



Rotaract NEWS





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On the cover: RAC Jai Hind College secretary Zainab Jetpurwala with a child at the Masti Mela, a fun fair organised by the club at the Dharavi slum in Mumbai.

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Record number of clubs earn the Rotaract Giving Certificate

More than 640 Rotaract clubs earned the Rotaract Giving Certificate in 2022–23, a new high with more than doubles the number of clubs that received it in the previous year. The certificate recognises clubs whose members have contributed a total of at least \$100 to The Rotary Foundation during the year. These clubs contributed more than \$242,000 to the Foundation last year, nearly triple the approximately

\$87,000 raised in 2021–22. Each club will receive a certificate signed by 2022–23 Trustee Chair Ian Riseley. Since 2019–20, Rotaractors have contributed more than \$438,500 through the certificate programme to TRF.

Citation for Rotaract clubs

Rotaract clubs that achieve the Rotaract goals by the end of the Rotary year will earn a citation. Only Rotaract clubs that have an active

charter with Rotary International are eligible for the citation. All achievements need to be reported by August 15, 2024. The Rotaract club president or Rotary sponsor club president can nominate a Rotaract club by completing the online nomination form for the citation. Only one nomination per Rotaract club will be accepted.

*Source: RI South Asia Office,
New Delhi*

Grandparent's Day celebration at an old age home

Team Rotary News

Members of RAC Tinsukia, RID 3240, came together to celebrate Grandparent's Day with the elderly residents of Nirmal Hriday Destitute Home in Tinsukia, Assam.

Armed with essential daily necessities to bring comfort to the senior citizens, the members arrived at the home. Soaps, towels, toothbrushes and food were distributed. Rotaractors also engaged in heartfelt conversations, shared stories and played games with them. ■



Rotaractors with senior citizens.

A Mumbai Rotaract club dreams big

Rasheeda Bhagat

A single Rotaract club in Mumbai, Rotaract Club of Jai Hind College (RACJC), RID 3141, has done a bunch of very interesting projects, which makes its president Khushi Shetty, smile proudly as she looks back on the year just gone by. For one, she managed to do what so many other past presidents of her club had only dreamt about — hold a Lit fest, complete with a book launch.

Among the projects done by this club of 178 members, 70 per cent of them women, one of their best is the hosting of *Masti Mela*, a vibrant and joyful fun fair for the children of Asia's largest slum — Dharavi. This initiative aimed to bring happiness and excitement into the lives of these children growing up in a huge slum, offering them a break from their daily, not too shiny lives.

A variety of engaging games and activities was held to capture the children's imagination and ignite their enthusiasm. Some of the most popular games were ball-throwing and ring toss which came with prizes when the children hit the target. 'Find the correct tile' was designed to improve their observation skills, and the 'jumping jack' gave them enough

scope for screams of delight. "A candy floss stall provided a sweet treat, adding to the festive atmosphere and leaving smiles on the children's faces. Understanding the importance of nourishment, our club ensured that the children were provided with a nutritious lunch, consisting of dishes like idli chutney, pav bhaji, and *sheera* for dessert. *Masti Mela* was not just about creating a fun fair; it was about spreading love, happiness, and a sense of community. The event showcased the transformative power of simple acts of kindness and the profound impact they can have on the lives of others," said the 2022–23 club president Khushi.

The day ended with joy and laughter; "we believe the memories of this day will stay with these children for a long time," said club secretary Zainab Jetpurwala.

Coming to the next project, the Mumbai Students Film Festival, organised by the club recently, marked the fifth year of providing a platform to aspiring young filmmakers. The festival got 20 entries of short films of 10–12-minute duration, and showcased a diverse range of topics





and perspectives. Well-known industry professionals, including Karthik Mallur, Saurabh Bharat, Priyanka Tanwar and Apoorva Shaligram, served as judges, lending their expertise and guidance to the event.

“The top 10 films were selected for screening at the prestigious Creative Adda venue in Versova. The audience was captivated by the filmmakers’ artistic prowess and storytelling abilities, witnessing firsthand the depth of talent among the next generation of filmmakers. The films explored intriguing

The Model UN initiative aimed to provide students with an invaluable opportunity to delve into the world of international affairs and work collaboratively towards crafting resolutions for pressing global issues.

themes, including Mumbai’s vintage car culture and the hidden masks worn by teenagers in today’s complex society,” says Khushi.

Prizes were given for best direction, cinematography and editing. The winners were awarded citations and monetary prizes. The festival concluded on a high note as the entire team came together to celebrate their accomplishments. The atmosphere was filled with joy and enthusiasm as the participants showcased their unity through the vibrant RACJC dance and shout.





The Mumbai Students Film Festival team felicitates a winner.



In June, the club organised its highly anticipated Lit Fest 23 in collaboration with *Speaking Souls* and *Re-Create Spaces*, providing a vibrant platform for literary exploration and artistic expression. The itinerary was packed with captivating events, including a book launch and conversation with the author Chattanathan. A stand-up comedy show titled 'Comedy Central,' an open mic event called *Alfaaz*, a mesmerising musical evening with *VibeZ*, and a pop-up marketplace, were also held.

The book launch and a Q&A session with Chattanathan, author of *The Heel*, gave the audience an insight into his writing journey. The stand-up comedy show featured the talented comedians Rowland Dominic and Praveen Pandya, providing a refreshing break filled with laughter. "*Alfaaz* gave budding poets and spoken word artists a platform to showcase their work, fostering a

Left: Club president Khushi Shetty (standing sixth from R) with the club's executive board at the 5th edition of Model UN programme.

Masti Mela was not just about creating a fun fair; it was about spreading love, happiness, and a sense of community.

Khushi Shetty

IPP, RAC Jai Hind College

supportive and inclusive creative community. The musical evening *VibeZ* featured talented musicians and singers who captivated the audience with original compositions and Bollywood Mashups, creating a mesmerising atmosphere," adds Khushi.

The pop-up marketplace where the Rotaractors raised funds for some of these projects by giving stalls on rent, allowed small businesses to promote their brands and offered the participants a chance to explore and support local entrepreneurship. "This further enhanced the festival's vibrant atmosphere, fostering a sense of community and collaboration," added Zainab.



Very excited about pulling off a lit fest — after all the Jaipur, Bengaluru and other big literary festivals make huge headlines all the time — Khushi said: “I am so happy that we were finally able to put together a lit festival. This has been dreamt of by many past presidents, but they simply couldn’t do it. But this year, we said we have to do it. So we first talked to some of our past presidents, learnt about their dreams, ideas and plans. At the end, my team decided on a one-day event with a pop-up market.” Her core team for these events had seven members.

She explains that the pop-up market is a kind of flea market but on a smaller scale and with brand exclusivity, giving small businesses

an opportunity to offer brand exclusivity, and that really interested the crowd. “We put on offer a book launch, movie discussion, stand-up comedy, poetry, and brands from small businesses... all in one place, giving the audience a different kind of experience.”

She adds that “in a bid to foster global awareness and cultivate a spirit of diplomacy among young minds, the club once again organised the fifth exciting event — an educational simulation of the United Nations. This inspiring initiative aimed to provide

students with “an invaluable opportunity to delve into the world of international affairs and work collaboratively towards crafting resolutions for pressing global issues.”

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) was simulated with the agenda of discussion being the violation of human rights in conflict zones. “Over the course of two intensive days, the simulation brought together a diverse group of students, each representing a different country. Through role play and lively debates, participants stepped into the shoes of diplomats, grappling with real-world challenges and devising innovative solutions. The event not only tested



Rotaractors holding banners to sensitise the public about trafficking of women.

their knowledge of global affairs but also honed their negotiation, critical thinking and public speaking skills.”

In the end, a draft resolution was presented. Participants had the opportunity to contribute their ideas, engage in productive discussions, and collaborate to form a resolution that represented their collective wisdom. The event underlined the importance of teamwork and cooperation in achieving common goals. But to take away the grimness of the debate, the youngsters also planned an entertainment segment, where they “engaged in a series of lighthearted activities. They exchanged anonymous messages through chits, adding an element

of intrigue and surprise to the proceedings. Dancing and enacting various roles provided a platform for self-expression and creativity, allowing participants to unwind and enjoy themselves,” she added.

Four powerful pictures were created, capturing the essence of silenced voices and the plight of those affected by trafficking.

Asked what next Khushi smiles: “Now that a new Rotary year has begun, I have given the baton to the new leader, also a woman, Vedika Bansal. And our club will continue to do fun and meaningful events,” she adds.

It has become a tradition for the club to celebrate women and raise questions on gender equity and the trampling of women’s rights by awareness drives for an entire week around International Women’s Day every March. This year too, under the presidentship of Khushi

We marched carrying these banners and chanting slogans against female trafficking, and wherever there was a big crowd, we stopped and recited a poem.

