


June 2024

Rotary News

INDIA

www.rotarynewsonline.org

 @NewsRotary

 /RotaryNewsIndia

Vol.67, Issue 12 | Annual Subscription ₹ 480

Rotary 





Rotary
Club of
VIRUDHUNAGAR Dist- 3212



P.G. U. JAYARAMAN
Pilot Faculty



Rtn. V.V.S.K. SHANMUGAM
PRESIDENT



Rtn. V.N.M.A.K. RAJEEVAN
SECRETARY



**STOP WORRYING ABOUT JOB(S)
START PRODUCING JOB(S)**

**A Comprehensive 3500+ Minutes
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
DEVELOPMENT
WORKSHOP**

Eligibility: AGE BELOW 32 YEARS

**FIRST EVER
RYLA
BE AN
ENTREPRENEUR
IN SRI LANKA**



In JAFFNA
14th, 15th, 16th
JUNE 2024

VENUE
J GUEST JAFFNA
146, PUNGANKULAM ROAD,
ARIYALAI, JAFFNA

RYLA COURSE DETAILS

- Formula to Choose & Build the Right Business
- Effective Promotions- Marketing - Selling
- Effective Finance Management
- Conquer More Customers
- Read People like a Book
- Creativity & Innovation in Biz

TO ATTEND RYLA CONTACT
Vasee +94 77 378 8795 - Navajeevan +1 416 272 8543

IDHAYAM
SAY IDHAYAM • SPELL HEALTH

For Future Participation in RYLA-INDIA Contact: 94431 66650 | 94433 67248

LEKHA_06/June 2024_Rotary-I

Inside

12

The woman who always says YES in Rotary

24

RC Roop Nagar conducts crucial training to save lives

28

RIPE Stephanie weaves the Rotary magic across Mumbai and Pune

34

The Rotary buzz in Kolkata

36

Happy Schools, happier children

42

An Interact club for the hearing, speech-impaired

44

Showcase the Rotary magic

48

Rotary boosts mobile cardiac care in Chennai

52

Homecare nursing empowers 15,000 girls

54

Boosting local healthcare and women's empowerment

70

Slow down on fast fashion

72

Consistency is the key



Focus on mental health

As a Rotarian and paediatrician, I felt happy reading the cover story on mental health by Jaishree. It is the need of the hour and well-written with apt examples and insight. Hope it kindles the thoughts of Rotarians showing them the path to focus. Today's kids are growing up with gadgets, lack human touch and sufficient interaction with friends and family. As the editor points out, more than 50 per cent are affected mentally, but among them, 90 per cent don't get professional help, thanks to stigma and social implications. As Rotarians we need to play a major role in this arena. I really appreciate your editorial team for bringing up such wonderful and thought-provoking articles.

Dr M Ismail, RC Mettupalayam — D 3203

The cover picture of an elderly woman affected by mental illness in the May issue is thought-provoking, and the cover story shows that mental health in today's world is a very serious issue.

RI President Gordon McNally is satisfied with the support he has received from Rotary clubs in promoting mental health. The Editor's note narrates graphically the consequences of ongoing wars and the relevance of Rotary Peace Centers and peace scholars at this time.

Ever-eluding peace

Editor Rasheeda Bhagat is hopeful that the Rotary Peace Fellows will focus on bringing lasting peace in the world. Peace has always eluded us; historically, there have been wars practically every year, and we are still at war. The human brain is conditioned to war, hate and conflict through this long period of evolution. Only when we move away from the direction of hate and conflict, can there be peace in this world.

*KMK Murthy
RC Secunderabad — D 3150*



The messages of RID Anirudha Roy Chowdhury, TRF chair Barry Rassin and vice-chair Bharat Pandya are all interesting.

The May issue is superb with great articles on creating hope in Naxal-infested areas, an ambulance for neonates in Rourkela, RIPE Stephanie's visit to India, the beauty of Jaffna, and all the pictures are beautiful.

*Philip Mulappone M T
RC Trivandrum Suburban — D 3211*

I think you should avoid the work of artists who modify images; this month's cover and a few pages from the last issue are inappropriate. Simple, down-to-earth pictures will suffice.

Pramod Beri, RC Kolhapur — D 3170

Greetings from RID 3261, and our warm regards to Editor Rasheeda Bhagat. We are getting regularly the hard copy of *Rotary News*, please email us regularly copies of *Rotary News Plus*. Thanks Jaishree for your wonderful article on mental health issues faced by our youth. The cover page photo by cinematographer Ibrahim of his mother is heart touching.

PDG Subhash Sahu — D 3261

Striking a chord among readers, the Editor's note has rightly mentioned the violence in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Syria and even the random gun attacks in the US. But it missed out the atrocities on women and children in Manipur. For the past one year, Manipur is burning with the worst crimes on women and children. The state has been divided into Kuki and Meitei camps, and the editorial has skipped the blatant atrocity in Manipur. I am sure the *Rotary News* editor has a point or two to convey on this issue. I agree with her, that

peace does have a chance in our world.

*Manu Sharat Tiwari
RC Jabalpur — D 3261*

Thanks for mentioning Manipur, where the violence is a collective blot on our conscience. Allow me to point out that in the August 2023 Editorial, I did touch upon the violence in Manipur. Here is an excerpt: "The chilling video of two Kuki-Zo women being paraded naked in Manipur, "with their private parts being touched by humans-turned-monsters," as the

LETTERS

Editor of *The Shillong Times* writes in a signed article, proves that brutality against helpless women continues.”

Editor

I read with interest the May editorial. I am not a supporter of either Israel, Hamas or Palestinians. But think about a situation where you are surrounded by six enemies ready to annihilate you. Don't you think you will do your best to protect yourself. This is the situation of Israel. The Hamas attack on Oct 7, 2023 was an intrusion in the peaceful existence of Israel, and created a humanitarian crisis. Palestinians are suffering immensely while their bosses are enjoying in five-star comfort. The true picture is captured in the book *Son of Hamas* by Mosab Hassan Yousef, who is the son of the Hamas founder. The world can't have peace as long as there are greedy politicians and no respect for international laws and boundaries.

Brij Khandelwal

RC Madras Central — D 3232

The article *Rotary gifts a human milk bank in Aurangabad and Tirupati* shows the highly appreciable project done by both the clubs for neonatal ICU. Also, the Tirupati club has put up a crematorium which was most useful during the Covid pandemic.

Santaram Cherukuri

RC Nashik Smart City — 3030

PRIP Rajendra Saboo has penned an excellent article (May issue) on APJ Abdul Kalam, a great son of India and role model for the youth. As director of TVS Schools, Madurai, I had a rare opportunity to invite Kalam to address the students in Feb 2015, a few months before his demise. He conquered the

hearts of around 1,500 students with his words of wisdom in a 90-minute interaction. He was particular that we should also invite about 200 students from the Corporation schools. So, we restricted the participation of our students. This was appreciated by Kalam in his speech. All the students were impressed with his ability to connect with the youth.

Nine years have gone since he addressed our students, but we cannot forget that day when Kalam tapped the youth power and imagination with his simplicity and charm. He left sparking many a dream in the young minds.

R Srinivasan

RC Bangalore JP Nagar — D 3191

I am a non-Rotarian who reads regularly *Rotary News* that is available in a local library in Rajkot. With reference to the article on Dr Kalam, I feel he was a stooge of the Brahminical lobby, and only danced to the tunes of his masters. He was loved by Hindus but never took up any genuine problem faced by minorities and weaker sections of society. In short, he was more Hindu than born-Hindus. For this qualification he was selected as President of India and conferred Bharat Ratna.

Farooq Abdulgafar Bawani

(Non Rotarian) Rajkot, Gujarat

Maiden coverage

We are grateful to the Editor for her support and the extensive coverage given to our projects in the last issue of *Rotary News*. On behalf of my club, we thank her for this. It is worth mentioning that this is the first time in our club's 71-year history that we have received coverage in *Rotary News*.

Sarita Lonikar

RC Aurangabad — D 3132

An interesting and informative column 'Music and Melody' has been missing in the recent issues. We are deprived of getting interesting information from S R Madhu's column on India's great singers, artistes and music directors. Do try to revive this column.

Shyama Charan Das

RC Subarnnarekha

Raibania — D 3262

RN Plus: Great reading

I enjoyed reading the various projects done by Rotary clubs in *Rotary News Plus*, April 2024. The details given in these articles motivate Rotarians to do good for the community and also let them know different ways to reach out to local communities.

TD Bhatia

RC Delhi Mayur Vihar — D 3012

On the cover: RI President Elect Stephanie Urchick

We welcome your feedback. Write to the Editor: rotarynews@rosaonline.org; rushbhagat@gmail.com. Mail your project details, along with hi-res photos, to rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com.

Messages on your club/district projects, information and links on zoom meetings/webinar should be sent only by e-mail to the

Editor at rushbhagat@gmail.com or rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com.

WHATSAPP MESSAGES WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



1. During a country visit to Mongolia, RI President Gordon McInally tries his hand at falconry, an ancient practice in the region. 2. McInally (second from left) and leaders of District 3450 give the thumbs up during preparations for the Macau Grand Prix in November. 3. While visiting Nassau, Bahamas, for a Rotary Institute, McInally drops by an environmental project run by Rotary members. 4. McInally shares a moment with Kenyan Rotarian and Rotaractor Kennedy Gayah on the sidelines of a Rotary Institute in Lusaka, Zambia. 5. McInally and his wife, Heather, greet Pope Francis in St Peter's Square, Vatican City.



6



10

The honour of a lifetime

It's customary for a Rotary president in the final month in office to recap the past year on this page, and I am proud of all we have achieved together. But I want to focus on our future, and that begins with polio.

We have reached an astonishing 3 billion children with the polio vaccine, and we have averted an estimated 20 million cases of paralysis. But it's not enough. We must continue supporting the End Polio Now campaign to reach zero cases and keep our promise to the world's children.

Polio is not our only global commitment. In fact, Rotary has been working toward global peace even longer. Spreading Positive Peace through service projects and Rotary Peace Centers around the world is more important than ever.

We must also continue to build peace from within, and that begins with supporting mental health and wellness among our fellow Rotary members and the communities we serve. Rotary has an opportunity to help build a global mental health system that currently does not exist, and I urge all members to consider joining the Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives to keep up the momentum we began this year.

It's been the honour of a lifetime to serve as your president. You have given Heather and me memories we will cherish forever. I look forward to our continued friendship and our collective commitment to *Create Hope in the World*.

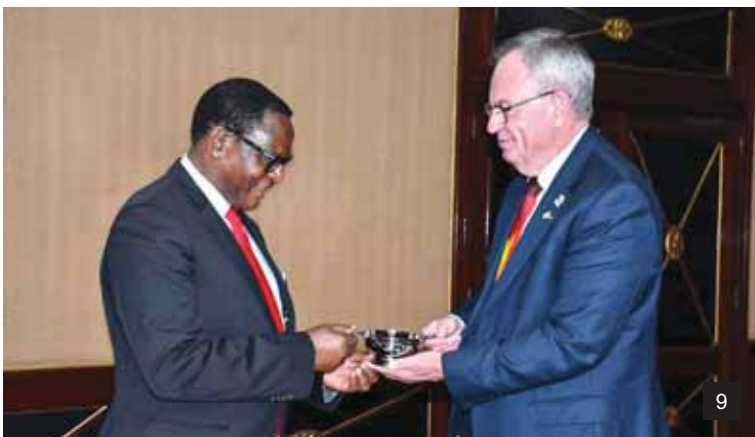
Gordon McInally
President, Rotary International



7



8



9

6. The McInallys visit Rotary leaders in Bhubaneswar, known as India's 'temple city'. 7. A student works on a puzzle with McInally at a school for young people with disabilities in South Africa that is supported by Rotary clubs. 8. McInally works on his forehand at a demonstration space for tennis players who use wheelchairs while in Rome for a Rotary Institute. 9. During a tour of Africa, McInally presents Malawi President Lazarus Chakwera with a quaich, a Scottish gift of friendship. 10. The McInallys join the fun at the July Fourth Parade in Evanston, Illinois, home of the Rotary International headquarters.

Rotarians!

Visiting Chennai
for business?

Looking for a
compact meeting hall?



Use our air-conditioned Board Room with a seating capacity of 16 persons at the office of the Rotary News Trust.

Tariff:

₹2,500 for 2 hours

₹5,000 for 4 hours

₹1,000 for every additional hour

Phone: 044 42145666

e-mail: rotarynews@rosaonline.org

Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 36,983

Rotaract clubs : 10,634

Interact clubs : 14,210

RCCs : 13,432

Rotary members : 1,184,368

Rotaract members: 175,505

Interact members : 326,830

As on May 14, 2024

Membership Summary

As on May 1, 2024

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	140	6,034	6.00	73	503	32	254
2982	87	3,892	6.06	43	897	85	186
3000	144	6,101	12.01	105	1,787	213	217
3011	137	5,151	30.17	86	2,529	155	38
3012	167	4,200	24.62	77	1,137	100	61
3020	82	4,783	7.74	41	729	111	351
3030	101	5,775	16.55	55	966	479	385
3040	111	2,490	14.58	40	814	54	214
3053	74	2,946	16.70	27	409	38	131
3055	77	3,164	12.58	70	1,088	45	377
3056	87	3,812	24.27	34	448	98	201
3060	103	5,211	15.85	67	2,259	65	144
3070	119	3,285	15.71	49	595	55	63
3080	108	4,333	12.55	66	1,944	161	126
3090	125	2,669	5.99	21	373	189	166
3100	112	2,229	10.63	13	58	34	151
3110	140	3,826	11.84	18	127	52	109
3120	89	3,679	15.77	46	551	22	55
3131	143	5,769	32.14	127	3,078	254	151
3132	93	3,818	13.99	44	639	102	214
3141	115	6,379	27.84	141	5,850	158	235
3142	107	3,926	21.55	64	2,279	103	96
3150	110	4,381	13.81	100	1,963	111	130
3160	80	2,650	8.79	32	258	95	82
3170	150	6,719	15.14	127	2,016	172	180
3181	88	3,711	10.78	46	483	88	121
3182	86	3,719	10.62	48	250	86	103
3191	94	3,527	18.40	97	3,201	129	35
3192	85	3,566	21.42	87	2,409	143	40
3201	176	6,834	9.89	139	2,634	101	95
3203	96	5,042	7.34	50	934	115	39
3204	79	2,593	6.79	24	237	14	13
3211	161	5,263	8.63	9	97	22	135
3212	124	4,753	11.63	101	3,777	184	153
3231	96	3,484	7.06	41	559	39	417
3232	188	6,569	21.05	131	4,592	110	102
3240	104	3,556	17.18	47	807	41	231
3250	108	4,200	22.12	63	987	55	191
3261	99	3,381	22.72	26	275	24	45
3262	117	3,904	15.52	80	805	641	287
3291	145	3,907	26.21			76	749
India Total	4,647	175,231		2,555	55,344	4,851	7,073
3220	70	2,017	16.86	97	4,158	100	77
3271	112	1,573	21.17	196	2,059	275	28
0063 (3272)	132	1,464	17.62	97	1,240	22	49
0064 (3281)	332	7,315	17.51	249	1,731	117	214
0065 (3282)	180	3,536	9.93	179	1,337	24	47
3292	156	5,548	18.73	185	5,432	107	136
S Asia Total	5,629	196,684	15.73	3,558	71,301	5,496	7,624

Source: RI South Asia Office



When the privileged wreak havoc

The shocking incident in Pune of an intoxicated 17-year-old overspeeding in a Porsche at nearly 200kmph, and that too on a narrow lane, and killing two young techies returning home after a get-together, has sent shockwaves across the country. What has come to the fore, once again, is the privileged rich taking for granted their right to break the law. Clear and simple. The drunk teenager flouted with impunity two laws — drinking in a public bar in a state (Maharashtra) where the legal drinking age is an astonishingly high at 25 and driving a car without a valid driving licence, which he could not have attained at 17.

The result of this reckless drunken driving was the death of two young people in the prime of their life. Once again, the privilege of class and money struck after this ghastly crime. The Juvenile Justice Board in Pune granted bail to the teen within hours of the tragic crash, that killed two young people. Astonishingly, his 'punishment' was to "assist traffic police for 15 days and pen a 300 word-essay on road accidents as his bail conditions." Predictably, this decision triggered widespread outrage on social media where the users fumed at such a lenient punishment for somebody who had committed three crimes — drinking, driving illegally and killing two people. Scathing comments were made on the Indian judicial system being a 'joke' and how "power and wealth dominate the system, leaving ordinary people powerless." The father, who had devised an elaborate escape plan to flee from Pune in typical movie style, was taken into custody from Aurangabad, and the bar manager and owner were arrested for serving alcohol illegally to a teenager. After two whole days, the bar was sealed, as CCTV footage clearly showed the guilty teenager

drinking there along with his friends. And, following public outcry, the teenager's bail was cancelled and he was remanded to an observation home.

While public memory will soon fade, what is scary is the surfacing of too many cases of youngsters indulging in substance/alcohol abuse, and their parents indulging them. While an overwhelming majority of Indians can only dream of owning a car, leave alone an uber luxury car such as a Porsche, which can cost anywhere from one crore to a few crore rupees in India, our country today can also boast of wealth that enables a parent to casually hand over the control of such an expensive vehicle to a child who had no licence to drive it. The arrogant underlying statement is: if he gets caught, we can manipulate the system to fish him out of trouble. But in this case, the "trouble" was much more than smashing a couple of road barricades or dividers... it was the end of two lives, and along with them the unleashing of a lifetime of sorrow and tears for two families. What blows the mind is the simple question... if you have crores to buy a Porsche, couldn't you spare a few hundreds to hire a driver for the night, especially after paying ₹48,000 at the bar?

If at all a lesson is learnt from this... it should strengthen the resolve of civil society organisations such as Rotary to intensify their efforts to spread awareness, first of all among parents, to protect their children from alcohol/substance abuse. When civil society faces such grave danger from illegal and irresponsible drinking, no effort can be considered too little. But then, like charity, vigilance too begins at home.

Rasheeda Bhagat



Thank you and keep dreaming big

Every June, we in Rotary look back at our accomplishments and plan for what's next. For me, this month is the end of seven years in Rotary leadership that began as president-elect of RI.

It's remarkable how far we have come during that time, and how much we've done through The Rotary Foundation. We wouldn't be where we are without your support and without you dreaming big.

A few months back, I saw these big dreams when I visited a hospital in India where doctors perform 4,200 paediatric heart surgeries a year thanks to a global grant. I will never forget the hospital in Taiwan where ambulances funded by another Foundation grant have doubled the survival rate for heart patients. And these examples barely scratch the surface; your Foundation awarded 1,098 global grants during the 2022–23 Rotary year. Think about the scale of that work — the magnitude of our impact.

Our Programs of Scale initiatives around the world are more proof of how big dreams are becoming reality. We have grant recipients working to end malaria in Zambia, reduce the mortality rate of mothers and infants in Nigeria, and eliminate cervical cancer in Egypt. Soon, our fourth Program of Scale will get started, dedicated to sustainable farming in India.

Through your support, our dream of spreading peace is growing, with the Otto and Fran Walter Rotary Peace Center set to welcome its first students at Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul next year. And if we hadn't envisioned a better world and supported Polio-Plus, would it have been possible that Nigeria would be declared polio-free, as it was in 2020?

This is why your support of the Foundation is so critical. We set an ambitious fundraising goal of \$500 million this year. We are well on our way to reaching the goal, and with the support of everyone reading this we'll make it. I'm especially counting on Rotary members who have not yet contributed. Whatever you give, know that your gift will make a difference, whether it's for polio eradication, literacy initiatives, peace education, or any other area in which Rotary excels.

These seven years have been a fantastic run for me. I have met so many passionate leaders in Rotary, Rotaract, Interact, and other members of our Rotary family. You have all inspired me with your drive and the big dreams you dare to dream.

All I can do is say thank you. I can't wait to see how far those Rotary dreams will take us in the years ahead.

