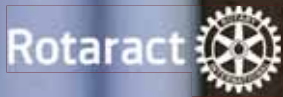


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Editor's Note



Stand up, speak out

As we go through school, college, attending religious sermons according to our faith, we are taught to be good and courteous, indulge in appropriate behaviour, and so on. In short, we are trained to conform... to societal norms. Hence the article titled *A club for the Cancelled* in *The New Yorker* magazine made me sit up. Here, every month, over 200 media professionals, academia, and other intellectuals are invited in New York to what is called the Gathering of Thought Criminals! The only qualifying factor — you have to be socially ostracised, broken rules, lost a job, friends, etc for holding unpopular opinions. Some people on the guest list are even notorious: élite professors who have broken university rules, journalists who have made a name for themselves amid public backlash, or nobodies who have defied societal norms.

Initiated by Pamela Paresky, a PhD from the University of Chicago, and lovingly referred to as the ‘Mother hen of the cancelled’ the thought

criminals meet once a month and talk about how many of them are misfits. One attendee ranted about how left-leaning New York has become and almost “every conversation is about how capitalism is evil or how America is the most racist, sexist, homophobic country in the world.”

It’s a long article which talks about “political homelessness” and other issues which set me wondering about how the place for dissent and nonconformist views is shrinking in our world, including our own country. But imagine how dull and boring our lives will become if everybody falls in line, obeys all the rules, because people in authority say so; be it in educational institutions, workplace, or wherever. If that happens, how will new and different thinking, innovations, disruptive businesses — such as Airbnb or Uber — come in? If the system, your organisation, your loved ones, or government, lulls or steers people towards a state of mind where you accept everything without questioning, rejecting or doubting, then what is left of the human mind?

Whether at the community level or a personal level, if we conform to accepted norms all the time, fall in line always, both at the workplace and the home, surely something within us shrivels up, and you diminish as an individual, worst of all, in your own eyes. Very often there is merit in standing up, speaking out, standing apart... it requires courage, but is worth it in the long run. And who is better qualified to do this... dissent, rebel, question, take risks and innovate, than the young? Bill Gates was barely 20 when he founded Microsoft and Larry Page and Sergey Brin 23 when they set up Google.



Rasheeda Bhagat

Sewing machines & more to 100 women in Pune

V Muthukumaran

Empowering rural women in and around Pune district of Maharashtra by leveraging the crowdfunding platform *Milaap* has boosted the morale of Rotaractors of 122 Rotaract clubs of RID 3131 who have jointly executed this three-phase, time-bound project.

Now, DRR Akash Chikate is planning to further expand *Project Dhaaga* (thread) to the next set of beneficiaries with the sale proceeds of cotton *kurtas* and eco-friendly bags made by 100 rural women.

It all started with Rotaractors creating an India Book of Records for “raising maximum money online in 24 hours for charity





Above: DRR Akash Chikate offers tea to an elderly woman.

Left: Rotaractors sell tea to mobilise funds for *Project Dhaaga*.

Below : DRR Akash Chikate receives the certificate from the India Book of Records official for raising the maximum money online in 24 hours for charity in the presence of PDG Prashant Deshmukh and district Rotaractors.

purpose' in July 9–10 last year. "An adjudicator came to Pune and gave the record title consisting of a gold medal and citation to us in the presence of PDG Prashant Deshmukh and district Rotaractors on July 31," recalls Chikate. The amount of ₹6 lakh raised through crowdsourcing was used to purchase 100 sewing machines. Rotaractors formed teams to sell tea, conducted cake-baking workshop, took up awareness drives to promote the event, held dance workshops, sold Rotaract merchandise, homemade chocolates and made gift hampers to mobilise donations for the 24-hour crowdfunding platform. "Each club was given a target of ₹10,000 and some of them achieved the target with multiple events and awareness, promotional drives."

"We identified 100 women who had undergone basic training in sewing and needlework, but could not use their skills for want of tailoring machines. *Project*





Women beneficiaries of *Project Dhaaga*.

Dhaaga addressed their need by donating 100 tailoring machines to them,” he explains. The project also aimed to strengthen the self-help groups, known as *bachat gats*, in Pune with the support of Rotarians.

After raising money and identifying the beneficiaries in the first phase, “we shifted gear to the second phase where advanced training was given to them for three months (Nov-Jan) with the support of panchayat officials of Shel Pimpalgaon village in Khed taluk near Pune.” Before their training started in November, DRR Chikate

donated the tailoring machines to the women in the presence of DG Anil Parmar, Rtns Meera Bharvirkar, Santosh Kamble and Anup Dandge, “who have all contributed to the success of the project.”

Raw material like fabrics and other accessories were also given to the women to create *kurtas*; “and the leftover cotton fabrics after production were used for making cotton bags. Now we are into the third phase during which we have already procured 1,000 *kurtas* (10 *kurtas* for a machine) and will begin our sales from July 25,” says Chikate.

World Rotaract chair PDG Ravi Vadlamani expressed happiness over the “success of our crowdfunding platform and said this is the way forward for the Rotaractors to take up large impactful projects,”

While a part of the sale proceeds will go to the beneficiaries to enhance their livelihood, “the other half will go to buying another set of 100 tailoring machines to reach out to more women in rural Maharashtra.” During the Rotaract Assembly on the sidelines of Rotary zone institute in Vizag, World Rotaract chair PDG Ravi Vadlamani expressed happiness over the “success of our crowdfunding platform and said this is the way forward for the Rotaractors to take up large impactful projects,” recalls Chikate. ■



DG Anil Parmar (2022–23) at the distribution of sewing machines to rural women at Shel Pimpalgaon village. Also seen is DRR Akash Chikate.

RAC Dharmanagar spreads joy; celebrates tradition

Team Rotary News

Sharing its significance, the cultural heritage it represents and the artistry behind each *diya* (terracotta lamp) at their stall set up in the market of Dharmanagar, Tripura, the members of RAC Dharmanagar, RID 3240, engaged in conversation with potential buyers. Under *Project Umeed Ki Diya* (lamps of hope) “we hoped to raise funds to support our service projects and promote the Rotary/Rotaract brand,” says Sayantan Debroy, the project chair.

The highlight of the stall was the Rotary and Rotaract banners. “Many visitors already knew about our organisation. Some associated us with polio, we had a huge crowd who stood and heard our club members talk about Rotary and Rotaract. This was a wonderful PR opportunity for us,” he says.

Displayed in an array of sizes and designs, the *diyas* were quickly sold off. The painting designs were inspired by the local handloom art, namely *Risa* and *Riha*, showcasing motifs inspired by mythology and nature.

The success of *Umeed Ki Diya* provided a solid foundation for the club to carry out its fellowship project called *Tales of 2k22*. Debroy says the get together celebrated the achievements of the club so far and “transported us back to the magical moments and experiences from 2022 and we all had a great time.” ■



Rotaractors at a fellowship event.



Club members interact with visitors at the stall.



The colourful hand-painted terracotta lamps.

Making children smile

Kiran Zehra



Excitement filled the air inside an open auditorium in Shri Vaishnav Vidyapeeth Vishwavidyalaya (SVVV), Indore, as children from the slums eagerly ran around the chairs in a game of musical chairs. Members of RAC SVVV, RID 3040, swiftly scooped up the little ones who couldn't

keep pace, ensuring they too could participate in the lively game.

This heartwarming scene unfolded as part of the *Nanhi Muskaan* initiative, an endeavour by RAC SVVV “to provide them with an opportunity to escape the confines of their daily struggles and experience joy. Some of these kids haven't played these games ever before. Their innocent smiles just made

our day,” says Khushi Srivastava, president of the club.

This initiative was part of the club's flagship project, *Spreading Smiles*, which focuses on making a positive impact on the lives of underprivileged children. To raise funds for *Nanhi Muskaan*, the club organised a unique event called *Bachpan* (childhood), inviting university students to participate in traditional Indian games like





hopscotch, *gilli danda* and dumb charades. Khushi explains that “we wanted more college students to participate in the games. So we kept the entry fee at a nominal rate of ₹20.”

The club has been actively involved in improving the living conditions of slum children in Indore by providing essential supplies such as food, clothes and toys. However, this time, their intention was “not just to offer charity but also to make the children feel valued and important. We wanted them to know that they matter to us and provide them with new experiences,” says Khushi.



Above: Club members with the beneficiaries.

Left: Club president Khushi Srivastava teaching a girl to sketch.