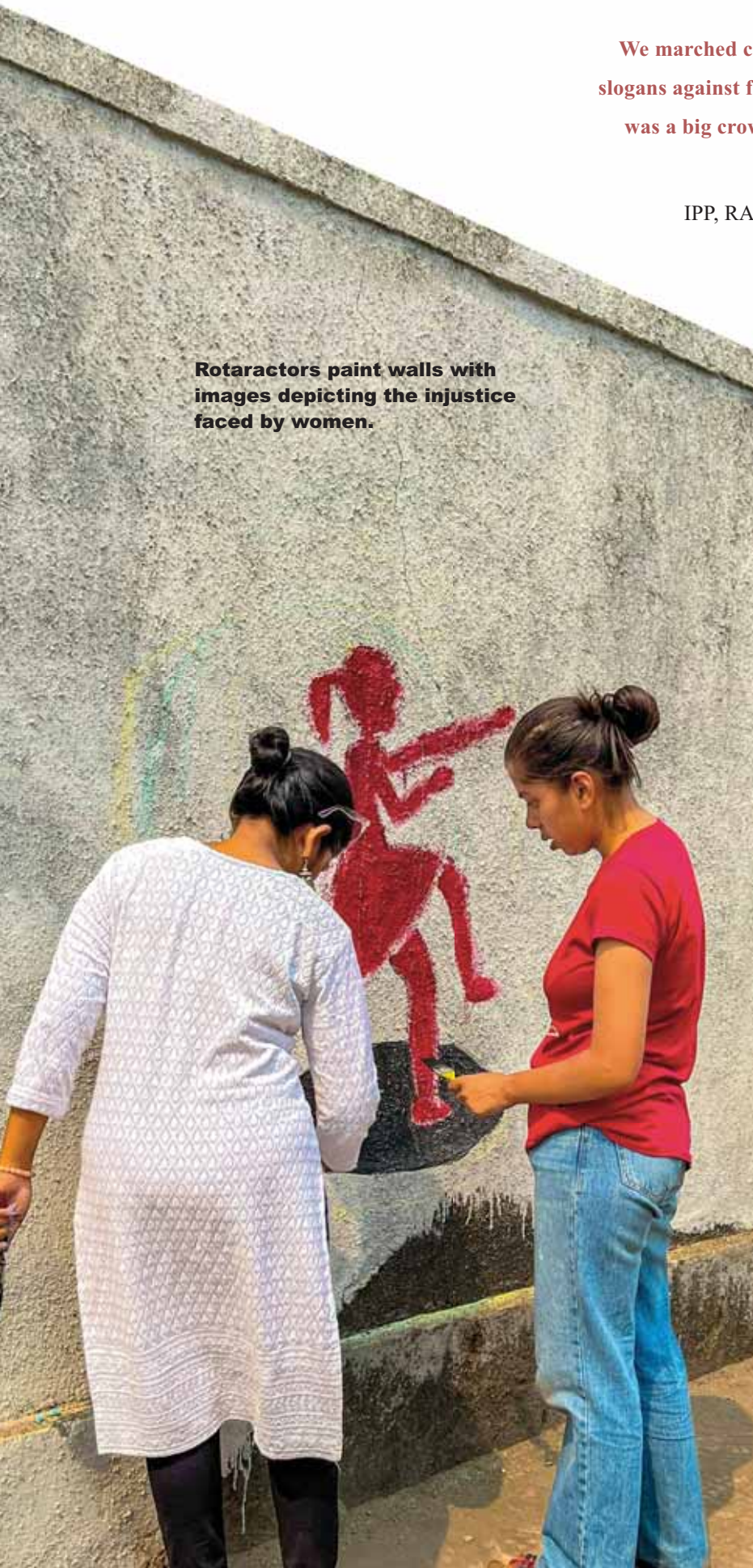
Khushi Shetty

IPP, RAC Jai Hind College, RID 3141

Rotaractors paint walls with images depicting the injustice faced by women.

Shetty, the women's week (March 1–8) was marked by the project titled *Cheekh*. "The basic idea of *Cheekh* (scream) was to perform flash mobs across Mumbai in which we highlight the grievous issue of women's trafficking. But this year this wasn't possible because of permission issues. So instead of this hurdle stopping us from observing the week, we came out with alternative ideas and our team took a different approach by engaging in a series of activities to make a powerful statement and introduced new features," says Khushi.

The major objective was to draw attention to the huge problem of women's trafficking and the sucking of innocent young girls into Mumbai's flesh trade. To raise awareness on this problem and urge citizens to take a stand against this heinous practice, the



Rotaractors decided to put up wall paintings in the Grant Road region near the railway station. Grant Road has “a huge red light area of Mumbai. We sought, and thankfully received, permission from the Mumbai Municipal Corporation to put up wall paintings in this area.”

A wall was utilised as a canvas to depict the oppression and abuse faced by women around the world. “Four powerful pictures were created, capturing the essence of silenced voices and the plight of those affected by trafficking. The artwork aimed to evoke emotions and stimulate conversations, encouraging society to confront a vice like the trafficking of women.”

The week was kickstarted with the club’s Rotaractors organising a parade at one of the Sunday Street spots at Marine Drive. Sunday Street is an initiative of the Mumbai police wherein some stretches of streets in central parts of Mumbai such as Marine Drive, Mulund, Vikroli etc are thrown open to the public for a few hours each Sunday for recreational activities such as yoga, jogging, skating, singing, dancing etc. “The idea is for people of Mumbai to relax and enjoy themselves doing fun activities and people with musical and other talent perform at these spots. These get a huge audience, so we thought why not do a parade at this spot,” she says.





Children participating in games at the *Masti Mela*.

So the Rotaractors prepared huge banners with slogans against women's trafficking, such as 'women are not commodities to be sold,' or 'real men do not buy women' and so on. "We marched carrying these banners and chanting slogans against female trafficking, and wherever there was a big crowd, we stopped and recited a poem. The parade aimed to draw attention to this issue, encouraging passersby to reflect on the gravity of the situation and take action."

The youngsters ran a parallel drive on social media too. The club released a short film on Instagram that drew a parallel between the treatment of girls and that of dolls, "emphasising the objectification and dehumanisation experienced by women in our community. The thought-provoking narrative resonated with viewers, resulting in an overwhelming response. Within a short span, the film reached over 12,000 people, amplifying the message against women's trafficking and sparking further discussion."

The Rotaractors have gone further than raising awareness on this issue.



A session from the Lit Fest '23.



IPP of RAC Jai Hind College Khushi Shetty (third from L), former secretary Zainab Jetpurwala (L) and Team Cheekh with Triveni Acharya, founder of the Rescue Foundation.

“In order to make a tangible difference, our club has joined hands with Rescue Foundation, an organisation dedicated to rescuing girls trapped in the web of trafficking and helping them return to their homes. Recognising the crucial work undertaken by the Foundation, the team organised fundraisers and successfully collected ₹10,100 to support this cause.”

Khushi adds that the funds raised played a vital role in facilitating the rescue and rehabilitation of five girls, providing them with a chance to rebuild their lives. She explains that an NGO in Kandivali called Huge has been started by a crime beat journalist, who wanted to rescue girls from red light areas. The volunteers do sting operations and identify the women/girls who want to get out of the deep hole they have got into. The

NGO often has to pay some money to rescue these girls and then they bring them to a rehabilitation centre.

The families are then approached and the situation of the girls is explained to them; “if the family understands, and agrees to

take back the girls, it is a happy ending. But unfortunately, many families reject them and these girls are kept in the rehabilitation centre, trained for some skill such as tailoring or starting a small business. The objective is to make them independent.”

The immediate past president of the club is happy that through “*Cheekh*, our club, where 70 per cent of the members are women, demonstrated the power of collective action and creative expression in combating women’s trafficking. By diversifying their activities, the team engaged with different audiences and fostered a broader understanding of the issue. Their efforts in raising awareness, sparking conversations, and actively contributing to the rescue of victims exemplify the club’s commitment to social change.” ■

I am so happy that we were finally able to put together a lit festival. This has been dreamt of by many past presidents.



Boosting membership, RID 3141 shows the way

Jaishree

From screening advertisements in cinema halls to organising orientation seminars and roping in celebrities, RID 3141 led by DRR Aastha Parekh has shown the way to enhance Rotaract membership in Mumbai.

August being observed as ‘membership month’ in Rotary, “we planned to focus on inducting new members — not just anyone — people with genuine interest and those who want to enjoy the Rotaract lifestyle,” smiles Aastha. Over 400 activities were conducted over a week starting Aug 1 to promote Rotaract with the participation of 39 Rotaract clubs. The efforts

resulted in increasing the membership to 4,000 in Mumbai.

The heart of this initiative was to promote and highlight Rotaract among non-Rotaractors, retain the existing members and create a pathway for the new members to join. The highlight of it all was a special *Kaun Banega Crorepati* show hosted by Bollywood icon Amitabh Bachchan with Rotaractors as participants. “It was an exciting programme and got us talking about Rotaract and our activities with the public,” she says.

A special video to promote membership and Rotaract was screened for eight days from August 1 at all

cinemas in Mumbai. Forty-two influencers and celebrities including Norwegian dancer Adil Feroz Khan, Radhika Jagtap and Tamanna Ahuja shared messages about Rotaract on social media which received over one lakh views.

