **RED** light. This is just standard procedure, similar to what we deal with at Customs in the airports here in the U.S. Rancho Feliz has a large presence in Agua Prieta and if stopped it never hurts to mention that you are a: "Voluntario de Rancho Feliz". Once searched you will be free to drive on into Mexico per the Exchange Program representative's directions.

**IMPORTANT!** You must have your **PASSPORT** to cross back into the U.S..

10) Question: What do we do about meals?

Answer: All visiting groups are responsible for the purchase and preparation of their own food. The Exchange Dormitory kitchen is fully stocked including cooking and eating utensils, coffee pot, refrigerator, commercial stove & oven, microwave, etc. (but no dishwasher). There is a serving counter and 8 picnic tables in the dining hall so up to 50 people can be accommodated for group dinners, parties, etc. Many times the groups shop at home and transport their food with them. However, there is a large Wal-Mart grocery store in Douglas, Arizona right next to the border if your group prefers to shop there. Also, there are several well stocked grocery stores and markets in Agua Prieta. The

Exchange Dormitory has a fully appointed kitchen. Most groups prepare the majority of their breakfasts and lunches at the dorm. Dinners are usually a combination of eating out, having a local cook(s) come to the dorm and prepare Mexican meals for \$10 per person or cooking your own meals. There are several fun and affordable restaurants in Agua Prieta as well as pizza delivery available.

**IMPORTANT!** Even though the Exchange Dormitory kitchen is fully stocked with cooking and eating utensils, with the large volume of volunteers we are constantly in need of more. Many groups bring down used cookware, plates, glasses, silverware and other kitchen items to donate upon their departure. Rancho Feliz greatly appreciates this generous gesture to the ongoing operation of the Exchange Dormitory kitchen.

11) Question: Can we eat the local food and drink the local water?

Answer: While the stories of stomach problems in Mexico are legion, this has not been our volunteers' experience in Agua Prieta. Most groups eat at the local restaurants at least one or two times during their stay with no negative side effects. However, we do not suggest that you drink the water out of the tap. We highly recommend bringing bottled water for drinking. Purified water can also be easily purchased in Agua Prieta. We suggest purchasing water in larger containers and dispensing it into individual containers throughout your stay. This will greatly reduce the amount of throw away plastic – an already existing plague to the community. Showering and even brushing your teeth with the local water has not presented a problem. But remember, travel itself can often upset the stomach so it is always wise to bring stomach remedies on the outside chance someone within your group falls ill. There are numerous pharmacies in Agua Prieta that also sell stomach medications.

12) Question: Is alcohol allowed in the Exchange Dormitory?

Answer: Alcohol is not allowed in, or on the grounds of, the Exchange Dormitory. However, for adult volunteers, there are many nearby restaurants, cantinas, etc. where alcoholic beverages can be purchased and enjoyed after a long day of work serving others.

13) Question: What do we do about bedding, towels and laundry?

Answer: All beds have pillows, sheets and blankets. However, some volunteers prefer to bring their own bedding including sleeping bags and pillows. This is up to your individual preference. The Exchange Dormitory does have a laundry room. We encourage volunteers to bring sufficient clothing for their visits so as not to overburden the laundry facility. However, for extended stays, etc. the laundry room is available. If you plan on using the laundry facility, please bring your own detergent. It is suggested that you bring your own towels and washcloths.

14) Question: How do we handle the foreign currency – U.S. Dollars vs. Mexican Pesos?

