

Plumbers Without Borders:

THINKING LOCALLY – AFFECTING GLOBALLY



Have you ever heard the words “globalocal” or “Glocal” ? These words are combinations of global + local... other linguistic blends are “smog” (smoke+fog), and “brunch” (breakfast + lunch).

"Think globally, act locally" urges people to consider the health of the entire planet and to take action in their own communities and cities. Long before governments began enforcing environmental laws, individuals were coming together to protect habitats and the organisms that live within them. One of the first examples of taking action was prohibiting contamination of our water sources; be it a lake or river used for both a clean drinking water source as well as recreational purposes. ¹

The critical role of the Plumbing and Mechanical Professionals: We are the skilled and trained practitioners responsible for the installation and maintenance of Plumbing systems, which are the basis for human health and sustainable communities. Plumbing and Mechanical professionals have become so skilled at the craft that we make it look simple, knowing very well that it's not. The average person generally has no idea what it takes to design/install or maintain a plumbing system; it is just expected to perform properly day in and day out. **“Plumbers Protect the Health of the Nation”** is a phrase used for decades, yet the general public doesn't think of Plumbers as having anything to do with personal health, much less global health. **“Keepers of the Gate”** is also used to describe the Plumbing and Mechanical Professionals protecting the environment since they install and maintain the water supply and the outgoing wastewater systems. Recognizing the potential Health and Environmental hazards

¹ From Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Think_globally,_act_locally

beforehand and deploying the proper Backflow and cross-connection control measures demonstrates the technical and practical expertise of the Professional Certified Plumber.

“The society which scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity, and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because philosophy is an exalted activity, will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water.”²

Natural disasters remind us how instantaneous the transition to chaos, with tragic consequences, can be when suddenly there is no access to drinking water and or sanitation. Water borne diseases such as Cholera and Diarrhea, kill millions of people daily throughout the world, but they are effectively eliminated by the Professional Plumber properly installing water and sanitary systems in residential, industrial or commercial applications. Humans can survive without food for sustained periods of time, but we cannot survive without water for very long!

Plumbers like Jed Scheuermann, have had a special affinity for helping people caught in the unpreventable chaos that ensues in the aftermath of natural disasters. The story of Jed’s journey to Haiti, published in the IAPMO magazine, *Official* (May/June-2010) inspired many of his fellow Plumbers to consider how they also can make a difference.



² John W. Gardner, *Excellence: Can We Be Equal and Excellent Too?* (1961)

Plumbers Without Borders was born as a local grass-roots effort in Seattle to facilitate and channel the abundant generosity among Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Mechanical tradespersons to reach out and help the underserved. Charity begins at home is so true. Although the plight of thousands of Haitians fighting for survival was the shocking jolt that spurred many to action, all of us, no matter where we live, have within our communities, neighbors who are struggling and living in sub-standard housing, many without clean drinking water, safe sanitation, and/or a safe heating system.

One of the first local alliances **Plumbers Without Borders** formed was with Habitat for Humanity/Seattle-King County. We are now working on our 6th project within our first six months with Habitat, with more scheduled, thanks to the generosity of PHCC Plumbers:

Bill Buckingham (Southwest Plumbing), Bob Larson (Bob Larson Plumbing), Jerry Church (J & K Plumbing), Ken Lantz (Quality Plumbing), and others such as Ed Benson (Paramount Mechanical), Reid-Pacific Company, Consolidated Supply, Pacific Plumbing, and Ferguson.

Habitat for Humanity has a local presence in over 3000 communities around the world.³ Their work is local, with a global impact.

Another of our early alliances was formed with a local chapter of Engineers Without Borders, who also have hundreds of local chapters throughout the US as well as internationally. Working on a local level, with local expertise and materials, is economical, efficient, green, and smart.



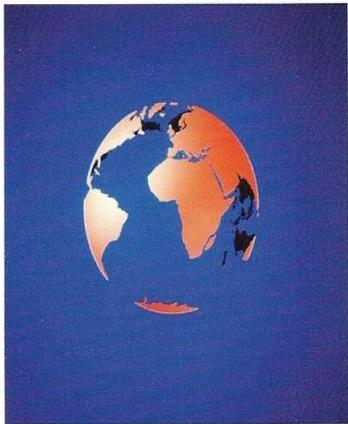
Left: Marty Kooistra (CEO-Habitat for Humanity); Standing: Fred C. Volkers, Plumbers Without Borders and Domenico DiGregorio, Plumbers Without Borders, signing Letter of Intent to work together

Plumbers Without Borders' vision includes being a facilitator and resource for other humanitarian organizations, who are already engaged in implementing water and sanitation projects throughout the world. We want to help connect volunteers with projects, both locally

³ <http://www.habitat.org/how/affiliates.aspx>

and abroad. There's been a resounding interest from Plumbers and Pipefitters around the world who want to participate in this global effort and some even want to form their own local chapters. To this end, Plumbers Without Borders is working on creating local chapters. A

Plumbers Without Borders



Helping to improve
global health by
increasing access to
safe water and
sanitary systems
worldwide

notable group in South Africa, IOPSA (Institute of Plumbing South Africa) is considering forming a local chapter. With the array of natural challenges, as well as the emerging development issues faced by the region, a **Plumbers Without Borders – South Africa** would be logically the most efficient use of resources.

Volunteering through local chapters, Plumbers and Pipefitters can be an integral part of building and protecting their local communities' water and sanitary resources. *After all, plumbing is definitely local!*

Plumbers Without Borders is developing the first comprehensive databank of Volunteer Trade Professionals, in the Plumbing & Mechanical field. This database will also include Manufacturers who wish to donate materials or supplies to organizations that are implementing water and sanitation projects.

Having local chapters of **Plumbers Without Borders** will also facilitate the improvement and/or creation of local "Disaster-relief teams", whereby highly skilled Plumbers, Pipefitters, Mechanical professionals can become an integral part of existing teams or agencies that would be dispatched to respond to a natural disaster. This type of global interaction will require the help of countless individuals to be coordinated at both local and global levels, perhaps under the auspices of the World Health Organization (WHO), The Red Cross, The Red R, and others.

Education and Training is still one of the single most effective ways of creating the foundation for healthy and sustainable communities. With that in mind, a variety of educational seminars will be developed by **Plumbers Without Borders**.

The topics may include :

- basic plumbing in both developing and developed communities
- Avoiding cross-connections
- Piping materials and valves
- System Maintenance
- Water filtration
- Sanitation basics
- Green technologies
- Waste to energy technologies
- disaster-relief plumbing basics

Plumbers Without Borders will promote Plumbing Codes and Material Standards used by most developed and developing countries, keeping the emphasis on health and safety.

Plumbing, Pipefitting, and Mechanical professionals are indeed stewards of human health, as well as sustainably healthy environments. By engaging the collective consciousness in our industry, and collaborating with like-minded efforts, both locally and globally, **Plumbers Without Borders** invites you to join in the process, no matter at what level of participation, everyone who shares in this vision is important.

Whether you would like to lend your support, keep abreast of news, join a “problem-solving” work-group or committee, start a committee, or a chapter, be an educational resource in the community, or any other helpful function, please let us know. Also, if anyone would like to share their own story of how they’re connecting and helping in their communities, please email or call us....we’d love to post it on our website...you’ll be in good company!

Plumbers Without Borders is a 501 C (3) non-profit organization, based in Washington State.

Please visit our website : www.plumberswithoutborders.org

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