An orientation seminar titled ‘The Hogwarts School’ had over 150 delegates including Rotaractors and non-Rotaractors. “We illustrated the boundless opportunities available within the realm of Rotaract and Rotary through a variety of engaging mediums.” Earlier during the month, the Rotaractors formed teams and visited colleges to introduce Rotaract to

RID 3141 DRR Aastha Parekh (centre) with (from L) Anisha Rao, Adith Iyer, Param Parikh and Utsav Kachhadiya at the Goa RYLA.



DRR Aastha Parekh with host club, RC Mumbai Lakers president Neha Gupta (centre) and RID 3170 DRR Pranjal Marathe at the RYLA in Goa.



DRR Aastha engaging school students at the RYPEN event.



Above: DG Arun Bhargava (second from R) inaugurating projects *Jeevandaan* and *Annadaan* in the presence of DRCC Rajan Dua (third from L) and DRR Aastha Parekh (L).

Right: DRR Aastha with the winners of *Technovate* - Team MingWx86.

the youngsters. “Our visit was at the right time because colleges had just opened for the first-year students and we could have their complete attention,” beams the DRR.

With the introduction of RI dues, “we saw a steady drop in Rotaract membership at the beginning of the year. Our exercise during August will inspire youngsters to join. We have

been highlighting how Rotaract stands apart from other organisations such as NSS which is present in educational institutions. We point out to them that only Rotary offers opportunities for fellowship and personal growth in the form of leadership goals, apart from community service.”

RYLA @ Goa

The district Rotaract clubs collaborated with RC Mumbai Lakers to host a three-day RYLA on the shores of the Bambolim Beach in Goa. The participants were engaged with nine activities and an ideathon, followed by a grand award ceremony. Two Rotary Youth Exchange students from Italy (RID 2060) also participated in the RYLA and “they found the programmes interesting and engaging.”

A two-day symposium was organised for school students aged 12–16. The event featured captivating sessions on mandala, graphology and paper craft, speech and drama workshops, communication skills, Frisbee and other team building activities. “This holistic programme aimed to



not only enrich their knowledge but also cultivate essential life skills,” says Aastha.

A national-level hackathon

Technovate, a 24-hour hackathon hosted by the district in Mumbai, saw a staggering 1,362 applications; 261 teams of tech enthusiasts poured in from 45 cities. Forty-five teams were shortlisted to showcase their skills in Web/Dev App, Blockchain and AI/ML to craft inventive solutions in the domain of ‘Social Causes’. The winners, who took home a cash prize of ₹50,000, and additional prizes from the sponsors, was chosen from 10 teams that had projects ranging from Marathon Organiser and Carbon Footprint Tracker to Organmatch and Medicine Integrity via Blockchain. The programme, says Aastha, “showed us how fusion of technology, social responsibility and enthusiastic collaboration can drive meaningful change.”

Earlier in July, the district welcomed the new Rotary year with a mega *Jeevandaan* and an *Annadaan* projects. *Jeevandaan*, a blood donation



A Rotaractor gives a food packet to an autorickshaw driver.



drive, was organised on a large scale in collaboration with several blood banks, across seven Western and Central Line Railway Stations. DG Arun Bhargava, along with DRCC Rajan Dua and DRR Aastha, inaugurated the drive at the Ghatkopar Railway Station. Twenty-six Rotaract and seven Rotary clubs participated in the campaign, and over 570 units of blood was collected in a single day.

Annadaan was a food donation initiative, organised along with Neotas Developers and Spark-A-Change Foundation. Food packets were ordered from First Feast, a food service provider, and the Rotaractors distributed them to various shelters, orphanages, community centres and underprivileged neighborhoods in Mumbai. Over 4,000 meal packets were distributed by Rotaractors in a single day. ■

Energetic Rotaractors of Ahmedabad

V Muthukumaran



Rotaractors
celebrate Holi.

A raakhi
collection.



Over the last three years, *Project WASH* of RAC Ahmedabad Narol, RID 3055, is inculcating basic hygiene and sanitation habits among adults and children alike in this city. “In each session, we have at least 15 children and adults who learn from our public demonstration with water-filled bucket as Rotaractors show them how to wash their hands thoroughly with soap. This year, we are consistent in holding the awareness demo, at least once a month, at

public space like garden, school, slum area and anganwadi,” says club’s IPP Hemil Acharya. So far, they would have conducted around 25 WASH sessions, but during the pandemic times, “we could not hold it due to restrictions.”

Rotaractors distribute freshly prepared food packets to the children and their families from lower rungs of society at times during WASH demos. “*Project WASH* has brought us greater visibility among the public and good feedback from the beneficiaries,” says Acharya. Last year the club sponsored a new Rotaract club — RAC

New L.J.I.E.T — on the campus of LJ Institute of Engineering and Technology in Ahmedabad with 56 charter members. “As there are very few institute-based clubs in the city, we want to promote Rotary in colleges and private institutions. Hence, we started the new Rotaract club which will create a new bonding and fellowship for its members,” he explains.

From July, the Rotaractors start the spadework for *Project Rakshika* (protection) in which *raakhis* (traditional bracelets made of colourful threads to express sibling love) are purchased in bulk from Andh Kanya Prakash Gruh, a school for the blind girls, and then sold at the retail markets on days leading to Raksha Bandhan. “We bought 1,500 *raakhis* made by partially blind girls for ₹ 15,000 and sold them mostly

to Rotaractors, Rotarians and the public. Funds are mobilised internally for *Project Rakshika* which benefits the blind school that has around 200 girls from deprived families,” he says.

The club also buys Diwali *diyas* (earthen lamps) from the blind school and sells them at local markets for “which there is great demand during festival days.” On the second day of Holi, celebrated as Dhuleti by Gujaratis where they spray coloured water and powder on each other, “we organised a zonal meet in which 250 Rotaractors from zone-1 of RID 3055 took part. It was an occasion for networking and fellowship among us. We came to know each other better.”

Friendship Day was celebrated along with Rotaractors of RAC Ahmedabad Midtown under *Project*

Langotiya Yaar (childhood buddy). Multiple games were played and they quizzed each other which created a bond among Rotaractors. I-Day was celebrated with the girl students at the blind school in partnership with RAC Ahmedabad West (Blind), an exclusive club for visually-impaired with around a dozen members. A number of fund games was held and the students were motivated by Rotaractors to excel in their studies.

In another friendship event, *Dosti*, along with RAC Ahmedabad Prahladnagar, a fun programme was held for children at a slum colony. Saloni Dalal took charge as club president this year in the presence of DRR Saheli Dhiren Shah and DRS Ankit Patel in a grand installation ceremony. In another event, DG Mehul Rathod and DRCC Shyam Kumar presided over the installation



A Rotaractor distributes food packet to a child on the sidelines of WASH session.



A *raakhi* being woven by a blind girl at the Andh Kanya Prakash Gruh.



Rotaractors give a handwash demo at a slum colony.

of Zonal Rotaract Representative-1 Sulai Shah, with Saloni as secretary; and ZRR-4 Tejendra Vaghela.

Member contributions

Sponsored by RC Ahmedabad Narol, the five-year-old community-based club with 35 members meets twice a

month for project reviews, planning and chalking out the implementation process. "We often use online platforms like Google and Zoom to meet and discuss, as professionals find it easy this way to interact with each other," says Acharya. An annual membership fee of ₹2,000 is being

collected from Rotaractors, "but we are very flexible in the mode of payment and they can pay in instalments." They have raised the annual fee by ₹200 after RI's mandatory dues came into force.

All the funds required for service projects and outreach activities are met through member contributions as well as from the club account. "Till now, we had not sought any sponsors or the help of our parent Rotary in our project execution," says Acharya who has completed BTech in Computer Science and Engineering (cybersecurity). Having been a Rotaractor for five years, "I am looking forward to become a dual member soon."

Hemal Acharya will be pursuing a Masters in Digital Forensics and Cybersecurity at the University of Albany, State University of New York. "I will continue to be a Rotaractor while living in the US. Last year, I was also the Rotaract district finance director, apart from being the club secretary, which was a good learning experience for me," he adds. ■



Rotaractors at the Zonal Garba event as part of Dussehra celebrations.

A cross-border Rotary Quiz

Kiran Zehra



The winning team — Interact Club of Galaxy School - Wadi, Rajkot.

Below: Interact Club of Fireflies, Pakistan.



RC Ahmedabad Greater, RID 3055, recently organised the Transnational Quiz on Zoom with an aim to foster international peace and promote collaboration between Rotary and Interact clubs across Asia. Thirty-six teams participated in the programme, “representing a diverse array of countries and regions,” said host club president Arup Sinha. There were four teams from Nepal-Bhutan, three from Bangladesh, seven from Pakistan, four teams representing Sri Lanka and the Maldives, and 18 teams representing India. “This international turnout demonstrated the wide-reaching impact of the quiz in bringing together young leaders from different

backgrounds and fostering cooperation and friendly competition.”

PRIP Shekhar Mehta delivered an inspirational message to the participants. “Even great leaders like Abraham Lincoln faced failures before achieving greatness. View failures as opportunities for growth and resilience,” he said.

RID Anirudha Roychowdhury advised the children to take advantage of the privileges offered by Interact clubs. “Have fun and enjoy your time in Interact. Building strong friendships and camaraderie is part of this experience. Understand that even small actions can have a significant impact in your community and the world. Your efforts matter,” he said.



