



Rotaract NEWS



Rotaract around the world

Mangrove rehabilitation



Rotaractors after cleaning up the Cipero Mangrove in the Gulf of Paria.

Members of RACs San Fernando and San Fernando South, RID 7030, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, in a bid to protect the environment, have engaged in a mangrove rehabilitation project in the Gulf of Paria, on the east coast of Venezuela.

\$10,000 for Shelter Box



Members of RAC Southern Oregon University selling origami stars as part of the fundraising initiative.

RAC Southern Oregon University, RID 5110, US, raised \$10,000 in a three-year fundraising commitment to ShelterBox, a charity that works in international disaster relief by providing families with shelter and other supplies.

Clean water awareness



A group of Rotaractors about to take a plunge into a lake in Canada to raise funds for TRF's Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Fund initiatives.

Polar Plunge, an event organised by Rotaract District 5050, in partnership with Rotary clubs in D 5040, aims to raise funds and awareness for providing clean drinking water for indigenous communities across Canada.

Tree plantation drive



Members of the RACs Lautoka and Nadi, along with volunteers from the Ministry of Forestry and other participants, at the inauguration of the tree plantation drive.

RACs Lautoka Sugarcity and Nadi, RID 9920, Fiji, in association with the Ministry of Forestry, planted 250 saplings at an NGO.



6 Rotaractors reach out to flood victims in Assam



10 A Rotaractor's Convention experience



12 Strengthening ties with Nepali Rotaractors

On the cover: RID 3240 DRR Rajarshi Sinha, along with Rotaractors, distribute food and water to people during the recent Assam floods.

Inside

16 Women form 55% of Rotaractors:
Kaushal Sahu

18 Rotary-Rotaract synergy in Mumbai



20 Understanding the LGBTQIA+ community



26 ROAR Awards



44 Gangtok Rotaract scales up MHM initiatives

RI Director **Dr Mahesh Kotbagi**

RI Director **AS Venkatesh**

**District Rotaract Representatives 2021–22
Zone 4, 5, 6 & 7**

2981	Dr Aaquib
2982	Lincy Mary V
3000	G M Suresh Sharma
3011	Niranjan Dev Singh
3012	Vipul Agarwal
3020	Venkata Gowtham Kalla
3030	Lokesh Mukesh Kansal
3040	Yatharth Golchha
3053	Sonal Jaiswal
3054	Utkarsh Patel
3060	Vatsal Khimasiya
3070	Rohit Jindal
3080	Shubham Goyal
3090	Shubham Lila
3120	Rishu Maheshwari
3131	Parth Jaokar
3132	Madhur Sunil Agrawal
3141	Bharat Gopalbhai Patel
3142	Rahesh J Donny
3150	Manoj Varanasi
3160	Naga Sree Sumankitha Vommina
3170	Vishakha Pednekar
3181	Darryl D'Souza
3182	Gladson Kunder
3190	Anurag Patwary
3201	Keerthi Vivek
3203	Mohamed S Ashick
3231	Sujith Raju
3232	Kamuvel G
3240	Rajarshi Sinha
3250	Harsh Raj Mishra
3262	Rupambika Pattanaik
3291	Arka Kumar Nag

Rotaract News

Editor

Rasheeda Bhagat

Deputy Editor

Jaishree Padmanabhan

Senior Sub Editor

Muthukumaran V

Sub Editor

Kiran Zehra

Administration and Advertisement Manager

Vishwanathan K

Designers

Gunasekaran L

Krishnamurthy N

Krishnapratheesh S

Send all correspondence to

ROTARY NEWS TRUST

3rd Floor, Dugar Towers, 34 Marshalls Road

Egmore, Chennai 600 008, India.

Phone: 044 42145666

e-mail

rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com

facebook

@RotaractNewsIndia

twitter

@Rotaract_India

instagram

@Rotaract_India

website

www.rotaractnews.org

Published by Rotary News Trust from Dugar Towers, 3rd Flr,
34, Marshalls Road, Egmore, Chennai 600 008.

The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or Trustees of Rotary News Trust (RNT) or Rotary International (RI). No liability can be accepted for any loss arising from editorial or advertisement content. Contributions – original content – is welcome but the Editor reserves the right to edit for clarity or length. Content can be reproduced, but with permission from RNT.



Where Rotaractors rock!

Arguably, we live in gloomy times; the Covid pandemic has left the entire world in a tizzy and each of us is dealing with some scar or the other left by this lethal virus in our families and lives. But if all of us within the Rotary family need to cheer up, we just have to look at our Rotaractors. First of all, as Rotary's latest credo of DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) reverberates, with empowerment of girls taking centre stage in the minds and hearts of Rotarians planning and executing community service projects, what more cheerful news can be there than the statistic that nearly 55 per cent of the Rotaract members world over are young women. And when a woman joins any activity, team or a leadership position, she will always strive to ensure the betterment of overall conditions for women as well as a level-playing field.

V Muthukumaran's article tells us how Karur — yes Karur in Tamil Nadu, and not one of our glitzy cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata or Bengaluru, has managed to attract a substantial number of Rotaractors

from the local community. Apparently the Rotaract Club of Karur, sponsored by RC Karur, doesn't have a single student member and its members comprise several of the city's young traders and professionals such as architects, engineers, those working in finance, as well as entrepreneurs. The result of this is that while the rest of the Rotaract world faces the bleak prospect of a steep fall in membership as now Rotaractors will have to pay an annual RI due of \$8/\$5, against free membership on offer earlier, this club's Rotaractors are happily paying annual club dues of ₹2,000 each, and are so happy to belong to a group that gives them an opportunity to network, do service projects and have a good time, that some of them are even willing to dish out ₹1,000 extra to help take care of the club members' RI dues!

Next, let's come to the horrific phenomenon of Assam being devastated by torrid rains leading to unprecedented flooding and untold misery for its citizens. In this issue, one of Jaishree's articles tells a heartwarming story of how Silchar's Rotaractors, led by RI District 3240 DRR Rajashri Sinha, who himself lives in Silchar and had his own home inundated in the flood waters, provided relief to the devastated people of the city. Using bamboo rafts, the Rotaractors reached relief material, mainly drinking water bottles, candles, biscuit packets and cooked meals to the stranded citizens. They did not stop here; one of the Rotaractors, Pankaj Sinha, visited the railway station every night for a few days to feed stray cows and dogs who were starving.

Restores your dwindling faith in human beings, doesn't it?

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Rasheeda Bhagat'.

Rasheeda Bhagat

Rotaractors reach out to flood victims in Assam

Jaishree

The heavy rains in Assam in June have caused havoc for over five million people across 2,900 villages in 27 districts resulting in loss of life, property and belongings. I reached out to RID 3240 DRR Rajarshi Sinha, a resident of Silchar which was badly hit by the floods; the conversation revealed the

harsh scenario of the state, even as he shared a video of his home and the neighbouring streets submerged in waist-deep water. Silchar is one of the worst affected towns and the breaching of the embankments of the Barak and Bekli rivers had worsened the situation. “It rained continuously for two days (June 18–19); the rivers

began to overflow and the dykes gave away, flooding the town. We moved up to the first floor as soon as the water levels started rising. There was no electricity or water for 10 days,” he said, and was quick to share a list of emergency items such as mosquito repellants, water, milk powder, sanitary napkins and blankets



Members of RAC Hailakandi distribute relief material to flood victims.

that were urgently needed for relief distribution.

“We lost sleep for over a month. All our crops have been washed away. Our house is inundated,” said a desolate-looking Sanjay Mandal, a resident of Silchar, answering my call on WhatsApp video. Roads and infrastructure were destroyed, leading to breakdown in communication between cities.

Young Shilu Rani Das who lost her husband during the floods was shattered. “This tragedy will be etched in my memory forever. Every time there is a flood, I will remember how I struggled to save my husband’s life,” she cried. He was suffering from cancer and was bedridden for the past one year. “We carried him on his bed to his sister’s house but his condition worsened. We couldn’t do anything. Maybe he would have been alive if we could have taken him to a hospital. We made a raft using banana stems and took his body for cremation.”

Sinha related heartrending incidents of a woman begging for a boat as her child was very ill, and how drinking water was such a scarce commodity. “We had no choice other than to drink the flood water, and I cooked food with whatever I had, using the same dirty water,” he quoted a woman in one of the villages



DRR Rajarshi Sinha, along with Rotaractors, on a boat to distribute flood relief to families.

when the club had visited to distribute relief material. “And there was a man on a raft holding on to a ripe jackfruit so dearly saying that he, his children and his cow will survive on it until they got some food.”

Over one lakh persons were sheltered in 500-plus relief camps in Silchar. “The water has not drained yet and our houses are stinking. The relief camps are overflowing with people and several children and the elderly are falling sick. So our Rotaractors decided to reach out,” he said, and spread the word on social media seeking help.