Barry Rassin
TRF Trustee Chair

Governors Council

RID 2981	Senguttuvan G
RID 2982	Raghavan S
RID 3000	Anandtha Jothi R
RID 3011	Jeetender Gupta
RID 3012	Priyatosh Gupta
RID 3020	Subbarao Ravuri
RID 3030	Asha Venugopal
RID 3040	Ritu Grover
RID 3053	Pawan Khandelwal
RID 3055	Mehul Rathod
RID 3056	Nirmal Jain Kunawat
RID 3060	Nihir Dave
RID 3070	Vipan Bhasin
RID 3080	Arun Kumar Mongia
RID 3090	Ghanshyam Kansal
RID 3100	Ashok Kumar Gupta
RID 3110	Vivek Garg
RID 3120	Sunil Bansal
RID 3131	Manjoo Phadke
RID 3132	Swati Herkal
RID 3141	Arun Bhargava
RID 3142	Milind Martand Kulkarni
RID 3150	Shankar Reddy Busireddy
RID 3160	Manik S Pawar
RID 3170	Nasir H Borsadwala
RID 3181	Keshav HR
RID 3182	Geetha BC
RID 3191	Udaykumar K Bhaskara
RID 3192	Srinivas Murthy V
RID 3201	Vijaykumar TR
RID 3203	Dr Sundararajan S
RID 3204	Dr Sethu Shiv Sankar
RID 3211	Dr Sumithran G
RID 3212	Muthiah Pillai R
RID 3231	Bharanidharan P
RID 3232	Ravi Raman
RID 3240	Nilesh Kumar Agarwal
RID 3250	Bagaria SP
RID 3261	Manjit Singh Arora
RID 3262	Jayashree Mohanty
RID 3291	Hira Lal Yadav

Printed and published by **PT Prabhakar**, 15 Sivaswamy Street, Mylapore, Chennai 600004, on behalf of Rotary News Trust and printed at Rasi Graphics Pvt Ltd, 40, Peters Road, Royapettah, Chennai - 600 014, India, and published at Rotary News Trust, Dugar Towers, 3rd Floor, 34, Marshalls Road, Egmore, Chennai 600 008. Editor: **Rasheeda Bhagat**.

Contributions is welcome but will be edited. Content can be reproduced with permission and attributed to RNT.



Website

Board of Trustees

Anirudha Roychowdhury	RID 3291
RI Director & Chairman, Rotary News Trust	
Raju Subramanian	RID 3141
RI Director	
Dr Bharat Pandya	RID 3141
TRF Trustee Vice Chair	
Rajendra K Saboo	RID 3080
Kalyan Banerjee	RID 3060
Shekhar Mehta	RID 3291
Ashok Mahajan	RID 3141
PT Prabhakar	RID 3232
Dr Manoj D Desai	RID 3060
C Basker	RID 3000
Kamal Sanghvi	RID 3250
Dr Mahesh Kotbagi	RID 3131
AS Venkatesh	RID 3232
Gulam A Vahanvaty	RID 3141

Executive Committee Members (2023–24)

Swati Herkal	RID 3132
Chairman, Governors Council	
Hira Lal Yadav	RID 3291
Secretary, Governors Council	
Muthiah Pillai R	RID 3212
Treasurer, Governors Council	
Milind Kulkarni	RID 3142
Advisor, Governors Council	

Editor

Rasheeda Bhagat

Deputy Editor

Jaishree Padmanabhan

Administration and Advertisement Manager

Vishwanathan K

Rotary News Trust

3rd Floor, Dugar Towers,
34 Marshalls Road, Egmore
Chennai 600 008, India.

Phone: 044 42145666

rotarynews@rosaonline.org

www.rotarynewsonline.org



Magazine

Director speak



Dear friends in Rotary,
My heartfelt gratitude to all the outgoing district governors and Rotarians, who graciously hosted Vidhya and me during our visit to districts this year. My appreciation to the Rotarians, Rotaractors and friends of Rotary/Rotaract who have tirelessly worked to spread hope and make a positive impact in our communities. A special thank you to the vibrant clubs of zones 4, 5, 6 and 7 for making this year truly remarkable in numerous ways. Let us together stand as beacons of change, as we make this world a better and more peaceful place.

While reflecting on the whirlwind of activities, particularly the fulfilling experience of overseeing the Rotary Institute in Bengaluru and DISHA at New Delhi, I feel that while we have achieved much, there is still work to be done. One pressing issue is the high attrition rate in our clubs. Despite our efforts to induct new members, we often lose many by the year-end. It is imperative that we prioritise member retention by fostering genuine connections and engagement. I urge all presidents, both outgoing and incoming, to make retention a priority and not just a mere strategy, as the key lies in building meaningful growth.

The disparities in income and living conditions worldwide serve as a stark reminder of the need for us, the fortunate, to assist the less fortunate. Through local funding and global grants,

Make retention a priority

Rotarians have made significant contributions to communities around the globe. However, it is now time for us to step up and become the benefactors who fuel the Foundation's resources. We have to replenish adequately the well from which we draw each year. While major gifts are essential, let us not overlook the impact of smaller contributions, for they too can make a significant difference. With only 30 days remaining, let's seize every opportunity to make a positive impact and save lives wherever possible.

I urge each of you to reflect on the essence of Rotary and the profound difference we can make when we come together as a global community. It's also time to recognise the work of our Rotarians, their families, our community stakeholders and CSR partners. A simple thank you will go a long way in spreading cheer in an otherwise conflicted world. I always believe that it is not joy that makes us grateful; it is gratitude that makes us joyful.

Also my friends, let us not run after awards, by ignoring all norms of ethics and integrity. Let your good work, whether in membership or service, make the awards run after you. The greatest satisfaction is bringing a smile on the face of the beneficiary which can never substitute for any award. Let us act now and demonstrate the true spirit of Rotary by serving humanity selflessly. Continue to *Create Hope in the World* and work towards spreading the *Magic of Rotary*.

Yours in Rotary service,

Raju Subramanian

RI Director, 2023–25

The woman who always says **YES** in Rotary

Rasheeda Bhagat

Believe it or not, but when she was growing up, your incoming RI President Stephanie Urchick wanted to become a spy! “I wanted to become a spy and work for the government,” she says with a twinkle in her eye.

So she must have seen all the James Bond movies, I ask her. “Of course; I’ve watched all of them,” she smiles. Her favourite James Bond was Sean Connery; “He was the best... and the original, but Daniel Craig was good too in the recent ones and he was so handsome!”

After we exchange notes on how Pierce Brosnan was another very handsome James Bond, we return to her quest to become a spy. “I did all my education in Pennsylvania and my major was international studies. Since I wanted to be a spy and work for the government, in my final year in college I applied to a lot of US government agencies, the FBI, the CIA, anything that had an alphabet,” she grins.

But with the applications requiring detailed family background, and her grandparents

hailing from Eastern Europe, she had to submit the names of all family members who were still in that region. Perhaps that was the reason that she, unlike her friends, never got any interview calls! She went on to do her Masters, followed by a PhD in leadership at the Indiana University in Pennsylvania.

Stephanie, currently a member of RC McMurray, is on a tour of India, and her programme is choc-a-bloc; I catch up with her in Bengaluru for this interview, which has to be done during the drive from the airport to Karunashraya, a palliative care facility for chronic cancer patients. Despite the early morning flight, she is relaxed, easy to talk to, and comes through as a plain-speaking person.

On how she joined Rotary, Stephanie says her parents were middle class, “nobody in my family had been in a service club so when I heard about Rotary it was completely new to me. When I was working in a small college in Pennsylvania, a





RI President Elect
Stephanie Urchick

woman walked into my office and said would you like to come to a Rotary meeting. I said what the heck is Rotary? She talked about what Rotarians do and when she got to the international part, I said ‘oh yeah, I want to go.’”

She joined the Rotary Club of California, Pennsylvania, in 1991, and “got engaged in club activities right away...

I never looked back.” By the fourth meeting she was doing the club’s newsletter and 18 months later, became the club president. Asked how difficult it was to become district governor, she says, “It wasn’t difficult at all, because everything in Rotary sounds exciting to me. No matter what people ask me to do, I say yes, yes, yes. So, when people ask me how did you get

to be RI president, I say I just kept saying ‘yes!’”

When I protest saying it can’t be that easy, Stephanie says firmly: “Oh yes, it is. When I was growing up, I had a mantra... and still have it... that life is always more exciting on the other side of *Yes*. Say yes and just figure it out. As long as it is legal. That way you get to do more, and see more and be more.”

Asked to define the best qualities required of a good leader, she says, “At the top of the list for me is always communicate, communicate, communicate. You need to listen to the people who

When I was growing up, I had a mantra... and still have it... that life is always more exciting on the other side of *Yes*. Say yes and just figure it out. As long as it is legal.



RIPE Stephanie Urchick announcing the Presidential theme — *The Magic of Rotary* — at the International Assembly in Orlando, Florida.



With PRIPs Jennifer Jones and Shekhar Mehta at the Visakha Vista Rotary Zone Institute in Visakhapatnam.

are working with you and share information with them, and it goes both ways. Communication is key, the absolute key,” she responds emphatically.

Also, she adds, “people have to trust you, or else they won’t trust your vision. A good leader also has to understand the value of praising people, telling them they’ve done a good job, and doing that publicly. And when they have not done a good job, tell them privately.”

How Stephanie chose her theme — *The magic of Rotary* — has an interesting story, dating back several years to when she “was on a Rotary mission in the Dominican Republic, to put water filters in homes.” She was in one home with two women and three little boys. “We put the filter together, then put dirty water in, and it would come out clean, and we



From L: RIDN K P Nagesh, Paola Dakoju, RIPE Stephanie, RI Director Raju Subramanian and RID 3192 DGND Ravishankar Dakoju at Bengaluru.



Enjoying Pizza at a restaurant in Italy.

At a glance

Relax: Dancing! I was in Italy and they did a disco night for me... I love dancing! Yes, dancing does that for me. And retail therapy. No, I'm not a shopaholic, I don't spend money unnecessarily, but love to go and look around.

Fitness: Now it is walking because I have a bad knee... old age, I suppose. But when my knee was better, it was cycling. I like to bike... in Pennsylvania we have special, separate biking trails.

Religion: I practise Russian Orthodox.

Food: Anything that I don't have to make myself. It's not that I don't like cooking; actually I do, but I am all by myself, so it's no fun to cook for just one person. No matter how much you cut down on the recipe, you still have too much.

Indian food: I love it, and my spice tolerance is rather high. We were at lunch the other day in Delhi and we got served lamb curry and





somebody asked me is it too hot for you and I said not hot enough! Do you know why my spice tolerance is rather high? When we were young we would go to church and after church we would go to my grandparents' home and my grandfather would serve us hot peppers he had made; he was a farmer. We, the grandchildren, would sit around the table, and eat hot peppers till our cheeks were red. So that's how we I have tolerance for spicy food.

Music: I listen to all sorts of music, the only thing I don't understand is rap. I've tried, trust me. But some of the rap lyrics are not good... they denigrate women! But I listen to country music, international music...

Feminism: I don't like the word 'feminist' because it has taken on a negative connotation. I much prefer 'equalism'... something that gives opportunities to all, no matter what your gender is.

Movies: Rarely have time for them.

Favourite actor: Meryl Streep. I enjoy watching movies in which she is there.

I believe every single Rotarian has had some experience that they have seen or been part of, that has made them say: Wow, this is why we do what we do.

Reading: Spy novels... I've got two in my bag, which I am reading. There is a writer called Lee Child... I've read all his Jack Reacher novels.

Favourite novels: That's a tough one, I have so many favourites. I've read a lot of Jack Welch when I was going through my doctoral programme, there are so many things he talked about which made a lot of sense, and one of these is quality in the field of education.

Favourite holiday destination: (Laughs) That is like asking who's your favourite child. Every time I come to a city for the first time... I find so many beautiful, stunning things. When I am done with being president of Rotary, I will have a lot of miles and I will use them to go to beaches.

Quality of members: We have to grow Rotary for sure; but growing membership is not about putting people in seats. It's about ensuring that the right people come into Rotary. People who share our core values, fellowship, leadership, integrity, diversity and service. And we know such people... they are there in our families and friends.

Future vision: I worked very hard on the Action Plan and the most important part of our vision is to act together, I can't do it by myself. We bring lasting change by paying attention to how we work together and take action. Too often we fail to recognise the change that is happening in us; when I work on behalf of someone, or for a cause, I change too. ■



With PRIP Jennifer Jones.

did that a few times, and when we stopped, one of the boys grabbed my sleeve and said: ‘Lady, lady, show me that magic again.’ He saw that as magic but the real magic was the change in that family’s life thanks to Rotary giving them clean water.

And I believe every single Rotarian has had some experience like this that they have seen or been part of, that has made them say: Wow, this is why we do what we do.”

She is happy with her theme, as “everywhere I go people comment

on how adaptable this theme is and can be used in so many different ways.”

Coming to her priorities as RI president, she is very clear that the first priority is “membership growth. We have to grow our organisation. Rotary is the strongest and best organisation in the world, and I don’t want to see it go away. For 30 years or more, we’ve been talking about membership and talking about it... but we are people of action and we have to do something about it. I know its hard work, it’s not like

Despite all the marketing and advertising we’ve done, people still think we are an organisation of rich old men eating out, but that’s not who we are.



Family celebration after being nominated.



At a Rotary event
in Mexico.



you can just wave a magic wand and it will happen; it has to be intentional.”

To grow Rotary, she adds, “we have to do three things at the same time. We have to attract members to our existing clubs, we have to keep members in our clubs because it is no use bringing in members and the existing ones leave, and we have to start new clubs. The world is changing and there are people who are not attracted to our existing clubs, they want to do it differently.”

She points out that way back in 2016, “we had a CoL that gave us the option to have different kinds of clubs, corporate clubs, e-clubs, satellite clubs and passport clubs. With so many options, we can tell people that if they have the hearts

Indian Rotarians take
Rotary very seriously.
They are proud to
be Rotarians.



With club members.

Rotary in India

When asked about her impressions of Rotary in India, both the positives and the negatives, particularly in the background of the recent strongly worded letter jointly issued by RI President Gordon McNally and herself, regarding election disputes and other negatives, RIPE Stephanie Urchick says: "I think Rotary in India is fantastic, there are so many fabulous things happening here and we can, and do learn so much from this part of the world. You are the first country that really established Rotary's partnership with CSR in a big way, and we are learning from it, and this model is working in some other countries, even though it (CSR giving) is not mandatory in those countries. We are finding companies who want to do good in the world and become our partners."

In TRF giving too, India is doing so well... it's a very generous country, and there is huge potential here. She cites the instance of "the current DG in Delhi who took raising funds for TRF as a challenge." Last year, in his district, 700 people had donated to TRF. But this year, he asked Rotarians to give just \$25 to TRF. "Though not a big amount, it made people who have never given to TRF to begin the culture of giving, and 1,700 people contributed."



RIPE Stephanie with a Rotaractor at the Visakha Vista Rotary Institute.

But what she admires the most about Rotary in India is "how revered it is as an organisation. This is one country... for instance, the young man on the flight knew what Rotary is. If it was in the US or Canada he would have asked what are you talking about? This tells me that there is so much service by Rotary happening in India. And because Indian Rotarians take Rotary very seriously. They are proud to be Rotarians. In several other countries, even developing countries, I don't get that sense."

But, she adds, "the whole thing about phantom clubs, and election issues are a blemish, that diminish the rest of the work

Rotarians do in India. People focus on the negatives; it's like putting a rotten apple in a barrel full of good apples. The rest of them may be of great quality but eventually that rotten apple will spoil all the others. So that's why President Gordon came out strongly, because we've talked for years saying clean up, clean up, but nothing happened. So he took that very strong step."

So will she continue to take action against the erring clubs/districts? "Of course, we are people of action. We have to make sure that we clean the way, so that all the good work that Rotary is doing in this part of the world is put in the spotlight and not this stuff." ■

DEI and gender

Any interview with a woman RI president-elect is incomplete without seeking her views on DEI and women in Rotary. So how well is the DEI mantra working in Rotary, I ask Stephanie Urchick. “I believe it is working. In Delhi, Rotarians were telling me about a club with only transgenders, so it is getting better.”

As for women in Rotary, “I believe that women have always been in Rotary. When I went to the Paul Harris Home for the first time, I saw on the wall pictures of Paul Harris, and Jean is standing right behind him. When we look at the earlier conventions... in 1912, a woman got up and said women should be included in Rotary,” says Stephanie.

Even at training events, be it the International Assembly or training for presidents-elect, “when I hear a woman get up and say I am just a partner, I say stop, take out the ‘just’. You are a partner, and if your spouse has been doing Rotary, you’ve been doing it too. So women have always been there. We’ve just not been smart enough about bringing them into Rotary membership.”

When asked if she encountered any difficulties or obstacles in her way because of her gender, her response is a resounding ‘No’. “I am a Rotarian not because of

my gender but because I want to change the world. But having said that, I also recognise that people look to others as role models. So I can see a woman looking at me and saying, if she could do it so can I.”

Again, the same thing holds true for her single status. “There are so many single people in Rotary and many of them, both men and women, come up to me and say I don’t have a partner either. So the underlying clear message is that if she can do it without a partner, I can do it too.”

On whether women are better communicators or communicate differently, she says, “Definitely, they communicate differently; the world reacts differently to women and men. That is why I believe so strongly in having a gender balance.”

Importance of peace

When I ask her about the world being a troubled place, with

so much of conflict happening all over, Stephanie says, “It’s a complete mess. But we in Rotary approach peacebuilding through a humanitarian lens; that is our goal. We are not going to stop wars, or negotiate to get hostages back. But what we can do, through the programmes we already have, is work on building peace one person at a time, one student at a time, one community at a time. It’s like the story of the star fish. The little boy, when told by a man that he wouldn’t be able to save them all, says I saved this one.”

We have an online programme on Economics and Peace, a very simple two-hour session that shows the difference between negative and positive peace. Our Peace centres around the world are a major, major peacebuilding initiative. More than 1,800 graduates who have gone through these centres are using their knowledge in peace and conflict resolution through practical applications.” ■



and the hands for service and if they believe in our core values then there is place for them in Rotary.”

But, while going around the world and after talking to people, she has found that “despite all the marketing and advertising we’ve done, people still think we are an organisation of **rich old men eating out**, but that’s not who we are. So when I talk to Rotarians I always say, we’ve changed, we’re different. But then we’ve also had the same meeting model for 100 years.”

Underlining the need for change and attracting more young members, Stephanie relates the story of the young Indian man, around 31, seated next to her on her recent flight from Milan to Delhi. “I started talking about Rotary and he said,



With her aide PDG Tom Gump, RID 5950, US.

We have to grow our organisation. Rotary is the strongest and best organisation in the world, and I don’t want to see it go away.

“Oh Rotary, my parents were in Rotary, that’s an organisation for older people. And I told him no, it’s an organisation for you and I’ll tell you why.”

By the end of the flight, they had exchanged cards, and the DGE concerned has already contacted him and guided him to come into Rotary.

On what needs to be done to attract and engage younger people,

Stephanie says: “We have to tell people that we are different because they have the wrong perception of Rotary. Young people today want to make an impact fast, quickly... they want things done, like now. One of the things they are interested in, and what makes me so happy is the environment. Because we need action on the environment.”

She adds that communication with youngsters has to improve; “when I talk to Rotarians they say: ‘Ah, these young people, they don’t know anything, they are wet behind the ears.’”

And when I talk to the youngsters, the Rotaractors, they say, ‘oh, we don’t want to work with the Rotarians, they are fuddy duddies and they don’t know technology... we have to bring them together so that we can enjoy the benefit of both the groups.’”



With TRF Chair Elect Mark Maloney at the International Assembly, launching the Rotary-UNEP global partnership for water.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat and special arrangements

Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S

RC Roop Nagar conducts crucial training to save lives

Rasheeda Bhagat

When he was on a tour last year to a famous winery in Waiheke Island of New Zealand, a very famous tourist destination, Dr BPS Parmar, past president of the Rotary Club of Roop Nagar, RID 3080, noticed, while

disembarking at the ferry station, an automated external defibrillator (AED) installed at the waiting area. “I noted that this device, which delivers an emergency shock to the chest in a bid to revive a victim of a sudden cardiac arrest, had been donated by

RC Waiheke Island,” recalls the laparoscopy surgeon who has specialised in metabolic surgery.

Explaining the dangers of sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), the most common cause of which is an irregular heart rhythm (known in medical parlance as ventricular fibrillation), he says that according to the eminent medical journal *Lancet*, about 5 to 6 lakh deaths in India are caused every year by sudden cardiac arrest. This happens due to an irregular heartbeat, and “unless there is intervention within a few minutes, over 90 per cent of such victims can succumb to sudden cardiac death. They hardly have any time to reach the hospital and unless we intervene immediately there is no hope of survival. This is why accompanying friends, family or even strangers standing nearby need to play a crucial lifesaving role.”

This is a skill widely known as CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) which involves manual application of external force on the patient’s chest to revive the heart (cardiac massage), till the heart rhythm improves. “Essentially, by doing CPR, you can buy precious time till an ambulance or emergency response team arrives at the scene and the patient can be transported to a hospital,” says Dr Parmar.

But the sad part, he adds, is that “unlike in the western countries, in India due to lack of awareness, policies and fear of legal hassles the bystanders are not able to respond appropriately in such situations. Hence the survival

A CPR demo in progress.



rate after SCA in India is as low as 1–2 per cent. We need to emulate the West where “bystander CPR” is common, which means the common people who are highly aware and trained to provide CPR act speedily during critical emergencies. They also have public access to AEDs, to deliver an emergency shock to the chest in a bid to revive the victim of SCA.” Small wonder, that SCA survival rate in the developed countries has gone up by as high as 60–70 per cent compared to barely 1–2 per cent in India.