Above: Team from Interact Club of Valmiki, Nepal.

Below: Interact Club of Khalsa, Kolkata.



The keynote speaker for the event was Sparsh Shah, an American rapper who has overcome a rare disorder, Osteogenesis Imperfecta. He motivated the Interactors to embrace their unique talent and contributions. “Stick to your vision, because what you can bring to the table, nobody else can,” he said.

The Interact Club of Galaxy School - Wadi in Rajkot, India, won the competition and the Interact Clubs of Visakha Vidyalaya (Colombo, Sri Lanka), Fireflies (Lahore, Pakistan), Valmiki (Narayanganr, Nepal) and Khalsa (Kolkata, India) were the runners-up. The awards will be couriered to the winners.

The quiz was hosted by Aliya T Sayed from RID 3272, Islamabad, Pakistan, and Zeaul Huda Hemal, district secretary, RID 3281. The event was supported by D Raja Cotton in Kadi, Gujarat, and Rotarians Sanjay Dalal, Mahendra Patel, Purvish Patel and Punita Mehta from Ahmedabad. ■

Changing villages through a decade-long project

Jaishree

It is rare to find Rotaractors dedicated to a single project for over 10 years. RAC HR College, Mumbai, is one such Rotaract club in RID 3141 that has been focusing all its efforts towards developing a cluster of villages in

Sangamner taluk, Maharashtra, since 2012, through its *Project Aashayein*.

Trisha Sanghvi, the then club president, wanted to do a community project which would “build a sustainable platform to provide water to drought-struck villages.” The club identified

the village cluster in Sangamner taluk which was reeling in drought, poverty and darkness. Located on the rain-shadow region in Central Maharashtra, the villages had very little rainfall and were suffering from acute water scarcity. “The residents would walk

Rotaractors of RAC HR College, Mumbai, promoting menstrual health awareness among village women.



for miles to access water. Khirpala village, located on the hills, is one of the worst affected. Women would spend 2–3 hours daily to fetch water from the foothills. Often the children accompany them and this affects their education,” says Rajaram Varpe, head of the taluk’s Village Development Committee.

The water crisis has resulted in harsh poverty in all these villages. Since a sizeable time is spent in fetching water daily, women are unable to help in the fields and crops could not be raised.

The club decided to adopt the village cluster for developmental work and designed the *Project Boond* to address the water crisis on priority. In collaboration with a Pune-based NGO Watershed Organisation Trust, “we built 17 wells, water tanks, three check dams, and installed several handpumps in villages across the taluka over this decade. The villagers are now able to draw water from the pipes installed close to their homes,” says Batul Chittorwala, the project coordinator for this Rotary year. In the later years, the Rotaractors expanded their service projects to encompass healthcare and sanitation, lighting, and education and entrepreneurship development, to bring about a holistic improvement in the villagers’ lives.

We built 17 wells, water tanks, three check dams, and installed several handpumps in villages across the taluka over this decade.

Batul Chittorwala
project coordinator
RAC H R College, Mumbai



A Rotaractor assembling a solar lighting system in a village.

The volunteers frequently would visit the villages and discuss with the residents about their requirements and the development plans. *Project Pankh* takes care of overall health, hygiene and wellbeing of the villagers. Sanitary napkins are distributed to adolescent girls and women across the taluk, and “we are slowly introducing safer options such as menstrual cups among the older women,” says Dhvani Mistry, who, along with Gauri Kadam, is part of Team Social Initiatives. Seminars are held on menstrual hygiene, safe disposal of the pads, sex education and women’s safety; “with the men we talk about gender equity and sex education.” Two NGOs — Days for Girls Organisation and the Association Social Beyond Boundaries — support these endeavours. Dhvani points out that open defecation is a huge challenge in these hamlets. At the Kumbarwadi village, people have to walk 2km to reach the closest public toilet. There are just two toilets for a population of 750 residents here.

“We will have to address this issue soon,” she adds.

In 2019, the club initiated *Project Gazaab Maharashtra* to promote entrepreneurship and financial independence among the village youngsters. Rotaractors would stay in these villages for a week every month and impart business education with a recommended syllabus from the Singapore Management University. On the eighth day the trainees will be encouraged to present their business ideas to the Rotaract panel. Seed capital will be given to the most sustainable and feasible projects.

Varpe highlights the success story of Ankita Kadari, a young beneficiary who successfully set up a tailoring unit. Now she is married and her business is also flourishing, he smiles. “Some of these youngsters have paid their college fees with the help of income generated from their business, and some are even supporting their families,” beams Bhagawat Ghagre, the committee secretary.

“We have provided seed capital to 50 budding entrepreneurs across this taluka,” says Batul.

While some hamlets are located miles away from the power grids, in others such as the Dholdara village, homes of many villagers are plunged in darkness because they cannot afford the power bills. Since 2017 the Rotaractors have installed solar lights in four tribal villages. “We have provided various lighting solutions such as study lamps, torches, household lamps and street lights,” says Batul. The project is implemented with the support of the Liter of Light Organisation, Australia. “This year we are ready to provide solar lamps for 50 more households,” she adds.

Dhvani is excited to share that *Project Aashayein* was acclaimed as the ‘Outstanding Community Service Project in the South Asia Region’ by Rotary International in 2019.

The Rotaractors have become an extended family to the villagers. “Initially we had doubts as to what these children can do. But they proved us wrong, and in these 10 years their hard work has paid off,” says Varpe. Ghagre is amazed that the youngsters have learnt to adapt to challenging situations such as lack of proper accommodation and toilets. “It is heartwarming to think that they stayed to help us.”

The team however is thankful to the villagers for their hospitality and eagerness to learn. “They are down-to-earth and ensure that we are comfortable. They would feed us three meals a day. They think that we are helping them. But it is actually a two-way relationship,” smiles Batul.

The club, chartered in 1986, has 450 registered Rotaractors. “Ours is a vibrant club and all our Rotaractors

fall in line with all the projects, be it community or personal development,” says club president Prit Jain.

In addition to the support from other NGOs and organisations, the club also raises funds for this project every year through various events. This year, the ‘Sell a Service’ event helped raise ₹88,500 in a single day. Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, complimenting the Rotaractors, also donated for the cause. The *Matka March* showcased club members balancing pots on their head and hip, copying the village women who had to carry water from long distances for their daily needs. It was a PR stunt to sensitise people about the plight of these women and it had a good media attention. A beach clean-up and a tree plantation campaign also formed part of the event.

This year the club inaugurated a well in a village with 390 families. Two hamlets were given solar lighting and sanitary pads were provided to 80 women to last them for eight months. ■

Team RAC HR College after installing a water tank in one of the club's adopted villages.



Students watch Chandrayaan-3 landing live

Team Rotary News



Government school students enjoying the live telecast of Chandrayaan-3 soft landing.

RAC Tirupur, RID 3203, organised an event that made a lasting impact on more than 500 government school students. The event featured a special live telecast of Chandrayaan-3's soft moon landing. The telecast was held in collaboration with KSC Boys Matric Hr Sec School in Tirupur.

In addition to the telecast, the club conducted an informative session on Chandrayaan Missions 1–3, rocket science, and space science for the students of Najappan Government Boys Higher Secondary School, Tirupur. This 45-minute detailed session provided valuable insight

into the fascinating world of space exploration. Following that, an engaging and interactive 30-minute Q&A session was hosted.

“The celebration of Chandrayaan's landing was a source of immense joy for everyone involved. The primary objective of this project was to raise awareness of our national achievements and inspire government school students to pursue studies in rocket and space science,” says Naveen Thirunavukkarasu, the club president.

Rotarians from RC Tirupur Thirumurugan Poondi were also in attendance at the screening. ■

Rotaract must take up global grant projects

V Muthukumaran

Expressing his happiness in spending time with Rotaractors across South Asia, RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury advised the youth brigade of Rotary to “live and enjoy every moment of Rotaract, and avoid controversy that will bring disrepute to your RI district.” Delivering his speech at the 10th installation of new president at SEARIC MDIO — South East Asia Rotaract Information Centre Multi District

Information Organisation — titled *Prarambh* (start), in Guwahati, he said that he would like to join hands with “Rotaractors in doing some impactful service projects.”

Rotaract is a parallel body of Rotary where youngsters as club members are creating an impact in society, he noted. “After the #Elevate Rotaract initiative, Rotaractors can apply for global grants for their clubs and they should make full use of this new opportunity,” Roychowdhury

said. He appreciated DG Nilesh Agarwal and DRR Parna Deb Roy for hosting the RID 3240’s first ever multidistrict Rotaract event since its formation over 33 years ago.

The outgoing SEARIC president Rahul Rajgadia, RID 3250, put on the ceremonial collar to new chief (2023–24) Abhishek Goyal, RID 3030, with a loud round of applause from 200 Rotaractors including 20–25 delegates from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and a representative from the US. The SEARIC council members were also inducted, along with the launch of a website and Rotaract directory for this nodal agency for Rotaractors in Southeast Asia. DG Agarwal, PDGs NN Dutta, Prabhat Kedia, Arijit Endow, Chandu Agarwal, RID 3240; and PDG Vommina Sathish Babu, RID 3160, gave their felicitation



SEARIC outgoing president Rahul Rajgadia puts the ceremonial collar to new president Abhishek Goyal in the presence of (from L) RID 3240 DRR Parna Deb Roy, PDG Vommina Sathish Babu, RID 3160, RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury, RID 3240 DG Nilesh Agarwal and PDG Chandu Agarwal at the installation event in Guwahati.



