

Rotaract NEWS

ROTARACT OUTSTANDING PROJECT AWARDS 2021-22

The Rotaract Outstanding Project Awards recognise exceptional community or international service projects that focus and increase the humanitarian service goals of Rotary International.

Selection process

Each online nomination form must be submitted by February 1, 2022. Awards will be granted to one winner in each of the designated regions. Awards will also be granted to international winners for projects submitted by a single club, projects submitted by more than one club or an entire Rotary district, and multi-district projects. Awardees will receive \$1,000 toward future project activities. Winners will be announced at the Rotaract Preconvention. Projects that took place from February 1, 2021 through January 31,

2022 are eligible for consideration. Rotaract clubs that have received an award in previous years are still eligible to receive an award again.

Criteria

Project submissions will be evaluated in the following criteria:

- **Sustainability (25%)**
- **Community assessment and impact in Rotary's areas of focus (25%)**
- **Collaboration with Rotarians and local experts to enhance effectiveness (20%)**
- **Support of Rotary's commitment to change lives locally and globally (15%)**
- **Percentage of Rotaract club members involved in development and implementation of project (15%)**

Optional supporting materials

Project submissions may include links to online photographs, videos, blogs, social media sites, local media coverage, and other information that demonstrate the reach and impact of the project submission. Members of the award panel will consider this information as they review your nomination. Only information submitted on the nomination form will be considered; information submitted directly to RI by email or post will not be reviewed by the award panel.

Nominations for the 2021–22 Rotaract Outstanding Projects are open since August 1, 2021. Follow the **Rotaract Facebook page** to stay updated on the Awards. Visit <https://on.rotary.org/ROPA2021> for more details.



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RI Director **Dr Mahesh Kotbagi**

RI Director **AS Venkatesh**

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Combating addiction, the Rotary way

One of the major problems afflicting our youth and their families in India today is addiction of various kinds; not only to tobacco, liquor, drugs, but also to the Internet. The last includes the dark net which can only be accessed through specific software, configuration, or authorisation. All the unfathomable horrors that you can think of are available on the dark net, which is, unfortunately, attracting a certain group of disillusioned, unhappy, misled and misguided youngsters, many of them in schools. On this dark net, you can buy drugs through the black market, access pornography, get information about credit and debit card numbers, bank accounts details and social security numbers, leaving them vulnerable to hacking and even firearms.

A Rotary Action Group on Addiction Prevention (RAG-AP) has been functioning under the chairmanship of past RI president Kalyan Banerjee, with Johan Maertens from Belgium having put in a lot of hard work in fighting substance abuse, through Rotary, across the world, particularly in Europe. As you will read in this issue an article, which is also the cover story for the coming issue of *Rotary News*, this RAG is very active in India under Banerjee's leadership. The core team working under him is deeply

concerned about how younger and younger children are getting addicted to not only harmful substances but also the Internet, including the dark net, from which hellhole, even suicides have been committed by youngsters.

As PDG Ulhas Kolhatkar (RID 3142), a paediatrician himself, puts it, now the Internet has taken precedence over the other three forms of addiction — tobacco, alcohol and drugs — among the young. While earlier doctors like him used to see 14–15-year-old students of Classes 9 or 10 with Internet addiction, now the age has come down to 12–13 years. “We now find that Class 7 and 8 kids are getting addicted to first tobacco, and then beer or other softer forms of alcohol... not hard liquor.”

As for Internet addiction, can you imagine that children between 5 and 8 years getting addicted, and this has happened thanks to the Covid pandemic forcing parents to give mobile phones and Internet access to their children for online classes. Even homes where a certain age bar had been strictly put in place for making available the mobile phone to kids, have had to do away with this restriction for the sake of their children's education.

It is good to note that this RAG is depending on the younger arm of Rotary — Rotaractors — to help in spreading awareness about addiction and substance abuse. A 2.5-minute video prepared by Rotaractors is getting great traction, and has become rather popular. Along with other simple material and concrete tips on what Rotary clubs can do to combat this great evil in our communities, it can be downloaded from the website rotaryaddictionprevention.in.

