

Rotaract NEWS

Rotaract





A boost to mangroves in Philippines

RAC Bacolod North, RID 3860, the Philippines, conducted a mangrove planting activity in Barangay Punta-Taytay. With the support of about 200 volunteers, 1,300 mangrove shoots were planted as part of the club's flagship project *Viridi Mundi* (Green World).

Coastal clean-up drive

RAC Kingston, RID 7255, Jamaica, with the help of environmental enthusiasts removed plastic litter and debris from the shorelines of the Gunboat and Buccaneer beaches, as part of their club activity to celebrate International Coastal Clean-up Day.



Educational kits for underprivileged students

RAC Ho with support from Rotary clubs in RID 1901, Ghana, donated educational kits to underprivileged students from a small town named Akrofu Xeviofe.



Food for the needy

Members of RAC Orillia, RID 7070, Canada dressed up in Halloween costumes knocked on doors in their neighbourhood, and collected non-perishable food items which were later donated to a charity called the Sharing Place Food Centre in Orilla.

Compiled by Kiran Zehra

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RI Director **Dr Mahesh Kotbagi**

RI Director **AS Venkatesh**

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Leadership lessons from Queen Elizabeth II

Ascribe it to the ironic times in which we live that a world torn apart by aggression, strife, war, and divided so deeply along regional, communal and class lines, where the havoc caused by the Covid pandemic coupled with ferocious natural disasters have sent several nations reeling under a great economic shock, over 400 world leaders came together in solemn solidarity last month. Irrespective of the various hues of differences they wear on their sleeves, they came together in a respectful and dignified group to pay their homage to the British Queen Elizabeth II, who passed away at the age of 96.

Even more ironic, the woman in whose memory they stood so respectfully, did not wield any great political power to draw them in. In fact she was often berated and criticised strongly for being a symbol of the dark colonial power that the British empire had once wielded, and the atrocities it had inflicted, on so many countries, including India. History is replete with the dark deeds of the British empire that looted and impoverished its colonies, while torturing thousands of its “native subjects”.

And yet, that very Britain, which went on to form the Commonwealth of nations and head it, was represented by the Queen with such equanimity, dignity, charisma and grace... all the elements that come so magically together to form what is called the “soft power” of a person, that her passing away left most of the world reeling under a feeling of irreparable loss. And it wasn't mourning of the kind we saw erupting for Princess Diana, who was snatched away in the prime of her life by a gruesome road accident. If there was ever an untimely death, that was it. But the Queen had lived a full life... nine decades and more.

The legacy Elizabeth leaves behind for world leaders to ponder over and emulate is the stoic and dignified manner in which public resentment, criticism, and brickbats can be handled, without losing one's sense of calmness. Another lesson she leaves behind is that when acrimony is at its dizzy high, silence can do a lot to tide over the storm. Her total lack of arrogance and anger, at least in public, holds a valuable lesson too. Of course, it can be argued that all this was ingrained into her by relentless tutoring and training over long years, and especially once it was known that she would be a future Queen of England. Unfortunately, in today's politics, neither education, training nor a sense of decency and dignity are considered prerequisite for leadership roles.

Small wonder then that today's world is throwing up fewer and fewer leaders at the helm of nations who can draw unadulterated respect, affection and admiration.

Isn't it saddening to think that the brand of mystique and magic that the British Queen spontaneously generated, through her mere presence and persona, might be something that is disappearing...



Rasheeda Bhagat

RAC Mulund South on a roll

Jaishree



Students of the Rotary Mulund School for the Hearing-impaired at the fun fair.

RAC Mulund South, RID 3141, is a 16-year-old club with 90 Rotaractors. “Ours is one of the oldest clubs in the district with Rotaractors in the age group 16–31,” says club president Archie Chhadwa (22) who joined the club three years ago. “Many of our members have been with the club for over eight years now,” she adds. Quiz her about the club’s significant projects, and she promptly rolls out several, some ongoing and some new. “We have so far executed 60 projects — offline and online — in this quarter. It is all about impacting lives which is the foundation of Rotary. Even if we can impact one life a day, we have made one step ahead, and we can go to bed peacefully,” she says.

The club’s *Dabbawala* project is clearly the members’ favourite, going by the enthusiasm with which

Archie talks about it. The club feeds children and pavement dwellers with a variety of food cooked by the Rotaractors themselves. “Our cooking has improved in the process and many first-timers have also developed interest in the art,” she says. About 15–20 Rotaractors meet up in one of their homes over weekends and cook dishes such as *missal pav*, *upma*, *poha*, *vada pav*, *sabudhana khichdi*, *dabeli*, *pav bhaji*, *chole pav* etc. “Two days ago, we made masala rice and distributed it to 100 children.” Rotarians too join the group at times. The Rotaractors bond over the shared work such as cutting vegetables and washing dishes and “there is so much fun and laughter,” adds the president.

Under *Project Parivardhan* the club members have adopted a village near Badlapur to help the villagers in various ways. Generally they visit them once every quarter “but if there

is something they need urgently then we would attend to it immediately. For instance, they wanted tubelights for their homes and school, and some of our Rotaractors visited the village with the fittings,” says Archie. It is an ongoing project over the last four years and the club has donated sewing machines, ceiling fans, blankets and many other essential items. Children are given books, stationery kits, toys and dresses. Pre-loved clothes are collected and washed by the Rotaractors, and are given to the villagers. “We celebrate Diwali and Christmas with them every year.”

Project Sole Purpose is a new project launched by the club president this year. Old shoes are collected from people. They are refurbished and donated. Through *Project Aanchal* the club is in the process of raising funds to provide baby weighing machines and infantometers to

Children enjoying snacks provided by the club under Project Dabbawala.





A yoga session in progress at a school, as part of the club's Project Chairascuro.

anganwadis in Bhiwandi. The club has received quotations and is in the process of shortlisting vendors. “We are particular that we want to give good quality machines as it involves babies,” she says

Under *Project Nari*, another ongoing project, the club focusses on women’s empowerment by organising workshops. Recently a self-defence workshop was organised for children in an orphanage where they were taught ways to handle various kinds of assaults. Through *Project Second Innings*, the Rotaractors reach out to the elderly in old age homes.

During the recent monsoons the club members distributed piping hot tea and biscuits early morning to autorickshaw/taxi drivers, police personnel, sanitary workers and street vendors through *Ek Cutting Chai*. “People were happy with our thoughtful initiative as the chai-biscuit combo was a welcome treat on a rainy day,” smiles Archie.

Every month the club members visit the Thane Regional Hospital





Above: Villagers take their pick from a pile of clothes given by the club under Project Parivardhan.

Left: Rotaractors distribute sanitary napkins to women.



Rotaractors teach children.

We have so far executed 60 projects — offline and online — in this quarter. It is all about impacting lives which is the foundation of Rotary.

Archie Chhadwa
president, RAC Mulund
South

which treats mentally-challenged people. They entertain the patients with music, dance and games to “make them relax and unwind,” under *Project Anokhe*.

Under *Project Chairoscuro*, an ongoing project to celebrate wellness, the club engaged 430 students of two schools for two days in various fun-filled activities such as tattoo drawing, face designing, mandala art, yoga, quilling, self-defence etc through 10 sessions. “We had seven trainers and we, along with the children, enjoyed the programme and learnt a lot.”

The club helped organise a fun fair at the Rotary Mulund School for the Deaf where the hearing-impaired children organised stalls, and designed entertainment and games. Mehendi stalls manned by the school students were a big draw and so were the food counters. “It was an amazing mela entirely managed by the students. We only gave them the idea and funds,” says the president.

Not to leave the animals behind, the Rotaractors fed cucumbers and carrots to cows at a *goshala* at the beginning of the year under their *Project Chaara Daan*. “They did eat the vegetables. After all, it is healthy food,” smiles Archie. ■



Rotaractors' rendezvous with Prez Jones

Kiran Zehra

RI President Jennifer Jones received a rousing welcome at the Ethiraj College for Women in Chennai, where she met Rotaractors of RID 3232, on her Imagine Impact tour. “Your energy is electric! I was told this district is home to the largest women’s Rotaract club that has 29,000 Rotaractors. Nick and I had no idea what to expect till we walked in through the door and experienced your crazy energy... and I love it,” she said and thanked DRR Gowtham Raj and Meera Sharma, past president of RAC Madras Central, for “the incredible programme.”

Her theme Imagine Rotary, she said, is “powerful, because it gives you Rotaractors the opportunity to think about what you want for your community and our world.” Asking the Rotaractors to dream big, she said, “with Rotaract you have a chance to become a better public speaker, understand how various governments work, develop leadership and professional skills, and have fun through service.”

When asked to pick between Rotary and Rotaract the RI president received a thunderous applause for choosing the





RI President Jones with RID Venkatesh, DG Nandakumar and DRR Gowtham Raj.

latter. “If you want something done, give it to Rotaract,” she said, adding that Rotaractors, with their strong social media knowledge and presence, could finish designing a project in a month over “quick chats on WhatsApp. Whereas Rotarians would form committees and take 3–6 months to complete the same project. We have to learn from you.”

Energising the Rotaractors she said, “The future of our organisation is sitting right here. This is how I imagine Rotary in the future — great, vibrant and alive. You bring great energy, positive leadership, efficacy and quickness in solving the world’s most pressing problems and challenge us to think differently about how we do our Rotary business. Together we could achieve great things.”

Talking about DEI, she said, “Diversity is our strength and Rotaract has already figured it out. Be it gender equity or diverse membership you have led the way forward.” She was delighted to learn that “your district’s Rotaract membership is 50 per cent women! Girls in the house make some noise.” Following her remarks, the auditorium roared with cheer.

To the question ‘What inspired you to continue to be a part of Rotary?’ Jones recalled the time when she accompanied her husband DGN Krayacich to a medical mission in the Amazon. “While Nick was part of the medical team, I had the opportunity to conduct workshops on media ethics. I met many Rotarians from different parts of the world. The internationality of Rotary inspired me and I understood that irrespective of our nationalities, backgrounds, religious beliefs... as Rotary members we all want the same things for our families, our countries and Rotary helps us achieve these goals. That inspired me to stay. This organisation gives you the opportunity to bring everlasting change to the world and to your own lives.” ■



President Jones and DGN Krayacich with DRR Gowtham Raj and DG Nandakumar.