To begin with, the DRR, along with club members Rtn/Rtr Bikash Mozumdar, Shubham Banik, Rupak Kumar Das, Pankaj Kanti Sinha and Dr Samujjwal packed drinking water bottles, candles, biscuit packets and cooked food, and rode on makeshift bamboo rafts to reach out to over 250 people in the city’s low-lying areas such as Singari Basti and New Bhakatpur. Pankaj Sinha visited the railway station every night to feed the stray cows and dogs.

RAC Hailakandi led by its president Kaushik Chakraborty distributed





A member of RAC Silchar Royals provide water bottles to a stranded family.



drinking water and groceries to 500 flood-hit families. “In many places we had to wade through chest-deep water to deliver food packets and water,” he said.

Rotaractors of RAC Silchar Royals visited the flood-hit areas, along with the National and the State Disaster Rescue Force (NDRF and SDRF) to assess the situation. In the first phase they distributed 100 packets of sanitary napkins and personal hygiene material to people in the relief camps. Then they provided 8,000 litres of drinking water, biscuits, milk cartons, mosquito repellents, candles and grocery items. “We would have helped at least 1,000 families across the city and will continue our relief work until things get back to normalcy. It is pathetic to see people lose their belongings and get stranded amidst the floods,” said club president Animesh Paul, and thanked the generous public and other NGOs who also donated for the cause.

Manoranjan Mohanty, an inspector with the NDRF, on a video call said, “I have been part of several flood rescue operations in the six years of my work. But I have never seen such an intense flood like this one in Silchar.” ■



Poojan Sanchala with the Indian national flag, along with international Rotaractors, at the Rotary Convention in Houston, USA.

A Rotaractor's Convention experience

Poojan Sanchala

All of us have a dream to represent their country in an international platform, and I got this opportunity twice. The first time was when I went to Italy in 2019–20 under the Rotary Youth Exchange

(RYE) programme. Rotary provides an amazing chance to go and live a life abroad and experience it like a local. In a span of 10 months, I lived with two Italian families, went to an Italian school and met people from 100 countries. Because

of the RYE programme now I can call Italy as my second home and I have friends in hundred cities of the world. Representing India among 100 countries at a flag march in an event in Tivoli literally gave me goosebumps. I felt like

an Olympic winner. After my exchange programme was over, I was looking forward to another opportunity to represent our country on a global level.

After coming back to Mumbai, I joined Rotaract Club of Mumbai Kandivali West in 2020,

and then I came to know about the Rotaract Pre-Convention and Rotary Convention happening in Houston; it was one of the biggest events happening post pandemic and I registered for the Rotaract pre-convention. In the opening session, when they called out 'India' at the country calls, I was the only one in the hall cheering out, and later when they announced that India leads the world in Rotaract membership with over one lakh Rotaractors, I was on cloud nine, and also felt a sense of responsibility representing one lakh Rotaractors at the convention.

At the breakout sessions I was happy to bond with Rotaractors from around the world. I learnt about the Rotary Action Groups and the MDIOs.

At the closing session, when RI President Shekar Mehta addressed the Rotaractors it filled me with great pride to see an Indian leading such a big organisation and addressing the delegates from across the world.

My favourite moment was the Indian music and dance performance at the opening ceremony of the Rotary convention after the address by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and RI President Shekhar Mehta. I could not stop myself from dancing to the beats, and when I, along with my friend from Nepal, started dancing, the other Rotaractors from around the world joined us even though they did not understand a single word. The energy and experience I felt dancing with other Rotaractors to Indian songs in a hall filled with



Sanchala exchanging his club flag with a Rotaractor.

11,000 Rotarians was an exhilarating experience.

Events like the convention give you a great

opportunity to become a global citizen, to socialise and make friends from all over the world like I did. Even as we learn new cultures and teach them ours, it makes one understand how people work for a better world beyond boundaries. I want more Rotaractors from India to attend the conventions and feel the energy of the Rotaract world.

I urge all Rotarians to encourage their children to join Rotaract that will groom them as young leaders of the future. I thank my parents who gave me wings to explore the world.

The writer is a member of RAC Mumbai Kandivli West, RID 3141



Strengthening ties with Nepali Rotaractors

Kiran Zehra

At a bazaar in Nepal, listening to a local vendor narrate heroic tales of Tenzing Norgay summiting Mount Everest, against a backdrop of the mighty Himalayas engulfed in fog “was a mind-blowing experience,” for DRR Rohit Jindal from RID 3070. “The mountains looked so remote and serene, and I couldn’t get enough of Norgay’s story. It was inspirational and magical,” he says.

Jindal was part of the Rotaract Multi-District Youth Exchange Programme where 34 Rotaractors from 11 districts in India (RIDs 3141, 3211, 3070, 3170, 3232, 3131, 3150, 3204, 3201, 3020, and 3053) met in Nepal for five days in April. “We got a closer look into the country’s culture, enhanced our leadership skills, and met some amazing Rotarians and Rotaractors from RID 3292,” he adds.

Rotaractors of RAC Banepa, RID 3292, received the Indian delegation at the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu and “drove us to Banepa which is at a distance of 27km. As Indians, we are known for our hospitality but the Rotarians and Rotaractors of Nepal were equally warm and kind,” he says. Describing the drive to Banepa in Kabhrepalanchok district, he says “The roads ebbed and flowed like waves through the green meadows and our host’s home was nestled in a dense green patch. Watching the sunbeams filter through the trees was a priceless experience. No video or picture could do justice to that.” What deserves a bigger mention is the “authentic *dal bhat* made by our host mom! It was delicious and left us licking our fingers.”

At a café in the Kabhrepalanchok, the





Above: A traditional Nepali welcome.

Left: DRR Rohit Jindal participating in a cultural activity outside Pashupatinath temple, on the 2,079th New Year's eve of Nepal.

Below: The Friendship rings gifted by DRR Jindal to the Nepali Rotaractors to build camaraderie.



group met with the host club RAC Kabhre Campus, and the Rotaract International Service director Manisha Shrestha from RID 3292 who shared her Rotaract experience with the Indian Rotaractors.

On their visit to Panauti, one of the oldest towns in Nepal, known for its 15th-century temples the Indian Rotaractors participated in a chariot festival called Panauti Jatra, celebrating the goddess Trishakti. "Asmita Ulak, the president of RAC Kabhre Valley arranged the traditional Newari outfits for us to wear at the festival and we were given a Newari feast, which included scrumptious



Indian Rotaractors in the traditional Newari outfits along with members of RAC Kabhre Valley.



Indian Rotaractors with the Nepali Rotaractors.

vegetable dishes and *chimdha*, buff *choilla*, a traditional meat curry, as well as *chhaang*, a Nepalese rice beer,” says Jindal. The Rotaractors also visited the Gorakhnath temple, Indreshwar Mahadev temple, one of Nepal’s oldest and largest surviving wooden temples, built in 1294. “The Panauti museum housed numerous artifacts belonging to the Newari tribe, showcasing their cultural heritage. It was like an interesting history lesson!”

RAC Bhaktapur, RID 3292, arranged a visit to the Durbar Square and the Fifty-five Window Palace. “These two places transported us back to the

15th century. Although much of the Durbar Square was destroyed in the 2015 earthquake this place had a unique charm.” Another tourist spot they visited was the statue of King Bhupatindra Malla, facing the golden gate. Walking through the streets dotted with souvenir shops, Jindal came across an art school that taught authentic mandala art. “It was interesting to learn the art form filled with meanings and stories hidden in every mandala painting.”

“When in Bhaktapur, eat the *ju-ju-dhau* and visit the Nyatapola temple,” he recommends. “The sweet curd dish will make you come back for

more and the temple will fill you with awe! We were also lucky to be part of the *Bisket Jatra*, the 2,079th New Year’s eve of Nepal.” The Rotaractors witnessed the pulling of a huge 25m-long lingam by hundreds of people. “We were flabbergasted by the sheer number of people involved in the procession!” The new year celebration made it impossible for the Rotaractors to visit the Pashupatinath temple, the oldest Hindu temple in Nepal, located on the banks of the Bagmati river. “We got to see it from afar and even if we did want to see it, we would have had to cross a sea of people. I am saving

this visit for my next trip,” he smiles.

Discon 3292

The visiting Rotaractors attended the district conference of the Rotarians. “All of us were given a warm welcome and we did not have to pay a single rupee for registration.”

For Jindal and his team “this exchange programme has been an exhilarating experience. We indulged in the rich and dynamic rituals of the different sects and tribes of Nepal; this has expanded our cultural horizons. We have made great friends and met Rotary leaders in this part of the world.” ■

Women form 55% of Rotaractors: Kaushal Sahu

Jaishree

I am proud to say that the global Rotaract membership has 55 per cent women... even as Rotary membership constitutes 25 per cent,” says SEARIC MDIO president Kaushal Sahu, in a freewheeling chat with *Rotary News*. He was in Chennai recently for the annual Rotaract Awards programme of RID 3232, and made a brief visit to the magazine office in the city.