Above: (Seated from L) SEARIC new president Abhishek Goyal, DRR Parna Deb Roy, RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury, RID 3240 DG Nilesh Agarwal and RID 3160 Vommima Sathish Babu, along with Rotaractors, at the installation event.

After the #Elevate Rotaract initiative, Rotaractors can apply for global grants for their clubs and they should make full use of this new opportunity,

Anirudha Roychowdhury
RI Director

speeches. Assamese actor Kopil Bora gave an inspiring talk to the delegates which also had 48 DRR designates from India and abroad.

In her speech, DRR Parna thanked both the outgoing and new SEARIC president for giving an opportunity for Rotaract District 3240 to host the installation event. “We are honoured and excited to have RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury as it is very difficult to get such a tall Rotary leader as chief guest for a Rotaract event in this region,” she said. During the

awards ceremony in the morning, 45 DRRs were presented with the Ultimate Rotaract Awards, which was followed by the installation in the evening.

A Rotaractor at RAC Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh, Parna is also a member of Rotary Club of Greater Tezpur. She is a charter member of RAC Guwahati East and has been in Rotaract for four years. “We will be launching a menstrual hygiene project across RID 3240 in which around 10,000 sanitary pads will be distributed and children, both boys and girls, in villages, schools and other institutions in the age group of 8–18 years will be educated on best hygiene practices,” she says.

The menstrual project, slated for launch in either November or February, will attempt at the Global Book of Records, says Parna who is working as accounts manager at Genpact in Kolkata. She is a club mentor and also learning facilitator for her Rotaract club in Arunachal Pradesh. There are 26 clubs with a total 900-plus Rotaractors in RID 3240. ■



Addressing hunger

Jaishree

Nothing can be soul-satisfying than satiating the hunger of the less privileged and to see the eyes of a person light up when we provide a meal packet to him when he is hungry. And as my grandmother always says — his soul will bless us. I am thankful to be a Rotaractor to experience such beautiful sentiments,” says Mohanapriya, past president, RAC Sri Krishna College of Technology, RID 3201.





Rotaractors, along with professional cyclists, participate in a rally to promote environment protection.

Pasi Theerka (satiating hunger) is a signature project of the club where the Rotaractors regularly identify street dwellers, beggars, ragpickers and sanitation workers, and provide them meal packets and water bottles. The good deed is done in areas such as Kuniamuthur, Perur and Kovaipudur. “We reached out to people around the railway station and the Government Hospital in Coimbatore,” she says. At least 30 people are provided food which ranges from lemon rice, biryani, sambhar rice or curd rice, says event chair B S Badrinath.

As part of project *Pasumai Payanam* (greening drive) the club members, along with 85 professional cyclists, undertook a cyclothon across the city’s localities to spread the message. At the end of the rally, they planted saplings in a large area. The initiative was supported by the Rotaract Club of Coimbatore User Group and the OTPW Foundation, an NGO that works towards planting and nurturing plants.

The *Run for Wheels* was a special marathon for the physically-challenged, wheelchair-bound youngsters, organised by the Siruthuli Foundation and the Ganga Hospitals, and supported by the club. “We imbibed a lot from the never-say-die attitude of the participants. Despite their shortcomings, they were exuberant and raring to go at the event,” smiles club president Jayandra Mugilan. The ‘inclusive run to unleash the power of ability’ was conducted on the premises of the Ganga Rehabilitation Centre in the city.

More than 20 Rotaractors and an equal number of volunteers donated blood at a blood donation camp titled *Vital Red*. Around 170 units of blood was collected and handed over to a local blood bank.

Badrinath is the community service committee chair and S Dharshan Raj, the committee director.



Above: Rotaractors of RAC Sri Krishna College of Technology with lunch packets ready for distribution.

Below: A Rotaractor gives a meal packet to a street dweller.



Saplings being planted as part of Project Pasumai Payanam.





Above: Rotaractors with the physically-challenged participants of the Run for Wheels marathon.

Left: Club members at a freshly painted classroom in the Government Middle School, Kovaipudur.



The club members actively took part in a mission to revamp the Government Middle School in Kovaipudur. They cleaned the school, painted it in fresh, vibrant colours, and undertook minor repairs such as providing locking hooks for the windows and electrical repairs under *Project Glow*.

As part of caring for stray animals, the Rotaractors led a drive to collect old newspapers, clothes and other articles, raised funds from selling them and donated the money to the Human Animal Society, an animal care home. ■

Rajpura Rotaractors make Rotary proud

V Muthukumaran

For two consecutive years from 2020, RAC Rajpura, RID 3090, bagged the top award for largest membership among community-based clubs at the Rotaract District Awards. “But after the introduction of Rotary’s mandatory dues from July 2022, this award was discontinued in our district awards event as

our clubs suffered a steep membership decline,” says DRR Vipul Mittal, an active member and past president of the Rajpura club.

Still as the largest Rotaract club in the district with 35 Rotaractors, “we will be doubling our membership by July next year, thus taking our headcount to 70, nearing our strength before the

enforcement of RI dues for Rotaract,” he says.

Project Mahadaan, the mega blood donation camps being held by Rotaractors across Asia, was first initiated by PDRR Sahil Bhateja, who hails from this club, in 2013–14. Over the last three years, *Project Beat the Heat* is being held for two weeks in July offering cold drinks, butter

milk and tender coconut to the public as a respite from the summer heat. “We give refreshments to pedestrians, municipal workers, conservancy staff, policemen and rickshaw men for two weeks in summer,” says Mittal.



DRR Vipul Mittal, past president, RAC Rajpura, donates a speaker system to a government school in the presence of Rotaractors.





Rotaractors with orphans and special children at the SoS Village, Rajpura, ahead of Diwali.

One of the most satisfying moments for Rotaractors is spending a day with around 100 special children at Sehyog Half Way Home at the SoS Children's Village, Rajpura, during the Diwali season. "Over the last six years, we visit them during Diwali to have fun games, distribute new clothes, sweets, and have fireworks with the orphans and special children," he says.

Another feature of the 20-year-old Rotaract club is that five of its members have become DRR including Mittal over the years. "We have got our own office-cum-club hall at the Rotary Bhawan owned by RC Rajpura, a more than 50-year-old legacy club with 165 Rotarians, the largest in RID 3090," he smiles.

As DRR, Mittal has drawn up plans to hold at least 2-3 multidistrict Rotaract events. "One of them will be a three-day Rotaract Premier

League, a Twenty20 cricket tournament for north zone, slated for November in Rajpura. We hope to attract at least six teams from different RI districts."

Two-day mega installation

Speaking at the two-day DRR installation event at Barog, a scenic hill station at Solan district of Himachal Pradesh, DG Ghanshyam Kansal invited Rotaractors to

"participate in all the mega and small projects of Rotary clubs. Along with Rotarians, you have to shore up the public image of our organisation. In this regard, I will be holding a series of RLIs (Rotary Leadership Institute) to educate, train both Rotarians and Rotaractors on efficient conduct of Rotary programmes that elevate our public image."

Kansal has granted ₹50,000 from the District Designated Fund for

Rotaract clubs to take up service projects, besides giving a 50 per cent discount in registration fee for Rotaractors to take part in Rotary events.

PDRR Council chairman Rajesh Goyal has come forward to sponsor the upcoming RPL cricket tournament. A pharma entrepreneur in Himachal Pradesh, he was instrumental in the success of the Rotaract Zone Institute held in 2021-22.

In his speech, Mittal said he wanted to add 250-plus Rotaractors and charter 10 new Rotaract clubs, which would take their count to 950-plus and 56 respectively in RID 3090. "One of my ambitions is to add 100 Interact clubs this year to the existing 210 clubs in our district." PDG Bagh Singh Pannu, District Interact chair Manik Raj Singla and RC Patiala Mid Town past president Bhagwan Dass Gupta were among those present at the installation. ■



A Rotaractor gives a water bottle to a rickshaw man under Project Beat the Heat.



Participants of the *Wings to Art* workshop conducted by RAC Coimbatore Main at the Sathya Nagar slums, Coimbatore.

Giving wings to children's creativity

Jaishree



When we announced to a group of children at the Sathiya Nagar slums in Coimbatore that we will be conducting an art workshop the following Saturday (Jul 8, 2023), little did we expect the shrill shrieks and whistles of excitement and appreciation from them. That struck home in all of us how much value the lesser privileged attach to some things that we take for granted,” gushes Hephziba, past secretary of RAC Coimbatore Main, RID 3201.

When a team of club members descended on the locality that Saturday as promised, armed with paints, crayons and art sheets, they found the entire place sporting a festive look, and “there were people, young and old, dressed in their best and all set to attend our workshop.” What followed was a whirlwind of activities for two hours. The children were taught to draw and



Crowds thronging the stalls at the *Womania* exhibition organised by the club.

make wall hangings and other craft work. The club had engaged Kaviya, an art expert, for the programme. Refreshments were served to the children and the residents after the workshop.