Club member helps a child put his hand-print on canvas.

During the event, the slum children were introduced to sketching and drawing, allowing them to explore their artistic talent. They were also invited to participate in various fun games. The day continued with some “rocking dance performances by the children, showcasing their talent and captivating our hearts.”

Witnessing their ability to find happiness in the simplest of moments, despite their lack of privileges, taught us a valuable lesson.

One of the most memorable moments of the event was when the children’s handprints were taken “as a symbol of precious memories. We painted their hands and imprinted them on a white poster cloth, which will be part of the club’s treasure trove,” smiles the club president.

To give the children an experience they had never had before, a live musical performance was organised exclusively for them. “They swayed and danced without any inhibition and we couldn’t stop ourselves

from joining them,” The event culminated with a cake-cutting ceremony, followed by the distribution of gifts from the members of RAC SVVV.

Recalling the smiles on the children’s faces, Khushi says “witnessing their ability to find happiness in the simplest of moments, despite their lack of privileges, taught us a valuable lesson. Those interactions felt like a warm embrace from an extended family. These memories will forever hold a special place in our hearts.” ■

Members of RAC Belgaum Yuva Darpan with Interactors after a cleanliness drive as part of World Interact Week celebrations.



Belgaum gets a green cover

Jaishree



More than 3,000 saplings/plants were planted during the last Rotary year in various parts of Belgaum city in Karnataka, thanks to Rotaractors of RAC Belgaum Yuva Darpan, RID 3170. “We enjoyed this environment project and all of us were deeply involved in the greening drive

right from the start,” says club president Prathamesh Joshi. The club members participated in the project on 21 Sundays of the year, and helped with cleaning the fields, sowing the seeds or planting the saplings, enriching the soil with nutrients and consistent maintenance of each plant/sapling. “We have planted several flower/fruit bearing trees in residential localities.

The locals also zealously participated in the project,” he says.

This project, he adds, was a learning experience. “We learnt the nuances of gardening — digging the soil, tilling it regularly and giving the right amount of water for the plants.” Every Sunday the Rotaractors would wake up at 5am, and meet up at a common spot and break out into teams.

“While one group will go to plant new saplings in a chosen locality, the other group will visit the places where we have planted the seeds/saplings for nurturing them. We have built a good rapport with the residents. Nearly 1,600 of them joined us in the greening drive, inspired by our dedication.” Green Saviours, an NGO, partnered with the club for the project.

In another initiative, the club, in association with RSAMDIO and RID 3203, has distributed sanitary napkins to 650 adolescent girls and women residing in the slums in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. “Rotaract clubs would have to place an order with us indicating the number of pads they needed and we would send it to them free of cost for distribution in their region,” says Namitha Rajput, club secretary.

The inter-district project has helped in establishing a bond between the two



A Rotaractor gives a sanitary napkin packet to a woman.



Right: Rotaractors with the elderly inmates of the old age home after providing the home with monthly essentials.



Rotaractors share a warm moment with the senior citizens at the Shantai Vrudashram.

Left: DG Venkatesh Deshpande, along with Rotaractors and Rotarians, after distributing dustbins at a slum colony.



districts, “especially with RACs NGM College and Pollachi Green Paradise in RID 3203,” says Joshi. To help develop interest and a sense of ownership, three new Rotaractors were assigned the job of coordinating with other clubs for the project and spreading the word about the initiative among people.

The club executed three heart-warming activities on Grandparents’ Day, World Interact Week and on Diwali at the Shantai Vrudashram, an old age home with which the club is associated with since its charter three years ago.

A team of Rotaractors, armed with gifts, fruits and vegetables, visited the home. They organised a health check-up and a meditation session for the elderly residents. “We spent the entire day with them, playing games and listening to their words of wisdom and anecdotes from their past. We sang and danced with them. It was a fun day well spent,” says Namitha.

During the Interact Week, the Rotaractors, along with Rotarians

Blankets being distributed to people.



of their parent Rotary, RC Belgaum Darpan, took the Interactors to the old age home. “Together we cleaned the ashram and entertained the inmates. Then we organised competitions for

Interactors and pepped them up to participate in community service projects in a smaller scale,” she explains.

During Diwali, “we spent the evening with the senior citizens at the home. We lit up the home with 150 *diyas*, recited bhajans with them, performed *aarti* and burst crackers with them. It was a very special day for all us,” she says. These special projects attracted three new members to the club last year.

In a joint project with RAC Belgaum Darpan, RAC Belgaum Yuva Darpan installed 80-litre dustbins in 14 locations at the Shreenagar Slum Colony in the city. “We interacted with the residents and explained to them the need for segregating wet and dry waste, and demonstrated the procedure. We reiterated to them to keep their surroundings clean,” says Joshi.

The two clubs came together for another service activity — to distribute blankets to over 360 less

privileged people including street and slum dwellers in various parts of Belgaum.

Pawtography was a fundraiser that helped to provide dog food and reflective neck belts for the canines. The event was done in collaboration with the Stray Care Foundation and Waggin Style. “We bought food to feed around 60 dogs and adorned the necks of 20 dogs with reflective belts to protect them from speeding vehicles.” The event called for pet owners to share fancy photographs of their dog after an entry fee was collected for participation.

The club with a membership strength of 55 Rotaractors mobilises the funds for most of its service activities in-house with the help of annual dues of ₹1,500 a member. “We have executed 55 community projects last year and each one had been meaningful and beneficial to the people,” says club president Joshi. ■

More than 3,000 saplings/
plants were planted in
various parts of Belgaum.

Nearly 1,600 residents joined
us in the greening drive,
inspired by our dedication.

Prathamesh Joshi
president
RAC Belgaum Yuva Darpan

Food, stationery distributed at a tribal village

V Muthukumaran

It was a great learning experience for Rotaractors of RAC Madras Millennia, RID 3232, as they spent an entire day at Oana Malai, a tribal hamlet, at Uthiramerur taluk of Kancheepuram district, Tamil Nadu, engaging the families and distributing food packets, stationery items and notebooks to around 70 children. There are around 200 families living in this village with very little basic amenities, says S Piyush, club president. They joined hands with Geo Foundation, an NGO, to implement *Project Dynasty*, that reached out to tribal children and urged them to excel in their education as “that was the only way to improve their living status,” he says.

The two-year-old community club has 25 members, 90 per cent of them students. On their signature *Project Vidya* (knowledge), he says they have sponsored the annual school fees of five girls studying in Classes 1–5 at government schools. Last year, they paid the fees of two girl children from KG and Class 1. Recently, the club co-hosted three cultural events, fundraisers for Rotaract projects, which got a tremendous response from Rotaractors and college students. While *Fizz* with 14 partner clubs raised funds for renovating toilet blocks and buildings at government schools, another cultural fest *Sunera* organised with seven other clubs mobilised funds for installing sanitary vending and disposal machines at two government higher secondary schools; and for the last one, *Flare*, they joined with 12 other Rotaract



Food being distributed at a tribal village.

clubs which led to setting up of a smart classroom at a government school. “It was a modern digital class with Wi-Fi, digital boards, projector, laptops and computers,” he says.

All the three Rotaract festivals celebrated the youth, their energy and passion with a host of events like face painting, ramp walk, mimicry, 60 Seconds Frame, Creo and a plethora of stage performances. “We were happy to be a partner in hosting the cultural festivals in which thousands of college students displayed their versatile skills,” recalls Piyush. Thanking their parent Rotary, RC Chennai Hallmark,

he says, “without their mentorship and timely help in the form of resources and grants, it would not have been possible for us to do our service projects.”

An employee at Sutherland Global Services, a BPO company, Piyush says, “being a Rotaractor over the last four years helped me hone my skills in public speaking.” He is planning to become a member of RC Chennai Hallmark, and “as a Rotarian I will focus on designing school projects and take up initiatives like distribution of daily essentials like food and clothing to the underprivileged,” he says. Godspeed to him. ■



**Rotaract
clubs come
together to
create
world's
largest
green
ribbon**

Kiran Zehra



Rotaractors receive the Asia Pacific Records for forming the world's largest green ribbon, stretching across a massive area of 98,294 sqft to promote mental health awareness.

Under the blazing sun, 1,591 participants stood strong, holding a vibrant green fabric in their hands. Their mission? To form the world's largest green ribbon, stretching across a massive area of 98,294 sqft. This inspiring initiative aimed to raise awareness about mental health and was made possible through the joint efforts of RACs Bhubaneswar Royal and Byasabhoomi Jajpur Road, RID 3262.