We all know how the young listen to, and trust, those closer to their age much more than older people. Invariably, a sibling proves more useful than a parent in solving a problem of conflict pertaining to a child in a family. If the power of Rotaractors and Interactors can be unleashed by Rotary to fight the evil of addiction and spread awareness of substance abuse, it would have climbed one more summit in the world of doing good.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Rasheeda Bhagat'.

Rasheeda Bhagat

Let's enhance Rotaract membership



Rotaract is going through a tremendous transformation. The journey of transformation started in 2016 when dual membership has been offered to Rotaractors. Today, there are several Rotaractors who are enjoying the benefits of dual membership — the best of both worlds of Rotaract and Rotary.

Our world leader Shekhar Mehta desires that Rotaract should grow multifold and by 2022 the reported membership should reach at least 300,000. Rotaractors across the world are geared up to double their membership. Every Rotaractor is enthused to bring another Rotaractor. I request Rotaractors to use their considerable skills to bring in Rotarians so that the face of Rotary will change.

Rotary Service Days is another activity that Rotaractors should take up with gusto. I request every Rotaract club to participate jointly with Rotary clubs in Rotary Service Days. Please plan projects to showcase Rotary and Rotaract and also invite at least 25 outsiders to witness the project. This will boost our image and also strengthen Rotaract.

Empowering girls is the clarion call given by our world leader and I urge every Rotaract club to plan and participate in these programmes. My favourite programme is to sensitise girls on menstrual hygiene and encourage use of reusable sanitary napkins.

Rotaract clubs are taking up tree plantation to preserve planet Earth and adult literacy in a big way.

I am happy to inform that District 3150 has signed an MoU with the Telangana government to support Rotaract clubs in all professional and degree colleges. The government of Telangana is treating Rotaract on par with NCC and NSS — a landmark agreement which will strengthen Rotaract in educational institutions. We are working with other state governments to follow suit.

The SEARIC MDIO led by Rtr/Rtn Koushal Sahu has launched a programme called *Show Rotaract Grow Rotaract* which is receiving excellent support. I request every Rotaract district to participate in the programme.

Let's together transform Rotaract.

Ravi Vadlamani
World Rotaract Co-chair

“

*Transformation
literally means going
beyond your form.*

– Wayne Dyer

”

A vaccine outreach programme in Umbergaon

Kiran Zehra



Rotaractors helping out in the vaccination drive.

RAC Umbergaon, RID 3060, carried out a mega vaccination drive at a public health centre in Umbergaon, Gujarat. “It is important because every one of us know somebody who have passed away due to Covid,” says club member and PDRR Chintan Shah.

Over 10,000 people were vaccinated at the centre and “we will be helping the local administration with another round of the campaign.” To overcome vaccine - hesitancy and convince people to get the shot the club has set up a helpline number. “We receive close to 150 calls on an average every day,” says Ashika Shah, a club member.

As the club has been working closely with the community and has carried out various service initiatives “we have gained their trust. We leveraged that and with science-based information we encourage them to take the jab,” explains Shah. Ashika adds that the callers had a range of doubts such as is the vaccine safe, will I die if I take the vaccine? “We clarify their queries patiently. The more accurate information we gave people, and told them the science behind the vaccine, they heard us out and were convinced to get vaccinated.”

A selfie booth installed at the vaccination centre helped

to enhance the club’s public image in the area. “People would click their pictures after getting their vaccines and we would ask them to tag us on their social media accounts,” says Shah. Sanitisers and masks were also provided to the healthcare workers at the vaccination centre by the club.