The South East Asian Rotaract Information Centre (SEARIC) is a multidistrict information organisation (MDIO) which functions as a resource centre for Rotaractors. There are 27 MDIOs worldwide, and they serve as a bridge between Rotary International and Rotaract districts. “Whenever we receive information or updates from RI we simplify the text and share it with the districts. The MDIOs also facilitate communication among Rotaract clubs of the participating districts,” he says. South Asia has two MDIOs — SEARIC and RSA (Rotary South Asia). “One more — India MDIO — will be launched this year. All these organisations help strengthen Rotaract in several ways such as improving membership and executing sustainable community-based projects, in addition to developing friendship across boundaries among Rotaractors.”

Sahu served as the SEARIC MDIO president for Rotary year 2021–22. RID 3250 PDRR Rahul Rajgadga is the president for the current year.

Through an aggressive campaign ‘Show Rotaract, Grow Rotaract’ launched last year by RI Director Mahesh Kotbagi and World Rotaract Co-chair, “the SEARIC MDIO added over 1,000 Rotaract clubs and 25,000-plus Rotaractors in our region.” The campaign focused on showcasing Rotaract’s activities and service projects to the public to inspire non-Rotaractors to join Rotary.

“We announced awards and recognitions for DRRs and DRCCs — a gold trophy for adding 5,000 new members, silver for adding 2,500 Rotaractors and a bronze for adding 1,000 new members.” Certificates signed by RI President Shekhar Mehta and World Rotaract Co-chair Vadlamani were also part of the recognitions. The winners were felicitated at Hyderabad on the

eve of the Rotary Presidential Conference in a special Rotaract event — *Synergy* — organised by the MDIO. Rotaract clubs were also felicitated with medals — a gold for adding 50 (100 for community-based clubs) new members; silver for 30 (50) and bronze for adding 15 (25) new members for institution-based clubs.

Another initiative — Shekhar’s Challenge — from Feb 1 to March 30, 2022, helped in adding 300 new clubs over the two-month period. RI District 3150 topped the challenge by adding 68 clubs, followed by RID 3190 adding 25 clubs.

A significant change in Rotaract this year is the development of community-based clubs. Sixty per cent of the membership growth came from community-based Rotaract



Jaishree

clubs, he says. However, institution-based Rotaract clubs attracted the greatest number of women members.

Sahu points out that institution-based clubs are losing members with the introduction of RI membership dues. “RAC Ethiraj College in Chennai which once enjoyed lot of acclaim for highest membership — 9,000 members — is now down to just 200. It is not about the inability of members to pay \$5 annual dues. It is just that they do not take Rotaract seriously. For urban Rotaractors paying \$8 or \$5 is not an issue. It is all in the mindset. When we can afford to spend ₹1,000 a month for lunch or dinner with friends, spending the same amount of money yearly for an enriching experience such as Rotary is worth every penny. When they understand the benefits Rotary offers in terms of leadership skills, self-confidence, friendship and personal growth, this dues amount is nothing. It is our responsibility to educate them.” In his opinion the membership strength might dwindle to 100,000 from the present 135,000 in South Asia during January 2023 when invoices for the Rotary dues will be raised.

Sustainable projects

The image of Rotaract in South Asia has transformed as the clubs are focusing on sustainable projects. “We are setting up libraries in remote places, and providing WinS facilities in several schools and doing more literacy projects,” he says, adding

When we can afford to spend ₹1,000 a month on lunch or dinner with friends, spending the same amount of money yearly for an enriching experience such as Rotary is worth every penny.



RI President Shekhar Mehta presents the Outstanding MDIO Leader Award to SEARIC MDIO president Kaushal Sahu at the Synergy event in Hyderabad, in the presence of World Rotaract co-chair Ravi Vadlamani (L) and event coordinator PDRR Shivkumar Easwaran.

that Rotaractors come up with various fundraising ideas and are also successful in crowdfunding for projects. “The new policy that allows Rotaract clubs to apply for global grants will certainly energise us to do impactful, sustainable projects.”

Dual membership

With the removal of age limit, he says that many people are interested to become dual members. Every district has 30–40 dual members and there is a dual members club too. This is a clear advantage of removing the age limit. Sahu is a dual member. He is a charter member of RC Gwalior Ace, and is the District Youth Exchange chair for RID 3053. “I was part of the hospitality committee in the Hyderabad conference. The experience was amazing. DGs must involve Rotaractors in their district committees. It is a good opportunity to work with Rotarians,” he smiles.

He joined Rotaract as member of RAC Gwalior Prestige in 2015, led his club as president the next year and became a DRR in 2017. “We had just five members when I joined the club, but when I left (to form RAC Gwalior Youth, a community-based

club) the club had 253 members. When I became DRR in 2017 the district membership was 106 and only four clubs were active. By the end of the year, we had 20 Rotaract clubs and we were felicitated by both SEARIC and RSA MDIOs.”

Thanking Rotary for helping him in his personal growth, the SEARIC president says, “From a shy person who could not give a presentation even in Hindi, I have evolved so much so that I was a speaker in the Indore zone institute addressing 800 delegates. I am at home at any place as much as in my hometown. All this is because I decided to be part of Rotary which is like an ocean. You can benefit so much from it; you just need the passion and drive to grab the opportunity that comes your way.” He was recognised as an outstanding MDIO leader by RI President Shekhar Mehta and Vadlamani, and has been appointed by RI as Rotaract ambassador for zone 4.

Six new districts and two new countries — Sri Lanka and the Maldives — became members of SEARIC MDIO during his presidency last year (2021–22). Now the SEARIC membership has nine countries and 43 districts. ■

As colleges in Mumbai are sizzling with energy and enthusiasm after a nearly two-year Covid lockdown, RC Bombay Bandra, RID 3141, is making the best use of new opportunities to expand its Rotaract power. Following an event on drug abuse hosted by the club at the RD National College, Bandra West, its principal Dr Neha Jagtiani and staff wanted to revive their Rotaract club which wound up in 2010 as “they could not carry it further at that time due to some reasons,” said Ramu S Vedaraman, club president (2021–22). “After seeing our presentation, the college wanted to resume Rotaract activities and during the visit of DG Dr Rajendra Agarwal, a thalassaemia awareness event was conducted at the college. We selected a president

Rotary-Rotaract synergy in Mumbai

V Muthukumaran

and a Rotaract board then, following which we reactivated RAC RD National College in June.”

Getting a new lease of life with 40 charter members, “this Rotaract club has drawn up an ambitious plan to induct 600 new Rotaractors in the next few years which is quite possible as the college offers diverse courses across the arts, science and engineering streams to over 6,000 students,” said Vedaraman. During

the one-day thalassaemia camp, around 100 students were screened and reports given.

Another club, RAC Father Agnel Engineering College, used to conduct a 22km-marathon called *Heart & Sole Run* for all age groups to sensitise the public on cardiac fitness and healthy lifestyle. “This is an eight-year-old club sponsored by us which hosts this annual marathon with support from other NGOs at



DG Dr Rajendra Agarwal (standing, fifth from L) at the thalassaemic awareness event, along with RC Bombay Bandra president Ramu Vedaraman, secretary Abbas Shahiwalwa and Rotaractors.

the Bandstand area of Bandra. Last year (March 2021), they got 600 online registrations for the marathon held through a hybrid process,” said Abbas Shahiwala, club secretary and youth services director.

The participants uploaded their screenshots and video clips on Strava, Nike apps and other social media platforms to register their presence. “Preparations are on to conduct a physical marathon, the fifth edition, this time around as colleges have opened and normal life has resumed,” said Rohit Nair, vice-president, RAC Father Agnel Engineering College.

A couple of field events, *Trek-Footslog* and a beach clean-up programme, have infused a new wave of interest among Rotaractors at this engineering college. “We took 200 school students accompanied by teachers to the Kothaligad Fort as a one-day excursion which was a great experience for us too. Secondly, with the help of 170 volunteers, including Rotaractors, we removed litter and garbage weighing around 350kg from the Girgaon Chowpatty beach by tying up with Change is Us, an NGO, that gave immense satisfaction to our colleagues,” said Nair.

In an offbeat event, they hosted a comedy show, *Mic drop Alfresco*, with Raunaq Rajani, a standup humourist, which attracted 200 attendees. “A flea market was held on the sidelines. Artistes from different genres such as rap and poetry recital also performed in an open-air theatre at our college quadrangle which saw around 180 registrations,” he said. Most of the funding for Rotaract projects and events are done through a mix of private sponsors, in-kind donations from companies and mentoring from their parent, RC Bombay Bandra.

Prosthetic limbs

On its part, the parent Rotary club will facilitate the induction of



Club secretary Shahiwala (right), medical service director Rattan Mukhi and president-elect Ishrat Sayed with a Borges Home inmate who was given a prosthetic limb.

more Rotaractors and expand their activities on college campuses, “where there is a huge potential for growth,” said Vedaraman. Chartered in 1990, the club has 36 members and is known for donating prosthetic limbs to at about 15 cancer survivors at the Ernest Borges Memorial Home

Preparations are on
to conduct a physical
marathon, the fifth edition,
this time around as colleges
have opened and normal
life has resumed.

