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## On a 'Human Voyage'

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There's a saying that even the smallest hands can help.

And so, Ecole Marie-Tanguay Grade 4 student Nicolas Kirkwood will be rolling up his sleeves for a Guatemalan family next month.

"I'm going to try to help the family to do . . ." Nicolas pauses for the right word which his mother, France Chevarie, adds: "renovations."

Chevarie beams widely as her son finishes his reply about their upcoming trip to **Guatemala** where he's going to take pride in making a difference.

"The agency (Humanis Voyages) is saying he's probably the youngest person to go on a trip like this," Chevarie said.

Human Voyages is a Montrealbased travel agency which offers travellers an opportunity to mix in humanitarian work while vacationing.

"I thought this (trip) would be much better for Nicolas than a surround-sound TV and stereo," Chevarie said, laughing again.

A third member of their party, family friend Sylvain Mireault, discovered the agency.

"I always wanted to do something like that," said Chevarie, who is currently between seasons as a Great Lakes marine pilot. Mireault is taking vacation time for the adventure.

The trio will also be spending two weekends vacationing in some of the most beautiful and historic places in Latin America.

During seven days, however, they will be improving the lives of a family in a poor neighbourhood of Antigua (pop. 36,000), which was **Guatemala's** capital for about two centuries, before a volcano-induced earthquake forced the colonial government to move to **Guatemala** City.

The party will be bringing \$1,200 in donations to buy material for the renovations and learning resources for a primary school, where the group will volunteer for three days.

During the mornings, they will be learning Spanish.

"It's not enough for building a new house, but at least it can fix a roof or, if it's a bigger family, make an addition," Chevarie said.

About \$400 of the fund was raised by Nicolas' 360 classmates during a Halloween event.

Chevarie also received \$400 from the Knights of Columbus of St. Francis de Sales. The remainder came from individual donations.

"There was even one family whom I didn't really know well who heard about the trip and donated \$200," Chevarie said.

They will arrive in Antigua on Thursday, Feb. 4, and tour the city on Feb. 5. The first weekend will include trips to a semi-active volcano, Pacaya, and to the Pacific Ocean beach town of Monterrico. The second weekend of Feb. 13-14 will involve a tour of Lac Atitlan and a visit to one of Latin America's biggest markets in Chichicastengango.

Nicolas will have plenty to report when he returns.

"I'm going to have a scrapbook," he said.

"I can't wait for him to come back to tell us all about it," said Nicolas' teacher, Annie Allaire.

While the publicity is not intended to raise more money, Chevarie said more is welcome and noted that every cent will be utilized to provide assistance. Email her at [fchevarie@cogeco.ca](mailto:fchevarie@cogeco.ca) or call, 613-938-2484.

**Keywords:** CITY AND DISTRICT

**Illustration:** Staff photo/Peerenboom-GP1001265 Nicolas Kirkwood and his mother, France Chevarie, display the poster his Ecole Marie-Tanguay class made recently. The pair will be bringing the poster to a school in Antiqua, **Guatemala** next month.