Inactive clubs in RID 3203 pose a challenge

V Muthukumar

One of the challenges faced by DRR S Shreevarshan, RID 3203, is to motivate the dormant clubs in his district to turn active. But it is easier said than done. “We have 93 Rotaract clubs who have registered on My Rotary portal. But among them, only 30 are active and the rest need to galvanise themselves and take up high-visibility projects to make their presence felt,” says the DRR.

When he took charge in July,

Shreevarshan initiated *Project Platoon* which saw 2,800 letters written by Rotaractors being couriered through India Post to a military address in New Delhi. “Each Rotaractor wrote in his or her style using choice words to pay their respect to our soldiers and Army officers for their exemplary valour and sacrifice in their call of duty,” he says. While celebrating the 75th I-Day, “we couriered the letters to the Delhi address, from where it will be sorted and delivered to various regiments guarding our borders.”

A three-day multidistrict RYLA in Ooty attracted 48 Rotaractors, mostly college students, from RIDs 3232, 3150, 3204 and 3000. DG B Elangkumaran, DGN Suresh Babu and PDG George Sundararajan mentored the students at multiple sessions covering leadership training, out-of-box thinking, communication skills and the importance of TRF in Rotary. District RYLA chair S Manikandan coordinated the sessions and took care of logistics. In between the sessions, Rotaractors took out a rally titled ‘Say no to drugs’ which caught the attention of locals and small traders at the hill station. RCs Ootacamund and Tirupur Gandhinagar sponsored the RYLA.

I-Day contests

Around 15 Rotaract clubs organised a number of competitions — drawing, oratory, dumb charades (mime) and fancy dress — for students at government schools in Erode, Tirupur, Pollachi and Udumalpet, major towns near Coimbatore. “Over 1,000 students from the primary and higher secondary schools took part in the



Rotaractors stage a rally during RLYA in Ooty.



Above: DG B Elangkumaran (3rd from L, sitting) with DRR Shreevarshan to his right, along with Rotaractors, at the valedictory session of RLYA.

Below: DRR Shreevarshan with RI President Jennifer Jones in Kochi.



I-Day contests and prizes were given to the winners,” says Shreevarshan. A four-member team will go on a motorcycle expedition across four RI districts in the state to create awareness on menstrual hygiene among school students. “The bike rally project is still on the drawing board as we are yet to work on the finer details. Following this rally, we will be distributing sanitary napkins to schools in a phased manner.”

While there is an annual district fee of ₹125 per Rotaractor, the DRR says, “the newly introduced RI dues — \$5 for institution-based and \$8 for community clubs — is a challenge we are handling deftly. We have to persuade the members to pay the RI dues to stay with Rotaract as it offers opportunities to hone their diverse skills.” Apart from taking district projects, “each club is at liberty to conceive and implement a range of service programmes in accordance with Rotary ideals or under the banner

A four-member team will go on a motorcycle expedition across four RI districts in the state to create awareness on menstrual hygiene among school students.

DRR S Shreevarshan, RID 3203

of our signature projects,” says Shreevarshan. To cite an example, he says RAC Tirupur Young Generation is giving taekwondo practice to children at the TISSO Home, an orphanage, under *Project Aram*. “At the two-day state-level championship in Kanyakumari, six students from the orphanage were sponsored by the club; their entry fee and transport expenses were borne by the Rotaractors. And they won one silver and three bronze medals,” explains the DRR.

A member of RC Pollachi Varnas for nine years, Shreevarshan, 26, is doing business in bleaching chemicals and also works as a political consultant. One of his goals is to “start a Rotary club exclusively for Rotaractors in RID 3203.” ■

An eco-friendly celebration in Nagpur

Kiran Zehra



Participants with their eco-friendly Ganesha.

For five years now, RAC Shri Ramdeobaba College of Engineering and Management (RCOEM) in Nagpur, RID 3030, has been practising the tradition of making eco-friendly Ganesha idols. “While creating awareness to protect the environment we want to inspire the youth to make a green choice,” says Santhoshi Biswal, the club secretary.

The club, with the help of its parent club RC Nagpur Mihan Town, organises this annual eco-Ganesha-making workshop. “Our parent club deputs an instructor and provides the material, and helps in gathering participants,” she says, adding that all her club members participate in this workshop. Although the plaster of Paris looks good and is economical “sculpting a biodegradable





Young girls sculpting idols from organic clay.



A Rotaractor collecting used flowers and garlands a day after Ganesh Chaturthi.

idol is so much fun and you get to take your creation home. The excitement among the participants over making their own Ganesh idols has been increasing.”

The workshop attracts “a lot of school and college students and we are glad they are thinking about the environment at such

a young age,” Santhoshi brims. The club members also encourage participants to “dissolve the idols at their homes and pour the water for the house plants.”

Ridhi, a 14-year-old participant from the workshop says, “I was so excited to take Bappa home. My mom and dad were so happy

that they helped me decorate my handmade Ganesha with dal and pulses.” For Anuradha, another participant “making the idols is like an art therapy.”

Under *Project Nirmalya*, a day after the Visarjan (immersing the idol in the water) the club members went from street to street gathering the flower garlands used to adorn the elephant God. “It is like a house party where everyone celebrates and have fun, and then stay back to help clean up. “For our club,” says the secretary, “responsibly disposing of the waste from the celebration is the most important part.”

The clean-up activity went on for 12 hours — 10 am to 10 pm — with a participation of 200 club members and volunteers. Over 3,000kg of floral waste were collected and sent for processing. “They will be converted into incense sticks, rangoli powder or other eco-friendly products,” she adds.

The club members follow a tradition of celebrating their birthdays with children from underprivileged backgrounds. ■



A Rotaractor celebrating her birthday with underprivileged children.

RAC Pune Kalyaninagar raises ₹5 lakh for literacy

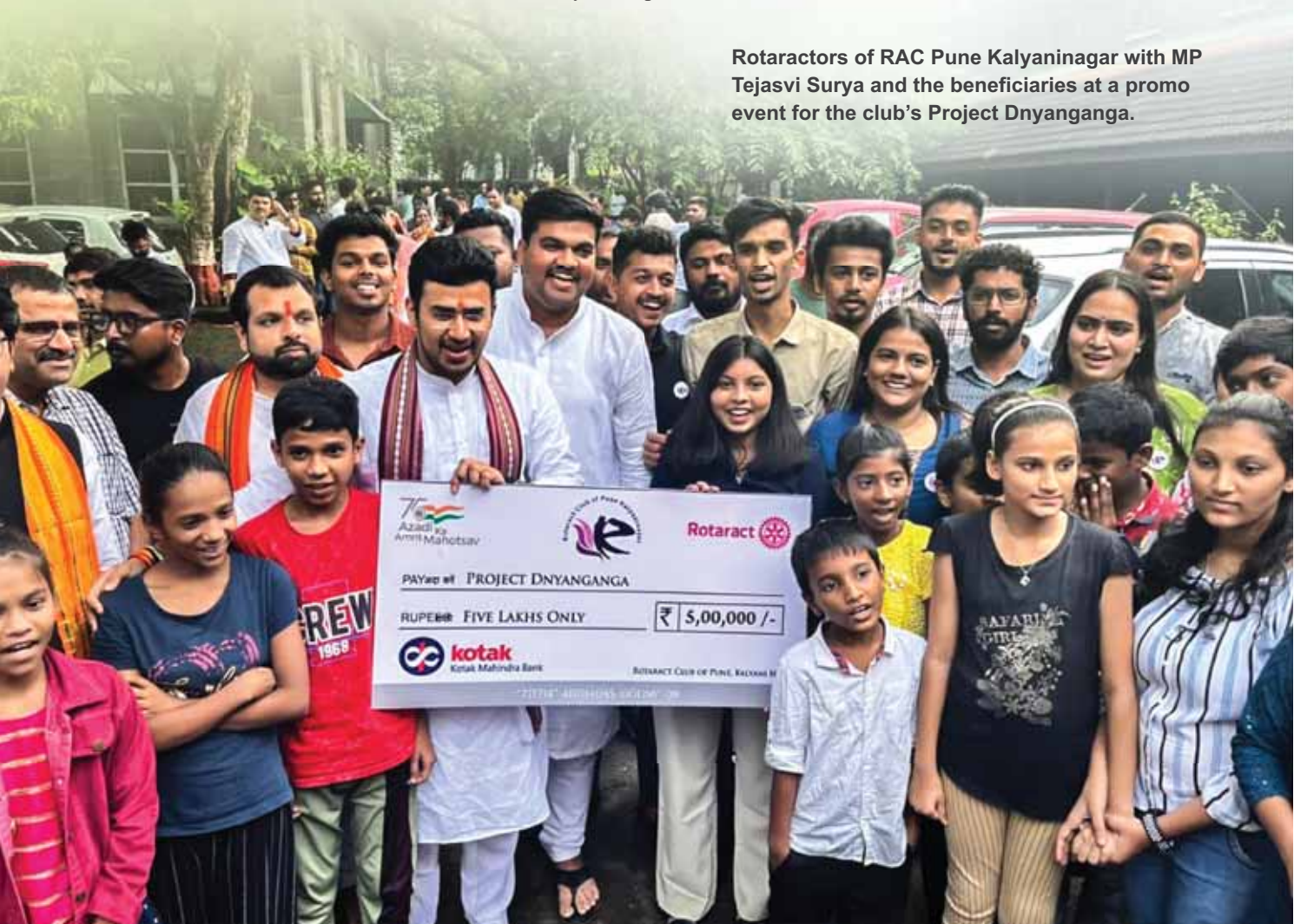
Jaishree

RAC Pune Kalyaninagar, RID 3131, celebrated India's 75th Independence Day by supporting the education of 75 children from underprivileged families under its *Project Dnyanganga*. "We were disturbed to hear about instances of children

forced to stop education, especially after the Covid pandemic, because their parents had lost their jobs and couldn't afford the fees. We came across stories about school dropouts being made to step up as breadwinners in many families to make ends meet. My domestic help's child was also one such victim," says club president

Shraddha Shantaram Sonawane. A discussion on the topic among the club members led to the idea of adopting as many children as possible and fund their education for the current academic year. To commemorate Independence Day, they decided to help 75 children. The club chartered in 2005 has 40 Rotaractors.