This remarkable achievement surpassed the previous Asia Pacific Records held by Spain, covering an area of 60,500 sqft and in terms of participants exceeded RID 3000 which had 1033 participants. "More than just a record-breaking feat, this event showcased the indomitable spirit and limitless potential of Rotaract," says DRR Abhilash Boitai.

The journey leading up to the creation of the world's largest

green ribbon involved "meticulous planning, resource gathering and collaboration. Every step, from securing a suitable location to engaging volunteers and forming the ribbon itself, was executed with great care. Despite facing scorching temperature and logistical challenges, Rotaractors successfully organised this project, prioritising the safety and comfort of all participants," he adds.

Right from the start, this project received tremendous support from local schools. Boitai, who has been actively involved in mental health projects in his district, urged Rotaractors to speak about the importance of mental health awareness in their communities, workplace and homes. As part of the awareness campaign, Rotaractors held placards offering free hugs, encouraging conversations, and sharing positive affirmations such as 'This too shall pass'. "The goal

was to draw attention to the silent epidemic of addiction, crime, and the tragic loss of life resulting from a lack of awareness and attention to mental health," says Durdana Begum, the project coordinator, and adds that "the impact of the previous mental health awareness programmes conducted in schools and colleges motivated students to show their overwhelming support."

Boitai further emphasised that "the significance of our achievement lies not solely in the physical dimensions of the green ribbon but in the message it conveys. By creating a new record, the conversation surrounding mental health will gain momentum, spreading understanding and empathy. This remarkable feat by the Rotaract clubs serves as an inspiration for everyone to prioritise mental health and work together to create positive change in the world." ■

Rotaractors design white canes for the blind

Jaishree

The Rotaractors of RAC PSCMR College of Engineering Technology, RID 3020, designed and donated white canes to four blind people. “The canes can sense obstacles on the path and alert the user. It has an inbuilt SOS button

that, when pressed, can inform the next of kin the whereabouts of the user in case he/she loses the way. The inbuilt GPS can easily help them track the blind person,” says club president J Nareshkumar. Enthused with the success of their experiment, the members are all set



Rotaractors of RAC PSCMR College of Engineering Technology ready to serve food for the elderly at an old age home.



Above from left: Delivering fruits and vegetables to the old age home and an orphanage; Children at the orphanage enjoying the meals served by the Rotaractors.

Right: Rotaractors guide a blind person use a white cane designed by them.



to design more such state-of-the-art assistive devices this year under the leadership of Rtr Saketh.

The university-based club at Vijayawada, with 129 members, boasts of the highest Rotaract membership in the district and was sponsored by RC Vijayawada Midtown. Nareshkumar, having completed his graduation this year, is all set to move out of this club this year. He, along with

35 friends, college and school mates, are ready to become charter members of a community-based Rotaract club sponsored by the parent Rotary. “We are awaiting the charter presentation, and our new Rotaract club will, in turn, soon be

chartering another Rotaract club,” he says. He is presently serving as a zonal Rotaract representative for 2023–24.

The club is bonding with international Rotaract clubs through *Project 67*. “We want to



Left from top: Eco-friendly Ganesh idols being distributed at a school; A Rotaractor feeds a cow at an animal shelter.



reach out to 6 continents and connect with them over Rotary's 7 areas of focus; hence '67'," explains Nareshkumar. Under this project, the club reached out to RAC Piarco, Trinidad, and conducted a *Peace Walk* there. "The participants held banners of both our clubs at the peace walk and later, over an online platform, we mutually exchanged information about our service projects being executed in our lands," explains Nareshkumar. The club is in touch with a Rotaract club in Europe and this time the area of focus is promoting basic literacy and

education. "We collected and sent them funds to purchase books and stationery to be donated to schoolchildren there."

There are 50 'grandparents' and 60 little children in both the homes. All of us have grown fond of them now.

J Nareshkumar
 president, RAC PSCMR College
 of Engineering Technology

All the members of the club have been regular visitors to an old age home and an orphanage during the last Rotary year. They would visit the two institutions every month to entertain the inmates and provide them with essential items such as toiletries, groceries and medicines, fruits and vegetables. "There are 50 'grandparents' and 60 little children in both the homes. All of us have grown fond of them now," smiles the club president. The members divide themselves into teams and take turns to visit the homes. On festivals and special days, they prepare food at a Rotaractor's home and serve it to the children and the elderly.

"All of us pitch in with the funds for this project," he says and recalls a fundraiser cricket tournament played at Guntur. It had a participation of 120 members. "Each of us contributed ₹700 for the 9-day tournament. It was a fun event that strengthened our bond, and we managed to raise ₹40,000 through sponsors."

The members visited a primary school and organised games for the children. The Rotaractors also visit a *goshala* in Vijayawada and donate fruits and vegetables to feed the animals housed there. On Ganesh Chaturthi, they distributed 1,500 clay Ganesh idols to the people in the slums to enable them to celebrate the festival in an eco-friendly manner. ■

Rotaractors educate public on the Constitution

V Muthukumaran

With the aim to educate the public on their fundamental rights, duties and basic Constitution laws of the country, Rotaractors of RAC AM Jain College Shift-II, RID 3232, distributed pamphlets to 100-plus residents living on the suburbs of Chennai. “Leaflets were given to shopkeepers, housewives, elders, roadside workers and pedestrians at Meenambakkam, a city suburb, and its neighbourhood,” says Vishnu Varthan, club secretary.

A team of 10 Rotaractors explained to those receiving the pamphlets their fundamental rights, and “how to respond to atrocious behaviour in



Rotaractors educate a housewife on her fundamental rights while distributing the dos and don'ts leaflets.



Pamphlets on the tenets of the Indian Constitution being distributed at a school.

public space like manhandling, harassment, extortion, brawl, scuffle and eve-teasing,” he says. The club members visited two government higher secondary schools in Meenambakkam and conducted seminars on menstrual management and hygiene for over 100 girl students. The nine-year-old club has 30 members drawn from the arts and science streams at the UG level in AM Jain College. “Our membership remains static at around 25–30 through the year,” he says.

Every year, they hold *Kolu Galatta* during Navaratri festival at the Rotary Central Margaret Sidney Hospital, Nanganallur, in partnership with the Rotaract Club of Chennai Central. “We install a grand *kolu* on the hospital premises as we want to spread the message of Navaratri among the residents and patients. We visit the *kolu* site on all the nine days, make some aesthetic changes to the arrangements, hold a small puja and distribute *prasadam* to all,” explains Varthan. Also, with the

Navarati *kolu*, “the public, hospital staff, patients and their attendants are given a peek into the richness of Indian culture and heritage in the course of our daily ritual,” he says.

The Rotaractors meet twice a month, one formal and the other an informal one, to discuss about club activities. “We are guided in our projects and community initiatives by our parent Rotary, RC Madras Central, who also provide us funds, if required, to implement them,” says Varthan who is doing final year, BSc (Computer Science). “Over the last two years as a Rotaractor, I learnt what we should not do to become successful both in personal and work life. In a way, Rotaract has shaped my thought process, hence I want to continue as Rotaractor for another three years.”

Varthan has plans to become a Rotarian only “after reaching financial stability in his life for which I have to work hard for another 4–5 years,” he says. ■

Empowering slum dwellers through education

Kiran Zehra

In an effort to uplift the slum dwellers of Kapurthala's Golden Avenue, a one-day workshop was organised by RAC Kapurthala Heritage, RID 3070, to teach them to write their names and sign their own

names. Initially met with reluctance, the organisers had an ingenious strategy up their sleeves. "We anticipated the hesitations and spread the word that participating women would receive sanitary napkins. In no time, we had over 50 enthusiastic

female participants," reveals Himpal Singh, the club president. She sees this as a learning experience for the Rotaractors, equipping them to handle unexpected challenges in their academic pursuits, careers and business ventures.

Club members distribute sanitary napkins to women living in the slums.



Named *Nayi Soch Nayi Udaan* (new outlook, new flight), this educational project aimed to empower adults and children residing in slum areas by equipping them with the ability to write their names in Hindi. “We emphasised the significance of individuality by encouraging the use of initials instead of thumb impressions,” explains Himpal.

The literacy programme encountered its fair share of obstacles. Educational resources such as books, stationery, and teaching aids were scarce in the slum area. However, the club dedicated its funds to ensuring the provision of adequate material.