After seeing the AED at the New Zealand island ferry station, an idea was planted in his mind that his club should sponsor such a defibrillator in a public place in Roop Nagar.

Workshops on CPR

“Our club’s aim was to empower the community with this life-saving skill; so we have been organising seminars and workshops on CPR for the general public. Over the past eight months our club has conducted 13 such workshops, training more than 2,500 people in this life-saving technique,” says RID 3080 PDG Chetan Aggarwal, who is also a member of RC Roop Nagar. These seminars, conducted both in-person and online, have been accessible to a wide audience in community centres, schools, colleges, the district administrative complex, district courts and factories. “The participants are from all ages... from teenagers to senior citizens; this is a testament to our club’s commitment to equip the entire community with this life-saving skill,” he adds.

Expert instructors

Dr Parmar says the club has been conducting these training sessions with the

help of expert trainers, particularly Dr Sushil Kumar, an anaesthesiologist, a non-Rotary volunteer, who has been partnering with their club to impart this crucial skill, to general members of the community. “The success of these seminars can be attributed also to the expertise of the instructors, who include experienced healthcare professionals and certified CPR trainers from the Parmar Hospital, to ensure that the participants receive high-quality training. These instructors not only teach the technical aspects of CPR but also instil confidence and empathy, essential qualities when responding to a medical emergency.”

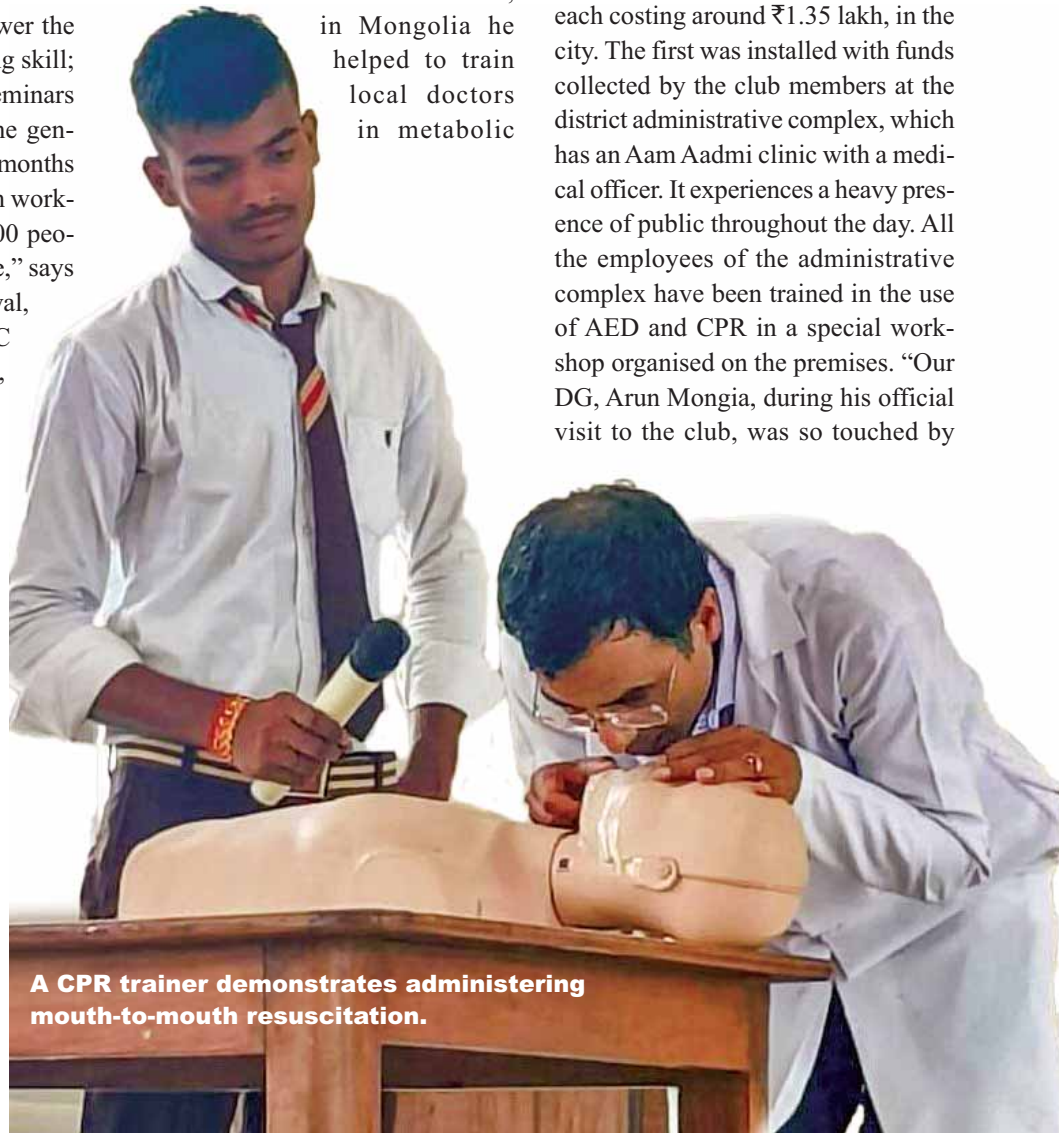
He himself has been doing advanced laparoscopic surgeries, and has been to five Rotary Medical Missions to Africa; in Mongolia he helped to train local doctors in metabolic

Essentially, by doing CPR, you can buy precious time till an ambulance or emergency response team arrives at the scene and the patient can be transported to a hospital.

Dr B P S Parmar
past president, RC Roop Nagar

surgery, for weight loss, control of diabetes, hypertension, etc.

RC Roop Nagar has recently installed two automated defibrillators, each costing around ₹1.35 lakh, in the city. The first was installed with funds collected by the club members at the district administrative complex, which has an Aam Aadmi clinic with a medical officer. It experiences a heavy presence of public throughout the day. All the employees of the administrative complex have been trained in the use of AED and CPR in a special workshop organised on the premises. “Our DG, Arun Mongia, during his official visit to the club, was so touched by



A CPR trainer demonstrates administering mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.



Dr BPS Parmar (L) and Dr Sushil Kumar explaining how to use an AED.

this initiative that he has donated one more AED with the help of district funds, which has been installed at a local hospital.”

Dr Parmar explains that this device is easy to use and comes with simple instructions. Many hospitals have it, though in different forms. This AED,

meant for the general public, is easy to operate; “there are clear instructions to follow and the task can be done in less than a minute by the machine. Once you switch it on, the machine senses the rhythm of the heart; if it is a shockable rhythm, it asks you to press the green button, and apply the pads on the chest. If it is not a shockable rhythm, then you have to do a manual CPR. If it is a shockable rhythm, and you use the AED, the patient will immediately get up. Then of course he/she has to be taken to a hospital.”

In conclusion, the surgeon adds, “Let’s not forget that a sudden cardiac arrest can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere and equipping communities and individuals with life-saving skills can go a long way in saving precious lives. We are proud that our club has been a part of organising such training which will help save lives.” ■

A lake in Pune gets a new life

Team Rotary News

Rotary Club of Pune Kothrud, RID 3131, has embarked on the Ramnadi Rejuvenation Sustainability Project to restore the Ramnadi river originating in the Sahyadri ranges and flowing through northwest Pune comprising Bhugaon, Bhukum, Bavdhan, Pashan, Baner and Aundh regions. The river has turned into a sewage canal due to dumping of construction debris and garbage.

The club plans to first restore the Khatpewadi Lake which is at the head of



A sapling being planted near the Khatpewadi Lake.

the Ramnadi river. The ₹75 lakh-project, spread over three years, is led by Girish and Anupama Khirsagar and Service Projects director Alka Kulkarni, and is supported by the Vasundhara Sustainability Abhiyan and Elkay Silicones through their CSR grants. The long-term plans include increasing the lake’s capacity, enrich its biodiversity and create artificial islands to attract birds and

butterflies, and increase the groundwater level to provide clean water to villages in the vicinity. The club also plans to set up the city’s first lotus pond near the lake.

To kickstart the mission, the team planted 100 native saplings on the lake’s shores and involved the Rotaractors and local villagers to nurture the saplings with guidance from the Vasundhara Abhiyan. ■



BECOME A DOCTOR IN USA



XAVIER UNIVERSITY ARUBA'S 6 YEAR PROGRAMME TO TRANSFORM YOUR AMERICAN DREAM INTO A REALITY



DOCTOR OF MEDICINE

First 2 years
Start @
KLE, Campus
Karnataka, India

Next 2 years
Continue @
Xavier's Campus
Aruba, Caribbean
island - Netherland

Next 2 years
Complete @
Xavier's affiliated
Teaching Hospitals
USA / Canada

DOCTOR OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

First 2 years
Start @
KLE, Campus
Karnataka, India

Next 3 years
Continue @
Xavier's Campus
Aruba, Caribbean
island- Netherland

Final year
Complete @
Xavier's affiliated
Teaching Hospitals
USA / Canada

Limited Seats

The session starts in
September 2024

To apply, Visit: application.xusom.com

Contact: Uday @+91 91 0083 0083 +91 98 8528 2712

email: infoindia@xusom.com

XAVIER STUDENTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR **H1/J1 Visa PROGRAMME**

RIPE Stephanie weaves the Rotary magic across Mumbai and Pune

Jaishree



RIPE Stephanie Urchick interacting with students at the Shruti School for the Hearing and Speech Impaired, Mumbai.

In vite your prospective members to a service project first, and not to a club meeting. Because a club meeting can be intimidating to someone who does not understand the language. They must see what we do and who we are. Keep this in mind while you share the magic of Rotary with non-Rotarians. Think about how you want them to find out who we are.”

RIPE Stephanie Urchick reiterated this during her recent tour

of India where she visited Bengaluru, Delhi, Kolkata, Pune and Mumbai, meeting incoming district and club leaders, major donors and inspecting community service projects.

On her theme — *Magic of Rotary* — she said, “I chose it for all of us because every single member has experienced the magic of Rotary. Every time you work on a project, or induct a new member, inspire someone who has never contributed to The Rotary Foundation to do that, you are

creating magic. Go back to your clubs and inspire your team to take your club forward, and help people live our 4-Way Test instead of just reciting it. Help build continuity so that we have leadership where our clubs, districts and zones are on the same page and work in the same direction even though we change every 12 months.”

She urged the incoming leaders to take challenges and opportunities head on. Her favourite mantra is ‘Life is beautiful on the other side

of yes.’ That, she said, helped her in her journey “from a little club in Pennsylvania to become an RI president. I said yes to applying for the post because of my experience in developing Rotary’s Strategic Plan. From the time I was invited to become a Rotarian until now, I have always said ‘Why not?’ and ‘Absolutely fine’, provided the matter is moral and legal.”

She explained to the Rotarians how the Action Plan evolved. “Formerly it was called ‘Strategic Plan’. But if I were to talk to you and say ‘Let’s talk about the Strategic Plan’, you will all go to sleep. So we



RIPE Stephanie enjoys a selfie moment with DGE Chetan Desai at the Biodiversity Park, Mumbai. RID Raju Subramanian is also in the picture.

Help build continuity so that we have leadership where our clubs, districts and zones are on the same page and work in the same direction even though we change every 12 months.

Stephanie Urchick
RI President Elect

decided that ‘Action Plan’ is a much better term. Because we are People of Action,” she said.

Stephanie urged the delegates to focus on membership growth. “Worldwide our membership has

not grown for 30 years. We have been talking about it, but we need to start *acting* on it now. Because if we do not, we will end up like Jaycee that has just vanished. We can’t afford to do that. Since July I have asked 27 people to join Rotary, of which seven have become Rotarians. Most people in the world who do not know Rotary still think that we are Romeos — Rich old men eating out. That’s not who we are. We must tell the world our story, and that we have changed,” she said.

Recalling her induction as a Rotarian 33 years ago by PRIP Chuck Keller who was a member of her club, Stephanie said, “He instilled in me my love for Rotary. Every single time I work on behalf of someone, I am not changing their life, but something is happening to me too. That is the psychic income, the salary we get. We do what we do because it makes us feel good.”

On the warm welcome she received in India, she said: “When I said in the US that I am going to India, everyone said it is going to be very warm. Well, not only the



RIPE Stephanie with (from R) DG Manjoo and Vishwas Phadke, RID Subramanian, DGE Shital Shah, PRID Mahesh Kotbagi and Amita, and PDG Deepak Shikarpur (far left) at the HV Desai Eye Hospital, Pune.

temperature but also the hospitality is very warm in India. Your handshakes, flowers, smiles and hugs warm my heart and make me realise that we are one big Rotary family. I am single, and my parents, grandparents are gone. I have a brother and his family. My family was small until I travelled and met my Rotary family. Now I find I have a larger family.”

RI Director Raju Subramanian urged the presidents-elect of the Pune and Mumbai clubs to motivate their teams to give consistently to TRF. “If every one of our 175,000 members in India give ₹600 every month to the Foundation, the magic of Rotary will happen,” he said. Major corporate donors and AKS



Above: RI Director Raju Subramanian, RIPE Stephanie, DG Manjoo with AKS members and Major Donors of RID 3131 at Pune. DGN Santosh Marathe (second row, third from L), DGE Shital Shah (last row, L), PDGs Shikarapur and Pankaj Patel (second row, R) are also seen.

Below: RIPE Stephanie, RID Subramanian and DGE Desai at the Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital. Dr Suresh Rao, director, Children’s Heart Centre; Dhaval Bhatt and Natasha Sejpal are also in the picture.



members were felicitated by the RIPE in both the cities. “Our Foundation needs more people like you. If we could achieve a \$2.025 billion Endowment Fund by 2025, most of our issues related to GGs and Annual Fund will be sorted and the global grants can continue without any hitch,” he added.

TRF vice-chair Bharat Pandya, giving an update on the progress made on the Endowment Fund contribution, said, “By March 31, we have collected \$766 million in actual contribution as against our target of \$1 billion, and in commitments, we are well on track. I am sure by June 2025, at the Rotary convention in Calgary, Canada, RIPE Stephanie and TRF chair-elect Mark Maloney will



proudly announce to the world that we have achieved our target.”

DGs Manjoo Phadke (RID 3131) and Arun Bhargava (RID 3141) updated their respective districts’ achievements, and DGEs Shital Shah (RID 3131) and Chetan Desai (RID 3141) listed out their plans for 2024–25. At the Mumbai meet, DGEs of RIDs 3040, 3055, 3060 and 3142 were also present.

Significant projects

In Pune and Mumbai Stephanie visited significant service projects being implemented by the district Rotary clubs. She was moved to tears when she went around the Children’s Heart Centre at the Kokilaben Dhirubai Ambani Hospital in Mumbai where one-day

old infants were being treated for congenital heart conditions. Rotary clubs of Mumbai are supporting the heart surgeries for infants in this not-for-profit hospital (*Rotary News* Dec 2016, <https://rotarynewsonline.org/dil-se-in-mumbai/>).

“We are doing 1,000 paediatric cardiac procedures a year, that is 4–5 procedures a day. Rotary has helped us scale up the programme,”

If every one of our 175,000 members in India give Rs 600 every month to the Foundation, the magic of Rotary will happen.

Raju Subramanian
RI Director

said Santosh Shetty, the hospital’s executive director. Thanking the doctors for “giving new life to infants,” Stephanie said, “I am honoured to see what you are doing. If anyone from this hospital comes to Pittsburgh (her hometown) I’ll coordinate with the Rotary clubs there so that you have a homestay and other facilities.”

The Centre’s director Dr Suresh Rao sought Rotary’s support for a neonatal transport unit (NTU) to bring critically ill newborns and infants from far flung villages to the hospital for treatment. “Many children die on the way to the hospital. We want a specially-designed ambulance to take care of these kids who have to withstand 5–6 hours travel from places like Pune or Nashik. Such a facility



TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya and RID Subramanian greet RIPE Stephanie in Mumbai. Also present (from L): RID 3142 DGE Dinesh Mehta, RID 3141 DGN Manish Motwani, DGE Desai, DG Arun Bhargava and RID 3040 DGE Anish Malik.

I am sure by June 2025, at the Rotary convention in Calgary, Canada, RIPE Stephanie and TRF chair-elect Mark Maloney will proudly announce to the world that we have achieved our target.

Bharat Pandya
TRF Vice Chair

could keep the child alive until he/she gets expert medical help.” RID Subramanian sought Rotary’s help to fund a high-end ambulance. He announced that his personal AKS contribution next year will be for this grant. Multiple clubs can come together to sponsor an NTU and this concept can be spread to other major cities too, he added.

Stephanie visited the Rotary Biodiversity Park being developed by RC Deonar at the Chembur Children’s Home (*Rotary News Aug*

2023, <https://rotarynewsonline.org/a-biodiversity-park/>) and inaugurated a library equipped with over 100 books donated by Rotarians to benefit the children at the orphanage. She also visited the Shruti School for the hearing and speech-impaired, supported by RC Bombay West and the Manjulaben Dolatrai Desai Rotary Borivali Eye Bank and Processing Centre.

In Pune she was impressed with the Rotary participation at the HV Desai Eye Hospital. Several matching/global and CSR grants have helped the hospital perform 6.2 lakh free eye surgeries since its inception in 2000. Hospital chairman Nitin Desai, a member of RC Pune Central and an AKS member who has been contributing ₹3 crore every year for the past three years, said that the hospital takes care of cancer patients too. “Since we do not have facilities

for chemo or radiation therapy, we send them to other hospitals for treatment at our cost,” said Parvez Billimoria, executive director of the hospital and past president of RC Pune Cantonment. The 400-bed hospital located in a 1.5 lakh sqft area is being expanded. An eye care training and research centre and another hospital at Solapur, 240km from Pune, are being built with CSR and Rotary support. Thirty-five vision centres set up across Pune cater to people with eye ailments.

She also visited the 900-bed Symbiosis University Hospital and Research Centre near Pune where Rotary clubs of Mumbai and Pune are supporting dialysis facilities.

Quoting Helen Keller, Stephanie said, “Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much. These initiatives are splendid examples of partnerships that produce an amazing amount of magic in Rotary. We are creating lasting change in people’s lives.”

Pictures by Jaishree

District Wise TRF Contribution as on April 2024

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution	
India						
2981	48,127	1,222	1,000	250	50,599	
2982	37,868	1,267	24,085	30,680	93,900	
3000	92,981	29,390	29,525	274,624	426,521	
3011	204,060	27,731	52,080	1,171,792	1,455,663	
3012	16,964	50	0	443,490	460,504	
3020	118,398	64,645	49,747	60,163	292,953	
3030	96,926	27,883	12,609	232,012	369,429	
3040	5,633	268	0	43,405	49,306	
3053	30,690	1,300	5,000	66,313	103,303	
3055	111,905	3,366	30	6,228	121,530	
3056	34,755	125	0	0	34,880	
3060	118,932	9,640	9,155	468,104	605,831	
3070	11,761	493	0	0	12,254	
3080	97,447	24,726	7,524	74,123	203,820	
3090	52,829	2,108	22,602	26,809	104,348	
3100	102,811	2,787	25,301	51,993	182,892	
3110	17,779	30	0	108,129	125,938	
3120	38,301	131	0	5,101	43,533	
3131	525,796	13,779	143,098	1,316,513	1,999,186	
3132	105,759	4,958	10,000	51,523	172,241	
3141	445,561	45,536	105,085	2,088,226	2,684,407	
3142	300,489	114,371	14,500	134,178	563,537	
3150	63,458	32,469	160,423	127,852	384,202	
3160	16,791	1,372	0	3,432	21,595	
3170	115,412	34,572	14,900	114,431	279,314	
3181	122,665	2,660	1,000	820	127,145	
3182	62,454	4,750	25,624	0	92,828	
3191	88,873	14,226	60,976	621,153	785,227	
3192	126,483	16,957	0	184,786	328,225	
3201	198,207	56,306	45,784	1,303,165	1,603,462	
3203	27,758	24,542	11,220	15,550	79,070	
3204	19,965	2,719	0	27,424	50,109	
3211	74,417	4,236	27,325	110,087	216,065	
3212	86,278	29,185	2,000	127,627	245,090	
3231	4,505	4,709	314	501	10,029	
3232	64,514	20,144	21,535	1,413,174	1,519,367	
3240	121,937	15,565	34,000	101,572	273,074	
3250	44,591	5,196	26	37,467	87,280	
3261	29,732	4,820	0	53,874	88,426	
3262	60,257	5,787	1,000	15,440	82,485	
3291	190,816	3,863	132,311	3,245	330,234	
3220	Sri Lanka	51,237	4,640	0	5,863	61,740
3271	Pakistan	15,750	82,553	0	20,402	118,706
*3272	Pakistan	4,342	385	0	25	4,752
*3281	Bangladesh	80,569	2,105	3,000	264,728	350,403
*3282	Bangladesh	90,726	4,982	1,000	9,116	105,824
3292	Nepal	173,194	24,213	19,999	390,671	608,077
63	(former 3272)	3,600	175	0	0	3,775
64	(former 3281)	26,883	300	1,000	0	28,183
65	(former 3282)	4,047	200	0	9,000	13,247

* Undistricted

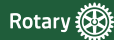
Annual Fund (AF) includes SHARE, AoF and World Fund.