For two consecutive years the club has been conducting an exclusive all-women exhibition — *Womania* — to showcase the art and craft creations done by women. Last year the event was “a roaring

hit. We had a remarkable footfall and the items sold like hot cakes,” she says. The three-day event was inaugurated by IPDG Sundaravadivelu. Twelve women had set up their start-up stalls and the exhibition had other exciting games. Dresses, trinkets, bangles, scrunchies soft toys and homemade products such as pickles, masalas, incense sticks and soaps were some of

the items marketed at the exhibition.

Under *Project Rhythm* the club organised two cardiac checkup camps — a paediatric heart camp for children studying at the Panchayat Union Primary School in Chettipalayam village, and a heart checkup camp for the villagers. Cardiologists from KG Hospitals screened people at both the camps. “Although none of the children had any heart ailment, the doctors found most of them malnourished and anaemic. They were advised to consume a healthy diet and were given health supplements,” says Hephziba.

At the adults camp the doctors also checked other basic vitals such as BP, cholesterol and blood sugar, in addition to ECG and Echo. People with heart ailments were advised to visit the hospital where they will be treated at a subsidised cost. ■



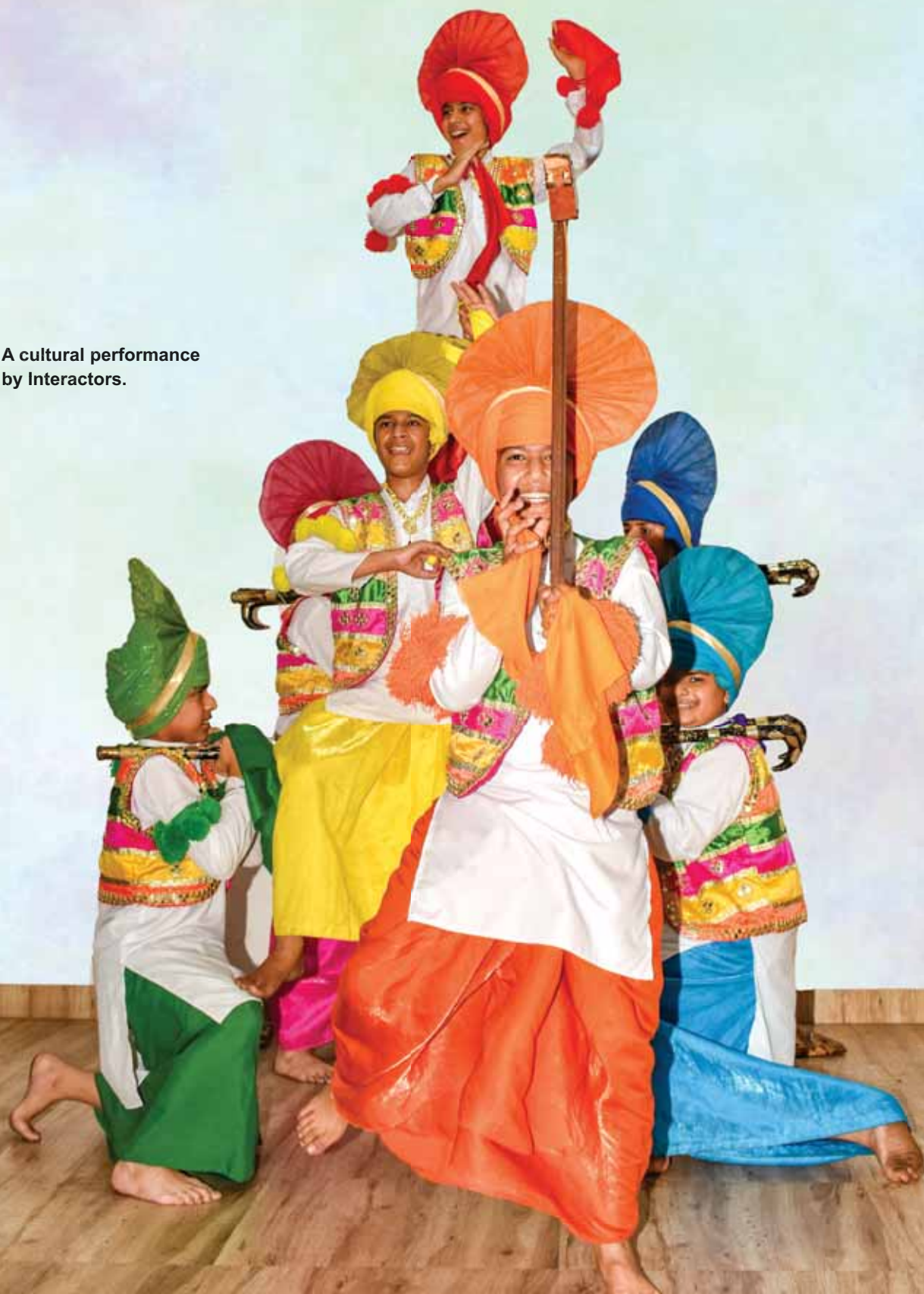
A cardiac checkup camp in progress.

Left: Children show off the craft work taught by the Rotaractors.

Interact Clubs expand in **RID 3090**

Kiran Zehra

A cultural performance
by Interactors.



In RID 3090, students have plenty of reasons to join an Interact club. “Apart from the clubs making a positive impact in their schools, the students are thrilled to have an opportunity to showcase their talent without the burden of registration fees,” says Manik Raj Singla, the District Interact Chair. He attributes this to “careful planning and the district’s commitment to understanding the students’ needs.”

In just four years, Interact clubs in this district have seen incredible growth, going from just five clubs in 2019 to a whopping 200 in 2023. One of the standout strategies that Singla calls a “game changer”, is organising school-level events. These events not only sparked interest but also created valuable community connections while showcasing the benefits that Interact clubs could bring to everyone involved. “Interact clubs have become a platform for students to flourish in our district,” he says.

The district Interact committee initiated a programme called “Involve

and Evolve Interactors,” which actively engaged Interactors in various Rotary events, transforming them into Rotary brand ambassadors. Recently 300 Interactors took part in an organ donation drive. “The number of participants outnumbered the Rotarians who organised the event,” smiles Singla. To further boost visibility and attract more students, the district invested significantly in Interact branding across electronic and print media. This increased awareness and encouraged more students to get involved, he says.

While expanding Interact clubs, the district encountered a challenge. “New club presidents often prioritised creating new Interact clubs over supporting existing ones.” To address this, Singla conducted an orientation meet to “guide them to make Interact clubs in their areas vibrant, and set specific goals for their growth, measuring progress by the number of new clubs sponsored and the number of events organised with maximum Interactor participation.” Another significant step was to work closely with Interact club committees at the Rotary club level.

He says this facilitated Rotary clubs with vital training and information to improve the performance of their sponsored Interact club.

To attract new members and clubs, the district utilised social media platforms, engaged district education officers, and hosted exclusive Rotary-Interact events. These events ranged from career counselling seminars to public speaking competitions, painting and sports tournaments, RYLAs, and an Interact Spelling Bee competition that saw the participation of 1,000 students. “We focused on the government schools and encouraged the students to participate. To keep things easy and simple, we charged no registration fee. Over 50 government schools now have Interact clubs,” beams Singla.

The district Interact committee mentored school principals and teachers, who guided students at the local level. While no financial incentives were offered, the district boosted Interactors’ morale by providing participation certificates and trophies to competition winners, and certificates to coordinating teachers. ■



District Interact chair Manik Raj Singla (third from R) and PDG Gulbahar Singh Retole with Interactors.

Creating platforms and opportunities for youngsters to build a successful career has been the singular focus of RAC Deonar, RID 3141, ever since it was chartered 35 years ago. And their parent Rotary, RC Deonar, helps them through sponsorship and resources for holding big ticket events throughout the year. “RC Deonar president Sangita Shahani helps us in many ways. She lets out a spacious hall at her culinary institute for our bimonthly meetings where all our members do a healthy brainstorming,” says Vaishnavi Shetty, club president.

While this community-based club has 45 members with a good mix of college students, salaried people and professionals from all walks of life, “around 20 people will be inducted soon. We have members from as young as 18-year-old to 35-year-old professionals,” says Vaishnavi. *Project Hire Me* is a one-day workshop with two sessions in which experts and mentors give stimulating lectures to college students on shaping their career through enhancing their skill sets and developing the right attitude. “Basically, we empower students and professionals with guest lectures and interactive sessions. In July, two speakers, Saloni Satam, a soft skills trainer, and Zaid Khan, founder-CEO, Zedital, delivered lectures on ‘modules of professionalism’ and ‘how to build a startup’ respectively to over 100 participants including Rotaractors and college students,” she explains.

The career guidance event was done in partnership with five other Rotaract clubs — RACs Atlas Skill-Tech University, Ruia College, Bombay Pier, SIES Sion (East) and Bombay Airport. With the support of their parent Rotary, a two-day RYLA will be held in October at Lonavala. “We are confident of having around 60 college and school students for the RYLA which will focus on academics, career-building and grooming leadership under a broad theme

Deonar Rotaract mentors youngsters

V Muthukumaran



RAC Deonar president Vaishnavi Shetty (L) and secretary Shweta Nair honour a guest speaker.