Rotaractors of RAC Pune Kalyaninagar with MP Tejasvi Surya and the beneficiaries at a promo event for the club's Project Dnyanganga.





Rtr Sayan Sadhukhan gives a cheque to a child in the presence of (from R) club president Shraddha Sonawane, Rtr Shrungal Kulkarni and club secretary Shivanjali Bade during the club's Charter Day.

With guidance from club advisor Siddhesh Gaikwad, a team of Rotaractors started with data collection to identify children who needed help. They collected data from schools and social organisations. “We verified every child’s data to ensure that our help reaches the right people,” she says.

The club was able to raise ₹5 lakh through personal contributions from members and donations from friends and family. “We approached politicians and entrepreneurs too. Initially they were concerned. Some of them asked us if we were adopting a school and when we explained our initiative everyone was happy to be a part of it. Several Rotarians too supported the cause.”

Member of Parliament (Bangalore South) Tejasvi Surya and Amit Thackeray presided over the distribution of cheques,

in two phases, to the parents of the shortlisted children. “We did the third phase on our club’s Charter Day (Aug 26), making the day a memorable one for all of us,” says the club president, adding, “it gave us so much satisfaction to realise that we have given the most valuable gift — the gift of education — to these children. Working for this project was indeed an enriching experience for all of us.”

*We said to people, don’t eat pizza
for a day, instead donate that
money for a flood victim. And
that worked wonderfully.*

Shraddha Sonawane
president, RAC Pune Kalyaninagar

Shraddha recalls a similar project last year when the club rose up to help flood victims in Kolhapur. The Rotaractors raised ₹5.5 lakh then and bought groceries with the collected funds. They packed 1,000 kits and distributed to the flood-affected people. “Back then we had an effective strategy. We said to people, don’t eat pizza for a day, instead donate that money for a flood victim. And that worked wonderfully,” smiles Shraddha.

The club is all geared up to distribute blankets next month to the inmates housed in an institute for the mentally-challenged in Pune to beat the winter chill. The members are planning on a mega donation camp during the World Rotaract Week in March 2023 as part of the nation-wide *Mahadan* programme. ■

Grooming talent for GenNext jobs

V Muthukumaran

With the steady induction of new members every week, RAC Lala Lajpatrai College, RID 3141, is looking forward to expand its project activities and gain visibility among students of this college, a reputed institute for higher education in commerce and business administration in Mumbai. “Each year we have over 200 Rotaractors. As we are an institution-based club, a large number of final-year students exit and freshers join in the beginning of the Rotaract year. In another 14 days from now, our headcount, which is 135-plus, will cross 150, for, our new focus on professional development and fellowship is creating the right impact among students,” says Malcolm Vakharia, club president. “Our aim is to inculcate good values and create bonding among students through regular events with loads of fun and excitement.”

Project Zero - An Offbeat Career Fair, a brainchild of Vakharia, is gaining traction with its bold vision to educate Class 9–10 students, transgenders and sex workers on the vast opportunities available for them to carve a lucrative source of income through offbeat professions such as blogging, vlogging, beatboxing, digital and graphic visualisers, etc. This three-month-old training sessions have benefitted 2,500-plus students across 10 schools in Mumbai, and engaged at least



RAC Lala Lajpatrai College president Malcolm Vakharia giving a talk at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Railway Station during the skit to create awareness on freedom struggle and martyrs.



Rotaractors celebrate the tricolour as part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.

50 transgenders-cum-sex workers for developing their skills in these emerging vocations. “These jobs are growing big with their associated industries finding huge market in India, especially in Mumbai. We have over 15 experts/resource persons to conduct training sessions on 20-plus offbeat careers for the beneficiaries,” he explains. So far, the club has done 25 project sessions for students and transgenders. ‘Zero’ refers to building a career path for students from ground zero through a calibrated programme, he informs.

Enough funds

Sponsored by RC Bombay Mid Town, the Rotaract club collects an annual fee of ₹750 per head, apart from the annual RI dues of \$5. “We get enough sponsors from companies, individual donors and contributions from our parent Rotary club to host events and programmes. Also, the mandatory RI dues are not a problem as students want to be part of Rotaract fellowship.”

On World Population Day (July 11), a team of seven Rotaractors led by Vakharia went to Nagpur to hold awareness sessions on sexology at a public and private school, reaching out to around 400 girl students. “Dr Nitu Hedao, gynaecologist, and three



A ‘Respect for tricolour’ demo at a railway station.



A sexology awareness session for girls at a school in Nagpur. Club president Vakharia is second from right.

Rotaractors gave special talks on the subject. The event gave immense satisfaction to us all,” he recalls.

I-Day events

A 20-day programme titled ‘Respect your tricolour’ consisting of various events including filling self-realisation forms, wall painting at the Dadar Railway station to promote Rotaract, and a virtual meeting with members from RAC Karachi Kolachi, RID 3271, in the midnight of Aug 14 to promote cultural exchanges between Rotaractors of the two countries, turned the spotlight on the youth brigade of Rotary at the Lala Lajpatrai College.

“We staged a *Nukkad Naatak* (street play) at CSMT, Churchgate and Mumbai Central railway stations on Aug 15. The play was based on the life and struggles of freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives during the liberation movement.” Rotaractors collected discarded national flags from in and around their localities after the I-Day celebrations and handed over a bundle of 75 flags to the Indian Oil officials to dispose them in respectful and eco-friendly manner.

Beyond the Limits will see groups of youth facing multiple hurdles and challenges in the course of their multitasking at a new location near Mumbai.

Upcoming projects

In the coming months, a couple of projects are expected to create adrenaline rush among Rotaractors. First, *Beyond the Limits* will see groups of youth facing multiple hurdles and challenges in the course of their multitasking at a new location near Mumbai. “We have a prize money of up to ₹10,000 to the winning team. Every year we change the nature of tasks and the location for the participants.”

Another event, *Astitva - Ek Pehchaan*, is for the physically-challenged and specially-abled communities who will be trained in vocational skills for a regular source

of income. “Each year, we change the beneficiaries who are drawn from various NGOs and different skills are imparted to them at the training sessions,” says the club president. To boost the morale of Rotaractors, he has composed and produced a three minute-video as a club anthem titled *Hum hai number one*. The sleek promotional clip was uploaded on musical platforms and social media including YouTube. “I feel privileged to lead the Rotaract club and being a Rotaractor for two years has helped me a lot in broadening my vision,” says Vakharia, a third-year BMS student.

Club ambassador Manav Shah, doing second-year BFM, points out that his four-year Rotaract journey has pulled “me out of my comfort zone and take challenges head on. This process groomed me in all aspects of life, especially honing my leadership qualities.” He is enjoying every moment of his current post of club ambassador as “I am the contact person for other clubs looking for partnerships and joint hosting of projects.” He is also responsible for enhancing the public image of his club through impactful, high-visibility events. ■

A transgender Rotaract club in Salem

Jaishree



RID 2982 DG P Saravanan handing over the club charter to RAC Salem Sakthi president V Priya, in the presence of RPIC PDG VG Nayanar (5th from L) and PDGs Velayutha Ravindran, T Shanmugasundaram and N Asoka.

Rotary Club of Salem Grand, RID 2982, formed the Rotaract Club of Salem Sakthi, probably the district's first transgender club, at the public image seminar held at Tiruchengode in September. DG P Saravanan presented the charter to V Priya, the president of the Rotaract club which has 50 transgender members.

Priya has a doctorate in social work and has won “around 80 awards” for her work in improving the welfare of the transgender community in Salem. She recalls saving a young girl from sexual harassment. “She was a school dropout and I convinced her to resume her studies. Today I am sponsoring her school fees,” she says, adding that she has also helped a transgender woman get her LLB degree, and has set up a fish stall for another such woman so that it can provide her a livelihood.

During Covid, Priya, with a group of transgenders, distributed packed food to street dwellers in 33 places across the city. “We

were feeding the disabled and the sick, who were totally immobile, when people were raising concerns about our safety, or rather, they were worried if we will spread the virus.” She is a member of various welfare associations and her passion for social work made her accept the invitation from Muralidharan, a member of RC Salem Grand and secretary of the Vizhuthugal Trust, with which Priya is also associated. “When Muralidharan said that his club would like to form an exclusive Rotaract club for transgenders, I grabbed the opportunity, because I am sure that it will open up opportunities to transform our community.”

Getting people to understand and acknowledge the transgender community, and educating the community about the various government schemes and livelihood opportunities, top Priya's agenda as club president. Her club will be launching its welfare projects with a medical camp in tie-up with Shanmuga Hospitals at the Rotary

Hall in the city during the first week of November. “Next I want to explore job/entrepreneurial opportunities for transgenders, and educate them to treat people with respect. People complain that transgenders harass them in public places. I want to stop this, and for that mutual respect must be developed,” smiles Priya. She recalls her meeting with Microsoft founder Bill Gates and Melinda in Chennai in 2005. “They were such warm people and genuinely concerned about our welfare,” she says.

Club secretary Nakshatra, like Priya, is also passionate about social work. She has worked with HIV+ people and other NGOs. She has participated in 27 ramp walks and has won the Miss Chennai and Miss Diva titles in 2017 and 2018, she says. Both Priya and Nakshatra aim to make their club popular in the city through meaningful service projects. “We want to transform our Rotaract club into Rotary club by next year,” says Priya. ■

Ahmedabad Interactors raise funds for Ukraine and Pakistan

Kiran Zehra

From starting a canteen to dedicating after-school hours to tutoring elderly people on online shopping, to selling *bhel puri* and *pani puri*, three Interact clubs sponsored by RC Ahmedabad Greater, RID 3054, have been working hard to raise funds for children in war-hit Ukraine and flood-affected Pakistan.