PolioPlus excludes Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. **Source:** RISAO

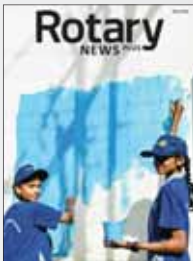


New members from different groups in our communities bring fresh perspectives and ideas to our clubs and expand Rotary's presence. Invite prospective members from all backgrounds to experience Rotary.

REFER A NEW MEMBER
my.rotary.org/member-center



Have you read Rotary News Plus?



Every month we bring out the online publication **ROTARY NEWS PLUS** to feature your projects. This is sent by mid-month to **every subscribing member** whose email ID we have.

Read **Rotary News Plus** on our website www.rotarynewsonline.org

We have received complaints that not all subscribers are getting the e-version of *Rotary News Plus* every month. But, of the **total number of 1.55 lakh subscribers**, we have email IDs of **only 1.04 lakh members**.

Please update your email ID at rotarynews@rosaonline.org in this format: Your name, club, district and email ID.

The Rotary buzz in Kolkata

V Muthukumaran

RIPE Stephanie Urchick was impressed going through the super speciality wings of Rotary Techno Netralaya, the largest among the 13 eye hospitals being run by RID 3291, at Salt Lake, Sector-5, the IT hub of Kolkata. “You are doing a wonderful work at the eye hospital,” she said to PRIP Shekhar Mehta, managing trustee, Eastern India

Rotary Welfare Trust which runs the hospital in partnership with Techno India Group.

Way back in 1994, the West Bengal government gave a three-acre land to the Trust, formed by the PDGs of erstwhile RID 3290, on a long-term lease (999 years). “After the 3-H grant of \$300,000 was sanctioned in 1998, we began construction of the four-storey building and completed

it in 2002. The healthcare operations began in 2003. Now the 100-bed super speciality eye hospital stands on 40,000sqft of built-up space,” said PDG Angsuman Bandyopadhyay, secretary of the Trust. Around 6,000 eye surgeries are done and over 50,000 OPD patients are treated in a year at this Rotary hospital.

Very soon, the eye hospital will share space with a new 500-bed Rotary Techno Global Hospital, “as we will build a multispeciality hospital on the same land in a \$50 million project. The new hospital will have 4 lakh sqft of built-up area.” While the first phase of 260-bed facility over 2 lakh sqft area will be operational in two years, the second phase with 240 beds on 2 lakh sqft will be completed by 2028.

RIPE Stephanie Urchick at the Rotary Techno Netralaya, along with (from L) its senior GM Arijit Ghosh, RI Director Raju Subramanian, PRIP Shekhar Mehta and DGE Krishnendu Gupta.





RIPE Stephanie rings the Rotary bell at the archive library in Rotary Sadan. Also seen are (from Left) RC Calcutta past president Purnendu Roychowdhury, DGN Ramendu Homchaudhuri, RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury, DGE Gupta, club president Kanak Dutt and DG Hira Lal Yadav.

Name change

When the hospital began its services, it was called Rotary Narayan Netralaya as it was a collaboration with Sankara Netralaya, Chennai, led by late Dr S S Badrinath, and the Narayana Health Group founded by Dr Devi Prasad Shetty in Bengaluru.

However, Sankara Netralaya built its own eye hospital in Kolkata and exited from the partnership. “Badrinath requested Shetty to continue his association with the Rotary hospital. The famed heart surgeon extended all help and services till Jan 2022, but from February that year we tied up with Techno India Group led by Satyam Roychowdhury. From then on, it was rechristened as Rotary Techno Hospital in deference to the new partner,” recalled Bandyopadhyay. “In all probability, the upcoming hospital will be the largest multi-speciality medical centre run by Rotary anywhere in the world,” he said. PRIP Mehta said, “Dr Devi Shetty has contributed immensely for the growth and development of our eye hospital.”

A Rotary Peace Pole was inaugurated by Stephanie during her visit to Rotary Sadan, the iconic three-storey building of RC Calcutta built in 1976. The 10-foot tall peace pole made up of 304 stainless steel pipes was erected at a project cost of ₹1 lakh with the aim to foster global peace and goodwill. “The sentence ‘May peace prevail on Earth’ was inscribed in different languages on the four sides of the pole, the first such monument in RID 3291, and the third one in the country, the other two poles are in Madurai and Chennai,” said Purnendu Roychowdhury, centennial president of RC Calcutta.

Inaugurated by PRIP Rajendra Saboo, the Rotary Sadan houses vocational centres for computer training, painting, and holds regular classes in classical arts like singing, dancing and musical instruments. Stephanie was guided through the archive library of RC Calcutta, the oldest club in Asia chartered in Jan 1920. She went through some of the oldest club rosters, rang the iconic bell used to signal the start of regular Rotary meetings in earlier times.

Dialysis project

A dialysis centre with 15 machines is being run by RC Calcutta Mahanagar at the Mayor’s Health Clinic owned by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. “We set up the dialysis facility through a global grant of ₹1.25 crore four years ago in partnership with RCs Maysville, Singapore, Changi, Tucheng and TRF,” said PRIP Mehta. Every day 30 renal patients undergo dialysis for free at the facility in Chetla, a busy locality in Kolkata.

It was a humbling experience for the Rotary president-elect and her entourage at the Mother House of the Missionaries of Charity founded by Mother Teresa. She went through the picture gallery next to the main hall in which nuns congregate to meditate and recite prayers, and climbed a narrow staircase to have a peek into a small room where Mother Teresa lived from 1953 till her death in 1997; the site of Mother Teresa’s tomb gave a surreal feeling to the VIP visitor from Evanston, Chicago, and Rotary leaders from India accompanying her.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran



Happy Schools, happier children

Rasheeda Bhagat

With its recent completion of two more Happy Schools, the Rotary Club of Dombivli, RI District 3142, has so far transformed, over the last four years, 18 government, government-aided and privately managed schools located in rural and tribal areas surrounding Murbad and Shahapur taluks in Maharashtra. The total amount spent on this project is over ₹1 crore to help improve the conditions in which children learn.

One of the most recent schools the club took over for renovation and sprucing up is at Belkadi village in Shahapur taluk, located some 90km from Dombivli.

A past president of the club and a core team member in the Happy Schools project, Sandeep Phoolgaonkar, recalls that some of the club members “visited the Prathmik Vidyamandir at Belkadi a few months ago, and found that the 34 students of this primary school were studying under pathetic conditions as the only classroom they had was leaking badly when it rained. And the school was lacking the most basic facilities.”

The club members decided to take up the renovation of this school and began working on it in Dec 2023. The one classroom-building was in dire condition and was demolished and the building reconstructed, with provision of proper windows and doors, proper ventilation, electrical connections, fans, lights, blackboard, etc. The existing but ramshackle toilet blocks were renovated, with separate toilets for girls and boys having

running water and an overhead water tank. A new handwash station was also put up and piped water supply given. A stage was constructed to provide the students a venue for special school events, and the compound wall was repaired and painted to give a sense of security to both the teachers and students.

The entire project cost of ₹13 lakh was given by the club’s CSR partner Centaur Pharma.

The second school which got a spanking new avatar by these Rotarians is the Zilla Parishad School in

Wanjale village in Murbad taluk. Once this school was identified, members of the club’s core committee for Happy Schools made an inspection visit to the school. “There are 20 girls and 14 boys studying in this primary school and they all belong to tribal families. Once again, during our inspection, we found the school’s condition was so bad that it was actually unsafe to use the toilets. The kitchen was nonfunctional due to absence of basic facilities for preparing midday meals, and there was no boundary wall whatsoever,” says immediate past president and project chair Shankar Sathawane.

Setting out in right earnest to completely transform this primary



DG Milind Kulkarni (R) inaugurates a handwash facility at the Prathmik Vidyamandir, Belkadi village.



व्यापारी ही व्यापारी

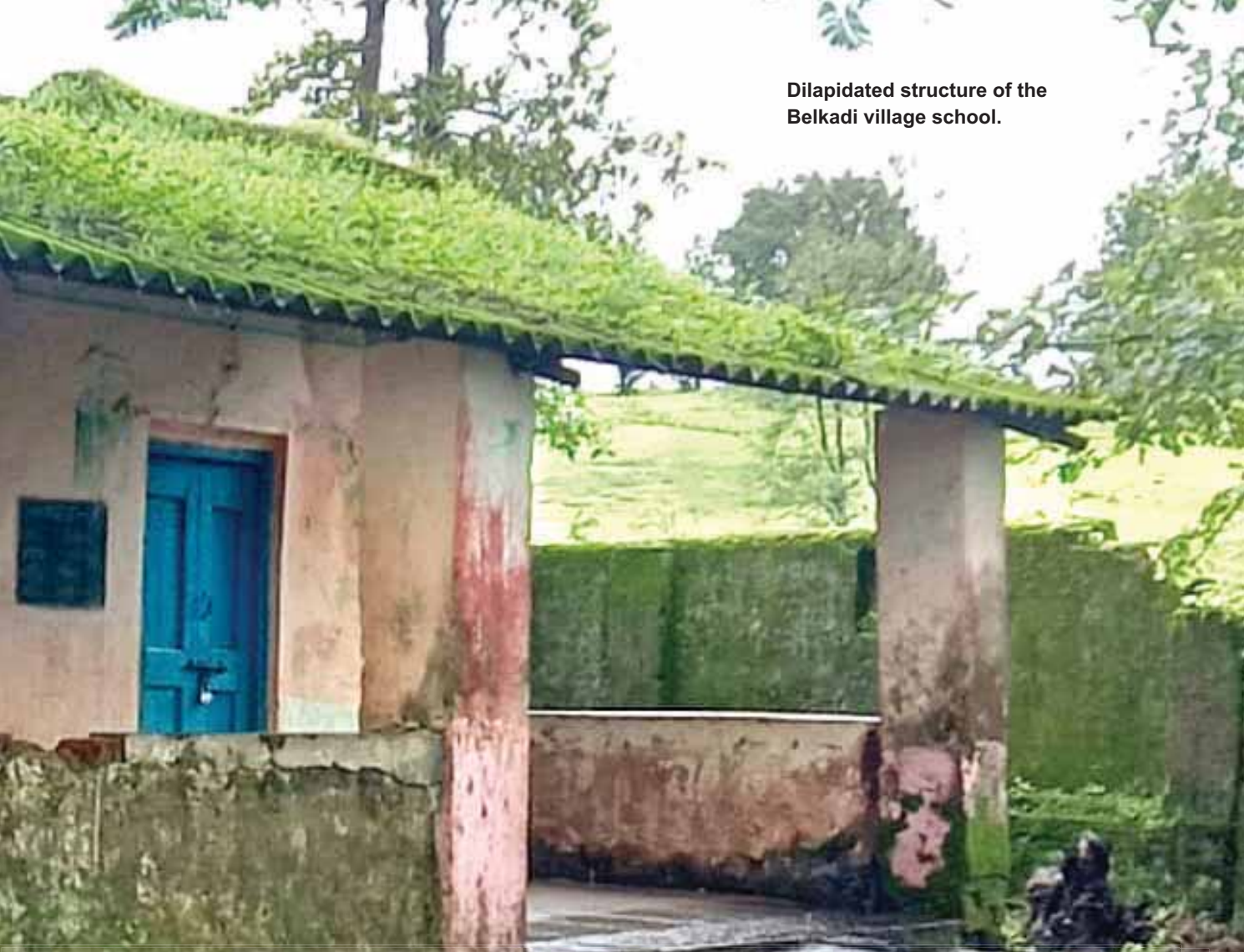
व्यापारी ही व्यापारी

व्यापारी ही व्यापारी

व्यापारी ही व्यापारी

व्यापारी ही व्यापारी



A photograph showing the entrance to a school building. The building has a blue door and a concrete pillar. A concrete wall with a gate is in the foreground. The structure appears old and somewhat neglected. The background shows green trees and a clear sky.

Dilapidated structure of the Belkadi village school.

school, the Rotarians constructed a compound wall surrounding the entire school premises and provided an 8ft-high iron gate, “complete with a nameplate of the school. This gives a sense of pride and security to the students and the teachers. The kitchen was completely renovated and made functional by providing shade, a platform and new flooring.”

A stage was constructed for school events and the classrooms were provided with iron grills and doors for safety. The school building was painted to give a new look, new separate toilet blocks for boys and girls were constructed, along with a hand-wash station. Sports equipment was also installed on the school premises.

This particular school was done in partnership with the club’s Rotaract club. “Three artists from the Rotaract club were assigned the task of painting the walls with beautiful, colourful pictures. They were given the freedom to choose their own theme, and they chose that of a train with rainbow colours,” said Phoolgaonkar, himself a Rotaractor till the age of 25, before he joined RC Dombivli in 2005. An interior designer by profession, he has worked on improving 25 to 30 gram panchayat, zilla parishad schools in Adivasi areas in his personal capacity for the last several years and has helped the club identify schools which are in a pathetic

condition and desperately need help and support.

This project cost around ₹15 lakh and the funds were again provided by the CSR partner Centaur Pharma. School headmaster Rajaram Gaykar, teachers, students and their parents expressed their happiness at the complete transformation of their school, as RID 3142 DG Milind Kulkarni inaugurated the project and the Rotarians handed over the school to the management in the first week of March. Kulkarni complimented the club for consistently working to convert schools to “happy schools” category, and that too “in this remote location bringing cheer and smiles on the face of the teachers and students,

mostly from the tribal community.” Sweets were distributed to the students during the inaugural, attended by club president Girish Pophale, secretary Radhika Shirali, other club members and their families.

Phoolgaonkar said these schools are attended mostly by children of tribals, who work as farm labourers, or in the brick kilns; they have no land-holding of their own, and for them it is really a god-send to send their children to beautiful, well-developed schools. For the club members, the completion of these two schools means that in the last four years they have beautified and spruced up a total of 18 schools at a cost of ₹1 crore. “When the environment changes, and the schools are beautified, children feel like coming to school. The bigger advantage is for the girls; now that we have provided separate toilets with running water (there are borewells available

and the Rotarians have provided the pipeline and overhead tanks) in these schools, girls have stopped dropping out from schools at puberty and there is 100 per cent attendance of girls in schools,” he smiles.

Sathawane thanked club member “Dr Ghanshyam Shirali for his tireless efforts in getting the CSR funds to execute this project,” and added that the zilla parishad school at Umroli Khurd, done by them, had also got “the cleanliest school award in the taluk recently. Our next Happy Schools project at the ZP School, Nadhai, near Murbad taluk is nearing completion and will be handed over soon to the school authorities,” he added.

RC Dombivli also runs another significant and long-term project titled ‘Rotary School for



Students create clay models of Lord Ganesha.





Deaf,' which was established in 1970. Chartered in 1965, this club now has 65 members and it first set up this school for the hearing-impaired in Thane district with just four students. "It now provides education from KG to Class 10. We also give college education to 191 students," he says. Managed by the Rotary Seva Kendra Trust set up by RC Dombivli, this school has about 350 students till Class 10.



Clockwise from top left Rotarians distribute sweets to students, staff and villagers at the Belkadi school; Actor Amitabh Bachchan at an event at the Rotary School for Deaf; Club members at the old premises of the school at Wanjale; Installation of Interact Club at the Rotary School for Deaf; DG Kulkarni with club president Girish Pophale and his team at the refurbished school in Wanjhle village; Christmas celebrations at the Rotary School for Deaf.

Phoolgaonkar adds that for those students who want to study further — Class 11–12 and thereafter, a three-year college degree, "we organise classes for them. It is our own building and has four storeys; we have ample space to hold classes for students who want to go for higher education. We have organised teachers for them and help them appear for the examinations as private students. We had started the school with just four special children and it has now grown to 350 students with a hearing handicap. They study till Class 10."



For the college lessons, the club has employed 7–8 teachers to coach the students. For the school there are 15 teachers. The activities of the school have been funded over the years from donations given by club members, he adds. ■



An Interact club for the hearing, speech-impaired

Jaishree





The Rotary E-club of Empowering Youth, RID 3132, has chartered the Interact Club of Jankibai Apte Mook Badhir Vidyalaya, a school for children with hearing and speech impairment in Ahmednagar.

“We had visited the school last year, when our club was chartered, to hand over a cheque for ₹50,000 donated by our club member Harshita Tapariya from the US. We spoke to the school principal about Interact and the opportunities the students will get by being in an Interact club,” says club member Dr Bindu Shirsath.

This year the club donated green boards for classrooms and stationery kits for the students at the Jankibhai school. The principal expressed interest in forming an Interact club with 25 students from Class 9 and 10. “It was heartwarming to see the children ‘sing’ our national anthem in sign language. They interacted with us in sign language which the teachers translated for us,” says Bindu. The new Interact club led by its president Manish Gandhi and secretary Sainath Dudhale implemented service projects such as cleaning the school campus and developing a kitchen garden in the backyard of the school. The Interactors involved the students in a mega seed ball project and, with guidance from

the parent Rotary, they imparted lessons in environmental care to the younger students.

With the objective of introducing the new Interactors to other Interact clubs, the parent Rotary club encouraged them to participate in an international poster competition on mental health which was hosted by a Rotary club in Gujarat. Interactor Ganesh Bhakand emerged the fourth best among contestants from Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and other parts of India.

“We are glad we were able to give these students an opportunity to engage in various activities through the club. This will enhance their self-confidence and develop their personality. Next year we have plans to organise a RYLA for these Interactors,” says Bindu. The club also gifted a sewing machine to a girl student who was trained in tailoring at the school’s vocational training centre. “She completed Grade 10, and as she was skilled in sewing garments, we decided to help her with a sewing machine so that she could support the family with her income,” says Bindu.

The E-club has 10 members, including two members from the US and Canada. It has chartered a cause-based eco club that executes projects related to environmental care in Ahmednagar. ■

Top left: Interactors working on a kitchen garden on the school campus.

Left: A sewing machine being presented to a student. DG Swati Herkal, club president Sheelu Makar, club secretary Arti Mhatre and club members are also seen.

Showcase the Rotary magic

RIPE Stephanie

V Muthukumaran

Now is the time for Rotarians to take action, “to move and make a commitment to increase membership, share ideas and impactful stories in their neighbourhoods, on social media to show the world the magic of Rotary,” said RIPE Stephanie Urchick.

Summing up an interactive session with PRIP Shekhar Mehta at the ‘Magic of Service’ event attended by 350 Rotarians from 20 RI districts of zones 5 and 6 in Kolkata, the incoming RI president, said, “Rotary is in you all to create hope in the world. Together we create magic by changing people we touch and benefit.” In the next 10 years, the RI membership can reach

five million, “if all our clubs embrace the new Action Plan which had identified four priorities for the people of action — increase our impact and adaptability, expand our reach and focus on member engagement.”

As chairperson of the Strategic Planning Committee that has worked for six years to bring out the new Action Plan, Stephanie led the core team on the Vision Statement that will steer Rotary on issues related to falling membership, retention, new format clubs, the DEI mantra and adapting new age tech to attract youngsters. “When expectations are not fulfilled, new members just walk away. We need to broaden and adapt to include

e-clubs, satellite and passport clubs, corporate and new generation clubs to attract diverse people who seek fellowship, service, leadership, projects and networking,” she said.

Rotary should welcome youth who want to do service in a different way, and form clubs with like-minded Rotarians who also expect other add-on services for networking. She recalled that as DG, she had an ‘amazing experience’ to educate people about Rotary in 1998–99. Her batch of RI directors from 2019–2021 was called ‘Covid directors’ as the pandemic was raging at that time. “But it was a blessing in disguise as we found new ways of connecting with people through digital

RIPE Stephanie Urchick with PRIP Shekhar Mehta at an interactive session.



technology and the amount sanctioned under Covid grants was astounding,” she said.

However, Stephanie cherished most the role as RI chair of the Strategic Planning Committee “where I had the opportunity to ask people around the world on what we could do better and what they expect of Rotary.”

Recalling her visit to the Dominican Republic as governor, along with other Rotarians, for the installation of water filters she said, “We worked hard to transport those filters, install them and worked with community leaders in the area to maintain them, and the locals, particularly the young, knew that easy access to clean water would change their lives.” Having played a small part in changing the lives of these children had transformed her life, the RIPE said. “We get a psychic income in serving people to bring lasting change in the world.”