Answer: The value of U.S. currency is very strong in Mexico. Consequently, almost all border town vendors will gladly accept U.S. Dollars. However, make sure you are aware of the current exchange rate. This figure can fluctuate daily and is usually posted at the place of purchase. Be sure you ask the vendor the current "cambio" (exchange) prior to committing to a purchase. You can easily find the exchange rate on-line by visiting Exchange Sites such as: <http://themoneyconverter.com/USD/MXN.aspx>

However, if you want to simplify your transactions and conduct your business in Mexican Pesos, there are several banks in town that will change your U.S. Dollars into Pesos. In addition, these banks have standard ATM's that will accept your U.S. Debit Card. Using one of these ATM's is the quickest, safest and easiest way to obtain Pesos in Agua Prieta. (If you plan on using a Mexican ATM it's helpful to call the number listed on the back of your debit/credit card ahead of time to let your bank know. This way they won't freeze your card thinking the transaction is fraudulent.) Your Exchange Program representative will gladly direct you to a nearby bank and ATM. We strongly discourage you from attempting to change money on the streets. Lastly, we do not suggest that you carry large sums of cash and ask that you not open your wallet or purse in view of bystanders. This is just common sense in any country.

- 15) Question: Does the Exchange Dormitory have internet access? Can we bring our laptops, iPads, iPods, etc.?

Answer: There is purposely no internet access at the Exchange Dormitory. We strongly encourage you to leave your electronic devices at home. It is our desire that you experience your international service visit fully without the incessant distractions of the digital age. The "Guardian Warrior" Exchange Program promotes human interaction, with both the people you are serving as well as with your fellow volunteers. Many groups gather around the fireplace in the dining hall after dinner and a long day of work and exchange their individual experiences, thoughts and philosophies on how to make our world a better place. This promotes rich and often times profound discourse and introspection on "purpose" and what it means to be a contributing member of the human family. We don't want these life enhancing experiences compromised so leave your electronic equipment at home. We promise it will be waiting for you upon your return. This being said, there are always exceptions and we understand this. There are several places in Agua Prieta, including our Rancho Feliz, Vecinos subdivision, where wireless internet access is available. Your Exchange Program representative will be happy to escort you to these various internet locations if the need arises.

- 16) Question: Will my mobile phone work in Agua Prieta?

Answer: Agua Prieta is located right on the border and, depending on your provider, many times it is possible to access a drifting U.S. cellular line. But you should not depend on this. Also, many U.S. providers offer an international calling plan at a nominal cost. In addition, your Exchange Program representative will have a U.S. capable phone in the event of emergency.

- 17) Question: There is a lot of negative news about the violence in Mexico. Will we be safe in Agua Prieta?

Answer: We have been volunteering in Agua Prieta since 1987. During that time we have had over 15,000 volunteers join us in serving the less fortunate and we have not experienced one single incident of violence. In addition, the Exchange Dorm is located ½ mile from a very large Federal Government military base. We have quick access to their assistance and a direct line to the Chief of Police. We have a huge presence in the community and the people of Agua Prieta want to keep this relationship in place. As previously mentioned, we work closely with the government of Agua Prieta and our assistance to their residents is desperately needed. Accordingly, we have an excellent relationship with the Police Department, the Mayor and the community at large. Statistically, as an American citizen you are safer in Agua Prieta than you are in most

cities in the U.S. While we cannot guarantee anyone's safety, our record has shown that the safety of our volunteers is our priority.

- 18) Question: Can you describe why Agua Prieta is a safer community than many others located on the U.S./Mexico Border?

Answer: The U.S.'s insatiable desire for illegal drugs has created a multi-billion dollar smuggling industry in Mexico. With huge profits involved, the illicit organizations controlling this unregulated industry fight amongst themselves constantly to control the revenue stream. It's really no different than the Mafia violence the U.S. experienced during its prohibition days in the 1920's and early 1930's – except on a much larger and more profitable scale. In response, Mexico's Federal Government started a crackdown in 2006. It upset the historic balance that the drug cartels had maintained amongst themselves and created a free for all to gain control of lucrative territories. This is when the violence really started. Fortunately, or unfortunately for the people who live there, this violence has been contained within the cartels themselves and only in certain locations. As far as the U.S./Mexico 2,000 mile border this violence has concentrated almost exclusively in Ciudad Juarez, across from El Paso, Texas, and Tijuana, across from San Diego, California. Of course there are media sources that preach doom and gloom for all of Mexico but the statistics simply do not support this perceived danger for U.S. citizens. This situation has been well studied and the explanation given for the lack of violence to U.S. tourists is that the cartels have their hands full dealing with their own federal governmental crack-down. The last thing they need is the U.S. government and law enforcement coming after them. This view is well supported statistically and especially in Agua Prieta where Rancho Feliz has not experienced one single incident of violence concerning its thousands of volunteers who have traveled and worked there since its inception in 1987.