In memory of PDRR Bhumik Shah, who passed away recently after a prolonged illness, the club carried out the *Big Smiles* Project. “We donated 60 umbrellas to rural students at Kankradi School in Dahad as a gesture to continue the good work Bhumik started,” says Shah. ■

Inculcating culture and tradition in children

Jaishree

One hundred little Krishnas were running helter skelter at the Rotary Bhawan in Bikaner on Janmashtami Day that celebrates Lord Krishna's birthday. The event was a fancy dress contest organised by Rotaract Club of Bikaner Marudhara and its parent club, RC Bikaner Marudhara, RID 3053. "This is the fourth year we are conducting this event where children are encouraged to dress like Krishna or his consort Radha. It is so much fun and every year the number of participants keeps increasing. It is a very popular event in the locality," says project chairman Devinder Singh. Last year owing to the Covid pandemic the programme was a virtual one, and "it had 150 participants."

The older children were made to recite verses from the Bhagwad Gita and episodes from the epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are related as part of the event to encourage appreciation of our culture and tradition in the young minds. All the children were given participation certificates after a sumptuous feast. The event has enhanced

Rotary's public image, says the Rotaract club president Vinay Bissa.

The seven-year-old club is planning to charter a Rotary club by the end of the year with all its 40 members becoming dual members. Bissa also aims to charter at least two institution-based Rotaract clubs in colleges. As a run up to the World Polio Day (Oct 24) the club has

planned a week-long campaign to propagate the need to continue administering polio drops in children even though India has been declared polio-free. "We plan to do this event in association with the CMHO (Chief Medical Health Office), Bikaner," he says.

The club recently organised a blood donation camp which helped to collect 134 units of blood. It was given to the government hospital.



Rtn Dr Sundeep Khare of RC Bikaner Marudhara felicitating a young winner.

Rotaractors and Rotarians from other clubs donated blood at the camp.

The club is in the process of setting up a tailoring institute to train underprivileged women and help them earn a livelihood. “We will assist them to get jobs or direct business from our known sources to women who opt to have their own tailoring unit,” he says, adding that the club plans to

We will assist the women to get jobs or direct business from our known sources to those who opt to have their own tailoring unit.

Vinay Bissa
President, RAC Bikaner
Marudhara



Rtn Pushpendra Singh (L) and RAC Bikaner Marudhara President Vinay Bissa (R) with the participants.



**Rotaractors
at the blood
donation
camp.**

donate sewing machines to five women who cannot afford to buy one. Rotary Club of Aadya, an all-women’s club in Bikaner, has also promised to sponsor around 20 sewing machines.

Although the amended RI policy has done away with the upper age limit for Rotaractors, and with the deciding power resting on the respective Rotaract clubs, Bissa says that his club prefers to have Rotaractors under 30 and is terminating older Rotaractors. After 30 people become more business-oriented. The pressure to succeed makes them focus more on ways to promote their business and so even casual interactions would eventually turn into business meetings, he says. ■

A Rotary Action Group combats addiction

Rasheeda Bhagat

When Johan Maertens, vice-president and chair, Scientific Committee, of the Rotary Action Group for addiction prevention (RAG-AP) invited me to chair this action group, as he felt that I will be able to draw in more Rotarians for this cause, I decided to focus on India as substance abuse has become a huge problem in our country,” says past RI president Kalyan Banerjee, adding that in several European countries Rotary has done a lot of work in this area.

This was three years ago; Banerjee pulled in two past RI

presidents — Jonathan Majiyagbe and Gary Huang — on board, put together a core team in India and sent out letters to all the RI districts in India, underlining the need for Rotarians to get seriously involved as “we are a country where addiction is a huge issue with large numbers addicted to tobacco, alcohol, drugs, etc. It’s a growing menace which needs to be tackled.”

But even as the initiative of involving Rotary clubs in India to address substance abuse took off, the corona pandemic hit and as Rotarians grappled with the challenges related to fighting Covid, this initiative took a back seat.

But now, of the 40 RI districts, 20 have wrote back expressing their willingness to take this programme forward, says Banerjee.

“My main objective is to get each Rotary district from India to form a core group to work on addiction prevention and substance abuse. It is a fact that more people are dying from addiction of different kinds in India today than the number of people killed by Covid. This is a raging problem which not too many talk or are bothered about, except those affected and the families afflicted. I believe this is something that needs to be taken on a serious footing, particularly as



PDG Ulhas Kolhatkar (third from L) in Thane at one of the Rotary Action Group Addiction Prevention programmes.