Rohit Nair
Vice-president
RAC Father Agnel
Engg College

every year. Here patients from the Tata Memorial Hospital are accommodated for palliative care,” he said. A technical team at the special home designs the artificial limbs that are custom-made to suit the specific needs of each patient after consultations with the doctors.

“We have gifted the machines worth ₹5 lakh to the Borges Home long time back and now we sponsor the making of prosthetic limbs each year,” said Shahiwala. The club has an annual budget of ₹1.2 lakh for making such limbs.

Over the years, the club has availed five district grants for service projects, and “we have applied for a maiden global grant worth \$40,000 for installing water filtration units to meet the drinking water needs of 30 government schools in Palghar district. This project will benefit 2,500 students once it is done,” added Vedaraman. ■

Understanding the LGBTQIA+ community

Kiran Zehra

What does the letter ‘A’ stand for in the LGBTQIA+? asks DRR Bharat Patale, RID 3141. “Some people say that ‘A’ stands for “ally”, a term for straight people who support the queer community. But the letter ‘A’ in the acronym stands for the asexual, aromantic, and agender identities,” he says. What was in the beginning just LGBT, over the years has progressed, and added more sexual identities and gender expressions, which are slowly being recognised and understood by society, he says and points out that “there is lack of awareness, a huge knowledge gap about this community. With DEI being the buzzword in the Rotary world we should first develop a clear understanding about this

community so that they feel included in the real sense.”

His district has formed an LGBTQIA+ Cell, a group of “experienced Rotaractors from our district and members from this community, who together spread awareness, plan initiatives and conduct events to help them find opportunities or seek help. We are

probably the first and only district in South Asia that has started an official LGBTQIA+ cell in the district council,” he says.

The group has created a handbook that has “a glossary to give you the words and meanings, to help you get comfortable with working towards creating an inclusive environment,” adds the DRR who has ensured that “the handbook has reached all the Rotaractors of my district.” Apart from terminologies the handbook also has an introduction to the community and LGBTQIA+ Cell of RID 3141. The district printed more than 500 copies and distributed them to district council members, Rotary and Rotaract club presidents, secretaries, Rotarians, DRRs from other districts, RSAMDIO and SEARIC MDIO representatives.



Rotaractors from RID 3141 celebrate Raksha Bandhan with transgenders at Kamathipura, Mumbai.



From L: LGBTQIA+ Cell member Manoj Pal, Anila Pillai, youth service chair, RID 3141, Shardhashis Prasad, president, RC Bombay Kandivli, Jyoti Gandhi, past president, Hussain Rassai, youth service advisor, RID 3141, DRR Bharat Patel and cell member Simran Padhi releasing a LGBTQIA+ handbook.

Last year the cell members visited Kamathipura, Mumbai's red light area to celebrate Raksha Bandhan with the transgenders. "We noticed that many of them weren't interested in celebrating the occasion because it was their own family who threw them out of the house without understanding them. But they felt happy that the Rotaractors thought about them," says Patale. Gifts were exchanged and the Rotaractors distributed 20 ration kits to them. A few months later the same transgenders from Kamathipura, "specially invited us for a Maha pooja at their home. We felt great and it was a positive sign that they were beginning to trust us."

A two-day online LGBTQIA+ workshop was conducted with six speakers. Over 300 Rotaractors attended the event. This was followed by Instagram promotions of an LGBTQIA+ calendar that reached over 18,000 people. Through the Rotaract district's social media account a monthly quiz competition was held on different facts and topics based on the community. Rotaract District 3141 has also signed a Rotaract Icon MoU with Rishav



Models from the LGBTQIA+ community showcasing a handbag brand at the Rotaract Fashion Week.



Rotaractors at the Rotaract Film Festival that screened movies on the LGBTQIA+ community.

Banerjee, the youngest Asia and India Books of Record holder from the LGBTQIA+ community, for the world's largest anthology titled *Stardust*, a collection of Banerjee's

poems. He will promote the cause and the Rotaract brand. "When we put more of this community's achievers in the limelight, we will inspire a lot more youngsters to open up

When we put more of this community's achievers in the limelight, we will inspire a lot more youngsters to open up and be proud about their orientation.



A transgender walking the ramp at the Rotaract Fashion Week.

and be proud about their orientation. This is also to tell them that Rotaract is a safe place for them," says Patale.

The district's annual Rotaract Film Festival, in association with India Film Project, a programme that celebrates the diverse cinematic voices from Mumbai, based its theme on LGBTQIA+. Over 50 filmmakers submitted their short films to the festival. The films of winners across 15 categories were screened at the Rotary Service Centre, Malad, followed by the awards ceremony. Following the success of the event, the DRR says, "We launched the Rotaract Fashion Week at a plush café. The fun fellowship saw designers and sponsors interact with the LGBTQIA+ community." In association with Colour Positive, Snapchat, Yours

Brewly, Alpha Omega, Brew House, La Fumet, the Chocolate Gateway, and Capturing Wow, the district Rotaract council organised a fashion show for the community.

With the help of these events and workshops "we have been able to educate and spread awareness about the community among our Rotaractors," says Patale and recalls the feedback he received from a Rotaract member who said, "I have a friend who is gay. When he shared this with me, I wanted to maintain a distance from him. But after attending the workshops and watching my district support the community, I have understood that I had to broaden my perspective. Thank you for saving my friendship.' I was overwhelmed. Through simple ways of awareness, we can bring change." ■

A multidistrict Rotaractors meet in Delhi

Jaishree

RI District 3012 hosted a mega multidistrict youth exchange programme in Delhi when the district Rotaract clubs hosted 44 Rotaractors from 12 districts of the country for four days in May. “It is probably one of the world’s largest MDYE and all our Rotaractors volunteered to make the guests comfortable,” says Isha Singh, the district’s International Service director, who was initially overwhelmed by the sheer number of visiting Rotaractors.

“They came from various parts of India — Rajasthan, Himachal, West Bengal and South India. An organising committee was soon put in place and we were prepared well ahead with the itinerary and accommodation arrangements.”

It helped immensely when the Delhi weather had let up from the scorching heat to a few days of light rain and cloudy skies, “just the right element for a tour of the capital and its surrounding regions.”

Rtn Ameeta Mahendru hosted a sumptuous dinner for the guests and host Rotaractors on the first day of the programme. For the next three days the visitors were taken on a guided tour to the Bahai temple, Akshardham temple, Qutub Minar, the Taj Mahal in Agra and Vrindavan. “We had placed one host Rotaractor in charge of four guests. This arrangement greatly helped at the Akshardham as carrying mobile phones inside the premises was

banned and I was a little anxious. What if we had missed someone there?” she says.

The delegates enjoyed shopping at the Lajpat Nagar market and other spots that the capital is famous for, and had dinner at the langar in a gurdwara on the second day.

“Beyond the sightseeing and shopping, the most important aspect was the opportunity that this exchange programme gave us all to bond with each other and forge everlasting friendship across the country,” says DRR Vipul Aggarwal, adding that the Rotaractors exchanged notes on projects and best practices, “and that will benefit our districts in the long run.”■

Rotaractors from across the country participating in the RYE programme in Delhi.



High visibility Rotaract events in Jamshedpur

V Muthukumaran

Five-year-old RAC Kalimati Jamshedpur, RID 3250, has taken up service projects that had lifted its visibility in this steel city of Jharkhand, thanks to the mentoring by its parent club, RC Jamshedpur Dalma. “We are a team of 30 Rotaractors who have volunteered in all the Rotary projects and activities to gain exposure in handling community events,” opens up

Moushikha Singha, club president.

In July the club adopted an 8-year-old orphaned girl, Deepa Bhakat, who had lost her parents and one of her legs in a road accident, under Project *Muskan* (smile). “We have provided an artificial leg to Deepa, a Class 4 student, and we are sponsoring her education and meeting the expenses of her other study needs. She is living with her aunt at Kalikapur village

near Jamshedpur,” says Moushikha.

In March, Holi was celebrated as *Rang Barse* (showering colours) with around 90 attendees including district Rotaractors making it a grand *mela*. Music, dance, games and competitions made the event a memorable occasion, she says.

Around 60 patients including students and locals were screened at a dental camp in the Guru Govind High School.

“Consultations were given for maintaining oral hygiene and we got a good feedback on this health project.” Each member pays ₹150 a month as club and district dues, but the newly introduced RI dues from July 1 may prove to be a dampener, she says. “A good chunk of our members may quit the club if they are unable to pay RI’s annual fee of \$8 (for community-based clubs),” says Moushikha. While those earning a good salary

RAC Kalimati Jamshedpur president Moushikha Singha (6th from L, front row) along with Rotaractors at a fellowship meet.





Club president Moushikha Singha (left) donating study material and stationery to Deepa Bhakat who lost her parents.



Holi being celebrated as Rang Barse by Jamshedpur Rotaractors.

may not complain about the new RI dues, “there are students and others who don’t have a big income, hence may not be able to pay the dues and will exit.”