- 19) Question: What happens in the event we have a medical emergency?

Answer: It's important to know that Agua Prieta is a large city with a population of approximately 175,000 people. The Agua Prieta hospitals referenced below are very respectable health care facilities. The General Hospital is located just 2 miles from the Exchange Dormitory and the Hospital Latino Americano can be accessed in approximately 10 minutes from anywhere in the community. Equally as important, our Mexican associates grew up in Agua Prieta. Through their vast network of connections we have direct access to every aspect of the emergency responders, services, health care centers, police department, and any and all other governmental and civil agencies operating in Agua Prieta. The fact is, as American volunteers who have been serving their less-fortunate since 1987, including investing over \$10 million in donations into their community, we receive preferential treatment. And this means even more in Mexico than it does here in the U.S.

**Agua Prieta:**

Hospital Latino Americano de Especialidades S.A. de C.V.

(011 52 prefix if dialing from the U.S. or Canada)

(633)338-3054, 338-3192

Calle 13 Y Avenida 22 # 1280, C.P. 84260

Hospital General

(011 52 prefix if dialing from the U.S. or Canada)

633 12 2 21 51 and 633 12 2 21 52

Carretera Vieja a Cananea s/n, Colonia Militar

Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico, C.P. 84200

**Douglas:**

Southeast Arizona Medical Center  
2174 West Oak Avenue  
Douglas, Arizona 85607  
Phone: 520-805-5938  
FAX: 520-364-2551

<http://www.samcdouglas.org/getpage.php?name=index>

**Tucson:**

Tucson Medical Center  
5301 E. Grant Road  
Tucson, Arizona 85712  
Phone: (520) 327-5461

<https://www.tmc.az.com/>

**Note:** There is direct air evacuation access from neighboring Douglas, Arizona to the Tucson Medical Center, one of the finest Medical Centers in the U.S.

- 20) Question: What kind of work projects will we be doing and what will they cost?  
Answer: We have a menu of service projects which include, home and building construction, food distributions, painting homes and schools, working with our Mexico Mutts animal program, working with abandoned children in orphanages, playing with children in our Vecinos Child Care Centers, teaching classes in our Vecinos Education/Recreation Center, and many more. You can discuss your group's different options with the Exchange Program Coordinator. All volunteer groups are responsible for paying their own work project materials costs. Project costs range from high to low but our volunteer groups typically raise around \$1,000 for service project hard costs. At Rancho Feliz we believe the fundraising aspect of the service experience is equally important as the work itself. Our volunteer groups have held bake sales, car washes, dinners and dances, auctions, runs and bike rides, Happy Hours, pledge drives, and a host of other activities to raise these much needed funds. In this way the volunteers can follow the energy from the start forward – all the way from the effort they expend in raising funds, to the purchase of materials, to their project labor and on into the improvement of another human being's life (or many lives in most cases). But that's not the end. By improving another's life(s) the energy will continue through that person on to his or her circle of influence and on into future generations. So the volunteer can see first-hand that the initial energy spent raising funds continues on out into the world for generations to come with no logical ending. This is the powerful and courageous act of a Rancho Feliz "Guardian Warrior". Equally important in the fundraising transaction is the fact that soliciting donations forces the volunteer to put his or her ego aside for the good of a higher cause. This submission of the ego is an act of enlightenment at the very core of the Rancho Feliz belief system.

**IMPORTANT!** As discussed above, Rancho Feliz is a volunteer-based, IRS registered, 501(c)3 not for profit organization. All donations are tax deductible for income tax purposes to the full extent allowed by Law. This includes donated items. This tax-deductibility feature is very helpful when soliciting donations.