A few community members, questioning the value and purpose of the programme. Undeterred, Himpal and her team persistently conveyed the importance of a signature. “We educated them that a thumb impression is often associated with illiteracy while learning to sign their own name would instil a sense of inclusion in society. We stressed that having something in



Above and below: Club members help slum dwellers to create their own signature.



common, such as being able to sign our names, can bridge gaps,” shares Himpal. The Rotaractors also highlighted the power of a signature in validating, authenticating, and establishing personal connections to documents or agreements bearing their names.

While the impact of this literacy programme in “enhancing access to education and empowering disadvantaged communities has been significant, its long-term success relies on support from regional Rotary and Rotaract clubs. Our clubs can contribute by mobilising resources, organising training initiatives, fostering community engagement, and nurturing partnerships. Together, we can create a more conducive learning environment for future programmes,” asserts Himpal, emphasising the need for a collaborative approach.

Keeping their promise, the Rotaractors distributed packets of sanitary napkins to the female members of the slum area. Complementing this, they conducted awareness sessions on menstrual hygiene, underlining the importance of proper care and promoting a healthier lifestyle. ■

High-visibility Rotaract projects in Palanpur

V Muthukumaran

One of the oldest Rotaract clubs in RID 3054, RAC Palanpur, chartered on Jan 21, 1978, takes pride in calling itself “the youth wing of Rotary Club of Palanpur, for, we associate ourselves closely with their service projects. We also conduct programmes to foster bonding among our members through the year,” says its club president Navin Suthar. The club chalks out some exciting events like trekking, fellowship evenings and weekly getaways for its members to bond and know each other better.

It was a mix of fun, adventure, fellowship and bonding for the 55 Rotaractors, some from other clubs, at the two-day trekking to Mount Abu in Rajasthan under *Project Shikhar 4.0*. “We camped at the scenic Aarna Wild that offers a panoramic view of the hill station. And we played adventure games like loop bridge, ziplining; hiked to the hill crest, held campfire, enjoyed the solo performances and stayed at Alpine tents,” recalls Suthar.

In a noteworthy gesture, over 130 tribal students at two government primary schools in Zumfali and Shivam villages were given sweaters and snacks under district project *Vastradan* in a two-day event. To mark Children’s Day, around 900 students from five government primary schools were given delicious lunch. “School principals and teachers were happy that we could provide a grand treat to children as most of them are from impoverished families,” he says.

Rotaractors formed teams, spread out to busy highways, approach roads and road junctions to paste reflectors and radium stickers on tractor trailers,



Children of a tribal primary school were given sweaters under *Project Vastradan*.

camel carts and other farm vehicles which face the risk of accident during night as they are not visible to the incoming, speedy commercial vehicles. “We received a good response from farmers and vehicle owners who make regular trips to the local market to sell their produce, and we got a chance to explain about Rotary to rural people,” recalls Suthar.

Under *Project Mission Life*, an official from the Gujarat Cleaner Production Centre gave a lecture on environmental issues, along with a poster presentation, for students at three primary schools from Moriya, Delwada and Vadhna villages near Palanpur. “Students and teachers took a pledge to save the environment. School bags, stationery kits and handbooks were distributed to 250 students at the end of the lecture,” says Suthar.

At the inter-district cricket tournament for the blind conducted by

their parent Rotary, “we volunteered to make the visually-impaired players comfortable at the GD Modi Arts College, Palanpur. Four teams competed and the one from Palanpur emerged winner to bag the trophy and a cheque for ₹5,000.”

Piles fissure camp

Dr Alamdar Chaudhary, proctologist from Relief Hospital, examined 100 children and adults suffering from piles disorder at a five-day medical camp. “While 75 patients were given medicines, another 25 were chosen for surgery at the hospital. This camp was a boon for the poor people who can’t afford hefty fees charged at private clinics,” he explains.

In January, the club celebrated its 45th charter year at the Rotary Hall with special children from the Lions Divyang Children’s Training and Education Centre. “Over 20 blind children



DGE Mehul Rathod, RID 3055 (centre), DGN Mohan Prashar and DGND Nigam Chaudhary at the inauguration of water booth at the Samarpan Hospital.



Students of three primary schools with their school bags under *Project Mission Life*.

gave a stage performance. We distributed gifts and a sumptuous lunch was provided to all the children.” Raksha Bandhan was celebrated with children at the Divyang Training Centre, Dhalwas.

Permanent projects

A water booth (₹1 lakh) sponsored by Durga Trade Company was set up near Samarpan Hospital, a busy locality, to provide relief from summer heat to the public. It was inaugurated by DGE Mehul Rathod, RID 3055, DGN Mohan Parashar and DGND Nigam Chaudhary.

“This will be functioning for 3–4 months till the summer lasts,” he says. The club is setting up water booth for many years now during summer.

Another permanent project is offering breakfast to thousands of pilgrims visiting Goddess Ambaji during *Bhadarvi Poonam* in September each year. “We also provide medicines to the elderly and refreshments as many visit the temple from across the country throughout this auspicious time,” says Navin Suthar. From July, work on renovating the Rotaract edifice, a signage, at the centre of Palanpur will commence, thanks to Duke Pipes

which had donated ₹1.5 lakh for the project.

With 27 members in all, the club meets every Saturday at the Rotary Hall for brainstorming and to plan ahead. “Our focus is also on membership drive for which we have released a social media poster, aimed at the youth and professionals, detailing the benefits of being a Rotaractor,” explains Suthar, an architect and a Rotaractor for seven years. “I will be joining my parent Rotary after a year or so, as at present, we are busy planning for district and global-level Rotaract events in the near future,” he adds. ■

Little deeds of kindness

Jaishree

Here is a club that understood the power of small gestures to create a positive impact in the community. RAC Coimbatore CACIL, RID 3201, believes in the extraordinary power of ordinary actions. Through their efforts, sanitary pads brought dignity, movie screenings brought smiles, and haircuts brought a glimmer of hope to those living on the streets. “No act of service is too small or insignificant for us. That’s why our club is named CACIL — Care And Affection Crossing Infinite Limit,” says club president Farhan.

Through *Project Thuimai*, the club focused on menstrual hygiene in adolescent schoolchildren. Organic sanitary pad dispensers were installed in three schools and a college in the city. Bliss Pads Naturals, an organic napkin manufacturer, is sponsoring the pads in these schools which will be dispensed free of cost to the students. Trained Rotaractors from the club, and from RACs PSG-CAS and CBE Comito, addressed the students in all these schools on menstrual hygiene management. “The two Rotaract clubs and an Inner Wheel club sponsored three dispensers which cost ₹5,000 each, and we installed one at the college,” says Farhan, adding that the incoming club president Navin has promised to continue the work as a flagship project next year, and add more educational institutions to benefit from the club’s MHM programme.



“We enlisted the support of a local hairdresser, Mani Salon, to give a neat haircut to street dwellers and ragpickers, and were thrilled to see the visible transformation it had on them. The look of relief in their faces will stay with us for a long time,” he says. The club members donated new clothes to them.

Around 120 children from an orphanage were excited to watch a Tamil film in a theatre. The Rotaractors sponsored the tickets and refreshments, and arranged transportation for the young guests. “It was a heartwarming project which we thoroughly enjoyed. Our movie-watching experience was enhanced as we were with the children,” says Abishek, club’s vice-president.

A team of Rotaractors from the club assembled at the Town Hall one afternoon and distributed footwear to those who were walking barefoot on the streets heated up by the scorching sun. “The look of incredulity, combined with relief, as we handed over the packets of footwear, was something that we will remember for a lifetime,” says Farhan.



On another occasion, the Rotaractors brought joy and fun to an otherwise mundane day of garbage cleaners at the Perur town panchayat. Games and fitness activities were designed for them by the club members.

Uncharted was a RYLA hosted by the club for Interactors of RID 3201. About 80 schoolchildren participated in the one-day event. “The sessions were mostly planned



Above: A fun programme for sanitary workers; **Below:** Children all set to watch a movie sponsored by RAC Coimbatore CACIL.



to educate them on moral values. We had also included an orientation session on Rotaract as they will soon transcend into Rotaractors.” The programme was conducted in association with RCs Coimbatore New Gen and Coimbatore South.