Though a high school teacher, she was an introvert before joining Rotaract four years ago. “As a newly-inducted Rotaractor, I was not open and friendly to my fellow members. But after this four-year journey in Rotaract, I have developed qualities to handle service projects and can also give lectures on a range of topics. The organisation has moulded me into a budding leader,” she smiles.

Expressing her gratitude to RC Jamshedpur

Dalma for extending resources and guiding the Rotaractors, she says, “Rtn SP Sharma who owns the South Point Academy, a popular school, provides the campus and halls for holding Rotaract events and weekly meetings.”

She is looking forward to her new role as club treasurer in 2022–23. “I have plans to hold a gala Dandiya night during Navaratri as a fundraiser. Also, *Rang Barse* will be more colourful with more events during Holi 2023.” Moushikha is also keen to develop a rapport with corporates and local entrepreneurs for funding a slew of community projects in the coming year. ■

ROAR Awards

Jaishree

Plan a large, high impact, sustainable service project in your district, and I will help you get a global grant sanction of \$200,000,” said World Rotaract Co-chair Ravi Vadlamani, speaking at the RSAMDIO Outstanding Awards and Recognitions (ROAR) held recently in Mangalore. The annual awards event felicitates Rotaract districts and clubs for various achievements such as membership growth, impactful service projects and image building. He called for the district Rotaract representatives to submit their project applications to Ziauddin Haider, incoming president of RSAMDIO from Bangladesh (RID 3282). The project should have an estimate of at least \$200,000, he added.

The ROAR programme for 2021–22 was hosted by RID 3181 with the support of RIDs 3190 and RID 3291. Vadlamani congratulated the Rotaractors for their achievements and conveyed his best wishes to the incoming RSAMDIO president Haider.

“This year Rotaract in India has seen fabulous growth by adding 30,000 new members. The RI Board has set the Rotaract membership

target at one million members by 2029. Your enthusiasm and energy is amazing and I am sure we can achieve our target much ahead of the deadline,” he said to an audience of 120 delegates from 22 districts.

But he also warned that the coming year (2022–23) will

be challenging, as the Rotaract membership dues — an annual \$8 a Rotaractor for community-based, and \$5 for institution-based clubs — will come into effect. “We will see a huge dip in Rotaract membership. We have already lost 9,000 Rotaractors from one district.” He urged the DRRs and the MDIO leadership to focus on membership retention and educate every Rotaractor about the advantages and benefits of paying dues to RI. “We have close to 240,000 Rotaractors world over.



Past president of RSAMDIO Arti Goswami passes on the collar to incoming president Ziauddin Haider in the presence of (from R) PDRR Jackson Saldanha, World Rotaract co-chair Ravi Vadlamani, AG Rtn Yathish Baikampady and DRR Darryl Dsouza.



World Rotaract co-chair Vadlamani and RSAMDIO president Arti inaugurate the ROAR event.

I want you to ensure that we will not lose even one Rotaractor because of the dues,” he said.

Referring to the Rotaract Outstanding Project Awards being announced at the Rotaract Pre-convention meet, Vadlamani said that he was disappointed that “there was no project from our region. When I asked the staff at the Rotary headquarters, I was told that maybe, Rotaract clubs from your region have not applied for the awards.”

“I saw projects impacting 36 people awarded as one of the world’s best projects. I have nothing against those projects. But the tremendous amount of work you are doing goes unrecognised because

When you execute impactful projects take pride in sharing it with the world and submit your nominations for the award.

Ravi Vadlamani
World Rotaract Co-chair

you do not showcase it to the world. When you execute impactful projects take pride in sharing it with the world and submit your nominations for the award.”

Nominations for the awards are evaluated for sustainability,

community assessment and impact by RI staff and Rotaract Committee members. Rotaract clubs must submit the nomination online by Feb 1. Seven outstanding projects — one from each region and two international club projects will be selected and the winners will be recognised at the Rotary convention every year.

Vadlamani announced the RI Board’s decision to include Rotaract as part of the mainstream convention next year instead of the pre-convention meet.

The two-day event was chaired by PDRR Jackson Saldanha; PDRR Ganesh GT Bhat was the event secretary and PDRR Sashi Kumar,



Fruit seller Harekala Hajebba being honoured by World Rotaract co-chair Vadlamani.

The winners

Best District - Membership Growth	RI District 3141
Most Promising District - Membership Growth	RI District 3212
Best District - Membership Growth Rate	RI District 3212
Most Promising District - Membership Growth Rate	RI District 3040
Best District - New Clubs	RI District 3150
Most Promising District - New Clubs	RI District 3190

Best Joint Multi District Event	Friendship Cup 2022	RI District 3181
Best Project - Public Image	Tambola 2.0	RAC Mundra, RI District 3054
Most Promising Project - Public Image	Ancient Interaction Trip	RAC Achievers, RI District 3132
Best Project - Professional Development Service	Karna 2022	RAC Karur, RI District 3000
Most Promising Project - Professional Development Service	Investing Solutions	RAC Achievers, RI District 3132
Best Project - International Service	The Geography of Food	RAC GNITS, RI District 3150
Most Promising Project - International Service	Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam	RAC Mhow Community, RI District 3040
Best Project - Club Service	R-Funatics	RI District 3131
Most Promising Project - Club Service	Rota Fiesta	RI District 3170
Most Impactful Project - Community Service	Golden Drop	RAC Coimbatore Main, RI District 3201

the event convener. RSAMDIO vice-president PDRR Naveen Senna and ROAR chairman Sowmyadeb Barman were the masters of ceremonies and AG Rtn Yathish Baikampady, a past DRR and Zonal Ambassador for zone 7, was the guest of honour. “Rotaract shaped me and elevated my life from a back bencher to an event management entrepreneur. This confidence grew in me even without my knowledge, while people pay a hefty sum to get trained in self confidence and leadership qualities. You are not just Rotaractors. You are leaders in your

community,” he said, and added that Vadlamani had mobilised 1,600 new Rotaractors in the city that morning. “Reach out to your friends and talk about your Rotaract experience.”

‘One-minute Film Contest’, a brand-building exercise, was launched at the event. Rotaractors were urged to produce a one-minute video of their Rotaract activity and upload it on social media platforms to promote Rotaract among the public. Twenty best films will be screened at the Rotary Zone Institute in Visakhapatnam in December.

Harekala Hajebba, a fruit seller who built a school in his hamlet, Newpadapu in Karnataka, despite his relative financial constraint, was felicitated at the ROAR programme. He was honoured with a Padmashri Award by the President of India in 2020 for his extraordinary contribution to the cause of education.

RSAMDIO president Arti Goswami handed over the collar to incoming president Ziauddin Haider at the end of the programme. The delegates were taken on a tour of the coastal town on the second day. ■

A limb fitment camp at Adampur

Team Rotary News

A five-day mega artificial limb fitment camp was organised jointly by RAC Adampur City and Rotary Club of Adampur City, RID 3070, in which 147 amputees got prosthetic limbs after a proper guidance by the technical team. “We arranged for the comfortable stay of the patients and their attendants who came from different parts of the country. Food and transport were also

provided to them,” said Rtr Gemini Jaggi from RAC Adampur City.

Hanuman Mandir and Arya Samaj Mandir at Adampur, a small town in Jalandhar district of Punjab, were buzzing with activities on all the five days with Rotaractors and Rotarians, along with doctors and the technical team, striving to provide a wholesome, hassle-free experience to the beneficiaries. “Every member gave their full support to

the limb fitment camp, right from picking up the patient and his family, taking care of their food requirements, arranging accommodation, etc. Once the artificial limb was fitted, the beneficiary gets a new lease of life as he can independently take care of his basic needs,” said Lucky Kapoor, club president (2021–22).

Ortho camp

Around 70 people were examined for muscular

disorders at the one-day free ortho camp and they were given medicines after consultations. Dr Swapnil Sharma from Oxford Hospital, Jalandhar, diagnosed the patients at the Hanuman Mandir. Project directors Rtrs Gavish Arora, Bhanu Thukral, Dinker Singhla and event chair Gemini Jaggi made the ortho camp a success. The community-based club has 25 members drawn from various professions. ■



DG Dr US Ghai along with Rotaractors at the limb fitment camp in Adampur.

Blood donation drive to help thalassaemia patients

Kiran Zehra

Did you know that children with thalassaemia need a blood transfusion every 15 days and adults every six months?” asks Sailesh Proddaturu, president, RAC Hyderabad East, RID 3150, adding that “Many patients of thalassaemia (an inherited blood disorder that causes the body to have less haemoglobin than normal), depend on blood transfusions to survive.” A regular blood donor, Proddaturu came across this information “when I casually went to donate blood.” The poster read “Save children with thalassaemia, and on talking to the organisers of the drive I realised how serious the issue was and wanted to do something for this cause.”

His club, along with RAC Secunderabad Medicos, RAC Hyderabad Utsav, Blood Warriors India, and the NTR Blood Bank, organised a mega blood donation camp at a shopping mall in Uppal, a city suburb. Around 300 units of blood was collected from 120 volunteers which were donated to the NTR Blood Bank.