Addressing 150 presidents-elect and DGEs of zones 5 and 6 later, she urged the club leaders to “get everything in place and your projects in line before July. Select your team in advance for a successful year and to make Rotary irresistible. We need strong people with leadership quali-

When expectations are not fulfilled, new members just walk away. We need to broaden and adapt to include e-clubs, satellite and passport clubs, corporate and new generation clubs to attract diverse people.

Stephanie Urchick
RI President-elect



RIPE Stephanie addressing DGEs and presidents-elect of zones 5 and 6, along with (from L) RI Director Raju Subramanian, PRIP Mehta, PRIDs Mahesh Kotbagi and Kamal Sanghvi.

ties as club presidents.” There should be continuity with change in Rotary’s growth as “our core values enshrined in the Four-Way Test, peacebuilding and service will keep us going. But we need to adapt to changing times with new format clubs and adopting technology in our work. Rotary has not made me richer, it has made me laugh and cry too. I simply cry after seeing the magical work being done by your clubs in Kolkata,” she smiled.

While Rotary promotes peace and wellbeing, its transformative power inspires Rotarians to “re-establish their commitment to its core values of service, fellowship and goodwill. We need a delicate balance between continuity and change as we remain steadfast to our service motto and at the same time innovate with technology to stay relevant in the work,” said RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury.

Every small act of kindness brings a smile on the faces of children and other beneficiaries, said RI director Raju Subramanian. “We are a 1.4 million-strong organisation doing service projects with transparency, integrity and ethics to make the world a better place,” he said. When a DGE from India landed at the Chicago

airport to attend the International Assembly in Evanston, he was asked by the US immigration officer, “what is Rotary?” Mind you, this was at the city where Rotary is headquartered,” said Subramanian, and called for steps to shore up Rotary’s public image.

Around 25,000 heart surgeries on children were done across India over the decade, said PRIP Shekhar Mehta. “Being the club president over 30 years back was my best year in Rotary as I enjoyed the hands-on experience,” he said.

Once a Pakistani mother with a blue child travelled all the way from West Pakistan to Durgapur in West Bengal for CHD surgery. “After the surgery, she said ‘my son was born in Pakistan, but got his life back in India, thanks to the heart surgery,’” Mehta recalled. He urged club presidents to “chisel your dreams with passion and bold vision translating into action.” He asked them to give credit to Rotarians who do service projects; and “go for CSR projects as just one per cent of annual CSR funds of ₹36,000 crore is more than the total TRF donations.”

PRID Mahesh Kotbagi said 50 per cent of Indian children born with congenital heart defects die before

We need a delicate balance between continuity and change as we remain steadfast to our service motto and at the same time innovate with technology to stay relevant in the work.

Anirudha Roychowdhury
RI Director



RIPE Stephanie with children at the Rotary Sadan.

they turn 12. To honour Stephanie's visit, "5,000 heart surgeries on children will be done across India in the coming year," he said.

Around 68 million, majority of them women and children, were displaced by wars and conflict across the world in the last few years, said PRID Kamal Sanghvi. "If we want peace and progress, then as torchbearers, we in Rotary have to work towards peacebuilding, rather than just talk about it," he said.

Listing out mega projects in RID 3291, DG Hira Lal Yadav said around

55,000 cataract surgeries are done and five lakh patients are treated in a year at the 13 Rotary eye hospitals; seven dialysis centres reach out to kidney patients; thousands of lives were saved through child heart surgeries in the last 16 years; a vocational centre trains young girls; a blood bank in Howrah, along with a blood collection van, offers 24x7 service; and old age homes shelter elderly people left high and dry.

While sanitary pads are being distributed and girls vaccinated against cervical cancer, on the sanitation front

"we have built 10,000 toilets with running water in the last 20 years," he said. "Our 4,000 Rotarians in RID 3291 are changing lives by investing time, talent, resources and energy."

Hero Awards were presented to three unsung heroes striving for gender equality — Krishna Mondal, founder-trustee, New Light that rehabilitates sex workers and their children in the Kalighat red light area of Kolkata; and Reshma Prasad, a transgender activist, who through her NGO, Dostana Safar, Bihar, urged Niti Aayog, the planning body, to issue Aadhaar cards to all LGBTQ people in India, helped get PAN cards for 12,000 transgenders; and jobs for over 10,000 of them after skill training. Usha Vishwakarma from Red Brigade, Lucknow, has trained over two lakh young women and girls in self-defence. Over 200 rape survivors in Uttar Pradesh were helped to get jobs and self-employment.

India's last polio survivor, 15-year-old Rukhsar Khatun (Class 9) who was brought to the venue from Shapara village, Howrah, by PDG Shyamashree Sen, was given a one-year scholarship of ₹10,000 at the event.



RIPE Stephanie presents a scholarship to Rukhsar Khatun, India's last polio survivor, in the presence of RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury and PDG Shyamashree Sen.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran

Couple Ravi Bawri and Tusu Devi from Seetaldih village at Chandankiyari taluk, 23km from Bokaro, Jharkhand, found to their dismay that their newborn had clubfoot, a congenital foot deformity in which the limb is curved inwards with toes glued together. “After a lengthy treatment at the Bokaro General Hospital with 5–6 weeks of plaster cast on the deformed foot, and regular check-up by doctors, the child is totally cured of clubfoot,” says Ghanshyam Dass, president, RC Bokaro Steel City, RID 3250.

The parents are a happy lot. “We are thankful to the Rotary club which has arranged the treatment and the doctors for the painless recovery of my child Ritesh who has got a normal foot now,” says Bawri. So far, 50 infants were treated for clubfoot since July last year and “none required a surgery. We will do the procedure for 10 more babies for this year,” says Dass. When Cure International India Trust, an NGO fighting club-foot syndrome, approached the club for sponsorship to treat babies with this birth defect, “we tied up with the Bokaro General Hospital who agreed to do free treatment and surgery.” Dass and club member, Dr Rajdeep, took care of logistics to facilitate the treatment of 2–3 weeks old infants,

60 children treated for clubfoot

V Muthukumar



Dr Rajdeep (centre), club member, fitting a plaster cast on the child.

while a four-member doctor team led by Dr ND Kachchap examined each child, fitted and removed the plaster cast each time for 7–8 weeks, and took a call on the need for surgery or not after an “elaborate inspection of the deformed foot.” From Cure Trust, Suchita Lakra coordinated with the club and hospital for a hassle-free experience for the parents and their child patients.

In the first stage, plaster cast is applied to the clubfoot for 7–8 weeks, and “each week a new one is replaced after examination by doctors” After this stage, if the foot is not cured, then doctors will go for a minor surgery called tenotomy that restructures the Achilles tendon for straightening the foot. “Once the surgery is done, special shoes are given to the infants and the progress is monitored for a year. However, the child has to wear the special shoe for up to 5–6 years to have a normal foot and a smooth gait,” explains Dass. Beneficiary parents, Shivam Tiwai and Prieti Kumari from Chandrapura village, say, “our child would have grown into a handicapped boy, but for the timely help by Rotary and the hospital. We are forever grateful to the club.”

In 2017, the club has adopted Ulgora village, 30km from Bokaro, where it runs Asha Ki Kiran (ray of hope), a free playschool for 150 children. “Every Sunday, we celebrate birthdays and marriage anniversaries of Rotarians, and present gift bags on festivals and special occasions,” says Dass. An indoor auditorium has facilities for badminton, table tennis, carrom, chess and Ludo for village youngsters. Polio drops were given to 800 children at PolioPlus camps in two phases organised by this 54-year-old club having 80 members. ■



Dr ND Kachchap (left) and Dr Rajdeep (right), along with doctors and a mother with her child.

Rotary boosts mobile cardiac care in Chennai

V Muthukumar

It is a great privilege for Rotary to “work collectively in healthcare projects with reputed hospitals and local governments, to scale up medical initiatives and expand their reach,” said RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury at an event to mark over 15,000 free mobile cardiac screenings and 20,000 ECG and ECHO tests done under *Project Nalam* (wellness), a flagship programme of RC Madras Central Aadithya, RID 3232.

Noting that this was his third visit to Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research (SRIHER), a multispecialty hospital and deemed university on the outskirts of Chennai, the RID said the concept of free cardiac screening at the doorsteps of people was praiseworthy as “most

of the beneficiaries do not have access to medical care.” He acknowledged the efforts of project mentor PDG Muthu Palaniappan and his team for conceiving the idea of a cardiac care bus and tying up with the hospital. Other clubs too can partner with this hospital in other disciplines of healthcare, he added.

Preventive healthcare will be the future of medicine in India, said TRF vice-chair Bharat Pandya, and called the mobile cardiac care unit “the need of the hour and need of society.” In India we are confronted with two extreme problems — “one set of people who don’t have time for check-up as they are busy tending to other matters all the time; and another set of people who do not

have access to any form of medical care,” he said.

As 60 per cent deaths in India occur due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, hypertension, stroke, kidney ailments and cardiac diseases, Pandya said, “we are sitting on a big volcano with NCDs affecting the Indian population in the 45–50 age group, 15 years earlier than in Western nations where such diseases are found only among those in the age group of 65–70.” Mobile heart screening is an excellent project that “will spur other clubs to do more, attract more participation from other hospitals and government bodies,” he said. During weekly cardiac camps, Rotarians can distribute pamphlets, explain the screening process to patients, and provide counselling on hygiene for better living, he pointed out. “Through this medical project, we are seeing one more example of the power of the Foundation in doing good in the world,” he said.

Medical projects galore

Giving an overview of *Project Nalam*, PDG Palaniappan said, “it was conceived as a global grant project (₹1.3 crore) in the form of this cardiac care bus which was designed in partnership with SRIHER and handed over to the hospital in March 2022.” RC Klang, Malaysia, RID 3300, is the global partner. Till date, the mobile heart clinic has done 146 screening camps, thus benefitting 15,266 patients, and conducted over 20,000 ECG and ECHO tests.

After the positive feedback on *Project Nalam*, “we are able to scale up our various other global grant projects worth over ₹5 crore that include 20 hybrid vision centres under *Project Orange* (₹2.35 crore); a dialysis centre (\$88,000) with 11 machines at the Urban Health Centre, Thiruvottiyur, a joint project with the Tanker

(From L) PDG S Muthu Palaniappan, GCC former chief medical officer Dr Hemalatha, project chairman K Balamurugan, RID Anirudha Roychowdhury, GCC regional deputy commissioner M P Amit, TRF vice-chair Bharat Pandya, DG Ravi Raman, RC Madras Central Aadithya president Syed Ashraff, and Ganeshan Suppiah, past president, RC Madras Coromandel, in front of the cardiac screening bus.



Foundation; while 2,650 cataract surgeries will be done in phases as a GG of \$93,800 was sanctioned recently.” The club will soon flag off an Orange van for its vision centres, while two more vehicles will be pressed into service by other clubs, he said.

In due course, ENT and pulmonary buses would be flagged off, “for which we are in talks with our partner clubs. Donors are ready and we will shortly apply for GGs for these mobile clinics,” said Palaniappan. “We will do mega eye camps at government schools in a joint project with other clubs and the city corporation.”

SRIHER vice-chancellor Uma Sekar said, “The success of the mobile cardiac care is due to the coordinated efforts of all the stakeholders including the doctors of the cardiology department led by its HOD Dr S Ramesh, support staff and the technical team of the bus.”

Citing a WHO study that found 35 per cent of global mortality was due

to cardiac illness, she said, “as heart attack strikes suddenly without warning, it is all the more important to go for preventive screening.” During the camps that were held twice a week, “we had identified at least 450 abnormal cases that needed further intervention and hospital treatment.” Fifty per cent of those screened were antenatal women, that means, two lives were involved. More than the treatment, “our approach is in preventive care for those who can’t afford medical care. In the next three years, we aim to screen 50,000 people, building on the progress we have made so far.”

Regional deputy commissioner MP Amit from the Chennai Corporation invited Rotary to join the civic body in other healthcare initiatives of the government. “I want to replicate the success of Rotary’s mobile cardiac check-up in our programmes and public health initiatives,” he said. Speaking to *Rotary News*, project chair K Balamurugan said, “Camps

are held twice a week across the 18 urban health centres of the Greater Chennai Corporation.” Now the civic body wants to avail the services of the mammography bus too, a GG project of RCs Madras Vadapalani, Madras West and The Hills-Kellyville, RID 9685, Australia, following the success of the mobile cardiac care project.

The hospital team led by Dr H Thamizhchelvan, dean, Sri Ramachandra Dental College and Hospital; the cardiology faculty led by HOD Ramesh; DRFC B Dakshayani who helped the club in selecting the bus chassis builder; Balamurugan and his team; and SRIHER former V-C PV Vijayaraghavan were felicitated on the occasion. Club president Syed Ashraff welcomed the delegates including DG Ravi Raman, DGE Mahaveer Bothra, DGN D Devendran, DGND Shriram Duvvuri, all from RID 3233, PDGs A Subramaniam, N Nandakumar and R Srinivasan. ■

High-tech device for Nashik blood bank

Team Rotary News

RI Director Raju Subramanian inaugurated a refrigerated centrifuge donated by RC Nasik, RID 3030, to the Jankalyan Blood Bank in the city. The equipment was procured through a global grant of \$54,500. The global partner was RC Bahia Norte, Brazil, while local firm, Ring Plus Aqua, chipped in with a CSR fund of ₹12 lakh.

More than 20,000 blood bags were being given to patients each year by this blood bank. The refrigerated centrifuge can separate components like platelets, plasma and cryoprecipitate from the donated blood, and hence, can help multiple patients from the same quantum of blood. DG Asha Venugopal was also present at the event. ■



RI Director Raju Subramanian and DG Asha Venugopal, along with ARRFC Pawan Agarwal, EMGA Rajiv Sharma, DGE Rajinder Khurana, DGN Dnyaneshwaer Shewale and club president Mangesh Apshankar, at the inauguration of refrigerated centrifuge at the Jankalyan Blood Bank, Nashik.

Meet your Governors



Udaykumar Bhaskara

Packaging

RC Bangalore Cubbon Park, RID 3191

A big push to e-clubs in Bengaluru

Feeling gung-ho over the newly carved district 3191, Udaykumar Bhaskara says, “in the coming years, our clubs will do wonders in membership growth, TRF-giving and CSR projects.” At present, there are 92 clubs having 3,500 members and “we have achieved a net membership growth of 13 per cent already. But at the same time, 200 Rotarians have quit thus posing a retention challenge.”

Led by the DG, the team encourages young professionals to join e-clubs “where they meet online instead of physically. Also, we are focusing on giving a big push to hybrid model clubs, where they can have both physical and online meetings with a flexible approach,” he explains. At present there are three e-clubs and 4–5 hybrid model clubs. A government school near Whitefield, an IT neighbourhood, was upgraded at a cost of ₹5.3 crore through a combination of global grant and CSR funding.

Rotary’s Answer to Cancer Enigma (RACE) is a signature project in which cancer detection camps are held for men and women regularly. “We have done four RACE camps, and our target is to screen one lakh people in the next two years.” Around 100 atmospheric water generators are installed in government schools through CSR grants and member contributions. For TRF-giving, his target is \$1.5 million. He joined Rotary in 1996 inspired by his uncle Sreeram Bhaskara, a Rotarian from Mumbai.

V Muthukumar



Ravi Raman

IT infrastructure

RC Madras Coromandel, RID 3232

Bifurcated districts will grow rapidly

Known for his expertise in drafting global grant applications, Ravi Raman says, “I was directly involved in securing 100 GG projects for clubs across Tamil Nadu, and those in the US, Australia, African countries and Peru.” With 188 clubs having around 6,600 members, he is the last governor of RID 3232 as it will be bifurcated next year.

Having joined Rotary in 1996 “only to enjoy cricket fellowship,” he took up active interest in service projects from 2012. The district clubs have initiated 60 GG projects (\$2.5 million) and 20 CSR projects (\$2 million) this year, with the DG’s guidance. Over the last three years, “we have invested ₹40 crore (multiple GGs) in setting up dialysis centres; spent over ₹30 crore in eyecare projects (both GG+CSR funding); donated equipment worth ₹50–60 crore for cardiac care, cancer treatment and mobile clinics; and ₹75 crore through GGs and CSR grants for upgrading schools and smart classes,” he explains. Around 60 lakes were restored (₹25 crore) over the last three years.

After the bifurcation, “difference of opinion among the district’s Rotary leaders have eased, and both the new districts are poised for rapid growth,” he says. His target for TRF-giving is \$2.5 million.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Project Vignettes

Team Rotary News

Service Above Self Award for Dindigul Rotarian



RIDN M Muruganandam, PRID C Basker and DG R Anandtha Jothi felicitate G Sundararajan.

Major Donor G Sundararajan received the Service Above Self Award at a felicitation event hosted by RC Dindigul West, RID 3000, in Dindigul. The event honoured his philanthropic contribution and commitment to volunteering.

A Rotary theme park in Chikmagalur



The Rotary theme park.

RID 3182 DG BC Geetha inaugurated a Rotary theme park constructed by RC Chikmagalur Coffee Land at the Rukminamma Government Maternity Hospital, Chikmagalur. The club also provided seating arrangements for patients at the Aralaguppe Mallegowda District General Hospital in the town.

Shoes for underprivileged students



DG Busireddy Shankar Reddy, along with club members, after distributing shoes to students.

RC Banjara Hills, RID 3150, distributed shoes to 230 students at the Government Primary School in Venkatgiri, Hyderabad. The club also distributed shoes to 150 HIV-infected children through the KC Pullaiah Foundation and Mamatha Foundation.

Aadhaar card enrolment camp



At an Aadhaar card enrolment camp hosted by RC Virar, RID 3141, close to 200 people registered. The enrolment process for Aadhaar cards was completed for 50 adults and children. ■

Homecare nursing empowers 15,000 girls

Team Rotary News

With a constantly updated curriculum and hands-on training, the 25-year-old Homecare Nursing programme of RC Chandigarh Midtown, RID 3080, has equipped over 15,000 girls with essential skills for employment in hospitals, private clinics and as provider of after-care services at homes.

Initiated by the club under the Rotary Skilling India banner, the six-month programme is divided into four months of theory classes and two months of practical learning. The curriculum is designed to cover various aspects of nursing, including

basic nursing techniques, first aid, nutrition, physiotherapy and mental wellness. “Over the years, many of our graduates have excelled in their roles, thus showing their proficiency in patient care, leading to appreciative letters from their employers and patients alike,” said club secretary Anup Sharma. The programme has also contributed to bridging the gap in the healthcare sector by enabling trained professionals to meet the increasing demand for nursing services, he added.

However, despite the success of the nursing programme, “challenges

such as funding constraints, logistical issues and need for constant update of the curriculum remain.” In future, Sharma said, “we will expand our programme to reach rural areas, include the latest techniques in nursing, and fostering partnerships with hospitals for upgrading the training opportunities.”

As part of its mission to empower women, the club is conducting a six-month skill development course for assistant beauty technicians at its Rotary Vocational Centre, Haripur, over the last three years. Course completion certificates were distributed



E-rickshaw inaugurated at the Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital.

to 160 girls who have finished their training.

These young women have not just mastered the art of makeup and hairstyling, “but they have embarked on a journey of self-employment and empowerment,” said Sharma. “The skill development certificates will unlock new opportunities and dreams for them.” Some of the trainees have already stepped into the professional world, securing placement as assistant technicians in beauty parlours, he added.

Toilet block upgrade

In a transformative project, a toilet block at the Government Model Sanskriti Primary School at Bhudanpur in Panchkula was renovated, with a few washrooms added, by the club at a cost of ₹4 lakh. The sanitation project that will benefit 900 students was made possible with the dedication of Rajeev Chopra, a club member. Club president Jeeten Bhambri took up the project inspired by a presentation by the NGO Aashi Foundation, and was supported by AG Sanjeev Checker.



DG Arun Mongia and Manjushree Sharma, director - Community Service, presenting course completion certificate to a homecare nursing student. DGND Rita Kalra (L) and club secretary Anup Sharma are also seen.

Buggy vehicle

An e-rickshaw (₹1.5 lakh) was handed over to the Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital, Mullanpur, for transporting cancer patients within the premises to get hassle-free medical treatment. Bhambri and his team were supported by Sanjeevani, an NGO reaching out to cancer patients, in presenting the

buggy vehicle to hospital director Dr Ashish Gulia. Another vehicle will be donated to the hospital shortly, “as there is a growing need for such services in patient care. Both the vehicles were funded through member contributions,” said Sharma.

Dr Gulia pointed out the need for a hostel (*sarai*) for patients’ care givers. ■

Rotary houses for visually-impaired

Team Rotary News

RC Madurai Star, RID 3000, along with RC Madras, RID 3232, built four houses (₹22.5 lakh) and handed them over to families of visually-impaired persons at the Bright Home site in Sakkimangalam village.

