

# EMPLOYEES SUPPORT COMMUNITY IN TIME OF CRISIS



Juan Bello of Rockwell Automation, Caracas' Information Technology department dressed as Santa Claus to distribute gifts to children in temporary shelters.

By their very definition, natural disasters bring about stories of hardship. But when employees of Rockwell Automation, Caracas, Venezuela, reached out to their community and friends in crisis, they turned a tragedy into a touching story of hope and gratitude.

Devastating mud slides near Caracas killed 30,000 to 50,000 people last December and left hundreds of thousands homeless

as they fled from mountainside barrios and luxury shorefront apartments. The tragedy touched everyone in the region, including Rockwell Automation employees, who joined forces to bring comfort to others during the holiday season.

The outpouring of help was amazing, said Alfredo Espinoza, marketing supervisor, Global Technical Services, who led the effort. He reported that every employee and many family members joined the struggle to collect, wrap and distribute donated gifts, clothes and candy to children housed in temporary shelters in time for Christmas. Juan Bello of Information Technology played Santa Claus and entertained the children along with fellow workers. "The kids were amazing," Espinoza said. "They cried when they received their gifts."

All employees in the Rockwell Automation office in Caracas had stories to tell about their

experiences with the disaster. "Everyone was touched by the crisis in some way," said Joao De Aguiar, country manager, Venezuela and Colombia. "We were very concerned for the safety of the people in the damaged areas and for our employees."



AP Photos

Recent mud slides devastated parts of Caracas, Venezuela.

Eduardo Leston, Motor Control Centers specialist, Packaged Control Products, lost his home in a torrent of mud, and said he witnessed "boulders, cars and buses crashing down the mountainside." In the following weeks and months, Leston said he was moved by all the support he received. "So many people have called or helped in some way. I have no words to express how much I appreciate the kindness from the people of Rockwell Automation."

Since then, financial assistance has poured into Venezuela from around the world. More than two dozen foreign governments and numerous companies have participated — including Rockwell, which donated US\$20,000 to the local Red Cross.

The crisis was an opportunity for many to show their support for each other and their communities, said John Good, marketing manager for the Latin American region. "This support reflects how we team as a company whether it is on behalf of a customer, an individual or, in this case, a community."



Several Rockwell Automation, Caracas employees participated in the Christmas relief effort.