- 21) Question: For the construction projects, we have no skills in mixing cement, laying bricks, pounding nails, painting walls, etc. How are we supposed to know what to do?

Answer: Rancho Feliz has a host of local, skilled laborers and craftsmen who we hire to teach and facilitate the volunteers in construction and other skills required for their respective service projects. These “Local Supervisors” average 3 to 4 per group depending on group size and project complexity. Payment for this instruction and supervision is budgeted into the overall project cost and provides much needed jobs to the local community.

- 22) Question: We understand that that the average group stays for a weekend. How can our volunteer group build a whole house in just two days?

Answer: First of all, it can't. Second of all, it's important to understand that the homes we construct are more accurately described as shelters. In the barrios of Agua Prieta many families are forced to live like refugees. Their living conditions are sub-standard at best with many homes being constructed out of nothing more than wooden shipping pallets and cardboard. The typical home (or shelter) that our volunteers construct consists of a cement floor, 4 walls and a pitched metal roof. While this may not seem like much to us, to the receiving family their new “home” is a dream come true. Typically these 1 or 2 room homes are built over the span of 4 or 5 weekends with each volunteer group building its respective portion. This includes mixing the cement and pouring the foundation, laying brick for the walls, hammering the wooden roof trusses together and attaching the metal roof. So if your group volunteers for a weekend you will be instrumental in constructing a portion of a much needed and greatly appreciated home. In addition, the entire receiving family will be on the job site with you. For many volunteer groups this is their favorite part – getting to know the families personally and gaining an awareness of the many challenges they face on a daily basis. Also, many of our construction projects are additions to existing sub-standard housing. Upon returning home, many volunteers follow the progress of the home they worked on by “Friending” the Rancho Feliz, Facebook Page and monitoring the construction posts.

- 23) Question: Who decides, and how is it decided, who gets helped in the community?

Answer: Rancho Feliz is a totally secular, non-religious, non-political, volunteer organization. Consequently, we base all of our service decisions strictly on need and merit. Many of our Mexican associates are embedded within the various barrios themselves. In this way we allow the community to tell us who is in the greatest need of assistance. This avoids nepotism, special interests, ulterior motives, and the fostering of resentment between barrio residents, and allows the neighbors to feel a part of helping the less fortunate among them.

- 24) Question: What type of clothing should we bring and should we bring any special tools, etc.?

Answer: Agua Prieta, Sonora sits at an elevation of just over 4,000 feet. It is a barren landscape with very hot summers, very cold winters and lots of wind. Consequently, depending on the time of year of your scheduled service visit, you need to dress accordingly. This can be further discussed with the Exchange Program Coordinator at the time of your reservation. However, be sure to bring warm layers and windbreakers for the winter and hats and sunblock are recommended year-round. It's important to remember that most of your time will be spent on the job sites or at the dormitory and you won't be going “out” in the traditional sense of the word. So nightlife attire is not necessary. Also, if your group will be working construction you need to bring work gloves and clothes that can get ruined from mixing cement, carrying bricks and the general rigors of construction labor. Depending on your chosen work project(s) various tools will

be provided. However, many groups bring some of their own tools such as shovels, hammers, saws, etc. and donate them to the organization upon their departure. Rancho Feliz greatly appreciates this gesture.

**IMPORTANT!** Rancho Feliz has a specially designed “Guardian Warrior” volunteer T-Shirt that many of our participants purchase to wear during their visit. These signature shirts are uniquely recognizable and distinguish the wearer as a Rancho Feliz “Guardian Warrior” volunteer when he or she goes about the community of Agua Prieta. When taken home, these distinctive shirts are wonderful mementos and a source of interest and conversation to all who see them.

25) Question: Can we bring candy, used clothing, old toys and other discarded household items to hand out to those in need?