RID 3000 DGE Raja Govindasamy, RID 3232 PDG J Sridhar, Kamala Manimozhian, past chairman, Inner Wheel District 321, and RC Madras president S Ravi gave the house keys to the beneficiary families.

Till now the club has built 45 houses in phases after it got the vacant house sites from the state government in 2006. (Refer <https://rotarynewsonline.org/rotary-houses-for-sightless-families-in-madurai/>)



RC Madras president S Ravi (right) unveils the plaque in the presence PDG J Sridhar and others at the inaugural.

Boosting local healthcare and women's empowerment

Team Rotary News

RC Manipal, RID 3182, recently upgraded the physiotherapy departments in two government hospitals in Kundapur and Karkala taluks in Karnataka. The project, valued at ₹34 lakh, was supported through a global grant; RCs Silicon Valley Passport and Central Chester County, RID 5170, USA, were the international partners.

The grant provided 13 varieties of physiotherapy machines to each hospital, significantly improving their capacity to serve patients. The

selection of equipment was guided by Dr Arun Maiya, dean of Manipal College of Health Professions at Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE). The upgraded departments will benefit various patient groups, including 1,600 endosulfan victims, as well as diabetic foot and stroke patients from remote areas.

The official handover of the equipment was done in the presence of DG BC Geetha, IPDG Dr Jayagowri Hadigal and DRFC chair Dr P Narayan.

The club also hosted a three-day prosthesis fitment camp at the Rotary Bhavan, providing crucial services to 200 individuals who use or need prosthetic limbs. Prosthetist specialists from Inali Foundation Pune and RC Poona Downtown, RID 3131, provided guidance and support. Contributions from local businesses such as Needs Manpower Support Services, Manipal Dot Net, Abharna Foundation, and numerous Rotarians and individual donors helped cover the camp's costs.

DG BC Geetha along with the members of RC Manipal at one of the physiotherapy centre that was upgraded by the club.





A beneficiary being fitted with a prosthetic arm at the prosthesis fitment camp hosted by the club.

A three-month intensive training focusing on skill development and business management essentials was provided to 13 women to help them become successful entrepreneurs.

Sewing machines worth ₹2 lakh were distributed to 20 women hailing from economically weak families under the club's project, *Mahila Udyamita Samridhi*. The second phase of the project had a distribution of high-end electric sewing machines worth ₹1.25 lakh to local training centres. Under the third phase, a three-month intensive training focusing on skill development and business management essentials was provided to 13 women to help them become successful entrepreneurs. The topics covered included business planning, account maintenance, marketing and connecting with banks. The sessions were led by club member Dr AP Achar, dean of Corporate Programmes at the Nitte University; Ramesh, executive director of Suphala Farmers Produce Company; and professors from the university. The programme also included visits to the Maverick Printing Lab and Nitte University, providing participants with practical insights into business operations. ■



DG BC Geetha handing over a sewing machine to a beneficiary.

A journey to chaos... and back

Rasheeda Bhagat

The *Fall of Kabul* — *Despatches from Chaos* by journalist Nayanima Basu, (Bloomsbury; ₹599) promises a lot, but ends up a tad disappointing. Make no mistake about it...any journalist who has landed in the Afghan capital in August 2021, barely 10 days before its heartbreaking capitulation to the Taliban without any fight or resistance, will have a captivating and gripping story to tell.

Basu has one, and it is filled with suspense, drama, and serious questions on her returning home as

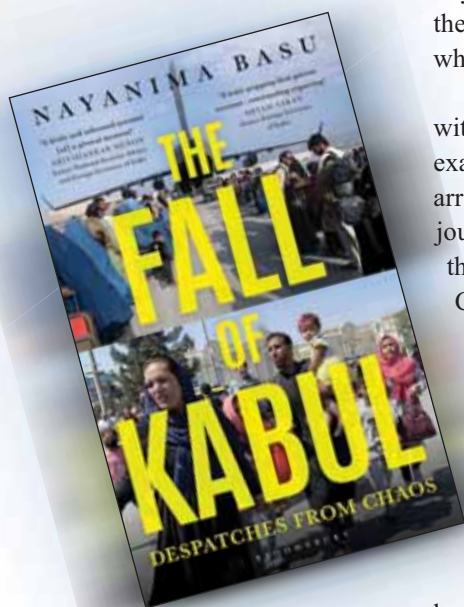
the Taliban move into Kabul and quickly shut down exit routes from the city. But the *manner* in which she tells that story, the frequent whining and persistent attempt to paint herself a war hero, end up irritating the discerning reader.

But her story first. Having covered Afghanistan from Delhi for several years, in July 2021, as there was wide expectation of a peace deal between the Ashraf Ghani government and the Taliban, and the impending return of the dreaded Taliban to this beleaguered country, the author lands up in the city on Aug 8, 2021, to report for the online publication *The Print*, where she was working then.

The book is a bit of a thriller with elements of drama, often exaggerated, right from her arrival at the Kabul airport and journey to Hotel Serena, where the international biggies led by CNN and other Western media entities are camping. We get quite a bit of whining and constant patting on the back... how the other international media has so much help... superior equipment, a plethora of local helpers hired through tons of dollars, how so many other journalists are 'embedded' with this agency or

that. But she is soldiering on with limited funds, and very little by way of local help. We are also told, rather sanctimoniously, how after she returned to India, no journalist bodies, including one of women journalists, invited her to tell her story! Had these elements been edited out, the narrative would have been more engaging.

In Kabul, Basu is completely surprised to find that everyone is optimistic about the peace talks with the Taliban initiated by the US in Doha. There is widespread belief that the Ashraf Ghani government will stay on, and a power-sharing deal with the Taliban worked out. Even when it becomes clear that the existing dispensation will fall and the Taliban will once again take over Afghanistan, most people



tell Basu that this time around it would be a “different” Taliban; in order to get international acceptance, they would not revert to their regressive gender policies.

But very soon Basu finds for herself the exact opposite and how she manages to get away in the nick of time forms rest of the narrative. ‘Will I die tonight?’ is the title of one chapter, which describes how her editor asks her to get out of the country, and says her ticket has been booked on the first Air India flight out the next morning, which never lands. She somehow makes it to the airport, along with another Indian journalist, and after long hours of trauma and lurking danger to her life at the chaotic airport, has to flee to the Indian Embassy, and finally, after more wait, makes it

home on Aug 17 by the Indian Air Force C-17 Globemaster. During the entire harrowing period, her foremost thought is about her young son waiting for her back at home in Delhi.

As always, Shah Rukh Khan’s name creates magic, and now Deepika Padukone has replaced Aishwarya Rai — she was the rage when I had visited Afghanistan in 2005. But King Khan continues to rule... even after 19 years!

A big plus of this book is that it provides in a useful capsule the history of this unfortunate country right from 1830 and the way superpowers like England, US and the Soviet Union played dirty games to expand their influence in Central Asia. It effectively brings out the shameful manner in which

The book effectively brings out the shameful manner in which the US first attacked Afghanistan, occupied it, and then left its government high and dry, departing abruptly without tying up the loose ends, aiding the country’s speedy slide into the dark ages once again.

the US first attacked the country, occupied it, and then left its government high and dry, departing abruptly without tying up the loose ends, aiding Afghanistan’s speedy slide into the dark ages once again.

Any book on Afghanistan is interesting, and Basu’s narrative is good for speed reading. But if you want a really gripping account, complete with vivid descriptions, and in-depth reporting and analysis of the eventual mess that the western occupying nations led by the US and UK made in Afghanistan during NATO’s 20-year occupation there, do read *Escape from Kabul—the Inside Story* by (Major) Levison Wood and Geraint Jones. Here’s a teaser.

Referring to the US President Joe Biden’s statement that “our mission in Afghanistan was never supposed to be nation building”, the authors say: “This begs the question as to why — if the Taliban was not a terror group — the war was allowed to go on for two decades. If NATO’s 20-year mission was to eliminate terrorism, then it failed. Al-Qaeda are still present in Afghanistan. So are the Islamic State—Khorasan.”

*This review first appeared in
The Hindu Businessline*



Upgrading school infrastructure

Team Rotary News



DG Muthiah Pillai (third from R) with PDGs V R Muthu and PNB Murugadoss at the inauguration of a smart board at the Coronation Girls Higher Secondary School.

CCTV camera, an RO water purifier, sports equipment, computers — all worth \$31,069 — were provided under the project to the NPSSRK Rotary Matriculation School; eight smart boards, 70 sets of classroom furniture, musical instruments and sports equipment were provided to the Coronation Girls Higher Secondary School. A toilet block was also renovated as part of the project. The total cost of this project was \$30,005.

DG Muthiah Pillai inaugurated the facilities in both the schools in the presence of PDG VR Muthu, club president Kalirajan and the project coordinator G Rajagopalan. ■

RC Sivakasi, RID 3212, executed two global grant projects to improve infrastructure in two schools in

the city. RC Ivinhema, RID 4470, Brazil, was the international partner. Ten interactive smart boards,

Neonatal ambulance to save rural newborns

A state-of-the-art neonatal ambulance was donated to the NPK Salve Institute of Medical Science and Lata Mangeshkar Hospital in Nagpur, thanks to a collaboration between RC Nagpur Downtown, RID 3030, who led the project with support from RC Woodford Green, RID 1130, USA, and RID 3310, Singapore.

Appreciating the project, DG Asha Venugopal said that “the neonatal ambulance allows us to reach rural areas quickly and efficiently, offering newborns a chance to receive the care they need when it matters most.”

The \$83,000 global grant initiative “is a significant boost to healthcare infrastructure in Nagpur’s rural outskirts, where it will serve an area of approximately 30,000sqft. This region,



DG Asha Venugopal, PDG Anand Jhunjhunwala (second from L), along with members of RC Nagpur Downtown, at the ambulance handing-over event.

which lacks immediate access to advanced medical facilities, will now benefit from specialised medical transport designed to ensure the safe and prompt transfer of critically ill newborns to the hospital,”

said Virendra Patrikar, the district secretary for service projects.

The new neonatal ambulance is expected to be operational immediately, with trained medical staff ready to respond to emergencies. ■

From RI South Asia

Guidelines for Rotary Foundation (India) contribution via Rotary.org

- Please use My Rotary login to avoid duplicate ID generation and receive timely credit of your contribution under your club.
- In the absence of My Rotary login, kindly create one, else use your registered email address while making online contribution.
- In case of contributions from family trust/company send cheque/bank draft to RI South Asia Office. Do not make contributions through My Rotary.
- Re-check your PAN before clicking on Submit for ensuring right PAN on your 80-G receipt.
- For all online contributions, 80G receipt will be generated in the name of the remitter whose My Rotary login has been used for making the contribution.
- Select currency as 'INR'

Appoint District Foundation positions

To achieve fundraising goals of 2024–25, it is important to have the right team in place to help keep the Foundation a priority for club leaders. Ensure that the chairs of the District Fundraising Subcommittee, District Endowment/Major Gifts (DEMGC), District CSR, District Annual Fund Subcommittee, District PolioPlus Subcommittee, and District Paul Harris Society Coordinator are appointed and details reported to RI. This gives them access to reports and information that can help. To report these appointments, district leaders can sign into My Rotary, go to 'Manage', then enter the details under 'District Administration' tab.

Annual Fund Year-end Special Recognition

To help boost Annual Fund contribution, Trustee Vice Chair Dr Bharat Pandya and RRFCs from Zones 4,5,6 and 7 have unveiled a new initiative called the 'Annual Fund Year End Special Recognition' for Rotary Year 2023–24. Participation in this special

programme will help districts and clubs achieve their Annual Fund targets.

All districts and clubs, including those who have already achieved the recognitions under 2023–24 Annual Fund Challenge, are eligible for these awards. The last date for making contribution for these awards is 30 June 2024. ■

Exciting NEWS

ANNUAL FUND YEAR END SPECIAL RECOGNITION

TRF Trustee & the RRFCs offer another opportunity for all districts to boost their Annual Fund contribution.

Eligibility Criteria

District Recognition

- ✔ 100 % clubs giving - minimum contribution of US \$50 by each club towards Annual Fund.
- ✔ 70% and above Rotarians contributing a minimum of US\$ 25 each to Annual Fund.

Club Recognition

- ✔ 100% Member participation, contributing a minimum of US\$ 25 each to Annual Fund.

Key Points

- All the Districts/Clubs including those who have already achieved awards under the 2023-24 Annual Fund Challenge, are eligible for the above recognitions.
- The last date for contribution for these awards is 30th June 2024.

Life behind the lens

Ed Zirkle

For an Army veteran, photography — and Rotary — have opened up the world.

In high school, a girl who lived across the street caught my eye. Hoping for a date, I visited her often in our suburban Chicago neighbourhood. But she had a brother who was into taking photos, and I quickly found that photography was more interesting to me than the girl. I ended up spending more time with her brother, bought myself an Argus C3 camera, and started down my photographic path.

My teenage romance never panned out, but I fell in love with photography. It has since consumed my adult life.

In college at the University of Louisville in Kentucky, I took classes in photography and interned at *The Courier-Journal*, one of the great Midwestern newspapers, known for its fearless investigative reporting. Subsequently, I grasped the technology and the chemistry of darkrooms as a “lab rat” at the

Evansville Sunday Courier and Press in Indiana.

In the 1960s and '70s, almost every city or small town in the US had at least one newspaper. Social and political issues like the racial integration of schools or the Vietnam War drove the news cycle. Many great journalists emerged from regional papers. At *The Courier-Journal*, I worked under William Hall Strode III, the photo editor who helped bring home a Pulitzer



A rider hangs on during the 2023 Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial in Gallup, New Mexico.



Jackie Gleason, Jack Nicklaus, Roger Maltbie, Bob Hope, former US President Gerald Ford and Glen Campbell at a 1977 golf tournament in Ohio.

Prize in 1976 for coverage of the court-ordered busing of students to desegregate schools in Jefferson County, Kentucky. From him and other prominent photojournalists, I learned how to tell stories with images that shed light on big questions of politics, war and social evolution.

I landed my first steady job as a photojournalist at the News Journal in Mansfield, Ohio, a daily newspaper. I had five or six assignments a day, most of which were typical for a small city: taking portraits of local business leaders or residents who distinguished themselves in the local economy, in sports or in community leadership. But every now and then, glamorous assignments came my way, like covering the concerts of Led Zeppelin or Frank Sinatra. I relished them. In March 1975, my editor sent me to photograph Muhammad Ali, the world heavyweight champion. He was in Ohio to take on Chuck Wepner in a fight that became the inspiration for the 1976 *Rocky* film. Ali

defeated him with 19 seconds left in the 15th round.

I remember bypassing Ali's handler, who tried to block us from taking pictures during his training bouts, to get close-ups of him chatting with fans and signing autographs in his robe. The photos captured another side of the ferocious fighter — he was gentle and engaging too.

Between 1969 and 1972, I took a leave from my newspaper job to join the Army. These were the climactic years of the Vietnam War. I had a low draft number — 18, if you can believe that — and I had heard that if you enlisted instead of waiting, you could choose what you were going to do in the Army.

Because I was a photographer and I had taken German in high school, I figured I was going to be like James Bond and spy on East Germany from Berlin. But when the Army gave me an aptitude test, they discovered I had no gift for languages. That left

me with two choices: mechanic or military police.

“Mechanic!” I said.

I ended up at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, but when my commanding officer found out I was a photographer, he dispatched me on helicopters and airplanes to document sea landing exercises, paratrooper jumps and live-fire demonstrations. I was getting a firsthand education in combat operations.

But my subsequent assignment to the Criminal Investigation Division was a sobering encounter with the darkest side of the human spirit. For two years, I photographed any major cases involving military personnel on or off post. For example, I assisted with the investigation of Jeffrey MacDonald, a former Army Special Forces physician, who was convicted of the 1970 murders of his pregnant wife and two daughters. He is serving three life sentences, and his case was made into a TV drama miniseries.

Hollywood tends to glamorise crime and forensics. But the real-life experience can be rough. With each investigation, I would photograph the crime scene, then spend hours processing the film and looking deeply into the negatives, some of which recorded gruesome details. Those images stay with you, affecting me in ways I didn't realise or understand until years later.

After returning to the newspaper, I started having nightmares, became argumentative and lost interest in connecting with people. A few years ago, a medical staff member at the Department of Veterans Affairs learned about my experience at the Criminal Investigation Division and handed me a mental health questionnaire. I checked off three-quarters of the

page. The staff member reviewed the results and said, “Oh, you have PTSD.”

A diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder explained a lot. The VA offered me treatment. But photography has become the best part of my PTSD therapy, offering me an outlet to express my emotions. My assignments propel me out of the house and out of my isolation.

I found rotary, or it found me, in the 1990s. My dad, who had also settled in Columbus, Ohio, introduced me. That’s how I found the Rotary Club of Whitehall-Bexley.

It surprised me. The people. The connections, not just locally, but internationally. Mine was a fun club, even though a bit old-school — the members were fastidious about attendance, sure, and they liked everyone to wear their Rotary pins. But their friendship and dedication to community service

inspired me. I soon became the international committee chair.

In 1997, I went to Nicaragua where our club sponsored a project to support surgeries for children with conditions such as cleft lip and cleft palate. I photographed a girl whose hands had been damaged through abuse; they were forced into a fire. The burns had healed, but her hands remained closed like fists due to internal damage. Doctors used a technique to open her hands. It was miraculous.

After Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, I contacted Rotarians there. I think part of the reason I went to Ukraine was for a chance to test myself and get back in a military environment. There were a lot of emotions tied up in it.

I spent 10 days roaming with my camera and notebook from the capital,

Photography has become the best part of my PTSD therapy, offering me an outlet to express my emotions.

Kyiv, to Kharkiv, a frequent target of Russia’s missile attacks, and then down to Odesa, the southwestern seaport. I slept on trains through the night and when I reached my destination, a Rotarian would be there to meet me.

I took many photos in Ukraine, of the destruction, the great architecture, and the warehouses where supplies donated to Rotary were prepared for distribution. But the photos of everyday people were even more compelling: wedding couples, people sharing meals amid the threats of war, old men playing chess in the square. Their resilience deeply moved me.

As the war intensified, I went back. A Rotarian lent me her mother’s car. As I drove around Kharkiv, I made many connections with Ukrainian soldiers. We exchanged military patches. That connection among people who served in the military can be found anywhere, but it was intensely felt among the brave and dedicated soldiers of Ukraine.

Being a photographer gives you permission to be curious and meet new people. It offers you access. You ask people to talk to you and show you their way of life. Oftentimes they invite you in.



Life in wartime: More than a year into Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, a woman sits in her apartment near Kharkiv, where she endured the loss of water, heat and electricity until volunteers moved her to a safe place.



Above: The Amish community in Ohio.

Below: American politician Sarah Palin at a campaign stop in 2008.



Politicians, in particular, understand the art of connection. I learned that while covering the presidential campaign of John Glenn, the astronaut-turned-politician in Ohio, or Hillary Rodham Clinton, or Sarah Palin. Glenn introduced me to his whole family, and my photographs captured his public and private sides, which I think helped people relate to him.

My brother and I are science fiction fans. We once spotted the world-famous physicist Stephen Hawking at Joshua Tree National Park in California. I got my camera and walked up to a woman standing by the van. “Is he ...?” Before I got the sentence out, she interrupted. “Yes, it is.”

“Can I take a picture of him?” I asked.

“Go ask him.”

He was sitting near an edge of the mountain that overlooked the Coachella Valley. And I asked him. He nodded. I got six frames before he wheeled away. Capturing that moment stayed with me forever.

Observation is critical. We can discover wonders where we least expect them. A good photographer is invisible, quietly documenting subjects without them paying attention or without making them feel uncomfortable. Building trust with subjects is also important. I spent nearly a decade visiting the close-knit Amish community and documenting, with permission, the traditional lifestyle in a modern world. Many Amish people prefer not to pose for photos, so I was careful not to intrude during my visits.

At present, I have a lot of projects going. Special Olympics. Portraits of World War II veterans (the stories they tell!). I go to Gallup, New Mexico, for an annual Native American arts and culture celebration. Rotary and photography have opened the world to me. They saved me after I got out of the service. They kept me out among people. They still do.

Pictures by Ed Zirkle
©Rotary



Volunteers from RAC Chandigarh Himalayan with the girls at a cloth store in the VR Punjab mall.



Children choosing clothes at the store.

A fun day out for girls

Jaishree

Around 150 young girls were the centre of attraction at the VR Punjab Mall in Kharar as they shopped for new clothes to their heart's content at one of the posh boutiques there. These children, between 8–15 and from an orphanage, were escorted to the mall by the members of RAC Chandigarh Himalayan, RID 3080, under the club's project *Choti si Khwaish*. "It was heartwarming to watch their gleeful faces as they picked and tried on various garments. It was a magical two hours as their laughter echoed through the store," says club president Prema Kashyap.