RAC CACIL and RC Coimbatore South together hosted various competitions for the Interactors of Vasavi Vidyalaya MHS School, as part of the Interact Week celebrations on the

first week of November. Jam sessions, debate, essay and music competitions were conducted.

Nine district trainer designates delivered sessions on self-development in six schools in the city and in Hyderabad. “We brainstormed and curated the content so as to cover topics related to challenges faced by the Gen Z in this social media crazy world. Our efforts were rewarded; the feedback said

it all,” he smiles. In another initiative, a session on mental health was organised by the club for students of Classes 4–9 at the St Philomena High School. Dr Benedict Savita, assistant professor, Avinashilingam Institute, was the resource person.

The club, in association with RAC Sree Krishna College of Technology, under *Project Rota-library*, set up an exhaustive library, replete with bookshelves and books of various genre,



Rotaractors hand over a carton of sanitary napkins for distribution at a school.



A street dweller gets a haircut.

at the VLB Janakiammal School in the city, and encouraged the children to cultivate reading habit which will help in their personal growth.

A fundraiser musical nite was organised by the Rotaractors to help provide education to schoolchildren in a hamlet in Anaikati, a hillock on the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border. Motta Madi Music, a popular music troupe, entertained 3,000 people over three hours. “This was our six-year dream as the budget was ₹18 lakh. We planned this fundraiser especially to help the tribal children. But we could only raise ₹20,000, very much short of our target amount. We will have to work out some other plan next year to raise a decent amount for the project,” says the president.

In a bid to help other Rotaract clubs, RAC CACIL initiated *Rota-vault*, a programme through which the club members helped with the paperwork to open bank accounts for ten other Rotaract clubs. “We also assist clubs to apply for PAN card because that will make the clubs more authentic, especially when they visit corporates or individuals for sponsorship,” he says.

The club, chartered in 2018, is a community-based club with 41 members, all aged between 19–31. ■

Self-defence workshop for girls

Team Rotary News



Project chairman Pratap Sinh Bhosale (R) with students being trained in martial arts.

Forty girl students at the Amutha Matriculatoion School in Thiruninravur, a suburb of Chennai, were trained in silambam and other martial arts with the support of RAC Saveetha School of Management, RID 3232.

“The area is a remote village and a conservative one. There are girl students who travel 20–30km by the local train or bus from villages such as Veppampattu and Tiruvallur to the school here. So the principal requested that we empower them with self-defence art,” said project chairman Pratap Sinh Bhosale.

A two-hour demonstration session was organised by him for

the students. “I too learnt the basics and taught the students,” he smiles.

Students who practise silambam as a martial art have an increased concentration level which results in good academic progress. It enhances self-esteem and increases self-confidence and courage in an individual. Silambam, as a sport, has a special quota in sports that many are not aware of. “It is our duty to promote this Indian martial artform that dates back many thousands of years and spread the word about its benefits and importance to the younger generation and their parents,” says coach Vinod.

Bhosale, having completed second year MBA, is all set to move on to another Rotaract club. He fondly remembers his stint with RAC SSM for having shaped his leadership and organisational abilities. “I was invited by our parent Rotary, RC Chennai Mitra, as a guest speaker to talk on the marvels of Thanjavur and my travel experiences,” says the Rotaractor who is also an avid travel blogger.

The club has been focusing most of its community service projects in conducting lessons in personality development for school-children in the rural areas near Chennai. ■

Rotaractors renovate a village school

V Muthukumaran

A two-year-old Rotaract club, RAC Coimbatore Smart City, RID 3201, has renovated a rural school that rivals a Rotary project, thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment shown by 30 Rotaractors who form its membership. *Project Pallikoodam* built six gender-segregated toilet blocks; replaced the roofs of three school buildings; laid a new classroom floor; and gave a new coat of paint for a lab room and administrative office at the Government High School, Akkanaickenpalayam, a village on the city suburb, at a total cost of ₹5 lakh.

The revamp projects will benefit 150 students of the co-education

school. “Our sponsor, VPN Textiles, Coimbatore, donated ₹4.5 lakh and the rest was from the club fund. We conducted a three-day sports meet *Arena Mania* for the students which earned us goodwill,” says Vishruthi Premanand, club president. In the same village, “we are holding medical camps for the last two years which benefitted 800 people till now.” While last year they tied up with the PSG Hospital, this year the club roped in Karpagam Hospital whose doctors examined the villagers for chronic ailments. “Along with general check-up, eye screening is done with the help of Aravind Eye Hospital, and till now 60 patients have undergone free cataract surgery,” she smiles.

In a community outreach, tomato rice and potato fries were cooked at a Rotaractor’s house by a 20-member team under *Project Hunger No More*. Then the food was neatly packed and distributed to 180 indigent people at the Government Hospital, Ukkadam, Thudiyalur and Saravanampatti, all in and around Coimbatore.

Geriatric counselling

To rejuvenate the elderly inmates at the Nahomea Almshouse Charitable Trust, an old age home, “we hosted three sessions in a day under *Project Geriatric Counselling*. While trainer Mythili conducted fun games for 30 inmates, a one-on-one mental health counselling was



RAC Coimbatore Smart City president Vishruthi Premanand (right, front row) with inmates and Rotaractors at the Nahomea old age home.



Rotaractors (in the background) at the Government High School, Akkanaickenpalayam, during *Project Pallikoodam*.



A medical camp in progress at the village.

given by Dr Govarthini in two sessions. We found that the elderly inmates are concerned about the welfare of their children, and feel helpless with their current situation,” recalls Vishruthi.

In a novel initiative, *Project Blurred Lines* saw the participation of over 100 people including children at a one-day seminar on sexual health awareness at the COINDIA auditorium. “We had three resource persons — Dr Yudara, founder, He Health; ‘Kalki’ Subramaniam, transgender activist and founder, Sahodari; and Swati Jagdish, director, Bond and Beyond. They gave stimulating talks which were followed by interactive sessions,” explains Vishruthi.

Expressing gratitude to their parent Rotary, RC Coimbatore Smart City, the club president says, “from the day our Rotary club chartered us two years ago, they supported us and gave confidence to take up impactful projects.” As a charter member, “I enjoyed freedom to initiate projects, right from the planning stage to the implementation,” she says. Enjoying her stint as Rotaractor, Vishruthi, a bank executive, is looking forward to “more exciting times ahead. In fact, I encourage students to join Rotaract which is the right platform for them to take up their social causes with passion,” she adds. ■

Celebrating a year of service and fellowship

Jaishree

employed individuals who bond so well over fellowship as well as service projects.”

The club recently distributed umbrellas and ration kits to trans-people through *Project Naaz* which is in its fifth year. “Some of them have requested us to find them jobs and we are taking it up with our relatives and friends. Every year we organise health camps and awareness programmes for the LGBTQIA+ community near Mulund. We have

I am retiring with a happy, but heavy heart. As I lay down office tomorrow, I am satisfied that I have given my best, continued the programmes initiated by my predecessors and introduced some of my own. More than anything we had a fantastic year,” says Archie Chhadwa, president of RAC Mumbai Mulund South, RID 3141, speaking to *Rotary News* on the penultimate day of the Rotary year 2022–23. She is especially happy to have inducted 25 new members raising the club’s strength to 99. “We are a 16-year-old community-based club, and there are members from 16 to 30, but then, age is just a number. We have college students, start-up entrepreneurs and



also been conducting online awareness programmes on transgenders among college and school students to help the public understand them better,” she adds.

Under *Project Laadli*, the club rallied together to raise ₹8,400 to sponsor the education of two girl students from less privileged families. The funds will be utilised towards school fee, uniform, school bags, books and shoes, for the students for the academic year

We bought the bags from a group of tribal women and painted them. Carrying those tote bags now invokes a shared smile of remembrance among us.

Left: Rotaractors painting tote bags.

Right: Ration kits being provided to transpeople.

Below: Women listen to a lecture on cybersecurity.





A Rotaractor gives a sanitary napkin pack to a woman.

2023–24. “We have been supporting the girls for four years now.”

Recognising the growing threat of cybercrimes, the club’s IT experts initiated *Project Sec-ur-ity*, conducting informative sessions on cyber security specifically tailored for women. Lectures on cybercrimes and online scams, along with techniques to identify and protect against them, were delivered to the public. By equipping individuals with knowledge and awareness, the club aimed to safeguard the community from financial traps and digital threats.