An anti-drugs seminar conducted by RC Solan, RID 3080, for school students.

children and youth are likely to get addicted,” he says.

Three PDGs who are closely working closely with Banerjee to create awareness on the ill-effects of different forms of addiction in India and create avenues for treatment by forging partnerships with other groups, corporates and the

We are a country where addiction is a huge issue with large numbers addicted to tobacco, alcohol, drugs, etc. It's a growing menace which needs to be tackled.

Kalyan Banerjee
Past RI President

government, are Ulhas Kolhatkar (RID 3142), Deepak Purohit (RID 3131) and Himanshu Thackar (RID 3060). “Kolhatkar, himself a paediatrician, has done a great job by talking to students, particularly in RID 3142, and also roping in other groups already working on addiction prevention in India. Purohit and Thackar are also involved in the various initiatives we have taken to talk to students, teachers, educating and motivating them to talk to larger groups to spread awareness on the dangers of addiction,” adds Banerjee.

PDG Kolhatkar says he is “deeply concerned about all kinds of addictions afflicting younger and younger children; so we are trying to focus on school kids. Invariably, the first exposure to any kind of addiction, especially in children, is tobacco; the second stage is alcohol and then come drugs.”

Intervenes Banerjee, “Today, apart from opium and other drugs, tobacco and alcohol, one of the most threatening forms of addiction in young children is addiction to the Internet. On the dark net, some

youngsters have even committed suicide because of this addiction. And this is something that needs to be addressed. Another concern is that children are all the time playing games, or watching pornography. Whatever the addiction, the Internet has emerged as highly addictive in some groups in our country.”

He says that Maharashtra is one of the worst affected states, along with Punjab, as “depicted in the film *Uda Punjab*. The good news is that Rtn Manmohan Singh from Punjab, who is working on addiction prevention, is the brother of the new Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi, and such connections between Rotary and the government are being established everywhere, which is very helpful.”

Banerjee adds that a core member of the Rotary executive committee in India working on prevention of substance abuse is PDG Himanshu Thackar from Surat, RID 3060. “He and his wife have been working on de-addiction in Gujarat for the last 20 years and he is specifically focusing on people who have

become de-addicted and helping them to stay so. As we know, the de-addicted need continuous help to prevent relapse, and they are the best ones to take the message to those who are potential future addicts, by telling them about the dangers of addiction from their personal experience.”

Kolhatkar adds that now the Internet has taken precedence over the other three forms of addiction — tobacco, alcohol and drugs — among the young. “Previously we used to see 14–15-year old students of Classes 9 or 10 with Internet addiction, but now the age has come down to 12–13 years and that is frightening. We now find that Class 7 and 8 kids are getting addicted to first tobacco, and then beer or other softer forms of alcohol... not hard liquor.”

As for Internet addiction, he now finds children between 5 and 8 years getting addicted, “particularly with classes going online during Covid, and children getting access to mobile phones even in homes where parents were earlier strict about giving them access to the cell phone.”

As mandated by the RAG on addiction prevention, many Rotary districts are holding workshops for psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, teachers and others on addiction prevention, and Kolhatkar says that at a recent training seminar “conducted as a part of our initiative **Health Connect**,

participants shared many stories of 7, 8 and 9-year-old children getting addicted to the dark net. It was really disturbing.”

“What is alarming,” adds the child specialist, “is that everyday I am seeing children who are getting addicted to the mobile phone. They may not be strictly labelled so, because this is too small a period to make this classification, but the symptoms are clear. They are jittery, unstable and are displaying symptoms of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and some of them are getting labelled as ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) but I do not know whether they really come

under these heads or are part of the Internet addiction syndrome.”