Lack of information is the biggest barrier to blood donation, says Proddaturu. “More people will donate blood if they knew that it can save a life, or many lives if the donated blood is separated into red cells,

platelets and plasma, which can be used individually for patients with specific conditions.”

Misinformation, he adds, “discourages potential donors to donate. We have heard our friends and relatives say donating blood could make them sick.” Among other myths are attracting an infection, and opinions that enough people are donating blood. “This is not true. Blood has a limited shelf life besides the number of qualified donors is smaller than most people think.”

As for the infection, he says, “this is why we partner with blood banks who make the process of hosting a blood donation





Members of RAC Hyderabad East enact a play to create awareness on blood donation for thalassaemia patients.



Club members at a programme to spread breast cancer awareness.

camp easy. They are well-equipped and bring along a medical team while we find the location and donors. There is no risk of catching an infection because only new needles are used and are disposed of safely after use.”

Keeping this in mind the club organised an awareness programme. With the help of 40 members, they held a flash mob for awareness of blood donation at the same mall while donors were donating blood. Through a dance, skit and a Q&A session, Rotaractors addressed the importance of donating blood.

The skit brought to light the plight of thalassaemia patients. “The goal was to send a message to the general public that donating blood is one of the easiest ways to help save lives,” says Proddaturu.

The club members visit an orphanage every Saturday to spend time with the children and impart vocational skills to them. The club has also hosted a cyclothon to spread breast cancer awareness. ■

Energising Rotaractors with workshops

V Muthukumaran

In an effort to create a knowledge sharing platform and enable Rotaractors and Rotaract clubs to register themselves in My Rotary website so that they can upload service projects, RID 3181 conducted six workshops in six months before July 2021. “Earlier we had 1,600 Rotaractors across 65 clubs, but after a filtration process the numbers were down to 480 Rotaractors in 35 clubs. At the *Elevate Rotaract* workshops, I have set a deadline of August 15, 2022, for

unregistered Rotaractors to fall in line by showing progress in terms of their involvement, project updates in My Rotary and other criteria,” says DRR Darryl Dsouza. “We have designed a Rotaract blog that also doubles up as district directory and a knowledge sharing hub.”

Even before his installation in July, he had conducted orientation sessions for 20 Rotaractors who formed his District Rotaract Council (2021–22). “We did 12 mega projects or events, one

every month, that helped us to bond together and share best practices,” he says. After a good response to DOTS/COTS (district and club officers training seminars) in July his team hosted ZOOTS, for zonal officers, in which 215 Rotaractors took part in their orientation session in August. “A beach clean-up by 120 Rotaractors at Panambur, a scenic coast in Mangalore, saw the removal of 1.5 tonnes of garbage and litter; this was followed by a three-day cricket

DG A R Ravindra Bhat flags off an End Polio Now cycle rally in the presence of DRR Dr Sumankitha, RID 3160 (4th from L), PDRR Abhijith M S, RID 3181, DRR Darryl Steven Dsouza and PDRR Raj Vamshi, RID 3190.



tournament, Friendship Cup, in August that saw five district teams with 130 Rotaractors competing in T10 matches in this second edition,” recalls Dsouza.

A Rota Funfair 2021 attracted 90 students from eight colleges for a two-day event filled with stage shows and solo performances that showcased the diverse talent of youth across Dakshina Kannada. For Rotaractors, *Go for Gold*, the district sports day, offered a platform to compete with their colleagues across 26 field events and indoor games. Around 230 Rotaractors from 16 clubs took part in the sports. Grocery items and other edibles were donated to White House, an old age home in Mangalore, which has 140 destitute and orphans. Four community leaders were felicitated by Mangalore clubs in January for their social service. “We visited a special home, Snehadeep, for HIV positive



DRR Darryl Dsouza (left) presents trophies to the winners at the Go for Gold, the district sports day for Rotaractors.



children, engaged them in fun sessions and donated essentials to them.”

In February, a three-day virtual meet titled *Aviskara* (innovation) brought 80 Rotaractors from across the world to know about start-up ideas from neo entrepreneurs. “Six Rotaract teams pitched in their startup plans for a lively discussion. Overall, we had four sessions including a special lecture by Harish Kumar, a startup guru, who gave tips on how to keep a good balance sheet and some best practices, and a session on incubation hub.”

A three-day RYLA at NITK-Surathkal imparted leadership skills to 100 college students through interactive and fun sessions in March. “After participating in Rotasia in Chennai, a four-member team went on a week-long tour for a multidistrict cultural exchange programme. This was followed by a two-day Rotaract district conference titled *Spoorthi Sagara* (ocean of inspiration) in May hosted

by Mangalore clubs with around 240 Rotaractors enjoying a medley of interactive sessions, entertainment shows and lively presentations,” says Dsouza.

RSAMDIO conclave

For the first time, a non-Indian was installed as RSAMDIO president with PDRR/Rtn Zia Uddin Haider Shakil from Bangladesh taking charge of this coveted post for 2022–23. He was elected as Rotaract South Asia president at the zone institute in Gujarat in April 2021. A dual member, he was past president of RC Chittagong Crown and RAC Chittagong Rose Garden, RID 3282.

“At the two-day conclave (June 25–26) in Mangalore, World Rotaract chairman PDG Ravi Vadlamani installed the incoming president; while ROAR (RSAMDIO Outstanding Awards and Recognitions) honours were presented by RSAMDIO



DRR Darryl Dsouza being felicitated at the Rotaract district conference in the presence of (from L to R): PDRR Ganesh GT Bhat, DRRE Nikhil R K, PDRR Jackson Saldanha, DRCC and PDRR Hitaishshi, DGE Prakash Karanth, DGND Vikramdatta and Rtr Nishan N.



At the clean-up of Panambur beach.

president Arti Goswami.” RID 3181 felicitated Padma Shri awardee Harekala Hajabba, a fruit seller who saved money to build a school in his village in Mangalore. Dsouza was selected as RSAMDIO director for zone-7 comprising nine Rotaract districts. In all, 110 members from South Asia took part in diverse sessions, events and variety programmes.

Retention is tough

A member of RAC Mangalore City for four years, Dsouza says the new membership dues from July 1 will be “tough on Rotaractors in B-class cities, towns and villages.” While those in urban centres can afford to pay the annual dues (\$5 for institute clubs; \$8 for community clubs), it will be “nearly impossible for Rotaractors in towns and villages living with limited means.” However, being in Rotaract is a “life-changing experience and hence, everyone must strive to retain their membership,” says the DRR, a mechanical engineer turned entrepreneur. His district has added 150 new Rotaractors and four new clubs last year. ■

Rotaractors play Santa

Team Rotary News

The members of RAC OP Jindal University, RID 3012, brought joy to underprivileged families near Delhi as they celebrated a memorable Christmas under their project — *A December to Remember*.

The club launched the project and invited 14 letterhead clubs, two other Rotaract clubs from Delhi (RACs Drishti and RAC JIMS Vasant Kunj) and an international club (RAC Nakawa, Uganda) to implement the project in their respective regions. We uploaded posters on social media inviting people to donate gifts and share the joy of Christmas with the less privileged,” says Isha Singh, the club’s international service director. She, along with KP Hayagrivaa, Ira Agarwal, Neha Jacob and Shivani Tadiboyina, initiated the idea.

The project lasted for 25 days from Dec 15–Jan 10. The participating clubs had to donate groceries or clothes to slum dwellers, senior citizen homes or disabled people, or toys and sweets to children. The members were encouraged to spend a day with the elderly in the old age homes or with children in orphanages and upload photos of their activities on social media. ■





Donating books to students

Kiran Zehra

Just when RAC Social Revolution, RID 3250, was looking for ways to help students from rural communities near Ranchi, club member Joy Samuel Soy, a student of Rural Management course at the Xavier Institute of Social Service (XISS), Ranchi, had to visit a few villages as part of his academic field lessons. “Our club had carried out a stationery kit distribution drive in this region. But during my field trip I realised that these students needed more than that. They had no proper educational material and needed help with sourcing important textbooks and notebooks.”

He approached club president Pratik Dwivedi and the club launched the initiative ‘Aapki Pustakein, Aapki Pehchan’ (Your Books, Your Identity). Joseph Marianas Kujur, director of XISS, inaugurated the project. The club members encouraged the staff and students to donate books and at the end of the first week “we had collected 250 books, a collection of all types of books — ICSE, CBSE and IGCSE

textbooks, story books, novels and magazines,” says Suman.

An inventory of the collection was made and the books were sorted according to the relevant age groups and grades. The Rotaractors then distributed them to the schools and colleges. “We have received a lot of books on IT and they will be useful for students learning computer science. The novels and magazines have been sent to old age homes and orphanages,” he adds.

To encourage more people to come forward and donate books the club approached Sanjeev Vijayvergia, the deputy mayor of Ranchi. He donated few books for the cause, and “a lot of people called us with regard to donating books and slowly our collection began to swell,” smiles Dwivedi.