Project Torch, another ongoing programme, focused on empowering children associated with Nirmal Jyot, an NGO in Mulund. Over four years, the Rotaractors have been providing two days of comprehensive soft skill training to 20 children, emphasising time management, communication and leadership skills. Through this

initiative, the club strives to instil confidence and equip young minds with essential tools for personal and professional growth.

Addressing the pressing issue of menstrual health management, the Rotaractors initiated *Project Period Pride*. They visited schools and colleges in the vicinity to conduct educational lectures on this topic, reaching out to adolescent girls.

Some transpeople have
requested us to find them jobs
and we are taking it up with
our relatives and friends.

Archie Chhadwa
president, RAC Mumbai
Mulund South

At the end of each session, sanitary pad packets were distributed, ensuring these girls have access to essential menstrual hygiene products.

Archie is happy that her club has executed over 150 programmes including 40 community service projects under her leadership. Amidst the serious undertakings, she recalls a fun session where the club members bonded over a tote bag painting event. “We bought the bags from a group of tribal women and painted them. Carrying those tote bags now invokes a shared smile of remembrance among us.”

As Archie prepares to pass the torch to Mancha Dedia, she reflects on a year filled with meaningful Rotary service. She is relaxed with a sense of gratitude, knowing that her efforts, alongside those of the dedicated club members, have made a significant impact on the community. ■

RID 3170's multidistrict conference on International Service

Team Rotary News



RAC Vasco da Gama president Priyanka Pandit and Rtn Amit Palekar, RC Panjim Riviera, lighting the lamp to inaugurate the conference.

Rotaract District 3170 hosted a two-day multidistrict conference on Rotaract's International Service Avenue at Vasco da Gama, Goa. RAC Vasco da Gama hosted the conference which was chaired by DRR Aniket Jadhav. Over 80 Rotaractors from 19 Rotaract clubs across five districts attended the event.

The event aimed to provide a platform for Rotaractors to network, learn and have fun, all while furthering the mission of the International Service Avenue of Rotaract. The gathering of so many talented and dedicated individuals from various clubs created a dynamic and energised atmosphere, setting the stage for a truly unforgettable experience, said host club

president Priyanka Pandit. Qalandar Sayed was the project chairman.

Amit Palekar, past president of Rotary Club of Panjim Riviera, inaugurated the conference. Siddesh Kochrekar conducted an ice-breaking session that helped Rotaractors get to know each other and feel more comfortable in the new environment. DRR Jadhav gave an overview of the international service avenue and urged the delegates to participate in the programme.

Rotaractors presented their best International Service Avenue project ideas, showcasing their creativity and passion for community service. The ideas demonstrated the potential for Rotaract to make a positive impact in the world, and the session provided

valuable insights into how Rotaract clubs could expand their reach and take advantage of new opportunities and resources, said Chaitanya Nilkanthanavar, director, District International Service.

Rotarian Lalit Saraswat gave an insight into the nuances of starting a business venture and Rtn Prakash Saraswat spoke on new opportunities for Rotaract clubs. A quiz on Rotaract drew active participation from the audience and "the session gave a good understanding of various aspects of Rotaract and the Rotary organisation to the delegates," said Nilkanthanavar.

The *Mr & Ms Rajsuya* competition, beachside activities, zumba sessions and the DJ Nite provided the fun aspect at the event. ■

Rotaract gains traction in Chhindwara

V Muthukumaran

As day temperature sizzles with soaring mercury levels this summer, *Project Pyaau* (water booth) is giving respite from the heat to birds, pet animals and pedestrians with water-filled earthen pots placed at 4–5 spots in Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh, by RAC Chhindwara.

“Though we have been taking care of pets and vulnerable people during summer over the last two years, we had kicked off a formal launch with *Project Pyaau* this year, in partnership with the municipal corporation,” says Aman Khan, club trainer and DRR-elect of RID 3040.

While Rotaractors have placed the earthen pots at vantage points in

the city, the municipality workers refill the pots on a regular basis for people to use it continuously. During the peak Covid time, they joined hands with five other Rotaract clubs to organise a month-long Rota Youth Fest (June 2020) through Zoom and WhatsApp that saw over 500 Rotaractors displaying their skills in 20 different competitions. “We had contests such as costume design, fashion, painting, cooking, acting, creative writing, dancing and photography. Three winners were selected from each category and the first prize was one-month Amazon Prime (OTT platform) subscription. All of them were given e-certificates,” recalls Khan. “We gave around ₹10,000, a part of the proceeds from the youth fest, to the Assam flood relief,”





Above: Rotaractors decorate the pots for *Project Pyaau*. Club president Sufi Abdul Tehseen is at the front.

Left: RAC Chhindwara trainer and DRR-elect Aman Khan (2nd from R) and club president Sufi Abdul Tehseen (3rd from R) at the inauguration of a water booth.

A mega public rally was conducted on *Gaurav Diwas* to mark the founding of Chhindwara district on Sep 5. Over 5,000 people including civic officials, politicians, social activists, Rotaractors, school and college students took part to celebrate the special day.

During *Mahadan 8.0*, around 95 units of blood was collected, and in another camp, they collected 120 units of blood.

“In the evening, we had *hasya kavi sammelan*, a recital of poems invoking satire and laughter, at Pola Ground, Chhindwara, which saw around 20,000 people enjoying the musical lyrics in the open-air stage,” he explains. During *Mahadan 8.0*, around 95 units of blood was collected, and in another camp at the Vivanta Critical Care Hospital, “we collected 120 units of blood.”

The four-year-old club has 22 members drawn from various professions and college-goers. “We have over 100-plus volunteers, non-Rotaractors, helping us out in our service projects and community outreach. And we are in constant touch with them to sustain a good rapport for they are critical in achieving our project goals,” says club president Sufi Abdul Tehseen.

Recalling the journey so far in the current year, he says, “we have done eight types of donations to vulnerable groups and institutions in a methodical approach.” First, they distributed over 50 blankets during winter; followed by the donation

We have over 100-plus volunteers, non-Rotaractors, helping us out in our service projects and community outreach.

Sufi Abdul Tehseen
president, RAC Chhindwara

of mattresses to 25 homeless and roadside dwellers; gifts to slum children during Diwali; arranged food delivery to over 200 workers at a construction site on World Labour Day in tie-up with an eatery (*Project Aashita*); 20 healthcare kits to injured pets rescued by We Care For All, an NGO; another 20 blankets to domestic animals at We Care; stationery items to 30 children at a special home; and blood donation drives.

Hum Honge Kaamyab

Each day, around 40 Rotaractors from RID 3040 reach out to help and coordinate in the blood donation drives across India through social networking and leveraging their Rotary contacts. “The idea of Rotaract volunteers was mooted by our club to facilitate the smooth conduct of blood donation camps under the tagline *Hum Honge Kaamyab* (we will succeed). While we are active in Madhya Pradesh, we are also expanding our reach to other parts of the country,” says Tehseen.

The club meets informally every day to sort out their finances and plan for the upcoming activities. Either Aman Khan, Tehseen or president-elect Siddhant Ramanand chairs the deliberations. “We collect ₹1,500 each from our members before the start of the Rotary year. Thankfully, we have got enough private sponsors and corporate funding to see through our year-long projects,” smiles Khan. ■

Spreading warmth in Coimbatore

Team Rotary News



Clockwise from above

- A Rotaractor presents a cricket bat and ball, as part of sports equipment the club donated to the school.
- Food packets being distributed at a home for the aged.
- Rotaractors fixing Bullseye stickers on vehicles as part of the club's road safety awareness initiative.
- The club's *Project Feliz Navidad* at the Ashreya Bala Bhavan.
- Rotaractors with children at an orphanage where the club donated blankets.





The Rotaractors of Avinashilingam Home Science College (RAC AIHSHEW), Coimbatore, along with RAC Monarks IIVM and Rotary Club of Coimbatore Monarks, distributed blankets to 200 children residing in four orphanages in the city.

The 70-member club have been actively executing service projects across the city. “We have been serving food, nutritional diet and energy beverages to pavement dwellers, ragpickers, the elderly and children at various locations,” said club secretary Shwetha Yazhini.

Feliz Navidad was a popular project of the club. The members set up a stall and stocked it with sanitary napkins, stationery supplies, tiffin boxes

and water bottles at the Ashreya Bala Bhavan. “We gave the children fake currencies and encouraged them to buy what they wanted from our shop. This way they had the satisfaction of having ‘bought’ what they needed and also learnt to transact with money,” she smiles. T-shirts were given to all the children.