Interactors of the Vishwabharati Girls' High School, Thaltej, Ahmedabad, raised €51 (about ₹5,000) for Ukraine by teaching elderly people to use their smartphones, filling up banking forms, giving information, and helping them pay property and water taxes, electricity and cooking gas bills online, all for a minimum fee. "These students belong to lower middle-income families and already have a lot of responsibility given by their parents and yet decided to think beyond themselves. Even though it's not a lot, they wanted to do their bit," says Arup Sinha, Interact chair of RC Ahmedabad Greater.

Talking about the plight of the children in Ukraine, Priyanka Prajapathi, president of the Interact



Club of the Vishwabharati school, says, "Many children are hiding in basements to escape bomb attacks, some have had to witness the death of their loved ones, and some had to flee their homes. Our problems don't even come close to what they are facing."

It all began when Rathod Khushi Haresh, a member of the Interact club, was asked at a club meeting why she wasn't wearing the school uniform.

"I had to choose between my uniform and books because my parents couldn't afford both," says Khushi. When the club learn about her situation, the Interactors came up with *Project Khushi*, and raised ₹2,000. Khushi got a new set of uniform for ₹1,000, while the other ₹1,000 was used as a seed fund for the children of Ukraine.

"On the last day of fundraising, all the Interact club members were out the entire day, sensitising the community about the situation of the Ukrainian children and we appealed to everyone to think of their suffering and donate from their heart and not just their pockets," says Priyanka.



The Interactors of Abhijat Vidya Vihar School started a cafeteria in the campus and placed a donation box near the payment counter and urged visitors to donate generously. "Being children and trying to raise money to help Ukrainian kids had an emotional effect on people. Teachers and students who visited our cafeteria were always ready to donate extra for the cause," says Jay Patel, club president. This initiative generated ₹2,500 (€31). "This gave us the confidence to do more," he adds. Next, the club sold snacks like *vada pav*, *bhel puri* and *pani puri*,



Clockwise from below: Interactors making seedballs; An Interactor giving tuitions; A uniform being gifted to a child under *Project Khushi* of Interact Club of Vishwabharati Girls High School in the presence of the school principal Gaurangi M Soyantar and trustee Ashish Shukla; Canteen Day at Interact Club of Abhijat Vidhyavihar.





Prayagraj Mehta, president, Interact Club of Vishwabharati English Medium School, Ahmedabad, being felicitated by Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel.

handmade paper bags, etc to local sweet shops. “This helped us raise another €80. This was a learning experience for us. We learnt marketing skills and understood that selling takes planning,” he says.

The money raised was sent to RC Tarragona Tarraco August, RID 2202, Spain, to partially fund a trip to Spain for 20 war-traumatised children from Ukraine. Acknowledging the donation, club member

Salvador Olive said, “It is a pleasure to see how these Interactors have gone all out to raise funds to help children in a country so far away from them, and all this under the supervision of Rotarians from clubs in different countries. This is the magic of Rotary!” The Ukrainian children would enjoy a month of physical and psychological support and pampering in Spain as an antidote to the trauma they experienced.

While these two clubs raised €162 for Ukrainian children, the Interact club of Vishwabharati English Medium School hosted a Canteen Day and sold sandwiches and *poha* to raise ₹3,700 for Pakistani children affected by floods. “It is not a very big amount but we hope it would help few children access food and water, or a toy or a book,” says club member Kavya Dave. Unfortunately, the funds could not be sent to Pakistan due to international payment restrictions. “We are working on alternative options,” says Sinha.

The Interact clubs organise at least two projects every year — one that helps their school or community, and another that promotes international understanding. “We Rotarians guide them through the projects. But with the way they had raised these amounts, you can tell that they do not need much handholding,” he adds. ■

A solution to stop spitting in public

Prayagraj Mehta, president of the Interact Club of Vishwabharati English Medium School, was tired and upset “to see a family member spit outside the car when we went on drives. So, I decided to do something about it.” He began working on

a solution to discourage spitting in public places and designed a ‘biodegradable spittoon’ which can be easily fitted inside a car or bike. He was recently felicitated with the Youth Innovator Award for his innovation by Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel.

Mahadan, a mega blood donation drive

Team Rotary News



Team Mahadan with DRREs of South Asian RI districts at the SEARIC Summit, Goa. Mahadan 8.0 chair Kushagra Bansal is seen third from left (standing).

Begun in 2016 under the leadership of RID 3090 PDRR Sahil Bhateja, *Mahadan*, a mega blood donation drive was able to collect more than one lakh units of blood through its 1,500 blood donation camps, including international camps, in these seven years. Rotaract clubs in over 30 countries are participating in these blood donation camps with enthusiasm. “The event is also registered with India Book of Records for the most number of blood units

collected during a week,” says PDRR Kushagra Bansal, chairman, *Mahadan 8.0*.

The programme faced setback for two years in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid pandemic. “But PDRR Abhishek Goyal, the chairman of *Mahadan 7.0*, revived it all up in the Rotary year 2021–22,” he says.

Mahadan 8.0 will be hosted by RID 3120 in March 2023 during the World Rotaract Week (Mar 13–19). The district led by DRR Sachin Upadhyay is working with Mahadan chair *Bansal* to make it a

huge success. The team has planned to organise 1,000 blood donation camps each in 75 Rotary districts across 50 countries, and collect at least 75,000 units of blood. The district has launched aggressive promotion and marketing strategies on various social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Whatsapp to urge the DRRs nationally and internationally to participate in the event. Various promotional strategies like celebrity bytes, Instagram reels and memes are being shared to create a hype for the event. The Mahadan team from RID

3120 gave a presentation at the SEARIC Summit in Goa to spread the message.

To create awareness on blood donation and promote *Mahadan 8.0*, a multidistrict event, ‘Jaagrakt’, was launched on Oct 1 (National Voluntary Blood Donation Day) in association with SEARIC MDIO, RSA MDIO and Rotaract India MDIO, says the Mahadan chair, adding that the team has drawn up more promotional initiatives such as launch of the Mahadan Anthem, Mahadan Helpdesk, and a website which will be rolled out soon. ■

A Rotaract marathon earns goodwill in Coimbatore

V Muthukumaran

A Rotaract marathon to create awareness about autism in Coimbatore saw over 500 participants including Rotarians, Rotaractors and the public across age groups running with enthusiasm in the early morning. “We charged ₹100 per head as registration fee and the marathon was inaugurated by ACP (traffic) Saravanan. The event was widely reported in the local media

and dailies,” says KR Sanjula, president, RAC Coimbatore Texcity, RID 3201, which conducted the 10km-run with the support of its parent Rotary and other clubs in the city.

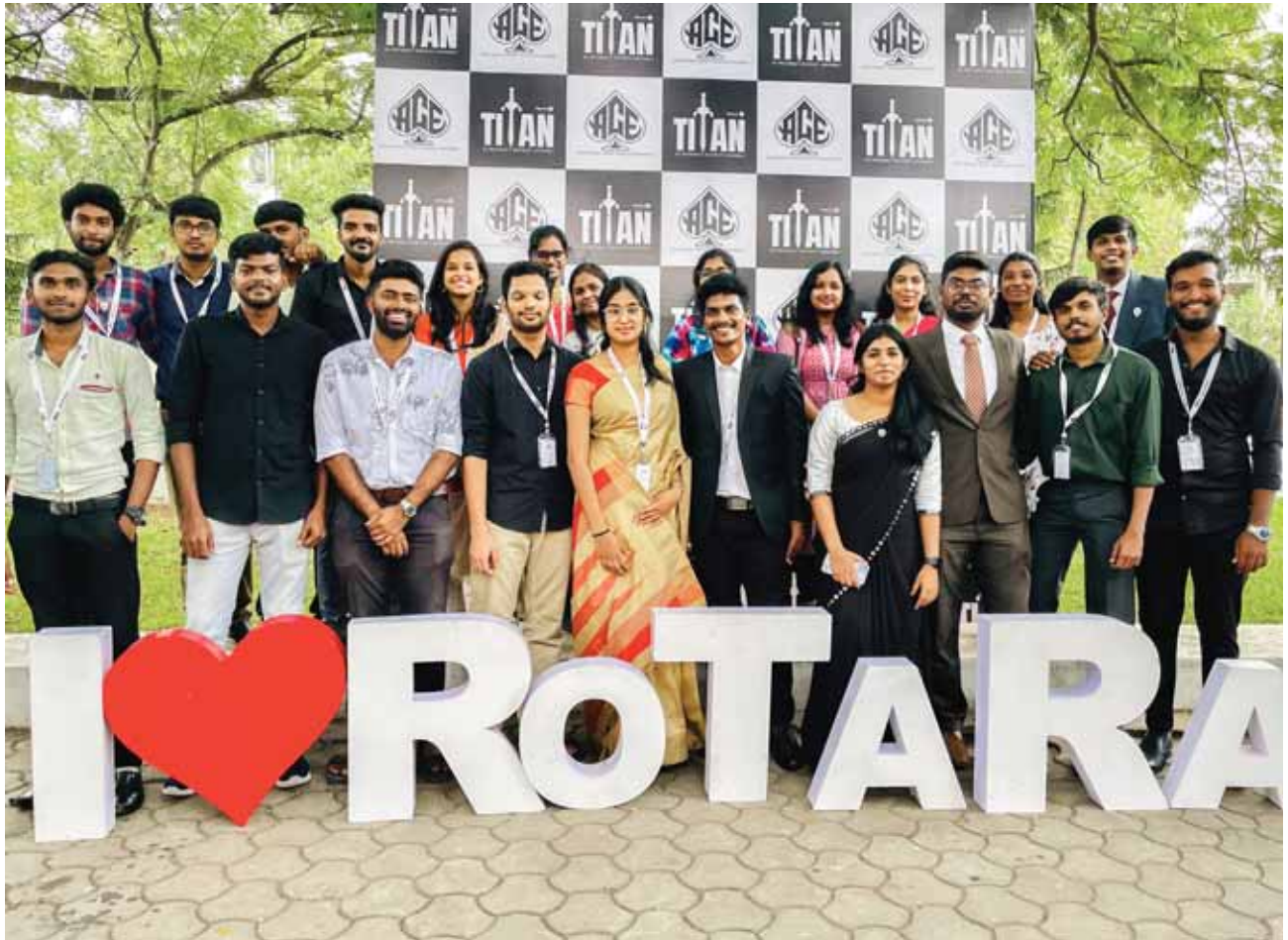
Each participant was given an event kit consisting of a t-shirt, certificate, paper bag and sweat band. While the men’s category had a 10km run, women/girls were allowed to complete 5km; and “the amount raised from the marathon

will be used to buy groceries, clothes and other essentials for inmates at orphanages and special homes,” says Sanjula. Though chartered 25 years ago, the club was dysfunctional for around 2–3 years, and “we had it revived in 2019–20 with the help of our parent, RC Coimbatore Texcity.”