This is the seventh edition of this annual project and every year the club extends this experience to 150 little girls housed in various orphanages. The children are escorted in a bus by the Rotaractors and a staff from the institution, and are gifted this



The young guests enjoying their pizza and soft drink.

joyful experience. “It can be a combination of venues — anything that will give them eight hours of joy and a lifetime of memories,” she says.

This year, the girls were taken to the mall where they were allowed to shop for clothes within a prescribed budget; then it was time for a sumptuous lunch and a Punjabi movie thereafter. “Lunch comprised pizzas, pastas and burgers, accompanied by fizzy Coke or Sprite, and wrapped up with ice cream. For most of them the elaborate menu was a first experience and it was sheer delight to see

them all indulge in the food, savouring every bite,” smiles the president. Jass Bajwa, a popular Punjabi singer, graced the event making the girls even more happier.

The club volunteers visit the orphanage the previous day to get to know the girls. The project’s objective is to provide them with a day of happiness, empowerment and inclusion, allowing them to experience moments of laughter, excitement and delight — activities that are often taken for granted by others, says Prerna.

Gaurav Ghai, a member of the parent Rotary, RC Himalayan Ranges, Mansa Devi, is the event initiator and sponsors the project every year. “We call him ‘a man with a diamond heart,’” says Prerna.

So what drives Ghai to spend ₹7–8 lakh for the project annually? “Such children generally do not get what they want; they get what donors want to give. So I believe in this occasion where children get what they actually want,” he says, and relates an incident when he had visited an orphanage on his birthday a few years ago. “The children were expecting a serving of *daal-chawal* and chips. But when I asked them what did they want, there was 15 minutes of silence and then a voice feebly said, ‘Pizza?’ Soon all 130 children excitedly joined in and requested the Italian dish. That was the best birthday I had ever celebrated,” says Ghai, a diamond merchant and a Rotarian of five years. He makes sure that the young beneficiaries shop and eat at the best venues, enjoy and make the most of the day. ■



A Rotary human milk bank in Coimbatore

Team Rotary News

Over the last two-and-half years, the Mother's Milk Bank set up at the Sri Ramakrishna Hospital by RC Coimbatore Cotton City, RID 3201, has collected 1,000 litres of milk donated by more than 300 lactating mothers, benefitting over 415 newborns.

Inaugurated in August 2021, this facility entirely supported through member contribution, was completed in a record time of 100 days. Now it has two ATMs — Any

Time Milk — one, attached to the Women's Centre by Motherhood Hospital, Coimbatore, and the second one is housed at the Rural Health Centre, Pachapalayam, a unit of Sri Ramakrishna Hospital. "A team of volunteers, doctors and Rotarians, called Nectar Bees, collect the surplus milk from the homes of lactating mothers to ensure a seamless process of donation," said Dr Neetika Prabu, secretary, RC Coimbatore Cotton City.

The two ATMs serve as both collection and distribution centres, facilitating donation of pasturised, mother's milk to vulnerable infants. "The ATMs run in coordination with the main milk bank at the Ramakrishna Hospital in Avarampalayam," said Neetika. Explaining the process, she said the donated milk is being rigorously tested and undergoes pasturisation in a state-of-the-art facility provided by the club. After this process, it is stored at minus 20 degrees Celsius, ensuring its efficacy for up to six months.

Easy access

The breast milk can be obtained by submitting a prescription from a neonatologist and approval of doctors at the Ramakrishna Hospital. "This inclusive approach ensures that no infant is deprived of the benefits of mother's milk due to financial constraints," she said. During the anniversary events of the milk bank, donors are honoured each year with mementos and certificates.

During World Breastfeeding Week (first week of Aug), the club's project team holds walkathons and promotional events to highlight the importance of donating mother's milk as it saves vulnerable, weak infants. "Our club has provided the medical equipment and logistic support to the facility, while our members take up events to create awareness on donation of mother's milk," she said. The milk bank has received good support from local NGOs such as Achintaya Milk Drive and the Coimbatore Parenting Network, thus enabling "us to leverage their extensive network of mothers and volunteers." ■



Above: DG TR Vijaykumar (third from L) presenting a memento to a donor couple. Also seen are (from R) club president Krishna Samant, Ajay Kumar Gupta, club secretary Neetika Prabu, Gokul Raj and Archana Kumar.

Below: Pasteurisation facility at the milk bank.



Rotary honours three social trailblazers

Team Rotary News



Award recipients along with Mukti Foundation managing trustee Meena Dadha (seated, centre), PDG P T Ramkumar (standing, centre) and members of RC Madras Metro.

At the maiden launch of Spirit of India Awards, RC Madras Metro, RID 3232, honoured three persons who overcame their disabilities to realise their mission of helping those who are physically disabled or otherwise challenged, to lead a normal life without stigma.

Paralysed from neck down at 18, Preethi Srinivasan, co-founder, Soulfree in Tiruvannamalai district of Tamil Nadu, is offering

holistic treatment to those suffering from life-altering spinal cord injuries. Apart from providing medical care, the NGO takes care of rehabilitation and social integration of the disabled.

Another awardee Mohammed Askar, founder of the radio channel Isai Murasu in Nagercoil, has interviewed over 3,000 people from various walks of life, including farming, celebrities and politicians. The main aim

of the radio interviews is to motivate youngsters to overcome challenges and achieve success in life.

The Uravugal Trust of Khaalid Ahamed has organised funeral rites for over one lakh unclaimed bodies in and around Chennai. His NGO has given a dignified burial to the deceased from marginalised sections of the community, who have none to take care of them.

Rotary's Vocational Excellence Award was given to MR Ramasubramaniyan for

his contribution in agricultural science; and For the Sake of Honour Award was presented to Dr Sunil Shroff, senior consultant in urology and renal transplant, for promoting organ donation through the Mohan Foundation.

Meena Dadha, managing trustee, Mukti, which distributes free artificial limbs, and co-founder of SNEHA, a helpline for those with depression and suicidal tendencies, was the chief guest at the awards event. ■

Rotary clubs celebrate 118 tribal weddings

Kiran Zehra

RC Bombay Queen City, RID 3141, through its interactions with the Yuva Parivarthan, a Mumbai-based NGO, discovered a concerning situation in Kasa village, Palghar, near Mumbai. The tribal community there had no concept of formal marriage, leading to complex legal and social issues for couples and their children. Adults and children lacked identity documents, which meant they cannot access schools, jobs, or basic services of the government.

“We also became acutely aware of the fact that children born to tribal couples were suffering from lack of formal recognition. This absence of status had severe repercussions: they were being denied schooling and healthcare because their parentage was not legally established,” explains Anupama Jalan, president of RC Bombay Queen City. Recognising the profound impact that formal marriage could have on the tribals’ lives, the club decided to fund weddings for these couples.

The cost of arranging a wedding for one tribal couple was ₹6,000, which was beyond the reach of many in this community. To address this, five Rotary clubs — Bombay Queen City, Mumbai West End, Bombay Hanging Garden, Bombay Metropolitan and Chembur — came together and spent six months planning a mass wedding ceremony for 118 tribal couples, “investing

We also became acutely aware of the fact that children born to tribal couples were suffering from lack of formal recognition. They were being denied schooling and healthcare because their parentage was not legally established.

Anupama Jalan
president, RC Bombay Queen City



Brides and grooms being welcomed.



From left: Vandana Mehta, president RC Bombay Hanging Gardens, Anupama Jalan, president of RC Bombay Queen City, gift a newly wed couple a few essential domestic items.

considerable resources and effort. Our members personally attended to the logistics and took a train to be present at the event, ensuring that everything proceeded smoothly,” she adds. RC Bombay Queen City funded 111 weddings.

The venue for the mass wedding was the village school, beautifully decorated with flowers and complete with tents for serving food and seating for the guests. The clubs provided wedding attire for the brides and grooms, mangalsutras, makeup kits

for the brides, and essential ceremonial items like white cloth for marriage rituals, garlands, and *sehra* (a headdress worn during a wedding) for the grooms.

Understanding the need to start their married lives with basic necessities, the clubs also provided domestic items such as bedsheets, *chatai* mats, and utensils. To ensure a warm and inclusive atmosphere, the clubs hosted a marriage feast for 5,000 relatives and friends.

The wedding ceremony was followed by the presentation of marriage certificates by the village tahsildar, granting legal legitimacy to couples’ union. In addition, each couple received ₹10,000 from the district collector’s office at Palghar to help them start their new lives.

The Rotary clubs also organised a polio vaccination drive for newborns and children under age five in the village after the weddings. ■

E-autorickshaws for women

Team Rotary News



Eleven women hailing from economically weak families in Bengaluru received battery-operated autorickshaws through a community service project led by RC Bangalore West, RID 3192, in association with its funding partner ATOS Global IT Solutions and Services. So far 25 women, including a transwoman, have benefitted from this project which is being implemented by the club for the third year in succession.

“We chose to give the women e-autos to help reduce the carbon footprint while enhancing the income for the underprivileged families,” said club president Sharath Namburi. DG V Srinivas Murthy presented the vehicles to the women at an event which also had the presence of club president-elect Yogesh Pachisia and district director (CSR) Naveen Kolavara. R Kalyana Sundar Raman was the project coordinator. ■

Slow down on fast fashion



Preeti Mehra

Before you think of buying your next new clothing, stop, evaluate, and reconsider...

When you go online and choose a dress of your choice or spend hours searching racks for just the thing that you are looking to buy, you may not even think that your purchase could be adding to the environmental issues plaguing the planet. These products are now being delivered right at your doorstep — be it shirts, trousers, t-shirts, salwar kameez sets, gowns, dresses, sarees, kids' wear — you can choose any garment and it reaches you without a fuss. Moreover, it is also possible to return it if you don't like it, making fast fashion a vital part of the e-commerce business.

But such buys do more than just contribute to retail therapy. They push forward environmental degradation and contribute to the massive climate change that is taking place. Let's just take water, which is a scarce resource that needs urgent conservation.

The fashion industry is the world's largest user of water. It consumes anywhere between 20 to 200 trillion litres every year.

And while cotton and silk textiles contribute to chemical and pesticide pollution in their production, polymers are



In our country, where it is not difficult to find a tailor and a large population has the skill of mending, throwing out a garment on a mere whim is blasphemy.

the most problematic. They shed microplastics. Plastic fibres are released when we wash polyester and other polymer-based textiles. It is learnt that textiles contribute as much as 20 per cent to 35 per cent microplastics that are polluting our oceans.

The UK's House of Commons Environment Audit Committee, in its report, *Fixing Fashion: Clothing Consumption and Sustainability*, has said: "Textile production contributes more to climate change than international aviation and shipping combined, consumes lake-sized volumes of fresh water and creates chemical and plastic pollution. Synthetic fibres are being found in the deep sea, Arctic Sea ice, fish and shellfish." It predicted that by 2050, the global fashion industry could use more than a quarter of the global carbon budget associated with a two-degree temperature rise.

And who is responsible for this? Each one of us, of course. So, what should one do to save the world from such a calamitous future? The World Economic Forum (WEF) has suggested ways that each one of us could follow to break the fast fashion habit. Here are some you could start with right away:

First and foremost, WEF says that we should "buy less and wear more," which means we should not throw out clothes for the heck of it. Or just because a button is missing, or the stitches on the hem have come apart. Instead, we should stitch the button or repair the dress. In our country, where it is not difficult to find a tailor and a large population has the skill of mending, throwing out a garment on a mere whim is blasphemy. WEF quotes a report that says "extending

the active life of 50 per cent of UK clothing by nine months could save 8 per cent carbon, 10 per cent water, 4 per cent waste per metric ton of clothing." Now, if we extend that logic to the population of India with buying power, we could make a massive difference.

The next suggestion is that you must be aware of what you are buying, or you must "read the label." Petroleum-based synthetic fibres like polyester require less water and land than cotton, but they emit more greenhouse gases per kg. But bio-based synthetic polymers made from renewable crops like corn and sugarcane release up to 60 per cent less carbon emissions. Recycled polyester is also better.

Of course it is best to buy organic cotton. Though more expensive, it lasts longer. Moreover, if more people opt for organic weaves, then demand for them will grow, which over time will reduce the use of pesticide on the crop, water and chemical for production.

Incidentally, if you are an active buyer of branded clothes and believe in the green cause, it would be pertinent to look for companies that are collecting old garments, recycling, and have pledged to reduce emissions and follow responsible production methods.

"Watch your wash" is an important tip, especially for those who throw clothes into the washing machine without considering its environment impact. According to estimates a 6 kg load of clothes has the potential to release 700,000 fibres into the environment. So, wash a garment only when it needs a wash instead of tossing it into the machine out of habit. Also, clothes turned inside out last longer and washing at lower temperatures saves energy.

Watch your wash! A 6kg load of clothes can release 700,000 fibres into the environment. Wash a garment only when it needs a wash instead of tossing it into the machine out of habit.

WEF's suggestion to "rent or borrow clothes" is a great one. Several specialised companies have now started renting clothes for occasions. Be it a wedding, festivals, a fancy dress event, or corporate meetings. It makes so much sense to borrow the dress instead of getting it made and then allowing it to sit in your cupboard for several years. Borrowing from friends and family should be a natural progression and not something to be embarrassed about. We need to change our thinking to change the world!

According to McKinsey & Company's last estimation, the global fashion industry is worth \$1.7 trillion, with over 300 million people working somewhere along the value chain to create clothes. Believe it or not, but from 2000 to 2014, the production of clothes across the globe doubled and the number of garments purchased per capita increased by about 60 per cent. Fast fashion has been a big contributor to this and if we can stem the tide, we would have done our bit. So, the best slogan that you can spread should well be, "slow down on fast fashion."

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues

Consistency is the key

Bharat & Shalan Savur

Great people don't do different things. They approach the same things differently. Their success stories are a series of small steps. Their rehearsal is the real thing. They practise their required ABCs to perfection to produce that X factor — they know that to write an essay they have to first master their grammar. The drill of their routine is done to death. Repetition after repetition until it sinks and syncs with the subconscious.

To make the cut, dig the rut. A routine that releases and realises the potential energy stored in the subconscious — to kick in as an auto-response in a subconscious state of mind, where physiology meets psychology.

In sports, this manifests as a memory-muscle team up. As when a goalie makes an apparently impossible save, a tennis player produces an improvised stroke at the right and instinctive instance. This bend-it-like-Beckham scene, the flick that kicks, is the result of decades of practice and preparation on and off the field — on ankles that angle the ball. As are those wrists that fist the tennis ball, often against the run of play, to an unexpected place on the

The fun way to work on your reflexes is to play a ball game.

It ensures you keep your eyes on the ball and your body keeps pace alongside.

court. May legends like Beckham and Botham inspire you to get fitter. It is this routine extra-mile exercise that generates the winner's smile. That one per cent inspiration born out of 99 per cent perspiration: toil, cold sweat and fear. "You have some great highs in sport, and you have some lows. If you don't put yourself on the line in games like these, you don't experience the great highs or the great lows." Digest this Rahul Dravid statement. When the muscle falters, the mind takes over.

This emphasis on the subconscious and sport is to motivate and help you continue to enjoy the momentum. It is a fitness rhythm with your holistic health: Your fitness is a journey. Holistic health is both companion and final destination.

Runner's high

The runner's high is the epitome of exercise. Adrenaline gushes, blood circulation rushes. This is your daily SIP (systematic incentive plan). Hence, the sequence to follow is like this:

Focus

The parable goes that in a beautiful lush garden, a student was trying to study. But he was being constantly distracted by a butterfly alighting on a flower, a line of ants marching steadily along, a squirrel running up a tree trunk and so on. As a result, he couldn't study. Finally, he went to his guru and confessed he couldn't concentrate on his studies.

'I'll teach you, come!' the guru said understandingly. The student followed her into the garden. There stood one plant. It swayed gracefully

in the wind. 'Focus your eyes on this plant and only on this plant,' she said. 'Let your eyes sway with it. Soon, you will be completely in harmony with it. This means your focus has improved.'

This is the power of focus. It is whole-minded and whole-hearted attention. You get not only your facts and acts right, you get into harmony with them and make a deep personal experience of the whole thing.



Concentration and the subconscious

Focus and concentration could be considered synonymous. In that context, I perceive focus as the eyes and concentration as the brain. Both feed and are fed by the subconscious and together they trigger the required relevant, reflex action. Connected motor nerves spring into action faster than your blink. The reaction itself has been patterned on past and consistent behaviour. For example, I stopped driving in 2000. But when we travel by cab or rickshaw today, sitting in the backseat, I still press my left and right foot down — hitting imaginary clutch and brake — when I sense an



emergency on the road. For subconsciousness is our second nature. Or a second's nature in a reflex action.

Psychometric tests

Catching reflex: The fun way to work on your reflexes is to play a ball game. Please don't forget to warm up. Join a club or start a small one of your own to play the catch-the-ball game you played as a kid. The game ensures that not only you keep your eyes on the ball but that your body keeps pace alongside. One-on-one sports like table tennis, tennis, badminton are better bets. They ensure you keep your eyes fixed and your body fluent and fluid — full time.

Donkey, donkey: If you prefer to make it a family event, get your partner and kids to play catch-catch. Each time you drop the ball, you get an alphabet starting with 'D'. If you drop it a total of six times, you spell out and make a d-o-n-k-e-y of yourself! And are out of the game. The one with the least alphabets against his/her name is the winner.

If you like doing things on your own time and space, take a ball. Throw it at a wall and catch it on the full. Repeat the throw and catch as long as you like. Vary the force and angle of the throw so that you move around to catch it.

In addition, you can play catch with both hands. Place a ball in each hand. Throw the ball up with your left hand. Simultaneously, switch the right-hand ball to the left hand. And catch the air-borne ball with your right. Repeat this sequence five times. Then follow the same drill by throwing the ball up with your right hand.

These exercises do wonders for your hand-eye-brain coordination

The power of focus is whole-minded and whole-hearted attention.

You get not only your facts and acts right, you get into harmony with them and make a deep personal experience of the whole exercise.

and reflexes. Hence, do them as often and as long as you can.

The balancing act: Stand on one leg without any support. Count to 10. Do 5 reps. Repeat with the other leg. You could stand by a wall just for need-based support.

Pool your resources: If you have access to a swimming pool, try this exercise. But, if you don't, don't do this. A pond, lake, sea etc. are for fish. Not for you. These waters are dangerous for this exercise. I perform this swimming exercise to test my balance and sense of direction. I start at the shallow end and swim across to the deep end. You'd say that's easy. It is. However, I shut my eyes and 'go blind'. My aim to swim straight as an arrow and arrive at a similar point across the 35-foot pool is off by at least 5 degrees. That is, if my target is 12 o'clock at the deep end, I arrive there at a 1 o'clock position. If I extend this angle of difference across an ocean, I think I'd be today's Columbus! He set sail for India. And discovered America. My pool set in India, restricts my travel.

The writers are authors of Fitness for Life and Simply Spiritual – You Are Naturally Divine and teachers of the Fitness for Life programme

Subscribe NOW!

to Rotary News
Print Version &
e- Version
For the Rotary year
2024 – 2025

Annual Subscription (India)

Print version
₹480/-

e-Version
₹420/-

Print version e- Version

	English	Hindi	Tamil
No. of Copies	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

For every new member the pro-rata is ₹40 a month.

Update the correct mailing address and contact details of your members directly to *Rotary News* every year to receive the magazine. RI does not share member details with us. Intimate language preference (English/Hindi/Tamil) against each member's name.

Payments can be made online at

HDFC Bank, Montieth Road,
Egmore, Chennai.

Rotary News Trust

SB A/c No 50100213133460

IFSC: HDFC0003820

Email us the UTR Number, Club Name, President/
Secretary's name, Amount and Date of Transfer.

Scan here to pay



Rotary Club of RI District

Name of the President/Secretary

Address

.....

.....

City State PIN

STD Code Phone: Off. Res.

Mobile E-mail

Cheque/DD No. Dated for Rs.

Drawn on

in favour of "ROTARY NEWS TRUST" is enclosed.

Date:

President/Secretary

Mail this form to:

Rotary News Trust, Dugar Towers, 3rd Floor, 34, Marshalls Road, Egmore, Chennai 600 008.
Tamil Nadu, India. Ph: 044 4214 5666, 98400 78074, e-mail: rotarynews@rosaonline.org

Subscribe to Rotary News

1. Subscription is for the Rotary year (July to June).
2. It is mandatory for every Rotarian to subscribe to a Rotary magazine.
3. The annual subscription for print version is ₹480 and e-version is ₹420 per member.
4. Subscription for the full year must be sent in July in the prescribed form.
5. Those joining after July can pay for the remaining Rotary year at ₹40 an issue for print version and ₹35 for e-version.
6. Subscription account of the club with *Rotary News* is a running account and does not cease at the end of June every year.
7. Names of all members with their complete postal address including **PIN CODE, mobile number and email ID** must be sent along with the form and DD/cheque payable at par. Online transfers can be made through GPAY or netbanking. When you make an online payment share with us immediately by WhatsApp (9840078074) or email (rotarynews@rosaonline.org) the UTR number, your club name and amount paid. If this is not done your payment will not be updated

in our records and your club will show dues outstanding.