“The joy on the face of the students when they receive a book they have been wanting to buy but cannot afford is priceless,” says the club president and adds that the project will remain an ongoing project in the following Rotary year. This project “has taught





Rotaractors carried out a stationery kit distribution drive at a primary school on the outskirts of Ranchi.



us that we can make a big difference and help in the education of the underprivileged by donating books. We have encouraged the students to donate their academic books to others once they move on to the next grade.” The club can be contacted at rotaract@xiss.ac.in for book donations.

Cleanliness drive

The club also carried out a cleanliness drive at Panchghag falls located in Khunti district, Jharkhand. “We took this initiative to restore the natural beauty of scenic sites in and around our city,” says Dwivedi.

In association with dentists Dr Ashwini Kr Pathak and Dr Alka Pandey, the club conducted a dental care programme at Tumbagutu village near Ranchi. Over 250 people were examined at the camp. ■



Rotaract expands reach in Dharmanagar

V Muthukumaran

Banking heavily on the support from Bengali people who are in majority in this remote, but scenic municipal town, around 170km north of Agartala, RAC Dharmanagar, RID 3240, “will be taking up a slew of diverse projects from July starting with mega tree plantations with the support of forest officials. We will continue with the installation of sanitary pad vending machines at schools and colleges, besides conducting MHM sessions for girls,” says club trainer

Ananya Bhattacharya, who is also the district secretary.

The Rotaractors gain visibility during Durga Puja which is celebrated with great pomp in Dharmanagar. “Last year, we got funding from local businessmen and also pooled our money to buy new clothes which were gifted to 180 children in slum colonies during the festival,” she says. A sanitary pad vending machine was installed at the Ganganagar Higher Secondary School, followed by an awareness session on personal hygiene for girls which

benefitted around 50 students. Blood donation camps, food and new clothes distribution for less privileged families are ongoing projects being done on a weekly basis.

A team of Rotaractors has done the radio-collaring of stray dogs to prevent them from being hit by speeding vehicles in the night. Hearing the plight of two meritorious, but poor students — Marina Darlong (13) studying in Class 8, and Priyotosh Nath (11) in Class 5 — the club adopted them and is sponsoring their education for over two

RID 3240 district secretary and club trainer Ananya Bhattacharya (left, sitting), along with Rotaractors, at the new clothes distribution event during Durga Puja.





Rotaractors at the installation of a sanitary pad vending machine in a school.

years. “Their parents are very poor and can’t afford to send their wards to school. So we decided to pay their tuition fees. Also, their other schooling needs such as uniforms, shoes,

notebooks and stationery, and school-bags, among others, are being donated by us,” explains Ananya.

With Ankan Deb having taken over as the new club president from

July 1, “we are yet to select our new office-bearers and will be meeting shortly to chart out our forthcoming projects. However, we will be holding workshops for students of Class 11–12 and college-goers on showcasing their skills through an attractive curriculum vitae.”

This three-and-half-year-old club has around 40 members, each of whom has to pay a monthly club fee of ₹100 and an annual district fee of ₹350. “The RI dues of \$8 per head, for community-based clubs, from July is a bolt from the blue for us. This is a semi-urban club and most of our members are students who can’t bear this additional burden as they don’t have a source of income,” says Ananya. Working as a lab technician at the Dharmanagar District Hospital, she says, “there are around 55 active Rotaract clubs and 1,300-plus Rotaractors in RID 3240 who have registered in My Rotary.” On her next goal in Rotary, Ananya says, “if my circumstances are favourable, I like to be elected as DRR as it will help me to expand my Rotaract activities and reach out to more beneficiaries.” Already a dual member, “I want to take bigger responsibilities and a major role in district Rotaract,” she signs off. ■



Rotaract D 3190 conference pays tribute to theatre

Kiran Zehra

To showcase the rich art, craft, and culture of Karnataka, and raise awareness on reviving art forms like theatre that are losing its sheen Rotaract District 3190 dedicated and themed its 44th Annual Rotaract District Conference, *Samskriti*, to the state's culture and heritage. The emphasis was on theatre "because it is an integral part of Karnataka and portrays our history, art and culture of multilingual ethnicity, dance forms, and music," says Sharanya Sridhar, district community service director and secretary of the conference.

Rangabhumi, an interclub theatre competition, was the highlight at the conference where Rotaractors enacted plays related to Karnataka's music, dance, cuisine and culture. Rohit Nagesh, a member of RC Banashankari, "was so impressed with the idea that he sponsored the prize money for this competition." RAC SSMRV bagged the first place and won a cash prize of ₹10,000; RAC Mount Carmel College came in second and won ₹7,000; and RAC Bangalore North

finished third and won a cash prize of ₹5,000.

Over 15 Rotaract clubs on the outskirts of Bengaluru are promoting local artisans, says Sharanya. "All their return gifts and awards were purchased at craft stores owned by rural artisans in Chennapatna, a city near Bengaluru famous for its handmade wooden

toys, or from roadside vendors which will help them earn a livelihood," she says. The way to keep our culture and art alive is to start "talking about it. So, we organised a campaign at the conference to create awareness on these art forms and artists and asked more clubs to purchase from them than buying something fancy and meaningless."

The two-day-conference had over 1,500 registrations and included an opening address by DG Fazal Mahmood, panel discussions, cultural performances, and showcased some of the most outstanding projects done by Rotaract clubs in the district. "Most importantly, the event provided a platform for networking and interacting with Rotary leaders," says Ganesh G, conference co-chair.

Earlier, DG Mahmood also gave the Rotaractors a slot in the Rotary discon to promote their Rotaract conference and even asked Rotarians to register for the event. "It was a great

The child of a construction site worker inside the cradle distributed by RID 3190 under its Project Canopy of Hope.





A theatrical performance at the Discon.

learning experience for us. We were humbled.”

The conference was sponsored by RC Bangalore Midtown, Cricket Central and Tag Unlimited.

Canopy of Hope

Among the many Rotaract projects highlighted at the conference “we

showcased ‘Canopy of Hope’, a project close to our hearts,” says Ganesh. This project provides cradles to keep infants safe as their mothers toil at construction sites.

Sharanya recalls seeing a baby wrapped in a cloth and left on a platform while the mother was working at the construction site.

We raised ₹81,000 and with the help of 50 Rotaract clubs, distributed 350 cradles.



A group of Rotaractors excited after winning an award at the conference.

“It was unbearable to see a child like that.” The district Rotaract team approached Rotary clubs to help raise funds to purchase comfortable cradles with mosquito nets, “We raised ₹81,000 and with the help of 50 Rotaract clubs, distributed 350 cradles,” she smiles.

The future of Rotaract made an interesting topic for a panel discussion, where Rotaractors, DRRs, and PDRRs, shed light on the relevance of Rotaract and its potential for the future. Other competitions at the conference were banner-making, and talent hunt. Praveen from RAC KGF and Sinchana Godkhindi from RAC Bangalore South-West won the title of Mr and Ms 3190. ■

Young Karur traders, professionals swell Rotaract ranks

V Muthukumaran

As Rotary's youth movement, Rotaract is grappling with the mandatory RI dues from July 2022, here is a club, RAC Karur, RID 3000, whose members, consisting of traders and professionals, are willing to pay an extra ₹1,000 per head annually to raise their club membership fee to ₹3,000 so that it takes care of monetary obligations to Rotary International.

This Rotaract club does not have a single student, teacher or a doctor. Don't be surprised as it is a community-based club catering to the interests of traders and businessmen in Karur, the textile city of Tamil Nadu. "We have 36 active members

in all, hailing from diverse trade such as jewellery, textiles, finance, training academies, architects and engineers. All of them are successful traders, second and third generation entrepreneurs carrying forward the legacy of their families," says R Sabarish, past president, RAC Karur.

Recently they have launched a blood donation app, *R4Blood*, which can be downloaded from the Play-Store. "The site has listings of donors, government and private hospitals, and a range of critical care services being offered in and around Karur. The app, developed by Rtr R Jeevananthan, is tailor-made to help patients in need of blood and this e-platform can be

scaled up to the national level with the support of Rotary and Rotaract clubs," he explains. An amount of ₹1.2 lakh was pooled in by members to design the mobile app.

Project *Karna* which had a soft launch in March 8 during Rotaract Week offers free NEET coaching to less privileged government school students for medical entrance exam. "We tied up with Graavitons, a coaching centre, to hold classes for 200 students aspiring to become doctors."

A number of sporting events are being held throughout the year to nurture young talent across the state. A state-level carrom tournament in Dec 2020 saw over 250 contestants and winners in men's, women's and doubles categories got a total prize money of ₹50,000. In March 2021, 46 teams competed at the open football tournament from all over the state and a prize money of ₹70,000 was given to the winners. "We raised ₹3.5 lakh from the football matches and donated ₹50,000 to N Hariharan, a final year medical student, for his college fees.



RAC Karur IPP P Selva Kumar hands over the laminated Karna poster to Graavitons CEO Parameshwari in the presence of (from L) project chairman Chris Marshall and club president N Baranish.