PRIP Banerjee adds that as RAG started working on addiction prevention, “we’ve found that in Mumbai students, drug-taking is a significant addiction, particularly in the slum areas. The horrifying part is that slum children are getting addicted to drugs, and vendors and peddlers are well spread out in Mumbai slums. They are present at all the *nukkads* (corners). The result is that slum kids have taken to stealing and selling anything they can

lay their hands on, just to buy drugs. The money earned by the father, or kept aside by the mother to buy food for the family is stolen by the kid, who is addicted. The parents are not in control at all.”

Kolhatkar underlines the need for a whole lot of training programmes.





Juan Alvarado

All this has been worked out, he says.

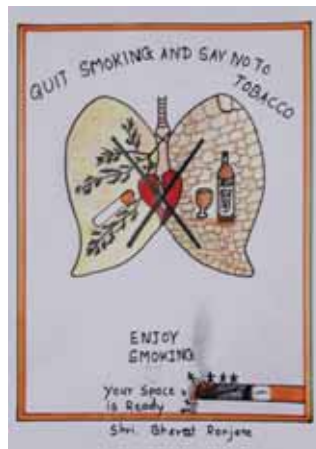
PDG Purohit adds, “For three years now — and since 2019 — we have been working on addiction prevention. Looking back, we are surprised how we ourselves were ignorant and unaware of this big problem of addiction in our community. In Rotary we’ve been working on so many different focus areas but somehow addiction has not featured in our routine community service work of the district. Only when we started working on this, we realised the severity of this problem.”

Sharing numbers, he says, what causes great concern is that in India, almost a third in the 20–30-year age group, or 33 per cent of young adults, are addicted to tobacco. “Also, today India has the dubious distinction of having 12 per cent of the world’s smokers; about 27.5 crore of our population is addicted only to tobacco. So the problem is huge. And tobacco has been proved beyond doubt to be the leading cause of all forms of cancer.”

Another alarming statistic given by Purohit is that “in the last three years alone, there has been a three-fold increase in alcohol consumption among young Indians. About 62.5 million Indians are addicted... not social drinking but addiction...

On the training methodology, he says, “We are developing a programme called **School Connect** and in the first phase this will train the physicians, psychiatrists and psychologists so that we will get a bank of at least 50 trained people. This is the first step. These people will go to the schools and address PTA meetings and teachers; we have different modules to train the latter. Next Rotarians will be trained and after Rotary intervention, training of students will start.” This will involve both spotting children with addiction, and subsequently, with the help of clinical psychologists the de-addiction of these children will begin.

Posters generated at a competition organised by RC Bhore-Rajgad, RID 3131.



Telltale symptoms of addiction

I ask PDG Ulhas Kolhatkar about how a parent can tell that her child is addicted, because many parents have no clue, or are in denial. So what are the telltale symptoms for a parent to get warned that his child may have some form of addiction?

His response: "First, the children will be very reluctant to undergo routine studies. Other signs are sleeplessness or insomnia, because many of these children are on social media, Facebook, Instagram or the dark net, mostly during the night hours when the parents are sleeping."

The third symptom to look out for, he adds, is that as they are online quite a lot, "because of this overexposure or over indulgence on the Internet, they end up with a problem of

anorexia or decreased appetite. Also gradually, scholastic performance will decrease, their grades will fall and the child will slip from excellent to average to poor and will finally fail in exams. That is the usual journey of addiction among children.

He admits seeing the denial syndrome in many parents who first say that our child cannot be addicted to any evil. But invariably, first the teacher will notice some symptoms in the child and will quiz both the students and the parents. "At first, normally the parents will deny that their child could be addicted. Next, the cultural taboos kick in and the parent will say my child has been brought up so well, taught the right values, etc, and will not even touch drugs. So we ask them to see the counsellor, who gives parents tips on what to observe or watch out for in the child. Scolding the child is of no use, as is punishing them by

keeping them hungry; it simply doesn't work."

Parents have to be taught by trained professionals the proper techniques of handling an addicted child... and why the child is doing it. With proper handling, love and affection the child can be weaned out of addiction, he adds.