In another initiative, the Rotaractors collected novels and magazines in English and Tamil from other Rotaract club members and the public, and gave it to around 60 children in a tribal hamlet in Attapadi.

A handwash awareness programme was conducted by the club for children at a village near the city and the Rotaractors demonstrated the right way to wash hands and other sanitation aspects to the families. ■

Developing eloquence in students

V Muthukumaran

Rooming the communication skills of school students in and around Thane, a suburb of Mumbai, has earned a brand identity for Rotaractors at RAC Thane Downtown, RID 3142, over the last six years as *Project Eloquence* is one of the most awaited inter-school competitions. And this Rotary year too is no different. “Our aim is to improve the vocational skills of students through competitions such as letter-writing, essay, debating and elocution,” says club president Rushikesh Bhadane.

In the first phase, 1,500 students from Classes 5–10 took part in 20 intra-school competitions, out of which 500 were selected for the final phase at the Indo Scots Global School, Thane. “After a series of fierce contests, 72 students emerged winners and were given prizes. President-elect Nilesh Kadam from RC Thane Downtown, our sponsor club, and Rtn Biju Gopalan, chair, partner-in-service, were among the jurors who chose the winners,” he recalls. *Project Eloquence* was sponsored by coaching institutes Byju’s and School Toppers.

Another satisfying work is their legacy project of distribution of Jaipur foot to amputees over the last nine years. “Recently, we gave 24 prosthetic limbs at the Ratna Nidhi Foundation on the premises of King George V Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, at a cost of ₹1.45 lakh. While Rotarians donated ₹25,000, we mobilised ₹69,000, and the balance amount came from public donations,” he says. So far, the club has distributed around 220 Jaipur foot in partnership with the Foundation, which is providing the artificial limbs.



From L: Rtr Mansi Kante, RAC Thane Downtown president Rushikesh Bhadane and Rtr Pushkar Kulkarni, along with a young beneficiary, at the Jaipur foot distribution camp.



From L: Rtn Nisha Raju, judge Sangita Bhadane, student winner Rohil Tawade and club president Rushikesh Bhadane at *Project Eloquence*.



A letter-writing contest in progress at the Indo Scots Global School, Thane.

Bhadane has initiated *Project Transition*, in which transgenders are given job opportunities. “We have designed an online job application form which the transsexuals have to fill in and send to their prospective employers. We have created a database of employers and companies through our contacts in Rotary, social media, friendship and social circles,” he explains. So far, 29 transgenders have responded to the job portal, among them seven have completed their interviews and waiting for the placement offers.

RI’s annual dues

With 57 members consisting mostly of students and young professionals, the nine-year-old club meets twice a month on Fridays. “We have a quorum of 30 Rotaractors to hold a meeting. For those who could not make it, we send the minutes of the meeting through social media handles and emails. But the real challenge is the collection of RI’s annual dues, that is, \$8 per head, plus 18 per cent GST, which comes to around ₹900 for a Rotaractor. We are ready to pay this amount. But it will be easy if we are asked to pay the dues in two equal instalments,” says Bhadane.

Having completed his B Tech, he is waiting “for the graduation ceremony in July or August. I will be joining a company soon.” Being a Rotaractor for five years had boosted “my confidence levels, improved my public speaking skills, and honed my attitude and skills for a successful career.” Though he was a dual member when he became the Rotaract club president, he had to quit Rotary due to “time constraints and other pressing needs. In the near future, I will be joining my sponsor club, RC Thane Downtown, and extend my active service to their social projects,” he assures. ■

Chiplun Rotaractors support underprivileged students

Kiran Zehra

The Government Primary School in Chiplun recently received a helping hand from the members of Rotaract Club Chiplun, RID 3170. Recognising the lack of basic learning equipment among students, the club took action to provide essential supplies, such

as notebooks and pencils, to support their educational journey.

After multiple meetings with the staff and students, the club's president, Akash Redi, expressed concern over the students' limited access to crucial educational resources to his club members. He highlighted their parents' struggles in affording basic educational material. Shaken by the

findings, the club sprang into action by providing school kits to 250 students.

One notable initiative carried out by the club was a marathon event that witnessed an impressive participation of 535 enthusiastic runners. The event aimed to promote health and wellness while raising awareness about the club's activities.





Above: The club conducted a marathon to promote health and wellness in the city.

Below: Rotaractors planting saplings in a rice field.



Club members provided essential learning material to students from underprivileged background.

The club took up a tree plantation drive which also created awareness on environment among the locals. Native tree saplings, including mango and coconut, were planted by the members. “This endeavour not only beautifies our surroundings but also emphasises the importance of sustainable practices and a greener future,” says the club president.

Qais Sayyad, the club’s secretary, says their community-based approach, “highlights how Rotaract simultaneously addresses the needs of underprivileged students and creates awareness about environmental issues. We are committed to building a better society by empowering students with educational resources and promoting sustainable practices.” ■

Manali Rotaractors in the thick of action

V Muthukumaran

A two-day *Gyan Khel Mahotsav* hosted by RAC Manali, RID 3070, at the Jawaharlal Nehru Government College, Haripur, offered 250 athletes from four colleges and village panchayats across Himachal Pradesh a unique opportunity to display their athletic skills and draw attention from the sports authority. “The state-level athletics meet also had volleyball and painting competition. Around 1,500 spectators enjoyed the showpiece event of our club,” says Simran Verma, club president. The sports meet was organised in memory of late Shamsher Singh Thakur,

past president, RC Manali, who was the architect of this Rotaract club.

While the Kullu team won the overall championship with a prize money of ₹21,000 and trophy, Rinku Thakur was declared the player of the tournament and was rewarded with a prize money of ₹1,000, two mementos and medals. In the volleyball, the first prize money was ₹21,000. The theme of the painting contest that had 50 participants was *Hamara Himachal, Pyara Himachal*.

Rtn Roshan Thakur and Dinanath Verma, vice-president, Tempo Travelers Association of Manali, were chief

guests at the sports meet which was part-funded by them. Rtn Amitabh Sharma, president, Ice Skating Association of India, donated ₹45,000, and the club mobilised ₹25,000 for the *Khel Utsav*.

Mega cleanliness drive

All the 28 members took part in cleanliness drives at major tourist spots and scenic venues across Kullu Manali — Solang Nala, Hampta Pass, Manali Wildlife Sanctuary, Bijli Mahadev Mandir and Hadimba Devi temple. “Our aim is to take up cleanliness campaign at 4–5 places each Rotary



RAC Manali president Simran Verma (5th from R), along with Rotaractors, during a clean-up drive at a tourist spot.

year with the help of NGOs and create awareness on the need to prevent littering by tourists who visit these places as the focus is on eco-friendly tourism,” explains Simran. The club roped in YouVah, Mahila Mandal (a SHG) and JIR Ghatotkach Yuvak Mandal, Dhungri, in their ‘Clean and Green Manali’ campaign. “We shifted out 3–4 carloads of garbage weighing around three tonnes from these places and offloaded them at the dump yard of Manali Municipal Council.” From there the conservancy workers segregated and slotted the waste before disposing them in an eco-friendly manner, she says.

On the medical front, 200 children and adults were examined at a health check-camp held on the Mall Road with the support of Shri Harihar Hospital, Manali. A range of tests for BP, blood sugar, Dexa scan (for bone density), spirometry (breathing test) and ECG was conducted; and six doctors screened the patients who were also given medicines.

In partnership with their parent RC Manali, the Rotaractors conducted four blood donation camps in which over 200 units of blood was collected; 500 saplings were planted at



Club president Simran Verma (2nd from L) presents a cash prize to a winner at the *Gyan Khel Mahotsav*.

four plantation drives; and the club enhanced its public image with its members volunteering at the five-day Manali Winter Carnival in January that showcased the cultural and historical legacy of Himachal Pradesh. “We joined hands with the NCC and

NSS cadets from various colleges and guided visitors thronging the winter festival. More than a lakh people visited the carnival that displayed folk music, dance, cuisine and performing arts of Himachal,” says Simran.

Negotiable club fee

While the members usually meet twice a month, if there are some ongoing projects “we will get together frequently to chart out our action plan,” she says. There is a two-level fee structure as the 11 executive members pay ₹1,000 each, while the rest are charged ₹500 only. “We don’t charge a member if he or she is from a poor economic background,” says Simran who has been a Rotaractor for four years.