Over 400 patients were screened for general ailments at a two-day mega health camps under Project Nalam Anbudan (Wellness with

RAC Coimbatore Texcity president K R Sanjula (3rd from R) with Rotaractors at a medical camp under Project Nalam Anbudan.





Club president Sanjula and members at the Rotaract District Assembly, Titan, held at KCT College, Coimbatore.

love) held at a slum colony near Thudiyalur, a city neighbourhood, and at Sundarapuram village. “For elderly and vulnerable people, ortho and ECG tests were done, followed by consultations. Medicines were also given.”

A five-year-old garbage dump that has become an eyesore and stink hill near Keeranatham Housing Society was cleared with the help of a JCB machine and a truck.

Project Tex-nourish is a year-long initiative in which fresh fruits and nutrition packs are being given to 20 primary school students every day. “A team of Rotaractors visit a government school each day to distribute fruits and nutritious edibles,” says Sanjula. Recently, 10 senior citizens from Helping Heart, an old age home, were accompanied by eight Rotaractors to the scenic Ukkadam lake, near Sungam bypass road to Trichy, as a one-day picnic. “They were given refreshments, snacks and a tasty lunch during the picnic.”

Mega clean-up drive

A five-year-old garbage dump that has become an eyesore and stink hill near Keeranatham Housing Society was cleared with the help of a JCB machine and a truck. “We cleared around 3–4 tonnes of accumulated

garbage at the site and around 300 families, who had to put up with bad odour for years, in that society thanked us for the clean-up initiative,” recalls Sanjula. On the response of its 30 members to the mandatory RI dues of \$8 per Rotaractor, being a community-based club, she informs that they have sought the help of their parent Rotary “to overcome the dues problem. We are also keen to hold fundraisers for using part of the proceeds to help members who can’t pay RI dues with a token grant.”

Having joined Rotary five years ago, Sanjula, data analyst at an IT firm, wants to continue in Rotaract as long as possible. “Rotaract helped me to develop my professional and management skills too. In future, I may join my parent Rotary to become a Rotarian,” she adds. ■

Rotaractors celebrate I-Day

Team Rotary News

Rotaract clubs across India hosted / participated in a series of events for *Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav*, an initiative of the government of India to celebrate 75 years of Independence. From poster-making to poetry writing club members indulged in various activities to make the celebration interesting. A large number of volunteers including the public took part in the gala events.

Here are a few glimpses:



Above and right: RAC Anjar, RID 3054, organised an open event — *kranti* to celebrate Independence Day. Students and individuals participated in various competitions including fancy dress, singing and dance based on patriotic themes.





Left and above: Under the event *Meri Chitti Humaara Watan* (my letter, my country), members of RAC Andheri, RID 3141, encouraged the students of Interact Club of Sheth Anandilal Poddar to write letters of gratitude to the Indian armed forces, police officers and Covid frontline warriors. The letters were handed personally by the children to the heads of the department in their respective schools.



Above: Rotaractors of RAC Vijayawada, RID 3020, organised a trek up the Mangalgiri Hills in Vijayawada, with 14 members of the club, who enthusiastically carried the Indian flag to the top of the hill.

Right: RAC Visakha Satellite City, RID 3150, carried out a walkathon with a 75 m-long Indian flag. The 2.5km-rally saw the participation of 150 Rotaractors and Rotarians.



Winters will be warmer for children at Bal Ashram Ghar

Team Rotary News

Rotractors with the children
at Bal Ashram Ghar.



On their first visit to Bal Ashram Ghar, an orphanage in Moradabad that houses 24 children in the age group of 3–9 years, members of RAC Moradabad Central, RID 3100, were “heart-broken. One child told us that during winter she would tuck her feet into her dress to keep warm because the orphanage had no blankets,” says Aayushi Agarwal, the club president.

The club assessed the needs of the orphanage “with blankets on top of our list. We pooled money for purchasing bedsheets,



A blood donation drive organised as part of Mahadan.

toiletries, oral hygiene products and cleaning material to start with,” she says. When the blankets were being distributed Aayushi saw them “hugging the blanket, and they asked us if it was supposed to be shared. The joy in their eyes when we told them that each of them gets a separate blanket, is something I will never forget in my life.”

Rotaract taught us the spirit of giving, and to apply ethical practice in our personal and professional lives.

Aayushi Agarwal
club president

All thanks to Rotaract, “we get to be part of their joy and that pushes us to do more. We learn so many new things each time we organise a project or conduct an event. On the outside it’s just a blanket distribution programme; for us it’s a learning experience. It has taught us the spirit of giving, and to apply ethical practice in our personal and professional lives,” says the club president.

In association with RSD Hospital, Moradabad, the club conducted a blood donation camp. The camp was part of *Mahadan*, a project undertaken by Rotaractors in India to encourage youngsters to step forward and donate blood. The club collected 50 units of blood which were given to the hospital’s blood bank.

The club also conducted a medical camp at Ganga Mandir, a slum area in Moradabad. Over 300 people were screened for blood pressure, diabetes and ENT issues. A paediatrician screened children at the camp and educated the parents about nutrition and hygiene. ■



A medical camp organised by the club.

Gala, impactful projects in Dharmanagar

V Muthukumaran

A small town with just over one lakh people, Dharmanagar which is around 170km northeast of capital city Agartala in Tripura was bustling with Rotaract activities on Durga Puja days. For a person living in this north-eastern state, it is not surprising as “80 per cent of people living here are Bengalis and they are mostly involved in one service project or the other,” says DRR Sandip Das, RID 3240, and charter president, RAC Dharmanagar.

During the five-day festival, the club has taken up a *Puja Parikrama* event that involves Rotaractors accompanying inmates of orphanages

and old age homes to Durga *pandals* (giant canopy). “We visited around 15 *pandals*, chanted bhajans and offered delicious *prasad* (sweet offered to god) to around 40 children and elders of special homes,” said Das. “It was a satisfying experience for us all to bring smiles on the faces of inmates.” Running into its fourth year, *Project Gift of Smile* was able to mobilise around ₹55,000 from donors and member contributions for distributing new clothes to poor children.

So far, five sanitary pad machines were installed at four government schools and a government degree college. “We will install one more

machine shortly. Recently, we conducted a debate titled ‘word war’ that saw 20 students, 10 teams of two students each, slugging it out over current topics such as robotics, artificial intelligence, climate change, and giving back to society,” said Ankan Deb, club president. Dharmanagar Government Degree College assistant professor and RC Dharmanagar president Subir Shom adjudged the contest and praised the Rotaractors for hosting the inter-school event.

District projects

Good touch, bad touch sessions are held at schools across the district clubs, following its huge success as



Rotaractors with children holding gift bags at Project Gift of Smile.



A Rotaractor gives dress material to a child.

a club project at RAC Nahar Katia, Assam. “Already most of the clubs had received a good feedback from the school authorities and we will do it as a year-long project,” said Das.

Project Raksha, the protection, throws a fluorescent belt on the neck of stray dogs to guard them against speeding vehicles on wintery nights in the highways. “Launched in October, the project is supported

by Rotarians and private sponsors.” Das is preparing for a two-day district conference titled *Punascha Vihar* at Bolpur-Shantiniketan, the birthplace of Rabindranath Tagore. The title refers to ‘homecoming for Rotaractors’ at Tagore’s native place. “We have got over 100 registrations till now and working on other modalities of the conclave.” With 69 active clubs and 1,530 Rotaractors, “we are

hoping for a strong show at the district meet which will energise us to sustain our projects.”

Sandip Das, a 30-year-old government staff, joined Rotaract in 2012 and became a dual member last year after induction into RC Dharmanagar. On his ambition, he says, “I want to know how Rotary works, gain experience in project handling and serve the community before climbing the hierarchy.” ■

On a literacy drive

Team Rotary News

The members of RAC Silchar, RID 3240, organised a literacy promotion rally, in association with the parent club RC Silchar, at a government school. At the end of the rally the Rotaractors staged various programmes campaigning for education. They urged the schoolchildren to take home the message and influence their friends and neighbours to admit their wards in schools.

In another initiative, the club organised an interactive session called *Sparsh* to educate adolescent children about sexual abuse, menstrual hygiene and taught them self-defence techniques. The club’s professional service director Chandrani Bhattacharjee conducted the sessions. ■



Rotaractors doing good in Sri Ganganagar

Kiran Zehra



Rotaractors of RAC Sri Ganganagar East, RID 3090, along with other clubs in the district, organised a Tiranga bike rally in Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan, as part of the *Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav*, a GoI initiative to celebrate 75 years of Independence and commemorate our history, culture and achievements,” says PDRR Lila Shubham.

National flags were distributed among the general public to support the *Har Ghar Tiranga*

campaign. Rotarians from the district too participated in the event enthusiastically. The aim of the event “was to make the relationship with the national flag more personal rather than it being a symbol reserved for a formal or institutional purpose,” says Shubham, who is also a member of the club. Over 250 Rotarians and Rotaractors participated in the bike rally.