Former AG V Sundararajan, RID 3000, presents a cheque for ₹50,000 to N Hariharan, a medical student, at the end of the '5 vs 5' football tournament.

Now he is a doctor at the Salem Government Hospital.”

Karur Mayor Kavitha Ganesan will flag off a three-day volleyball tournament (July 15–17) for the top 10 teams in TN to be held under floodlights at the

Thiruvalluvar Municipal Playground. PRID C Basker and other prominent Rotarians from Karur will be present at the inaugural. District collector Prabhu Shankar and electricity minister Senthil Balaji will preside over the valedictory session.

to include the financial commitment to RI. As traders, we are well off and can mobilise resources and money for our programmes.”

High-profile projects

N Baranish, architect, has taken over as the new club president (2022–23). Listing out a few projects that are being drafted, he says, “training workshops will be held to convert farm waste into charcoal briquette (WCB), a profitable business model, for the youth to reduce our carbon footprint.” A series of public campaign on 3Rs (recycle, reduce and reuse) will be taken up to create awareness on adopting a sustainable and eco-friendly lifestyle.

A team of Rotaractors will visit schools under Project *Agri School* to engage students on the importance of agriculture so that “they appreciate the value of food chain from seed to plate and learn to grow crops.” Under Project *RHAC* (Rotaract Health Awareness and Consulting), a team of service-minded doctors will be empanelled to offer consultations to poor families who had registered under this Rotaract programme.

Karur has 1,500-plus Rotaractors across 18 clubs (five community-based and 13 institution-based), but 85 per cent of them are yet to register themselves at My Rotary portal which is a mandatory requirement. ■

We network with each other and mobilise funds easily for gala events, service projects and other programmes. Also, we get sponsorship as we are part of business community.

R Sabarish
past president, RAC Karur

No funding woes

As most of the Rotaractors are traders and entrepreneurs, “we network with each other and mobilise funds easily for gala events, service projects and other programmes. Also, we get sponsorship as we are part of the business community,” explains Sabarish. When queried over the new RI dues effective from July, he says, “membership dues is not a problem at all. Some Rotaractors are willing to pay more club dues



A state-level carrom tournament in progress. Past president Sabarish (2nd from R) looks on.

Gangtok Rotaract scales up MHM initiatives

V Muthukumaran

Over 10,000 sanitary pads were distributed and 10 menstrual hygiene workshops were held in schools, colleges and rural areas of Sikkim in the past one year by RAC Gangtok Hills, RID 3240, under its Project *Good Habits*. “We also install pad vending machines at schools and colleges, apart from sensitising the girls on personal hygiene,” says Pintu Sharma, past president (2021–22).

In one such event, the club distributed over 250 hygiene kits for girls at the Chujachen Senior Secondary School; while similar MHM kits were given to students at the Government Junior High School, Lingding, and Balika Niketan. Each hygiene kit consisted of a sanitary napkin, a pair of undergarments, sanitisers, masks and a soap for menstrual care of girls. Also, over 200 boys were given sanitisers and

masks. “We invited three experts to deliver lectures to school girls on women’s hygiene and AIDs,” says Sharma.

The seven-year-old community-based club has 25 members, of which 15 are college-goers and the rest are working professionals. As part of *Defeat Diabetes* campaign in which Rotary clubs organised blood sugar testing camps across India to test at least one million patients to create a

Rotaractors and Interactors at the Project Let’s Talk.





School girls display hygiene kits during an MHM session.

new world record, “we did simultaneous diabetes camps across the four revenue districts of Sikkim which benefitted at least 1,000 people,” he says.

Engaging Interactors

Project *Let's Talk* aims to make Interactors in Sikkim aware of Rotary's global reach and life-changing programmes through regular interactions with school students. “There are seven Interact clubs in Gangtok and we hold at least 2–3 interactive sessions in each school so that Interactors develop a good bonding with Rotary and become Rotaractors in due course,” he says. So far, 15 Interactors had benefitted from the initiative. “We discuss a range of topics with school students, have fun and entertainment with them to create a rapport with Interactors.”

Sponsored by RC Gangtok South, the Rotaractors pay monthly dues of ₹50 per head and ₹350 as annual district dues. “We are aware of the new RI dues of \$8 per head for community clubs and everybody will comply with it as they find Rotaract



Rotaractors at the installation of a sanitary pad vending machine in a school.

a great platform for fellowship and bonding among diverse people,” explains Sharma (24), an IT professional. “Though I got employed in Noida last year, I don't want to miss the club installation. So, I took leave and made it a point to be with Rotaractors in Gangtok for the investiture ceremony.” Though his parents are from Bihar, Pintu Sharma was born and brought up in Gangtok “which

is my home and the bonding among Rotaractors here is very strong.” Devesh Agarwal, the new club president, says he will further expand the MHM programme reaching out to remote villages in North Sikkim. “We are yet to decide on the village to start our hygiene campaign. Some of the projects are still in the planning stage,” says the MBA student from Amity University, Kolkata. ■

A Rotaractor's journey

Kiran Zehra

Rotaract is nurturing us to be future Rotary leaders by providing us an opportunity to exchange ideas with leaders in the community, develop leadership and professional skills, and have fun through service," says Aishwarya Mayuresh Warke, DZRR, RID 3142. Through Rotaract "I have learnt to organise and run a club, manage funds, and plan and carry out activities and service projects."

Recalling her years as member of the Interact Club of PMM Rotary School, Ambarnath, Maharashtra, Aishwarya says she had to revive "a club that was hibernating. We had very few members and zero projects or activities." Drawing inspiration

from her father DG Mayuresh Warke, she spoke at different events organised at her school to encourage students to join the club. Very soon the club was active, and "we began our service projects by distributing 600 paper bags to medical shops in the bazaar area."

In 2018 she joined RAC Ambarnath (chartered in 1968) and from then on "I have had the opportunity to learn something new every day." A few years ago, "when I was the president of the club, we provided flood relief material and food to a village in Maharashtra. We had to deliver food for 220 people late night. With the help of Rotary-Rotaract network, we did it in less than two hours." When she visited the village the next day an old woman said, "last night 220 of

us prayed for you." This was the first time "I experienced the satisfaction of being a Rotaract member," she smiles.

Talking about her father Aishwarya says, "There were times when my father had to go on 'Rotary duty' and missed my PTA meetings, my cultural performances, and birthday too. Sometimes I was disappointed, unaware of the good work he was doing. But now when I go out for a service project and can touch lives, I realise what my father has been doing. I am proud of him and grateful to him for helping me through my Interact-Rotaract journey."

Her club has adopted a government school and converted it into a happy school where the Rotaractors teach English and impart soft skills to the students. The club also runs adult literacy classes in two villages and has carried out 200 other projects that include feeding animals, Rakhi celebrations with police personnel, and more.

A mechanical engineer, Aishwarya will pursue her master's degree at the University of Dublin, Ireland. "I will miss my Rotaract club and friends here. But the best part of Rotaract is that we are an international community, and be it anywhere I will still have the opportunity to be part of a service project and will be directly involved in transforming lives." ■

Aishwarya Mayuresh Warke, Zonal Rotaract Representative Designate, RID 3142.



Rotary
District 3142



In Brief



5-year-old creates Guinness Record

At age 5, Bella J Dark from Weymouth, UK, has created a Guinness world record

for becoming the world's youngest (female) person to publish a book. Her book *The Lost Cat* tells the tale of Snowy, a cat who gets lost after venturing outside alone at night. Published in January 2022 by Ginger Fyre Press, over 1,000 copies have been sold.



An electric plane

Sherwood eKub aircraft, a British-designed all-electric conventional aeroplane, completed two zero-emission flights at Little Snoring airfield in Norfolk, England. The first flight lasted 10 minutes, while the second 22 minutes.



Drones to deliver blood

Aster MIMS Hospital in Kozhikode, Kerala, has introduced

drones to transport blood and medicines. Following a successful five-day trial, Skye Air, the drone delivery tech firm, has announced it will undertake 50 flights, carrying blood samples and medicines, for the hospital. The drone weighs 20kg and can hold additional weight of up to 5kg.



Floating solar farm

Energias de Portugal (EDP) has built a 12,000 solar panels farm,

equivalent to the size of four soccer fields, on the Alqueva reservoir, an artificial lake in western Europe. Paired with lithium batteries this solar farm is moved by two tugboats to their mooring and can power around 1,500 households, generating 7.5 gigawatt-hours annually.



Innovative river cleaning tool

An Italian firm has invented River Cleaning, a tool for stopping plastic waste from rivers and other water bodies reaching the oceans. Anchored to the river bed this tool comprises a series of buoys that spin on axles powered by the natural flow of the river. Floating in a diagonal line, their spinning funnels incoming trash towards a collection point at the shore.

Compiled by Kiran Zehra; Designed by Krishnapratheesh S



IMAGINE WHAT'S NEXT

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA | 27-31 MAY 2023

Register today at convention.rotary.org

#Rotary23



MELBOURNE
2023