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If you want to help for a day, give them rice;  
If you want to help for a while give them a tree;  
If you want to help for an eternity, give them an education.

Spring 2020

## *San Diego Union-Tribune*

### Someone San Diego Should Know

LIFE OF AIDING POOR GREW FROM SUMMER JOB

By JAN GOLDSMITH (EDITED BY LYNCH)  
APRIL 13, 2020



Lynch has spent decades educating and lifting up impoverished in Tijuana

In 1980, David Lynch, a special education teacher in New York, signed up for a summer teaching program in Tijuana. Forty years later, Lynch remains working in Mexico having helped thousands of poverty-stricken children improve their lives. He has built a legacy that will help many more children for years to come.

When Lynch arrived in Tijuana in the summer of 1980, he was assigned to a neighborhood located at a garbage dump. His project was to teach kindergarten for the summer.

“The poverty was shocking,” Lynch recalled. “Piles of garbage, no running water, no electricity, the stench of garbage, flies everywhere.”

Families spent their days scavenging at the garbage dump. Known as *pepenadores*, they searched for anything of value to sell or use such as clothing, shoes, household goods and recyclables. Everyone in the family scavenged, including children.

Less than 30 percent of the children attended school, which was located outside the neighborhood. Few had career opportunities. Their future was scavenging.

“I felt for those kids. But I did not think I would return after that first summer.”

He did return. Lynch taught two more summers.

After the third summer, he decided the children needed more than summer classes. He asked for and received two one-year sabbaticals to partner with Rosemont College in Philadelphia on a year-round school. His third request was granted, provided he commit to thereafter return to teaching in New York. Lynch declined and, instead, relinquished his tenured job.

In 1983, Lynch moved to Tijuana to devote his life’s work to educating poverty-stricken Tijuana *pepenadores* children. With help from volunteers and Rosemont College, Lynch created a school providing a variety of classes for the children. Students ranged from kindergarten to age 12. He reached out to families working at the garbage dump sometimes having to overcome skepticism.

“The eagerness of these children to learn amazed me,” Lynch said. “Their attention never wavered despite a constant parade of pigs, dogs and chickens passing through the outdoor classroom.”

In 1985, Lynch and volunteers completed construction of the first schoolhouse located near the garbage dump. By 1988, two of Lynch’s former students became the first dump dwellers to attend secondary school and graduate. Many more would follow.

“Most of these children had never left the neighborhood. The garbage dump was their life. We would take them to other parts of the region and show them Mexico and California. We showed them there is more to life than the garbage dump and they did not need to be scavengers.”

About 18,000 children have taken Lynch’s classes, many of whom have gone on to lives outside the garbage dump. Antonia was a student at age 12. By chance Lynch met her 25 years later at a *quinceanera*. “You took me many places, including a bakery. I decided then I wanted to own one,” Antonia told him, pointing out she owns the bakery that catered the 500-guest event. *(Not all the students are/were from the garbage dump. Many live/lived in local neighborhoods. Added by Lynch)*

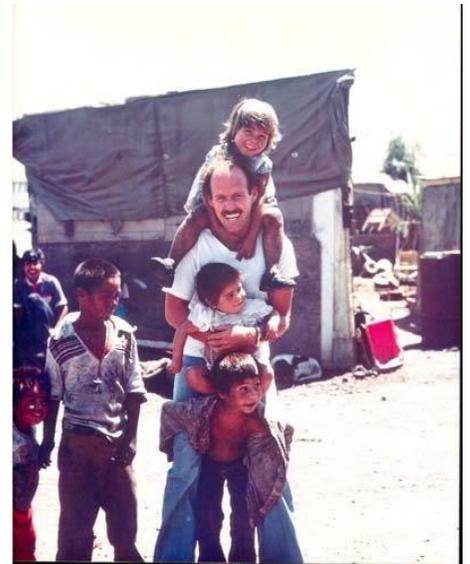
Lynch, who never married, developed lasting relationships. Ramon needed a temporary place to stay at age 10 but remained living with Lynch until age 19 when he married. Now 46 and working as a truck driver, Ramon his wife and three children are family to Lynch. As is Felipe, a former student, who is now a teacher at Lynch’s school. Lynch is godfather to Felipe’s children and grandchildren.

He has won numerous awards including the “World of Children Humanitarian Award” hosted by UNICEF. He credits his special needs brother, Kevin, for sensitizing and inspiring him to help others.

Today, Lynch resides in San Diego. Although the Mexican government now operates the school, Lynch continues with the kindergarten. In 1989, he formed a nonprofit, Responsibility, Inc., to expand fundraising, scholarships, and educational programs. It has also created a school for *pepenadores* in Nicaragua and helped build homes and bring in water and medical services over the years.

David Lynch has touched the lives of thousands and his programs will continue helping many more into the future.

And to think it all started with a teacher joining a summer teaching program.



Lynch, Summer 1980, at Tijuana Garbage Dump

### *Susan Sarandon’s Twitter Account in April 2020*

Everyone should know about THIS David Lynch too. In the last 40 years he has educated almost 20,000 children living in Tijuana *(and added by Lynch, Nicaragua)*.

*Edited by Lynch*

*Susan Sarandon visited Lynch’s school in 2006. She has been supporting his work since 1998.*



### **THANK YOU**

As always, friends, we thank you for your support. Your continued support is both needed and appreciated, especially today.

Gratefully, *David Lynch, the Board of Directors, the Mexican Staff, the Nicaraguan Staff, and all of our students.*

*Bill O’Reilly, lifetime family friend, visited Lynch in Mexico in 1990. He has been supporting Lynch’s work since 1983.*

***Responsibility, Inc., is a 501 ( C )3 nonprofit organizations. Donations are tax deductible. EIN: 33-043729***