Club president Vaishnavi Shetty (6th from L) and secretary Shweta Nair (7th from R) along with Rotaract leaders of RID 3141.



of *Leadership in digital age*,” says Shweta Nair, club secretary and a lawyer. Recalling her three-year Rotaract journey, she says, “the organisation provides ample scope for you to learn through project planning, execution and management, which our colleges can’t provide.”

Over the last 30 years, *Project Xpressions* has honed the diverse skills of thousands of school students. “We hold this two-day cultural fest for schools across Mumbai. Around 2,000 students from 30–35 schools take part not just in dance and singing competitions, but in a plethora of art display including fashion show, painting, clay modelling et al,” she says. A panel of experts judge the contestants and prizes are given to the winners across different genres.

Waiting to join Rotary

Shweta (26) wanted to become a member of RC Deonar, her parent club, only after reaching 30. “I am looking forward to become an active



Students give wings to their imagination at *Project Xpressions*.

Rotarian, but have to wait for four more years,” she smiles. For her friend, Sonal Agrahari, the club’s joint secretary, and studying Law, “being in Rotaract is full of excitement. I have gained self-confidence, turned into an extrovert and very comfortable in making public speeches.” This is her fourth year in Rotaract, and she was

earlier member of RAC Guru Nanak Khalsa College.

Summing the efforts of her club, Vaishnavi, a fintech analyst at TSS Consultancy, says, “we not only open up a platform for college students to plan their career, but also groom their personality through global perspectives.”■



Anti-drug campaign in schools

Kiran Zehra



RC Solapur North (parent club) president Dr Nihar Burte and secretary Dhanashri Kelkar with RAC Sangameshwar president Sanjana Nagtilak after distributing prizes to winners of Mantavya, an elocution competition organised by the club for school students.

In a bid to illuminate the path towards a bright, addiction-free future, the Rotaract Club of Sangameshwar, RID 3132, launched *Project Tejomay*, an addiction awareness campaign. “This initiative is primarily aimed at educating secondary school students in Solapur about the harmful side effects of addictive substances such as tobacco, alcohol and cigarettes,” says club president Sanjana Nagtilak.

The first part of the campaign engaged students through a multimedia presentation

to illustrate the detrimental effects of addictive substances, along with details about their ingredients and the legal penalties associated with their consumption. Short video clips were played to maintain students’ interest and simplify the complex topics. “Our initiative also introduces healthier alternatives, such as reading, working out and networking, to encourage positive habits among young minds,” says Sanjana.

After a week, the club hosts an elocution competition for the students at the same

school, encouraging them to share what they’ve learned during the awareness sessions. Sanjana points out that “this phase not only reinforces their understanding but also nurtures their public speaking skills and confidence.”

She further adds that “each school has a designated project chair, and they oversee all aspects of the project, from start to finish.” The elocution competition is judged by fellow Rotaractors, providing them with opportunities to enhance their analytical skills.

The club has already reached out to five schools, benefiting over 1,000 students. The project cost per school is ₹5,000. Participants receive certificates, while winners of the elocution competition are rewarded with certificates, medals, and cash prizes of ₹1,000 for the first place, ₹700 for the second, and ₹500 for the third place.

One poignant moment during a *Tejomay* session, says Sanjana, was when a Class 6 student shared “the suffering of his mother and aunt who are victims of domestic

violence caused by their intoxicated spouses. The student said he felt helpless when his mother pleaded him to save her from the physical violence. He pledged to never touch addictive substances and ensure a safe space for the women of his house. It was a heart-wrenching testimony but it also underscores the importance of our campaign.”

As part of World Rotaract Week, the club conducted *Mantavya*, an elocution competition held at the Sangmeshwar College in the city. This joint effort with its parent club, RC Solapur North, was sponsored by Manodaya Neuropsychiatric Hospital. The parent club president Dr Nihar Burte and secretary Dhanashri Kelkar were present at the event. Approximately 25 participants spoke on a variety of topics,



A participant delivers a speech at the elocution competition.

including mental health and blood donation.

The competition was judged by renowned communication experts

Manjusha Gadgil and the Rotaract club’s IPP Shreya Mashal. Participants received certificates, while

winners were honoured with trophies and cash prizes. The dignitaries were given tulsi saplings, as memento. ■

Schoolchildren interacting with Rotaractors during a lecture on drug abuse.



Bonding over a football game

V Muthukumaran

Every year a one-day football tournament is hosted by RAC Borivali Heights, RID 3141, that attracts school, college and working professionals' teams across age groups to win the RCBH trophy and prize money. "We aim to unite communities and foster goodwill through football as the RCBH tourney draws competitive teams from across Mumbai; and this time, we had teams from Pune too. Out of 24 contesting teams, the winner got a trophy with a prize money of ₹10,000, while the runner-up was given a smaller trophy

with a purse of ₹6,000," says Yash Goda, club president.

The fundraiser, *RCHB 5.0*, mobilised around ₹50,000 which will be used to provide scholarships to meritorious students from less privileged families and to hold a series of seminars and workshops at the Swami Vivekanand High School, Dahisar, in East Mumbai.

The football matches held at the Players Turf, Goregaon West, saw a large number of spectators cheering the teams and the organising team of Rotaractors took care of logistics and coordination

which were handled by project chairpersons Rtrs Aryan and Shrey, both mentored by Rtr Rohit. "With the amount raised, we are providing the school fees of 30 poor students; and had hosted a couple of workshops on personality development and 'good touch, bad touch' for children at the Swami Vivekanand School," says Goda.

A seminar on Mandala art, a series of abstract circular designs that aims to promote inner peace, was also held in which students were taught on the fine skills required for this aesthetic drawing,

sketches and mural painting. "We will be holding a dance competition for students in the near future," he says.

Mental health seminar

Dr Siddhi Khapre, psychologist, gave a talk at a mental health seminar, titled 'Matters of the mind,' co-hosted by the club, with the participation of 35 Rotaractors. The importance of having a sound mind through a healthy lifestyle and life-work balance was emphasised at the seminar.

Around 50 units of blood was collected at the blood donation camp,



RAC Borivali Heights president Yash Goda (standing, 4th from L) with Rotaractors at the football tournament.

named *Geetanjali*, organised jointly with parent Rotary, RC Borivali East, and donated to a private hospital. “We have plans to honour at least a dozen youth with Yuva Puraskar Awards in the third quarter of this Rotary year. And we have started work to identify youngsters who had achieved big success or contributed immensely to the society for the awards,” explains Goda.

In his third year at Rotaract, Goda, an IT data analyst, is happy with the steady progress of his seven-year-old club in the overall performance metrics in RID 3141. While in 2021–22, they got 25th rank among Rotaract clubs in the district, “we jumped to 13th rank last year and are confident of reaching the top five positions by the end of this year.”



Club president Goda gives a commendation certificate to Dr Siddhi Kapre, a psychologist, at the mental wellness seminar.

Regular brainstorming, review sessions and planning at the bimonthly club meetings have contributed to the success of their service projects, he says.

With the growing visibility of the club, two of their members are now part of the District Rotaract’s core team, and DRR-elect Nikhita Sunil is an active member

of RCBH. While Goda is eager to become a Rotarian, he says, “I will join a Rotary club only after I get settled in my life and career with a good financial stability.” ■

Students of Swami Vivekanand High School, Dahisar, at one of the personality development seminars.



Silchar Rotaract involves community in environment projects

Kiran Zehra

In a comprehensive community engagement, RAC Silchar, RID 3240, collaborated with Mahindra Finance for *Project Hariyali*, spanning four phases.

Club president Prasenjit Debnath says, “Our joint mission was to accomplish a widespread tree planting initiative across various locations in Silchar, bolstering the green cover in our community to combat environmental degradation, and actively contribute to a healthier and more

sustainable ecosystem locally.” He further adds, “We did not just want to plant the sapling and forget about it and are trying to come up with an easy maintenance plan where Rotaractors would adopt the saplings and ensure its growth.” Close to 140 saplings were planted in various locations in the city.

In another environmental initiative, the club undertook a paper bag distribution project dubbed *The Magic of Paper*. “The endeavour

aims to curb the use of plastic and promote environmental consciousness,” says the club president whose team concentrated their efforts in the local Karimganj market, encouraging shop owners and customers to use eco-friendly paper bags.

Working alongside their parent club, RC Silchar, Rotaractors provided essential medicines to patients at the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, Silchar. The medicines included tablets for cold and fever, cough

syrups, gastric medications, and multivitamins. Debnath says, “We wanted to ensure that needy individuals have access to healthcare support.”

Additionally, the club organised a health check-up camp that benefited around 500 patients, aiming to improve access to healthcare services in underserved areas and promote overall health and well-being for rural residents. “The camp was a huge learning experience for us. From organising different medical counters

RAC Silchar president Prasenjit Debnath (centre) with Rotarians and staff of Mahendra Finance in one of the venues where saplings were planted.