That is why counselling is a must. While private schools have counsellors, municipal and government schools, thanks to lack of financial resources, don't have them. "But in private schools, particularly in the CBSE and ICSE schools, it has almost become compulsory to have counsellors," he says. Now in government and regional language schools, "through help from local Rotary clubs, we are trying to provide the services of counsellors."

to alcohol, which is directly linked to liver cirrhosis."

The same startling statistics stare us in the face when it comes to addiction to various types of drugs. In the last 10 years alone, India has seen a **30 per cent increase** in drug addiction. "One statistic says that over 60 per cent of Punjab's youth are taking drugs in some form or the other, 600,000 people are dying every year in the world due to drug-related problems, so addiction and substance abuse is a much bigger problem than corona."

In the background of these numbers, adds Purohit, "under past

Most people don't understand that addiction is a treatable disease and by treating an addict, we are not only saving a life, but also creating a happy family.

PDG Himanshu Thacker

RI president Banerjee's leadership we approached Rotary districts in India to work on substance abuse by early 2020. About 20 showed interest in working for this cause. But then the pandemic hit and schools and colleges were closed." As work has to be done with and through schools and colleges, "we resorted to zoom and internet for training and awareness and created a Rotary website **rotaryaddictionprevention.in**. It is operational and suggests easy projects that clubs can do... our own product for our own people."

Districts have also done poster competitions to raise awareness and these have got enthusiastic response, "which shows people are interested. Then there are video competitions;



Paul Noronha

a 2.5-minute video on drug prevention done by Rotaractors has created a good impact,” he adds.

In RID 3131, an addiction prevention centre has been started by a Rotarian where 50 children are taking treatment.

Right now, this RAG is focusing on awareness creation and prevention, and identifying areas where Rotary clubs and their members can work. “We have to give clubs projects that are simple to do, and involve Rotaractors too, as they can make a big impact. We have created some PowerPoint presentations that can be downloaded from

our website and presented at club or district meets.”

Banerjee adds that apart from approaching clinicians and experts who can guide Rotarians working on prevention of substance abuse, “we are also in touch with other non-Rotary addiction prevention groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.”

Kolhatkar says, “We’ve formed a national scientific advisory committee which includes big names such as Dr Pratima Murthy, director of Nimhans, Bengaluru, and other experts. These people have worked day and night for two months and created two beautiful programmes — **Health Connect** and **School Connect** — and the next on the cards is

Rotarian Connect for our national committee.”

But, says Banerjee, “our final vehicle is the club, because ultimately all Rotary work and action takes place at the club level. We are concentrating on how to create a volunteer base and train them, so that they are useful in tackling this huge problem.”

Kolhatkar adds that when Rotarians themselves, who were once addicted but have now won the battle, come forward to lead from the front, it makes a big difference. “For instance, one of our very senior addiction prevention leaders says very openly that he was himself addicted to alcohol 30 years earlier, but is now addiction-free, and he is such an asset for our district.”

What clubs can do

Past RI president Kalyan Banerjee who heads Rotary International's action group on substance abuse gives these pointers to clubs in order to identify the root causes of addiction to tobacco, drugs, alcohol, the dark net, etc.

Clubs can participate in this programme thus:

- Hold orientation programmes for members by inviting outside experts to address them
- Form a small addiction prevention committee
- Organise awareness lectures with the help of AA (Alcohol Anonymous), NA (Narcotics Anonymous) or other experts in the field of tobacco and Internet de-addiction
- Hold competitions — posters, essay, poems, videos, etc
- Awareness rallies
- Organise cyber *suraksha* programme (RAG can help here)
- Organise health camps or exhibitions
- Hold marathon, cyclothon, walkathon, etc
- Issue certificates to small institutes, organisations once they become tobacco or alcohol-free
- Recognise services of individual Rotarians by giving 'Rotary Addiction Prevention Champion Awards'
- Start de-addiction clinics, rehabilitation centres, etc.

Corporate involvement and partnership is being forged through requesting corporates to provide infrastructure and their premises, for training. "Our partners have promised to sponsor all our de-addiction programmes."