In another initiative, the club members spent time with the inmates of Apna Ghar Ashram, a home for





Club members with the inmates of Apna Ghar Ashram.

Left: Rotaractors participate in the bike rally to promote *Har Ghar Tiranga* campaign.

Below: A class topper being felicitated by members of RAC Sri Ganganagar.



the aged and mentally-challenged. “These are people who are abandoned by their own families and don’t have a lot to feel happy about. The least we could do is serve them a decent meal, spend meaningful time with them, and give them something they can use,” says club president Ram Mittal.

The club also distributed notebooks and stationery kits to students of the Government Primary School Bhirthiliya Wali at Sri Ganganagar. Mittal adds that to encourage the students to attend school regularly and perform better “we awarded trophies and certificates to class toppers.”

The club conducted a cardiac check-up camp to celebrate World Heart Day. “We collaborated with a few cardiologists from our city to create awareness about different cardiac issues and their treatment,” says Shubham. The camp also highlighted the prime causes and symptoms of heart-related ailments and urged people to take preventive action.

The Rotaractors are collecting pre-loved clothes that are in good shape to donate to people living in the slums. ■



Project Proud Girl to focus on menstrual hygiene

V Muthukumaran

A two-year-old RAC Deviprasad Goenka Management College of Media Studies (DGMC), RID 3141, has taken up a number of high-visibility projects since July 2022 such as *Rakhi with Heroes*, Ganesh idol-making workshop and book donation to an orphanage. Striking an optimistic note, club president Sanman

Hutgikar says, “this is our first offline year after the Covid pandemic. However, in the last two years, we have done around 50 hybrid events and projects despite physical constraints.”

In November, the club will collaborate with a social entrepreneur to create awareness on menstrual hygiene among rural women at a remote village near

Naigaon town in Vasai taluk under *Project Proud Girl*. “First, we will hold a workshop for Rotaractors who will be taught to make sanitary pads. Following this, they will visit the village to hold street plays/skits to spread MHM awareness. The women and girls will be taught the process of making sanitary napkins; and we will provide all the raw material for this,”

explains Hutgikar. In the first phase, they hope to cover at least 50 women; and has plans to expand their reach in the coming months.

As of now, the club has not done any joint projects with their parent, RC Bombay Airport, which “supported us a lot during our installation. We are looking forward from this year to associate with them in a big

Children at an orphanage with books donated by Rotaractors.





Above: RAC DGMC president Sanman Hutgikar (back row, left) with Rotaractors at the Ganesh pandal erected in the college lobby.

Below: A Rotaractor tying rakhi on the wrist of a policeman at the Malad Police Station.

way and also take up district projects,” he says.

Earlier, Rotaractors tied *rakhis* on the wrist of 20 policemen and officers (*Rakhi with Heroes*) at the Malad Police Station to mark Raksha Bandhan as a “show of gratitude for the law enforcers who have to keep vigil to ensure our safety through the year.”

Ganesh Utsav

The three-day Ganesh idol-making workshop for Rotaractors helped them to bond together and a grand *pandal* (festival tent) was erected in the college lobby. “An artificial pond was created to perform *visarjan*, the dissolution of the clay idols, by the students in an eco-friendly manner,” said Hutgikar.

Colourful, aesthetically-designed



bookmarks were made by Rotaractors who visited Desire Society, an orphanage at Malad West, and donated books inserted with the bookmarks to the girls to mark

International Literacy Day.

A second-year student of BA (Multimedia and Mass Communication), Hutgikar joined Rotaract a year ago and he is keen

to do service projects that have a “positive impact in society. I would like to complete Masters degree before joining Rotary and do more good to the communities,” he adds. ■

A Rotaract war against noise pollution

V Muthukumaran



Rotaractors and students at the Project Techworld.

Daily life in Mumbai has to contend with a series of urban nightmares that affect our senses adversely, and to counter this growing menace, RAC TCET (Tagore College of Engineering and Technology) at Kandivali East with around 500 Rotaractors will be taking up an ambitious *Project Kaano ki Suno* (listen to your ears) to create awareness on noise pollution among the public.

While spadework is still on, “we will start from mid-November with the installation of dB metres (that measure decibel levels) at five high traffic zones and zero in on a thoroughfare hit worst by noise hazards, say Magathane, a busy junction, where mime acts and dumb charades will be done by our

team,” says Muskan Sinha, club president. Flyers, pamphlets on the need to curb sound pollution will be distributed to pedestrians and commuters at this identified traffic hub. “Our aim will be to make this busy junction a ‘no honking’ or silent zone with the support of traffic police and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC),” she explains. At Magathane, apart from the Metro station, there are two big hospitals and nonstop traffic noise affects patients too, she says.

As an extension of *Project Kaano*, they will give silver paint coating to the damaged coils of Bluetooth speakers at public places and they will be connected to microphones at the rear end which will reflect rays on a white

screen to denote the sound level. “This whiteboard will help people to take notice and make efforts to reduce decibels of the blaring speakers nearby.” She is planning to make noise awareness drive a year-long project with the support of parent Rotary, RC Mumbai Borivali East, which mentors and provides resources for Rotaractors, and the BMC.

Project Techworld

With the aim to groom young minds in electronics, a six-year-old *Project Techworld* has conducted workshops on basic electrical circuits and components for around 2,500 students across 80 government high schools. “Our team of 200 Rotaractors has designed

100 mini circuits across seven categories with the annual STEM grants from the college. Now we are awaiting the BMC nod to hold tech workshop for 10 more schools reaching out to over 800 students on a single day,” says Muskan.

So far, five CPR sessions were done with a dummy for TCET students as “we had a couple of deaths on our campus due to epileptic seizures recently. This year, we will be expanding *Project Emergency* for local communities too and AED machine will be used to give the demonstration.” Around 15–20 Rotaractors are involved in the medical demo project. Two general health camps were held so far — one for the nearby slum colony in which 150 children and adults were diagnosed for general illness and specific diseases related to ENT, dental, neuro and heart; and another one for the teaching/non-teaching faculty benefiting 105 patients. “We have a mega plan to install sanitary pad vending machines at eight government schools. The first two vending units (₹5,000



A CPR session in progress.

each) will be done by us through club funds; and for the balance, we will tie up with our parent Rotary and sponsors,” explains Muskan. The six-year-old club has a reliable sponsor in Nusta Bhatkantii, a travel and tour operator in Kandivali.

Doing third year in Electronics and Telecommunications, and having

joined Rotaract two years ago Muskan wants to “continue in Rotaract as long as possible. I want all the Rotaractors to develop self-confidence and achieve their goals in life.” On her Rotary goals, she quips, “I have not given a thought about it at all. I will think about joining a Rotary club only after getting a job.”■

RAC Khopoli facilitates safe Ganesh ‘visarjan’

Team Rotary News

RAC Khopoli, RID 3131, in collaboration with the municipality, RC Khopoli and the Inner Wheel Club of Khopoli, facilitated a safe, environment-friendly immersion of Lord Ganesha in Khopoli, Maharashtra, after the ten-day Ganesh Chaturthi festival.

Artificial ponds were created in three vans which were driven around residential localities and people were encouraged to immerse their Ganesh idols in the water filled in the vans. The club initiated this project in 2020 to address the water pollution issue when hordes of idols were taken out to water bodies in and around the city for immersion. “The idols, made of PoP or clay, with all the floral decorations and artificial paints, will pollute the water bodies and the chemical effluents will harm marine life. So we came up with this idea,” says DRR Akash Chikate. Since then the club has been arranging this *Krutrim Talav* (artificial pond) project every year during the Ganesh festival. The water-filled vans will be



placed at strategic locations in residential colonies on the second, fifth and tenth day of the festival and Rotaractors help the public immerse their idols in the water.

The idols are then taken to a safe spot to be dissolved in an eco-friendly manner, thereby preventing pollution and protecting marine life. This year the project saw immersion of 350 Ganesh idols across Khopoli.■

A unique Vriksha Bandhan in Mansa

Kiran Zehra



We have a lot to learn from trees,” says Sahil Jindal, member of RAC Mansa City Royal, RID 3090. “Did you know trees have means for protecting themselves against most diseases and insects with their bark? Several factors can weaken or destroy trees, like too much or too little water, poor soil, injury to the trunk or roots, and mostly felling.” In 2020 his club “took an oath to protect trees in the neighbourhood.”

To make it more meaningful, interesting, and to emotionally connect to the cause “we decided to celebrate Raksha Bandhan with the trees. This festival celebrates the bond between a brother and sister and the care and





Above: Club members distributing food to daily wage workers.

Left: Rotaractors caring for cows suffering from the lumpy skin disease.

Right: A rakhi for a tree, designed by the club members.



protection they have for each other,” says Jindal. The club members tied *rakhi* to trees and pledged to protect them, calling the *Project Vriksha Bandhan*.”

“We designed special bigger, brighter and biodegradable *rakhis* for trees,” says Vasundra Jaitly, the project chair. The Rotaractors chose their trees and tied *rakhis*, sending out a message to protect the environment. “Some of us hugged the trees and it was a great experience,” she says.

Ten other clubs from RID 3090 too participated in the project. “It does not stop with this. We will check on our trees and ensure it grows well. We will soon come up with an initiative where club

members can adopt a tree each and care for it,” says Jindal.

When the club received information from cattle farmers about their cows suffering from the lumpy skin disease in the past few months, Ankush Garg, IPP of the club, swung into action. “It was his idea to administer the lumpy skin vaccines to the cows, and extend care for the animals affected by this virus. Over 30 cows were treated and now they are recovering,” says Jindal.

Club members pooled in funds to distribute healthy meals to 65 daily wage workers employed at *gaushalas* in Mansa. ■

Rotaractors at Project RED, a two-day cultural fest of RID 3141.



Fundraisers to stem dropouts in RID 3141

V Muthukumar





Below: Rotaractors at Project Arogyam that holds medical camps for the local communities.



A Rotaractor feeds stray dogs.