Rotaractors at the medicine counter at a medical camp in the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, Silchar.



to making sure the beneficiaries received the right medicines we had to be on our toes,” he sighs.

Debnath says, “We collaborated with Choudhury Eye Hospital and Research Centre to offer free eye check-up to 70 patients. Simultaneously, an awareness programme was carried out to promote eye health, and we sponsored cataract surgeries for eight patients.”

With the objective of providing sustenance to those facing hunger, the club cooked and distributed food to underprivileged individuals. They also conducted a food donation drive at an old age home in Silchar. ■

Promoting healthy diet and nil food wastage

V Muthukumaran

An eight-year-old *Project Happy Plate* of RAC Coimbatore Institute of Technology, RID 3201, has created positive vibes across the college campus with its focus on avoiding food wastage and distribution of surplus food to less privileged families in nearby villages. “We urge students to avoid food wastage and reward them with badges and memorabilia like bookmarks, greeting cards and key chains for achieving a certain goalposts in our project,” says K Thiyanesan, club’s past secretary.

Top ranked students who had amassed huge points are given

discount coupons for food, snacks and ice creams at various retail outlets.

With a concerted drive, most students are now conscious not to waste food (meals, tiffin, snacks, beverages) they consume at the hostel mess and canteen, “as a result, we have given 470 coupons and 230 *Happy Plate* badges to students last year,” he says. “Last few years, we donated books (novels, short stories), instead of coupons, to students as Covid shutdown curtailed our activity.” Leftover or surplus food at the mess and canteen were collected at one place, packed neatly and distributed to roadside families and homeless people. In an offshoot of *Happy Plate*, the Rotaractors

pooled in ₹10,000 and camped at Ondipudur, a suburb, to cook meals which were distributed to 150 rural families there.

Chartered in January, 1977, the club has 31 members, all of them pursuing different science and engineering streams at the UG and masters’ level in this famed college at Peelamedu in the heart of Coimbatore. The Rotaractors have carved a niche for themselves in various outreach activities.

Through *Project Safe Period*, the club had adopted Little Hearts, a special home for differently-abled girls and women, for six months, during which “we gave them around 900 sanitary pads to all the



A Rotaractor donates sanitary pads to an inmate of Little Hearts in the presence of Club’s IPP G Karthik (2nd from R) and other members.



Club's IPP Karthik (2nd from R), along with Rotaractors, at *Project Safe Period*.

60 inmates.” Also, three menstrual hygiene sessions were conducted at the home educating the girls with dos and don'ts for healthy periods.

Another signature event, *Project Nalam Anbudan* (health with love) serves health supplements and energy drinks after explaining their nutritional value to students. “We are providing nutritional food at display stalls over the last seven years. Last

year alone, we have reached out to 1,500 students on our CIT campus,” explains Thiyanesan. For around 100 student athletes, “we served sprouts made of cereals and pulses that will boost their energy.” Organic soup and amla juice were given to elderly walkers who visit the campus for regular exercise in the morning.

For the first time, Rotaractors teamed up with Kovai Cool, an

NGO, to plant around 250 saplings of diverse species on the premises of Universal Elder Care, an old age home. “Over 40 volunteers including Rotaractors and students took part in the greening mission under *Project Nitham Oru Padi*,” says G Karthik, club's IPP. Their parent Rotary, RC Coimbatore East pitches in with sponsorship and mentorship for some of the Rotaract projects; “and it provides seed money for holding some key events like *Project Athena*, a talent hunt for schoolchildren, and installation of new office-bearers,” he says.

Studying in the final year MSc (four-year integrated course on software system), Thiyanesan says, “the three-year Rotaract stint has changed my professional attitude for good, helped me in time management and multitasking.” The 20-year-old district trainer wants to continue as Rotaractor after exiting from college by joining a community-based club in Coimbatore. “I want to become a Rotarian only after reaching 30, till then I will remain in Rotaract,” he smiles. ■



A Rotaractor gives a *Happy Plate* badge to her collegemate.

A Rotaract App gets more hands, fresh ideas

V Muthukumaran



RAC Parleshwar Genz members along with children at a slum colony in Bandra, Mumbai, during *Project Yaariyan*. Club president Yash Mitra is 7th from left.

A two-year old RAC Parleshwar Genz, RID 3141, is into hectic membership drive as its president Yash Mitra is making full use of the *R-App*, a district Rotaract induction portal. “We have 26 active registered members, and in the coming days more professionals and students will join us through this *R-App*, after which they will also get their IDs through the RI website, *rotary.org*, so that we raise our headcount to take up more projects for the community,” says Mitra.

Recently, through *Project Yaariyan* (friendship) they engaged around 150 children in the age group of 6–18 years at a slum colony in Bandra, Mumbai, in fun games and gave motivational talks to them. “We asked them what they would like to eat, and as they preferred Chinese food like noodles and Manchurian, the same were served to the children. Sweets and savouries were also distributed to them, which they relished a lot,” he recalls.

With the aim to foster bonding among the youth, a one-day, five over-each cricket tournament, called *Sahas 2.0*, was organised for 20 teams having six players each. “It was an open cricket where any team can participate, and we had around 40 spectators to cheer up the players at the Gallant Turf, Juhu.” While the winning team got a trophy, medals, Decathlon (the sponsor) goodies and prize money of ₹2,000, the runner-up team was given a smaller trophy, the same gifts and cash prize ₹1,000.

The club has plans to hold a menstrual hygiene seminar in a village near Mumbai under *Project Laal Naari* (red woman). “We are in the process of identifying the village and are in talks with a WHO trained doctor who will be giving a lecture to the villagers,” says Mitra. He is aiming to reach out to around 60–100 rural women who will be taught on best hygiene practices.

Expressing his heartfelt thanks to RC Mumbai Parleshwar president



A Rotaractor serves food to a child.

Monika Tandon, he says, “our parent Rotary is mentoring us and providing resources for holding diverse projects whenever we approach them with such a need.” Having been in Rotaract for three years, Mitra, a final year B Tech (mechanical) student at the K G Somaiya College of Engineering, says he learnt three fundamental skills as a Rotaractor — leadership, management traits and networking, which

have “changed my attitude and way of life thoroughly.”

At 21, he will be passing out of college this year, “but I will continue to be an active member in this community club. I will be in Rotaract for another nine years, and at 30 I will join Rotary to better myself in all matters of life.” Mitra wants to joint his parent RC Mumbai Parleshwar which guides his Rotaract club now. ■

Creating an impact in RID 3080

Team Rotary news

Several Rotaract clubs in RID 3080 have done impactful projects aimed at spreading happiness, raising awareness, and extending a helping hand to those in need. Here's a glimpse of their efforts:

Project Ashirwad

Laughter, dance, and music filled the air when RAC Chandigarh Shivalik visited Kartar Asra, an old age home in Chandigarh, to celebrate Grandparent's Day. Games were played over tea and a special monsoon snack — Ghewar — was served along with other foods.

Organ donation awareness

RAC Panchkula Beautiful with the motto, *Life can begin after death*, aimed to provide insight into organ donation and its significance hosted a seminar at the health department of Haryana, Panchkula.

Flash flood relief

In response to the devastating floods caused by incessant rains in July 2023, RAC Mohali City in collaboration with RC Mohali Midtown carried out a food donation drive for 750 affected people.



Hepatitis awareness drive

RAC DAV Girls College conducted an awareness campaign on hepatitis, dispelling myths and educating students in government schools and colleges in Yamunanagar, Haryana.

Training in CPR

RAC GNKC provided knowledge about heart diseases and CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) to people on the streets and demonstrated CPR — an emergency procedure that can save lives. This project sought to equip individuals with the skills needed to respond effectively in critical situations.

Donation drive for specially-abled students

This project by RAC Himachal Pradesh National Law University focused on donating essential items to specially-abled children and providing them with monetary support to cover their school expenses. ■



In Brief



World's first green container ship

The world's first 'green container ship' fuelled by methane from food waste

and landfill waste has docked in Felixstowe, England. Maersk, the logistics company behind the success of this ship, has 24 additional methanol-powered ships scheduled for delivery by 2027 as part of its commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2040.



Releasing 2,000 white rhinos

Conservation group African Parks has acquired the world's largest private rhino farm, home to a significant portion of the remaining white rhino population. They plan to release 2,000 captive white rhinos, along with their offspring, into secure locations across Africa, in a major effort to rewild these endangered animals.



Iraq eliminates trachoma

Iraq has become the 17th country to eliminate trachoma, the leading infectious cause of blindness globally. Improvements in sanitation helped Iraq defeat the disease, which is endemic in parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America.



Taiwan takes on period poverty

Taiwan is addressing period poverty by dedicating a NT\$100 million (£2.5 million) package to offer free menstrual products in schools and universities, benefiting 95,000 students, with a focus on those from

low-income background. Furthermore, public venues such as libraries, museums and art centres in major cities will provide these products.



Luggage-free travel in Japan

Japan Airlines (JAL) has introduced a trial clothing rental service called "Any Wear, Anywhere" for arriving passengers, allowing them to rent clothing in advance and avoid the need for checked luggage. This initiative also lightens the aircraft, helping to save on fuel and emissions, thus contributing to lower carbon emissions for JAL.

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