Answer: The answer is yes, as long as you pack them in personal suitcases, duffle bags or other luggage pieces. We discourage trying to cross the border with large quantities of used items loaded in boxes or garbage bags. This could be a problem. Mexico frowns upon sizable loads of used items being brought into the country as the possible sale of these items would be in direct competition with their struggling local retailers. However, if an individual wants to bring one or two extra luggage items filled with candy, used clothing, old toys, etc. to hand out to the poor this has not been a problem in the past. Many volunteers use this opportunity to clean out their closets (and the closets of their neighbors) to put their no longer used clothing back into grateful circulation.

26) Question: What exactly is a Rancho Feliz “Guardian Warrior”?

Answer: By definition, a “Guardian” has the courage to protect those without opportunity. Likewise, a “Warrior” charges undaunted, against seemingly impossible odds, into the battle for justice. Combined – a “Guardian Warrior” displays his or her power through compassion, responsibility and action – by looking out for those who cannot fend for themselves. The battlefield of today’s “Guardian Warrior” transcends the literal interpretation of war and destruction to embrace fearlessness, service and understanding in every moment of our lives. When it comes to helping the less fortunate, we can never let down, we are never off duty. Our strength is their only hope. Our Rancho Feliz volunteers have the courage to step out of their comfortable lives and help those not born into their same fortunate opportunities. This is a Rancho Feliz “Guardian Warrior”.

27) Question: Why does Rancho Feliz use the Knot of Eternity as its logo and what is its significance?

Answer: The “Knot of Eternity” is a Tantric Tibetan symbol. This ancient geometric design represents the true nature of reality – where everything is interwoven and interdependent. Nothing exists independently. Nothing exists on its own. This intrinsic inter-connectedness is symbolized by the infinite single thread design of the “Endless Knot”. With this awareness we understand the true nature of our own human experience – we do not exist independently. Rather we only exist in relation to each other as strands in a universal web of cause and effect. In this respect we matter, for we are cause in the fabric of life and every action we take affects the whole. With this understanding comes the realization that the best thing we can do for ourselves is to take care of each other. This non-dualistic awareness, that our own liberation is inexorably bound with those we serve, is the guiding philosophy behind Rancho Feliz. We call this “enlightened self-interest”. At Rancho Feliz we understand that the less fortunate provide us the

opportunity for self-actualization through service. We need and depend on them to give purpose, meaning and quality to our lives. Likewise, the less fortunate need and depend on us to provide opportunities for quality and dignity in their own lives. This principal of “reciprocal giving” is a fundamental precept to Rancho Feliz operations.

28) Question: How can we stay connected to Rancho Feliz after we return home?

Answer: Rancho Feliz has an active Facebook Page where project updates and other relevant information are posted daily. We strongly encourage you to “Friend” our site and even make your own posts describing your unique “Guardian Warrior” experiences. Also, our web-site: [www.ranchofeliz.com](http://www.ranchofeliz.com) is updated regularly. It is a wonderful way to keep up to date on our many life-changing projects and programs.

29) Question: Do you have any letters of recommendation from participating groups? Would it be possible to talk to someone who has previously volunteered in the Exchange Program and get their feedback?

Answer: Yes. For a history of feedback on the Exchange Program please visit the “Volunteer Comments” page on our web-site at: <https://www.ranchofeliz.com/exchange-program-letters>

Listed below are three Rancho Feliz, “Guardian Warrior” Exchange Program volunteer references who you are welcome to contact:

**Amy Armstrong**

e-mail: [amydarmstrong@gmail.com](mailto:amydarmstrong@gmail.com)

Amy is the group leader for the Armstrong Family Foundation, Arizona State University scholarship students. She coordinates this group’s Exchange Program visits twice a year. Amy and her husband Patrick also founded and host the Next Generation Philanthropists volunteer group’s Exchange Program visits.

**Sally Falkner**

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Sally has been participating in the Exchange Program for many years coordinating the Seton High School (Tempe, Arizona) student visits as well as several others.

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Morris Scott has participated in the Exchange Program for a number of years and is intimately familiar with the program and its operations.