She has completed her Masters in Travel and Tourism Management at the Panjab University, Chandigarh, and waiting for a job placement. “I enjoy every moment of my Rotaract journey as social service is close to my heart, and I am looking forward to join my parent RC Manali in the near future,” she smiles. ■



Rotaractors collect litter and garbage along the scenic hills.

Helping schoolchildren in Karad

Kiran Zehra & V Muthukumaran

For a 10-year-old Rotaract club which was suspended by the RI board for some reasons and revived two years back, it has been an exciting year so far for RAC Karad City, RID 3132. The community-based club in the Karad taluk of Satara district of Maharashtra has 34 members with businessmen and salaried people.

In a heartwarming display of compassion and commitment to education, the club organised a shoe distribution drive called *Project Sphurti*. The initiative, which took

place in March, aimed to provide underprivileged students with shoes and “although shoes alone do not solve the problems these children face, it helps them build their self-esteem and inspires a love for learning,” says Akanksha Tiwari, the club president.

Three schools, Sadguru Ashram Shala, Shere; Danshur Bando Gopala Mukadam Vidyalaya, Wathar; and Siddheshwar Vidhyalay, Koparde Haweli in Karad, were selected as the beneficiaries of this project. The club members worked tirelessly to

ensure proper sizes of the students were taken with the help of their class teachers. “The children asked us ‘*Didi aaj shoe doge? Socks bhi doge?* (Will you give us the shoes today? Will you provide us with socks?)’ For some of them this was the first pair of shoes,” she says. PDRR Devanand Mahadeva sponsored this project and the club distributed shoes to 123 students across the three schools. The selected recipients, from Classes 5–9 “were filled with joy and gratitude upon receiving their new shoes. The shoes will not only provide them with comfort but also instilled a renewed sense of confidence that would enable them to attend school with pride. Understanding the profound impact of our initiatives we are inspired to plan future projects that would continue to uplift and support these students.” The club has decided to provide them essential learning material like notebooks and stationery they require to thrive academically.

Project Bachpan, another initiative by the club, is focused on





educating children on good touch and bad touch for girl children in the age group of 4–12 years. “This is our two-year-old flagship event which has covered 12 schools through hybrid sessions reaching out to around 2,000 children so far.” Rtr Gayatri Pravin, a software developer, is conducting the sessions and “she is passionate

about engaging the girls and trying to sensitise them about their gender consciousness. Gayatri also interacts with teachers and parents on how to handle children and groom them in the right manner,” explains Sanjivani Nikam, the club’s literacy chair.

Around 8–10 Rotaractors visit both primary and higher secondary

schools in villages to hold fun sessions under *Project Masti Ki Pathshala* (fun at school). “We have around 2–3 hours of happy moments with school children by engaging them in music, dance, games and group fun like dumb charades and *antakshari*. So far, we have held fun sessions with 500 students at two schools,” she says.

After seeing the plight of girl students who have to trek a long distance to reach their schools, “we have donated three bicycles to those studying from Class 6–9 under a district grant project. We will be donating cycles to three more students,” says Neel Deshpande, editor, club bulletin.

The club plans to expand *Project Spurthi* and cycle donation in a big way next year, says Akanksha. For her, conducting the two-day Rotaract discon titled *Krishna Kath* (on the banks of River Krishna, where Karad is located) with the participation of over 100 Rotaractors from the district “gave me a sense of fulfilment. RID 3132 Rotaract chair Sanjay Bora presided over the event which turned out to be a memorable one for us all.” ■




Above: Students listening to a session on ‘Good touch, bad touch,’ organised by the Rotaractors.

Left: Schoolchildren with the shoes gifted to them by members of RAC Karad City. Club president Akanksha Tiwari is seen at the centre (second row).

Kadi Rotaract earns praise for discon

V Muthukumar





A two-day
Garba and
Dandiya Raas
programme.

A small town Rotaract club, RAC Kadi hosted a three-day district conference titled ‘*Virasat – the legacy*’ at Kumbhalgarh, the fortress and heritage city of Rajasthan, in which 160 Rotaractors from across RID 3054 and around 12–15 Rotarians took part and enjoyed a medley of fellowship events like DJ Night, poolside party, awards ceremony and some delightful cuisine. Overawed by the arrangements and the grand events, DRCC Bhanu Gupta complimented “the good work being done by DRR Parth Raval and Kadi Rotaractors in holding the discon with fanfare and diligence,” says Jay Raval, president, RAC Kadi.

Rtrs Bhaskar Soni and Maitri Madia bagged the overall awards for best performance in the male and female categories, while RAC Mundra was felicitated for having the largest delegation of 16 Rotaractors from among the 23 Rotaract clubs which attended the discon. Kadi is a small town in Mehsana district of Gujarat, 45km from Ahmedabad, and “among our 33 members, 80 per cent are professionals and the rest, college students. We are doing impactful projects throughout the year,” he says. On top of the pecking order is *Project Udgam* (horizon) which distributes 15–20 lunch packets daily to families at a slum colony near Meldi Mataji temple in Kadi, and 60 food packets to those at another slum near Balapir, a residential locality, once a month. “We are doing food distribution for over four years, which would have benefited 500-plus families eking out a tough life. *Project Udgam* has raised our profile among the residents of Kadi as Rotaractors deliver food packages with sincerity,” explains Raval.

Project Ramzat is the signature two-day Garba and Dandiya Raas programme, a fundraiser, to mark Navratri festival in October. “Last year we had over 7,000 footfalls including Rotarians, Rotaractors and the public at the Vivah Party Plot, a huge farmland, as



DRR Parth Raval, RID 3054 (standing, centre), along with Rotaractors, at the district conference at Kumbhalgarh in Rajasthan.



A food packet being given to a homeless person under *Project Udgam*.

they danced the whole night to Gujarati folk songs and other popular numbers,” he recalls. A ticketing fee of ₹100 was charged from each participant, and the collected amount of ₹70,000 is being used for Rotaract projects.

Recently, a career guidance seminar was conducted for students who had passed out of Classes 10 and 12. at the MM Patel Memorial Hall at the SV Campus, Kadi. Two resource persons — Bhavin Pandya, dean of management faculty at the Kadi Sarva Vishwavidyalaya; and Hiren Patel, principal, Vidush Somani Institute of Technology and Research, Kadi — mentored 60 students with their presentations, followed by an interactive session.

The members meet twice a month, once in a joint meet with their parent, Rotary Club of Kadi. “Our focus is on fellowship and bonding. We charge a membership fee of ₹1,500,” says Jay Raval, who has been a Rotaractor for seven years and owns an electronic goods showroom. “I will become a Rotarian after two years and want to be a key member in organising fellowship and networking events,” he adds. ■

In Brief



Battery-powered ferry

P&O, a British shipping company, achieved a significant milestone in eco-friendly ocean

travel by completing a battery-powered channel crossing. The company's *Pioneer* ferry, the world's largest hybrid double-ended vessel, made its inaugural journey from Dover to Calais using a combination of onboard diesel generators and batteries. This hybrid design is expected to reduce emissions by 40 per cent.



Conversion therapy ban in Iceland

Iceland, known as one of the most LGBTQ+-friendly nations, has passed a law banning conversion therapy with significant consequences for those who violate the ban. Iceland now joins approximately 16 other countries, including Brazil, Ecuador, Spain and Germany, in prohibiting conversion therapy. The law specifically targets conversion therapy based on sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity.



Ghana approves malaria vaccine

Ghana becomes the first country to approve a malaria vaccine that has the potential to save thousands of lives, particularly among children. Developed

by the University of Oxford, the vaccine has shown in trials to provide up to 80 per cent protection against malaria. Oxford aims to produce 200 million doses of its vaccine annually.



Barbie with Down syndrome

Toy manufacturer Mattel has introduced a Barbie doll with Down syndrome to promote inclusivity in playtime. The US company collaborated with medical professionals to ensure an accurate representa-

tion of women with the condition. British model Ellie Goldstein, who has Down syndrome, was selected as an ambassador for the new Barbie.



Solar power harvest

Scientists at the California Institute of Technology have successfully harvested 200 milliwatts of solar power in space and transmitted it wirelessly to Earth. The experiment involved a solar panel attached to a satellite, which then used microwaves to transmit the electricity to a lab rooftop in California. This breakthrough is seen as a solution to the challenges of energy storage and transmission, thereby contributing to the transition to renewable energy.

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