PRIP Banerjee adds that the "government is very proactive too in addiction prevention and almost every district has a de-addiction centre which is run by the Ministry of Social Welfare, and PDG Himanshu Thackar is trying to work with them."

Underlining the importance of Rotarians and Rotaractors guiding

and bringing people together to fight substance abuse, he says that this initiative was particularly important for women, "because when the husbands get addicted, the wives suffer the most. We know we have a big problem also in the North East and I am happy to report that our Rotarians in the North East are very active and involved... in places such as Assam, Meghalaya, etc. We are hoping for better engagement with Rotary districts south of Hyderabad."

Dr Judita Syiemlieh, past president of RC Orchid City Shillong, a core committee member of RAG-AP, says, "The problem was rampant in Manipur and Mizoram for long, and now we are seeing addiction in Shillong too. We have been trying very hard to sensitise Rotarians on the need to work in this area, have been forming committees at the local level, and also trying to form a partnership with the government."

PDG Thackar and his wife Aruna, a trained social worker, have been working relentlessly on addiction prevention right from 1989, when she set up an NGO in Surat called *Parivartan Deaddiction and Rehabilitation Centre*. "She has a great experience in working

with addicts and must have handled around 25,000 people since 1989," says Thackar.

After the NGO was started, and Aruna began working with the addicted, Thackar helped out through liaison with the GoI. "The result is that the government has recognised Parivartan as a grant programme, and I coordinate with the government on various issues, including developing systems, and learning from its vast experience in addiction prevention."

He says that what "most people don't understand is that addiction of any kind is a treatable disease, and that is where we, as Rotarians, have to create awareness. Because by treating an addict, we are not only saving a life, but also creating a happy family. That is our goal for Parivartan, and this Rotary project too."

The couple already has a rich and several decades' experience in developing skits, glove puppet shows, street plays, workshops for school and college students, road rallies, apart from skill development of various types required in any de-addiction programme.

The PDG recalls that as governor in 1995–96, during his visit to the clubs, Aruna made it a point

**With proper handling,
love and affection the
child can be weaned out
of addiction.**

PDG Ulhas Kolhatkar



PRIP Kalyan Banerjee, chairman, RAG-AP, with the committee members. PDGs Pinky Patel, Himanshu Thackar, Ulhas Kolhatkar, Deepak Purohit and Ajay Gupta are also seen.

to get the help of Rotaractors and Inner Wheel members to conduct audio-visual presentations to create awareness on both addiction prevention and treatment.

The passionate crusader answers the question on the kind of dent Rotary can make on addiction prevention and treatment in India thus: "Rotary can do what we have done for polio, and for that we will have to work with and involve the top district leadership in this project." He recommends that every district should appoint a chairperson, with a three-year term, "and all the clubs should have committees dedicated to this cause. We can then train the designated people to do programmes in the community, concentrating on prevention, which is very necessary." There are three phases in addiction — primary, secondary and tertiary — and in the tertiary phase comes treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration of

the de-addiction person in mainstream society. "In the last, Rotary can really play a very important role."

Thackar is already "negotiating with the GoI to become a partner in this RAG initiative, by supporting our awareness campaigns, give us addiction prevention content in regional languages and also training our volunteers. The government is very excited to partner with Rotary in this initiative, the ministers are very appreciative and enthusiastic, but the bureaucracy always takes some time!"

PDG Purohit adds that at the moment this RAG's objective is to reach as many Rotary clubs as possible and impress on the members how crucial this fight against substance abuse is. "Somehow, this has not yet become a focus activity of Rotarians; we need to motivate them to nip addiction of any form in the bud in places where it is just

beginning and control it where it has already spread. Happily, our Rotaractors are already in touch with schools and colleges through our "connect" programmes, because these are the main places where addiction takes root."