All the 146 Rotaract clubs in RID 3141 were instructed by DRR Gemin Shah to conduct as many fundraising events as possible in the first six months from July so that “those Rotaractors unable to pay the newly introduced RI dues will get financial assistance from their clubs,” says the DRR. Despite having 14,000 Rotaractors doing high-visibility projects, “we do face retention issues in our clubs which we are addressing now.”

So far, around 16 fundraisers were conducted, and under Project Umeed (hope) a live concert by Hindi pop singer Arjun Kanungo hosted by RAC Mumbai Downtown was a roaring hit among the audience. Over the years, the district Rotaract has got patronage from McDonald’s, Red Bull (energy drink) and Athena School of Management and “we rely on them for

sponsoring our programmes, service projects and stage events,” says Shah who is in Rotaract for eight years now.

Project RED (Rotaract Entertainment Destination), the annual two-day cultural fest of RID 3141 held in December, is the most awaited razzmatazz for Rotaractors. “We get around 3,000 footfalls in those two days in which literary sessions, fine arts, drama, musical shows and skits blend seamlessly to offer a mosaic of entertainment,” he says. Rotaractors get an opportunity to exhibit their skills in music, dance and other performing arts at RED platform.

Project Arogyam

General health camp under Project Arogyam is a signature programme of the district clubs which has earned them goodwill among the communities. “We have done 18 health camps so far this year reaching out to 3,500 people who

were screened for chronic ailments such as BP, blood sugar, obesity and heart problems,” he explains. He has a target to conduct 40 Arogyam camps touching at least 8,000 lives in the current year.

Expressing his gratitude to DG Sandip Agarwalla, the DRR says, “whenever he visits a Rotary event or programme, he interacts with Rotaractors and offers support in whatever way possible.” DG Agarwalla never fails to mention that “Rotaractors are the future of Rotary and an important pillar of strength in Rotary’s growth.”

Shah runs a family business which includes steel manufacturing and trade. His parents — late Chirag Shah and Sejal — are Rotarians and his brother is a former Rotaractor. A member of RAC Mulund Hills, “I want to join my parent Rotary and support all their community projects as an active member.” ■

Bhopal Rotaractors focus on slum welfare

Team Rotary News



The Rotaractors of RAC Technocrats Institute of Technology and Science, an institution-based club in Bhopal chartered by RC East Bhopal, RID 3040, along with RID 3012, distributed sanitary napkins to adolescent girls studying in government schools under the *Project Aaina*. Soni Kumari, district coordinator, RID 3040, the club's joint secretary Aditi Choubey, and club member Aditi Mishra, conducted sessions on menstrual hygiene management for the students. This is an ongoing project being done by the club quarterly.

In another initiative, the Rotaractors organised a clothes

Clockwise from above:

- Grocery kits being distributed to underprivileged families.
- Rotaractors with sanitary napkin packets ready for distribution.
- A sapling plantation programme in progress.
- Children all set to receive clothes.

collection drive to collect used clothes from around their localities. They washed and ironed these clothes, sorted them age-wise and distributed them to 150 children and young adults of less privileged families.

On Oct 24, World Polio Day, the club members, along with the parent





club Rotarians, administered polio drops to 100 children and educated parents in the city's suburbs on the need for continuing giving polio drops to children despite India being declared polio-free.

Over 650 saplings were planted in various localities by the Rotaractors under the district's environment care drive.

Under *Project Prem ki Thali*, the club, in association with RAC Physiotherapy Scholars, RID 3012, provided food to residents in a slum locality in Bhopal. "Our aim was to satisfy as many people as possible and provide the less privileged with good food. We will be repeating this project soon and cover more people,"

says Saurabh Nayak, president of RAC TiT and Science. In October, the club members distributed groceries to 150 families. "We raise funds internally from our members for each welfare project," he adds.

Under *Project Prem ka Dhaga*, the Rotaractors celebrated Raksha Bandhan, tying *rakhis* on the wrists of 150 slum dwellers. "It was an opportunity to put a smile on their faces and gift them a feeling of warmth and love which is what the festival is all about. True to the spirit of the festival, we Rotaractors pledged to support and take care of the underprivileged and in the process, we experience a huge satisfaction," says the president. ■

RID 3190 Rotaractors ride a wave crest

V Muthukumar



DRR Joseph Wilson
(middle row, collared)
with his Rotaractors at a
photo-op session.

This Rotary calendar, 2022–23, will go down as one of the most nostalgic months for Rotaractors at RID 3190 (Bengaluru and nearby towns) as from the next year it will be split into RIDs 3191 and 3192, says DRR Joseph Wilson, a dual member of RC Bangalore. “Hence,

I have the onerous responsibility to preside over the bifurcation of this Rotaract district into two newly chartered RIDs,” he says.

He was finetuning the logistics and making arrangements for the two-day Rotafest (Oct 29–30). “The event, a 30-year-old cultural festival for government school students



With a theme of ‘Ramp for a cause’, Dazzling Dudes and Divas is a fashion show open to the public too and organised to raise funds for holding special events for acid attack survivors and special children.

and Rotaractors, was given a boost by PDG Rajendra Rai (2007–08) during his tenure,” he says. While the first day is meant for school students and children from orphanages, the Rotaractors will hog the limelight on the second day with a display of their skills in various stage crafts and field programmes. At least 850 students will showcase their talent that will include a medley of dance, musicals, skits, stage programmes et al at the Kuvempu Kalakshetra Auditorium, BIT campus. “Each student will get a welcome kit comprising an exam pad, stationery, books and refreshment packs. We will provide lunch to all participants.” On the next day, around 1,300 Rotaractors from 100-plus clubs will come out blazing with their high-octane energy, says Wilson.

Fashion show

With a theme of ‘Ramp for a cause’, Dazzling Dudes and Divas is a fashion show open to the public too and organised to raise funds for holding special events for acid attack survivors and special children. “This ramp walk fundraiser initiated by me will most probably be held at the Phoenix mall in the second week of December.”

DG Jeetendra Aneja greeting DRR Joseph Wilson at the installation ceremony.



The ramp walk will have four categories of contestants — juniors (5–10 yrs), seniors (60–75), special category (wheelchair-bound people) and Rotaract — and they will be judged by a panel of celebrities and film stars. A preliminary event will shortlist the final participants at the Dazzling show for which celebrities have started promoting it through TV commercials and on social media.

Rotacamp is one of the most awaited events as Rotaractors get to enjoy a scenic place, far removed from the urban madness. “Last year around 450 Rotaractors visited Sakleshpur, a hill station,

RID 3190 team flagged off a flood relief truck containing essentials and material (750kg) to Silchar which were distributed by Assam Rotaractors to families worst hit by the recent floods.

on the way to Mangaluru for a four-day stay and rejuvenation. This time, we are planning a visit to Wayanad, Kerala, with at least 300 Rotaractors on Republic Day weekend in January.”

Flood relief contributions

In August, the RID 3190 team flagged off a flood relief truck containing essentials and material (750kg) to Silchar which were distributed by Assam Rotaractors to families worst hit by the recent floods in that state. Due to torrential rains, towns like Channapatna in Ramanagara district saw massive devastation; and “we partnered with Amazon and Donatkart (one-line shopping) to distribute relief material worth ₹1.3 lakh to needy families.” A 15-member team from the district’s Community Service arm joined hands with the local Rotaractors to provide immediate relief to around 125 families.

RI dues challenge

While each club has to pay the annual district due of ₹4,000, irrespective of their member strength, “the new mandatory RI dues is a challenge and we have to explain to Rotaractors the benefit of remain-

ing in Rotaract,” says Wilson. “We explain to our members that the gains of being a Rotaractor far outweigh the amount they pay as both district and RI dues. They are part of a global organisation known for its great work in charity and also offers opportunities for networking and fellowship.” At present, there are 207 clubs having 10,000-plus Rotaractors in RID 3190.

Recalling his experience two years back, Wilson says he had a ringside view of Rotary world when he was a project chair of Kreedha Habba, a mega sports carnival hosted by RC Bangalore for 900 government school students at Malur village. Nine years ago, he made a shift from being an Interactor to Rotaractor, joining RAC Bangalore, and “from then on I learn something new everyday in life in the Rotaract world.” An employee of the IT wing of Cap Gemini (data base), Wilson, 28, “continues to be inspired by opportunities thrown up by Rotaract for people like us.” In the near future, he wants to take up a major responsibility in his parent Rotary club and “thus sharpen my skills which will help me to climb up the Rotary ladder in the years ahead.” ■

Rotaractors on a coastal cleanup drive

Team Rotary News

Rotaract Club of Saveetha School of Management, sponsored by Rotary Club of Chennai Mitra, RID 3232, participated in a coastal cleanup drive at the Marina Beach in Chennai.

“Only when we participate in such activities, we can understand the extent to which we destroy our beaches. People have to be sensitised about caring for our public places. And we Chennaiites must be proud of our

Marina Beach, India’s longest and the world’s longest beach. Instead our mindless littering spoils its beauty,” says Pratap Singh S Bhosale, the club’s public relations officer. Ten out of the club’s 35 members participated in the activity. They interacted with the sanitary workers at the beach and gave them financial aid “as incentive for their work”.