8. Language preference (**English, Hindi or Tamil**) should be stated alongside member's name.
9. Update the correct mailing address and contact details of your members **directly** to *Rotary News* every year to receive the magazine regularly. **RI does not share member details with us.**
10. Members should ensure their names are included in the subscribers' list their club sends us. If you've paid, but your name is not sent to us by your club, you will not get a copy of the magazine.
11. If you've not received your printed copy to which you had subscribed, check with your club president if your club has opted for e-version.
12. Clubs must **immediately** update us about any modification in membership status to enable us to deliver the magazine to the new members.
13. Clubs are liable to pay for the number of magazines we despatch according to the



list available with the Rotary News Trust.

14. Unpaid dues of the club will be shown as outstanding against the club. Any payment received subsequently will be adjusted against earlier dues.
15. Details of clubs with subscription arrears will be shared with RI and are liable for suspension.
16. We regularly verify our subscribers' list that clubs share with us with that of RI's data to detect missing subscribers.
17. If a member has not received the magazine for a month, inform us **immediately** so we can resolve the issue. Magazines are sent through concessional book post; so postal tracking is not possible. You may not receive your copy if your club has not passed on your subscription to us. So please check with your president or RNT for your enrolment in the subscribers' list.
18. There may be delivery issues in some areas. In such a situation clubs can opt and receive copies in bulk. Additional charges will be applicable.

Non-compliant clubs face termination by RI

Beginning July 1, 2022, the RI Board has included in its *Rotary Code of Policies* the termination of Rotary clubs that do not subscribe to a Rotary magazine. A quarterly report on non-compliant clubs is being sent to RI by our office, after notifying the respective club leaders and the DGs. These clubs are given a **90-day grace period** after which the defaulting club is placed under suspension by RI.

For clubs that stay suspended and are non-compliant for 180 days, RNT, after notifying RI, sends a reminder letter stating "the Board at its discretion can terminate this club."

Club presidents, please urge your members to subscribe to *Rotary News*, and get a full picture of Rotary activities in India. **RI recommends inclusion of information about mandatory subscription in your PETS/GETS curriculums.**



Wordsworld

On the reading highway



Sandhya Rao

Do go on this delightful journey. You will not regret it.

Where do I begin to tell the story of how engaging it was to read Amor Towles's *The Lincoln Highway*, all 576 pages of it in smallish print? Possibly for the first time in over 60 years of reading, I fell in love with a chapter. Chapter 3, which appears in the middle of the second half of the book. Reading the book is rather like venturing out into space, the great unknown. Except that much is known. Let me explain. In a Q&A I chanced upon while browsing the internet, the author says, 'After dwelling for days

on the draft's shortcomings to no avail, I suddenly realized that the book... was a countdown. So, I went back to the beginning and began revising — having renamed the sections as Ten, Nine, Eight, and so on. This helped clarify for me what belonged in the story and how it should be told. ... But when I finished the first draft, it seemed to me that the reader deserved to have the same experience while reading the book that I had while writing it: of knowing that the story was not open-ended, but ticking down day by day to its inescapable conclusion.'

It starts off with 18-year-old Emmett Watson, newly released from a juvenile correctional facility of sorts, and his little brother Billy, setting off from their home in Nebraska in a powder blue Studebaker to find their mother in far-off San Francisco. They decide to take the Lincoln Highway upon Billy's insistence. As precocious Billy clarifies, 'It was invented in 1912 and was named for Abraham Lincoln and was the very first road to stretch from one end of America to the other.' It goes from Times Square in New York, over 3,390 miles (5,456 km), all the way to Lincoln Park in San Francisco. He has a logical explanation for why he thinks they will find their mother, who had abandoned them years ago, in San Francisco on a particular day.



American novelist
Amor Towles

It must be mentioned here that their father has just died, leaving them nothing and so Emmett decides to make a new start. Unexpectedly, they are joined on the journey by two fellow inmates of the facility, Woolly who is woolly-headed as they come, and Duchess aka Daniel, who is sharper than a knife. They have their own agendas, and as Emmett tries his darndest to get on track, the journey metamorphoses into an engrossing tale of twists and turns, diverting, stirring, inevitable in turns. Billy carries with

him a secret — or maybe, not so secret — weapon: *Professor Abacus Abernathé's Compendium of Heroes, Adventurers, and Other Intrepid Travelers*. Armed with a plethora of hero stories from this compendium, Billy tags along with his brother and his two not-really-mates with faith and myths. How the road trip progresses, what happens along the way, the people they meet, the things they learn apart from getting acquainted with the likes of Macbeth, Ulysses, Hercules and others of that ilk, is what the book is about.

In Chapter 3, what happens is... no, let that remain under wraps so you can come to your own conclusion after experiencing glorious storytelling and style, and meeting some remarkable characters. You will be surprised how often you will identify

with a person or a situation or an observation. Yet, the writing is light, it lifts and delights, it makes you float on the magic of words and ideas, and the flights of imagination it takes you on are kind of cool.

An earlier book by Towles, *A Gentleman in Moscow*, is highly critically acclaimed and has even been serialised on Netflix. I have neither read that book nor watched the serial. But *The Lincoln Highway* got me curious about the author. In a section called ‘The Books of My Life’ published in *The Guardian* (April 19, 2024), Towles talks about the books that influenced him. ‘Reading was always encouraged in my house,’ he says. ‘But when I was in my early teens, my father would occasionally offer me money to read a book he was convinced I would like but I was reluctant to pick up due to its length. The three books he paid me to read: JRR Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, James Clavell’s *Shōgun* and Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. I loved all three, but *One Hundred Years of Solitude* opened my eyes to a whole new tier of storytelling. It remains one of my three favourite books (along with Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* and Melville’s *Moby-Dick*).’

Ideas don’t just come, stories don’t take shape on their own. The writing process calls for

preparation. Towles says in an article in the *New York Times* of September 23, 2021, ‘Before I set out on a new project, I like to read a handful of novels written in (and ideally set in) the time period in which I’m about to immerse myself. ... *The Lincoln Highway* takes place over 10 days in June of 1954, so in anticipation I read a number of American works from the mid-50s including James Baldwin’s *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953); Raymond Chandler’s *The Long Goodbye* (1953); Flannery O’Connor’s *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* (1955); and Sloan Wilson’s *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955).’

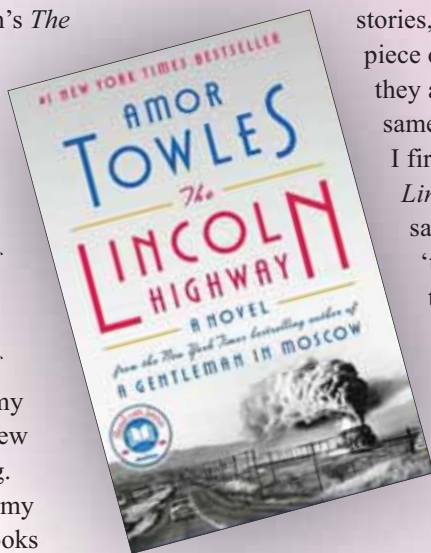
Then there is the business of how you tell the story, or rather whose story you tell. For instance, when a child comes home and describes something that happened, say, in school, it is her/his version, told from her/his point of view. Short stories, novels, any piece of writing... they all follow the same logic. ‘When I first outlined *The Lincoln Highway*,’ says Towles, ‘the plan was to describe the story from two alternating perspectives: Emmett’s (in the third person) and Duchess’s (in the first person).’

This seemed a natural way to juxtapose the two different personalities, upbringings, and moralities of the lead characters — and by extension,

two different ways of being American. But once I was writing, the voices of the others characters began to assert themselves, making their own claim on the narrative, insisting that their points of view be heard.’ Heard they are, loud and clear.

I cannot recommend this book highly enough, it is unputdownable. And this is not said lightly. Further on in the article I’ve quoted from earlier, we realise that Towles didn’t know that the Lincoln Highway actually existed when he conceived of the story. But the moment he made this discovery, it ‘reinforced or reshaped a number of the book’s themes and events,’ he recalls. There is one photograph, on page 268 in the Penguin edition I read, ‘of Times Square with two police officers looking up the length of Broadway and not another living soul in sight.’ This came into the novel because Towles decided ‘to look at the front pages of the *NYT* for the ten days on which’ his story took place. He was amazed ‘by a story on June 14th announcing that all activity in New York City would stop for ten minutes on the following day as part of a nuclear attack simulation.’ The next day’s photograph showed an all but abandoned Times Square, showing the very spot the Lincoln Highway begins. That’s how we find Woolly reading old headlines in one chapter. Talk about art imitating life! Here, art and life come together.

The columnist is a children’s writer and senior journalist



RC Kottai Pattukkottai — RID 2981



Tailoring machines are given to poor women passing out of the club's training school each month. A juice mixer was donated to a worker for self-employment.

RC Nagpur South East — RID 3030



The club took the Class 10 students of Sanjuba High School to the Datta Meghe Medical College's museum to learn about human anatomy.

RC Karur Young Gen — RID 3000



Paver blocks were laid, and a water tank was installed at the Government Primary School, Pavithiram, with CSR grant of ₹1.85 lakh from Karur Vysya Bank.

RC Bhopal Hills — RID 3040



Artificial limbs were fitted to 186 amputees at Manas Bhawan in tie-up with Bhopal Utsav Mela Committee and Narayan Seva Sansthan Udaipur.

RC Delhi Safdarjung — RID 3011



Two air conditioners, a fridge, water coolers and a smart phone were donated to KM Birla School, Aarush Jain School and GD Goenka Public School in Delhi.

RC Jaipur Researchers — RID 3056



Lunch boxes were given to children of Unstoppable 2.0, an NGO, to promote intake of nutritious meals for holistic development of mind and body.

RC Baroda Jawaharnagar — RID 3060



DG Nihir Dave handed over ice-lined refrigerators to medical officers of four urban health centres of the Vadodara Municipal Corporation.

RC Moradabad — RID 3100



Club president Sharmitabh Sinha held a handwash awareness session at the Shanti Niketan Inter College, Ram Ganga Vihar. Students were given hygiene kits.

RC Shahpur — RID 3070



The club's 4-year-old Ayurveda clinic at Rehlu village has treated 3,000 patients who were given medicines after diagnosis by Dr Brajender Sharma.

RC Kushinagar — RID 3120



Mosquito nets were distributed to families in a slum area at Kasia to protect them from malaria and other vector-borne diseases.

RC Malerkotla — RID 3090



Wheelchairs (₹50,000) were donated to six disabled persons at the Blind School, Malerkotla, and ₹15,000 was given to the school management.

RC Lonavala — RID 3131



Reflective collars were tied on stray dogs to protect them from being hit by speeding vehicles.

RC Malkapur — RID 3132



White coats were distributed to women who work in sugarcane fields to protect them from the sun's heat.

RC Kolhapur City — RID 3170



PDG Vasudev Deshingkar handed over desk-benches at KS Chougule High School, Malwadi, and gave an inspiring speech.

RC Mira Road — RID 3141



An ambulance worth ₹3.1 lakh was donated to Nityanand Ashram, an old age home. It was sponsored by Hemant Bhardwaj and Sandhya Raj Mehta.

RC Tirthahalli — RID 3182



A 5km marathon to create awareness on drug addiction was held with students and public. Club president Bharat Kumar led from the front.

RC Nandyal — RID 3160



Club president Dande Dastagiri gave large umbrellas (₹45,000) to 20 roadside traders to provide relief from scorching summer. PDG Chinnapa Reddy was present.

RC Bangalore City Centre — RID 3191



In a joint project, 515 desk-benches worth ₹11.58 lakh were donated to government schools in and around Bengaluru.

RC Kozhencherry — RID 3211



A hearse van was flagged off by state ministers. The vehicle adds to the fleet of two AC ambulances and two mobile mortuary units run by the club.

RC Nanganallur Elite — RID 3232



An ambulance (₹9 lakh) was donated to the Hindu Mission Hospital through CSR grants from Aithent Technologies and Quinte Financial Technologies.

RC Rajapalayam — RID 3212



An entrepreneurs' workshop saw 170 participants with Thyrocare Group founder Velumani Arokiaswamy and IPDG VR Muthu giving speeches.

RC Raipur — RID 3261



Sixteen couples got engaged at a matchmakers' meet for widows, widowers, divorced and thalassaemia victims at a temple.

RC Vaniyambadi — RID 3231



At the 257th monthly health camp held on third Sundays, 275 people were examined at the OPD, and among them 205 were chosen for surgery.

RC Salt Lake Central — RID 3291



Sundarban Alor Disha Eye Clinic was inaugurated in Bhubaneswari village, Maipith in South 24 Parganas. Eye screening machines were donated.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran



**TCA Srinivasa
Raghavan**

A requiem to Boeing 747



It was with immense sadness that I read about Air India's last remaining Boeing 747 making its last flight. Since the aircraft had been phased out gradually and the last passenger flight was in 2021, the event passed mostly unremarked. This last flight was a cargo flight. And thus, something truly great and beautiful passed into India's aviation history. The plane was originally designed to carry heavy cargo for the US army. But in 1966 the now defunct Pan Am, known earlier as Pan American Airlines, decided it wanted an aircraft that could carry 250 passengers and with engines that consumed 25 percent less fuel than the old Boeing 707. In 1966 it placed an order for 50 jumbo jets, as the 747 came to be known.

Soon Air India followed suit and placed a much smaller order, for six. The first of these was delivered to it in 1971. We were in college in Delhi then and would go to what came to be known as jumbo point — the spot where the planes passed directly just 100 feet overhead. It was amazingly thrilling, especially if you had some girls along with you. Nearly all the jumbos landed after midnight. That added to the excitement.

Watching a jumbo take off and land is like watching a top-class ballerina. There was power, of course, but also the most extraordinary grace as it left the ground and slowly climbed away or as it glided in to land with the wind hissing over the wings. The roar at take-off or when the engines were reversed when

it touched down, was deafening and the earth trembled. But inside the aircraft you could speak in a whisper and be heard across the aisle. As engineering goes, the 747 was a marvellous achievement. After all, you were sitting on four gigantic engines of immense power. Each engine had enough power to blow away a tank weighing five tonnes for a half a km distance.

In 1975 I had my first experience on the 747. That was also the first time I flew. I had applied for a job in Air India and after the usual rounds of tests and interviews they gave me a free ticket to attend the final interview in Bombay, as it was called then. We boarded at 830am and took off at 9 on a cold December morning. Then they served breakfast. It was the most sumptuous breakfast I had ever had. The omelette and rolls, and the cheese and the jam simply melted in the mouth. I was uncouth enough then to ask for a second round, which the stewardess happily supplied. It was the last leg

The jumbo even had *thayir sadam* (curd rice) on board after a prime minister from the South asked for it. He has long gone but the *thayir sadam* stayed on as an unlisted item.

of a New York-London-Delhi-Bombay flight and most passengers weren't in the mood for a heavy breakfast after an overnight flight. Since then, like everyone else, I flew on it many times, including, unlike the others, five times with two prime ministers. Believe me, that's the way to fly.

It used to be business class configuration with first class service. They even had *thayir sadam* (curd rice) on board after a prime minister from the South asked for it. He has long gone but the *thayir sadam* stayed on as an unlisted item. I should mention here that only the flights were free for us journalists, usually no more than 30, and our newspapers paid all other costs. On the way back to India the prime minister would mingle with us for about half an hour. You got to see his human side. The most unforgettable was drinking a toast to someone proposed by the prime minister. We were flying back to India and it was nearly midnight — and he was wearing a lungi and banyan and was barefoot. It was great PR for the PM.

There were many funny episodes, too. Once a German bus driver dropped us journalists at the wrong security gate and went off. On another occasion a Korean driver couldn't find our plane and left us on the tarmac. Once we watched the Chinese premier board his plane from almost touching distance while waiting to board ours. There was zero security. These and many others were highly memorable occasions. ■



Rotary
Club of
VIRUDHUNAGAR Dist- 3212



Rtn.V.V.S.K.SHANMUGAM
PRESIDENT



Rtn.V.N.M.A.K.RAJEEVAN
SECRETARY

50th Free Eye Checkup Camp

in association with Sankara Eye Hospital, Krishnan Kovil



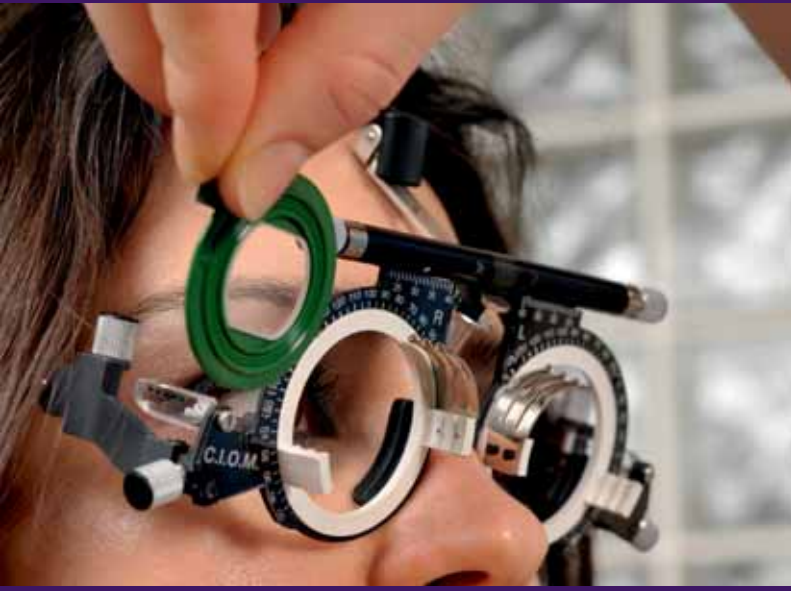
Regular eye checkups are crucial for maintaining good vision and detecting any potential issues early on

Every Month on 1st Sunday
Free Eye Checkup Campaign
held at Virudhunagar Rotary Club

Eye glasses with frames provided free of cost for the people suggested by the ophthalmologist

So Far... Free Eye Checkup Camps

No. of Persons Benefitted	Cataracts Surgery				Free Eye Glasses Provided
	Suggested for Surgery	Rejected due to BP & Diabetics	Postponed due to Personal Reason	No. of Surgery Performed	
4431	1825	160	193	1472	1074



Sponsorers Free Eye Checkup Camp

Ysm. L.Vairamani - V.Kaleeswari

Wing. CMDR. Rtn. S.Janagarajan
Aruppukottai, Ar.Sv. Vaniya Nadar Charity Trust

Rtn. K.C.Guruswamy

Rtn. K.Ramadoss - Mrs. Radhika
Grand children
Ashwin - Guruyugan - Yuvan

Rtn. Uma Jegannadhan

Mr. M.Nagasigamani - Mrs. N.Prema

LEKHA ab June 2024 Rotary-

FOR DETAILS CONTACT
P.MAREESWARAN +91 97509 56764

IDHAYAM
SAY IDHAYAM • SPELL HEALTH

Project Coordinators: Rtn. Er.Vadivel Ramaiah, Ysm. A.Ramaswamy, Rtn. M.A.P.R.Krishnamoorthy

UG / PG / Ph.D. & Professional Programmes

CAREER ORIENTED & SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

3-Level Certificate/Diploma/Advanced Diploma alongwith Degree Programmes

ICG is now...



IISU CENTRE FOR PREPARATORY CLASSES

▪ Civil Services ▪ NET ▪ US CMA

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES



CONVEYANCE FACILITY

Covering all parts of Jaipur including remote areas



HOSTEL FACILITY

Safe Environment, A/C Rooms, Healthy Vegetarian Food



EXTRA & CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES



PLACEMENT SUPPORT



WI-FI ENABLED CAMPUS



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



NCC, NSS



SPORTS



Nurturing Excellence

Career Counselling & Guidance

PSYCHOMETRIC TESTING ALSO AVAILABLE

<https://icfia.org/iisu/psychometrictest>

IIS (deemed to be University)

Gurukul Marg, SFS, Mansarovar, Jaipur-302020 Rajasthan (INDIA)

+91 141 2400160, 2397906/07
Toll Free No.: 1800 180 7750

admissions@iisuniv.ac.in

www.iisuniv.ac.in



ADMISSION OPEN

2024-25

FOR COUNSELING AND QUERIES

Arts & Social Sciences
+91 9358819994

Science
+91 9358819995

Commerce & Management
+91 9358819996