It was indeed heartbreaking for the Rotaract volunteers to hear them

say that all their hardwork would be useless, for, the next morning the place will again be filled with similar garbage “because of the uncaring attitude of people. We spoke with some of the visitors at the beach and gently requested them to always bring a cloth carry bag whenever they visit a park or a beach, to put garbage such as plastic bags or wrappers after eating snacks at these places,” he says. ■

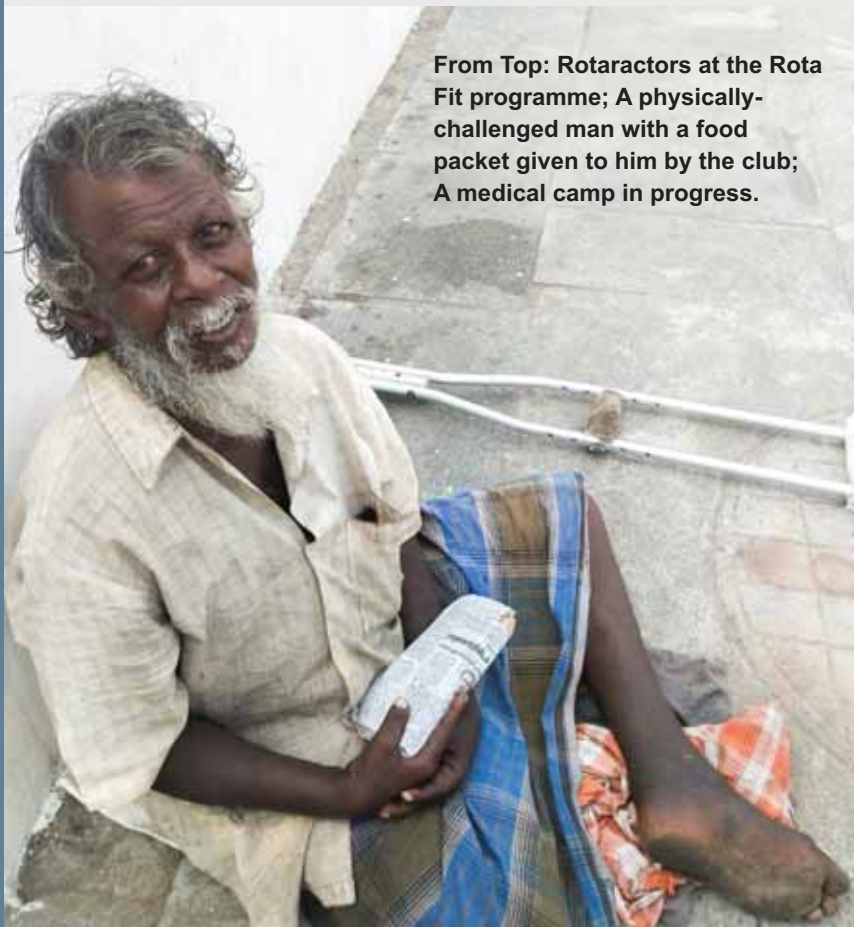
Members of RAC Saveetha School of Management with sanitary workers at the Marina Beach, Chennai.





Rotaractors focus on healthcare in Chennai

Team Rotary News



From Top: Rotaractors at the Rota Fit programme; A physically-challenged man with a food packet given to him by the club; A medical camp in progress.



Rotaract Club of Madras Mount, RID 3232, along with its parent club RC Madras Mount and the District Rotary Community Service team, organised a health check-up camp in Chennai. Around 300 people benefited from the camp. Tamil Nadu health minister Ma Subramanian inaugurated the camp in the presence of MLA and Rtn Ezhillan. Basic parameters such as BP, blood sugar, bone density and haemoglobin tests were done, in addition to diagnosis and treatment for various ailments. Eye check-up was performed by ophthalmologists and spectacles were given to the needy. Medicines and vitamin supplements were also distributed, said club president Ranjith Naresh.

The Rotaractors organised a breast-feeding awareness programme for new mothers with the help of gynaecologists and paediatricians as resource persons who educated them on the right food to be consumed during pregnancy and post-delivery as part of neonatal care. The agenda included talks on jaundice and breast cancer.

On Independence Day the club members gathered at the beach for a 'Rota Fit' programme which comprised Zumba and outdoor games aimed at physical fitness. "The sessions not only inspired us to pursue physical activities, but also helped us strengthen our bond," said the club president.

The Rotaractors learnt to work with worksheets through an online session conducted by Deepika Chopra, an auditor.

The club distributes packed food to elderly street dwellers and sanitary workers in various areas of the city regularly. ■

Project Happy Hours vibes with Rotaractors

V Muthukumaran

A zonal project, *Happy Hours*, has energised the four-year-old RAC PVP Siddhartha, RID 3020, with its president Prem Sai leading his Rotaractors to monthly visits to orphanages and special homes in the neighbourhoods. The Rotaractors are students of Prasad V Potluri Siddhartha Institute of Technology, a reputed engineering college in Vijayawada.

Though the club has 100 members, only 25 had registered at the My Rotary portal and “we have to sort out some issues with the college authorities for the remaining members to get added into the RI website,” says Sai. “During the five visits to special homes, we have donated grocery bags, books and stationery, dress material and other daily essentials worth ₹1.3 lakh. We also joined hands with three more clubs for two such visits to orphanages.” One of the regular features of this club is distribution of food and cloth on alternate months. Around 6–8 teams, having a dozen member each, will fan out to the nook and corner of the town to distribute freshly-packed food and clothing for homeless, destitute and poor families.

District summit

Prem Sai is keen to host a two-day district summit for Rotaract club



Rotaractors of RAC PVP Siddhartha with the inmates of an orphanage during Project Happy Hours.

presidents from RID 3020 with the aim to “interact with Rotaract leaders and share the best practices. We are yet to get permission from DRR Prathyusha Varma and our parent Rotary, RC Vijayawada, for organising this Rotaract conclave, but if everything goes as planned, we will stage it either in the last week of January or first week of February,” he explains. The Rotaract meet will be held either in Vizag or Kakinada with the support of RAC Young Leaders. With 30 Rotaract clubs and around 700 Rotaractors in the district, the Rotaract summit, still in the drawing board, will offer opportunities to forge partnerships and learn from the experience of other clubs in executing service projects, he says.

On the newly introduced RI dues for Rotaractors, Sai is optimistic that all the members will pay the amount (\$5 for institute-based clubs) as “there is no opposition from them so far.”

Mentorship

Rotaractors are invited to the weekly meetings of RC Vijayawada and “we are given opportunity to announce our projects and also seek financial and other support from Rotarians to conduct events and programmes,” he says. Rotaract Advisory Committee chair R Rama Rao acts as a bridge between the Rotary club and Rotaractors, and “his doors are always open to us to seek guidance and support for our activities,” says Sai.

Also, RC Vijayawada president Dr Nagaraju Kaja welcomes “our initiatives and assures help and readiness to provide resources for our programmes.” Doing third year B Tech (Mechanical), Prem Sai, 20, wants to do Masters in Canada, a four-year programme, and after that “I will return and become a Rotarian, preferably in my parent Rotary,” he signs off. ■



Rotaractors with children after distributing stationery kits to them.

A greening drive at Dahisar Coast

Team Rotary News

To commemorate Independence Day, RAC Dahisar Coast, RID 3141, in association with their parent club, RC Mumbai Dahisar, organised a tree plantation drive across

Dahisar, Mumbai. The Rotaractors planted saplings and organised rallies to spread the message.

In another initiative, the Rotaractors visited Little Angels Ashram, an orphanage

in Malad, and spent the day with the children. They taught them to differentiate between good and bad touch and self-defence techniques, and talked to them about moral values and nutrition. The Rotaractors distributed pouches with stationery items to the children.

The club with 56 Rotaractors is community-based, with a mix of students and professionals. “We come up with welfare projects when the student-Rotaractors do not have exams. We raise funds from friends and family for meeting the expenses for projects,” says club secretary Harsh Kumawat. ■



Rotaractors demonstrate self-defence techniques at the Little Angels Ashram in Mumbai.

RAC Mumbai Royales works for children/women's welfare

Jaishree



The Rotaractors of RAC Mumbai Royales, RID 3141, through Project Prerana, organised books and clothes drive for a fortnight. “We set up donation centres in six strategic spots from Khar to Bhayander on the western line, and Vashi to Nerul, and our members actively volunteered in collecting and sorting the donated items,” says club president Manavika Agarwal. The collected material were given to the Chaiim Foundation, an NGO rehabilitating survivors of human trafficking.

Hygiene kits were distributed to the 24 girls housed at the Foundation with help from the SFC Foundation, another NGO. The Rotaractors visited the Chaiim Foundation and interacted with

the girls there. They provided groceries to last a month to the Foundation.

The club members observed World Day against Trafficking in Persons (July 30) on various social media platforms to create awareness about the grave issue among the public.

Through Project Swasthya, the club organised a hepatitis awareness programme for the tribal population of Navapada village in Nandurbar district near Mumbai. “The remote village does not feature in the government schedule for vaccinations and the people are mostly illiterate, says Manavika. The Rotaractors visited the village along with Dr Reshma Chourasia, a general physician who gave a lecture on Hepatitis and its symptoms to the

villagers and ways to prevent it. Dr Reshma screened the children for hand, foot and mouth disease.

The club members engaged the tribal children with several games and fun activities, and gifted them story books.

In a recent initiative the club organised a seminar on financial literacy to educate the destitute women at a women’s shelter. “We highlighted to them the various points of the PM’s Jan Dhan Yojana and other financial services such as bank accounts, remittances, credit, insurance and pensions.

A wealth management seminar organised by the club for its members was well received and beneficial to them. ■

In Brief



Retailer donates big to fight climate change

Yvon Chouinard, an American retailer and

founder of clothing brand Patagonia, has donated the entire \$3 billion of his apparel company's valuation to fight climate change. Recently the brand donated \$10 million it has saved in corporate tax cuts to the same cause.



Run for WWF

Robert Pope, a British marathoner and a Guinness Record holder for the fastest runner in the 2018 London Marathon in two hours and 36 minutes, dressed as Forrest Gump (movie character), recently ran a

distance equivalent to the width of Ireland in less than 24 hours to raise funds for the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF).



Cleaning the Pacific

The Ocean Clean-up, a non-profit, has removed over 100 tonnes of plastic from the Pacific Ocean using its prototype cleaning system called System 02. It used over 45 extractions to sweep an area of 3,000 sqkm.



A blood test to detect 50 types of cancer

Grail, an American biotechnology company, has developed a simple blood test called the Galleri Test to detect more than 50 types of cancer through a blood sample by looking in the DNA for cancer cells that shed into the bloodstream.



Price tag on carbon emissions

The Indian government has passed a conservation bill in the Lok Sabha making it easier to put a price on carbon emissions. While the bill encourages the use of non-fossil fuel it also includes penalties for corporations who aren't using an adequate amount of renewable energy sources to power their operations.

Compiled by Kiran Zehra; Designed by Krishnaprathesh S



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