As Banerjee puts it, "Rotary has the means and the people, but we don't have the method, and that's what we are trying to overcome. One of the methods is to form clubs dedicated, at least partially, to fighting substance abuse. A beginning has already been made in Mumbai, with a cause-based hybrid club — Rotary Club of Addiction Prevention — with 30 members."

While the Rotaract club of Himayathnagar conducted an alcohol awareness programme, a detailed workshop by the RAG-AP team and an Inner Wheel club was organised.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Leading RAG's de-addiction initiative

Rasheeda Bhagat



Two clubs that have really taken the bull of substance abuse by its horns are Rotary Club of Mumbai Ghatkopar (RCMG), RID 3141, and RC Hyderabad Midtown, RID 3150. In Mumbai, a cause-based hybrid club titled RC Addiction Prevention has been

sponsored by RCMG, with 30 members, and 20 more in the pipeline. It has also started a de-addiction centre at Spandan Hospital in the metropolis.

Yogesh Zaveri, a member of RCMG, who is passionately involved in fighting substance abuse for many years says this de-addiction centre was started by their club about

a year ago and OPD services are available here for all four types of addiction. Meetings are held here in partnership with the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and “about 25 people, in the age group 35–40, attend these meetings.”

An electrical engineer by profession, Zaveri is a charter member and past president of RCMG. He

says at these meetings in Spandan Hospital, “people share stories of how they are not respected by their family members because of their alcohol addiction, and are counselled by people who have successfully quit.”

The counselling sessions are very effective and “two doctors from the hospital were so

Rtn Yogesh Zaveri, with the VTT group, attending the *Unplugged* programme at the Ghent University, Belgium.



People share stories of how they are not respected by their family members because of their alcohol addiction, and are counselled by people who have successfully quit.

impressed by this programme that they have both been made Rotarians and are now members of the cause-based club RC Addiction Prevention.” The new club has already established three OPD clinics for treatment, counselling and awareness for all types of addictions, including Internet addiction.

Himself a college teacher, Zaveri says that initially, concerned about the manner in which youngsters were getting addicted to tobacco, gutka and alcohol, “our club initially started working against substance abuse through street plays done by youngsters on addiction. When Johan Maertens visited India in 2008, I was our district’s TRF chair, and he said if you are interested, we can organise a VTT (vocational training tour) to Belgium’s Ghent University. The VTT materialised in 2012, and I took two faculty members from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and one from the Bombay University.”

The group of four underwent *Unplugged*, a beautiful, school-based intervention programme to tackle substance abuse among adolescents. It is a comprehensive social influence programme for addiction prevention, and is compulsory for all schools in Belgium. “Since then RCMG has trained over 200 teachers for this *Unplugged* programme,” says Zaveri.

His club has also conducted training programmes for family physicians in combatting substance abuse, and treating the addicted. “This project is being undertaken under a global grant, and so far, over 1,000 family physicians have been trained.” Other activities done by the club include holding AA

meetings at a hospital in a Mumbai suburb, and at the Spandan Holistic Mother and Child Care Hospital in the metro.

The club has also developed a programme for training post graduate Psychology students to be school counsellors for addiction prevention conducted by the SNDT University, Mumbai.

RID 3150 has been one of the active districts in combating substance abuse, and has already conducted a mental health awareness seminar for a joint Rotaract club meeting, where addiction awareness formed an important topic of discussion. RC Hyderabad Midtown has been in the forefront of the RAG work for tobacco cessation, and at a multi-district conference organised by the club, ‘Ican’ care programme for tobacco de-addiction was introduced.

A joint meeting was conducted by the Bareilly International University, Gujarat University and RC Hyderabad Midtown (host club) with eight co-host clubs. This club has also been conducting joint meetings with clubs across Rotary districts in the Punjab, Odisha, Himachal, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu. Eighteen meetings with 30 participating clubs have been held and distribution of tobacco cessation booklets has begun. ■



A Rotaract cycle expedition addresses global warming, illiteracy

V Muthukumaran

Extrême sports and high-endurance adventures have caught the fancy of Rotaractors Dhanush M and Hemanth YB who are now into an ambitious cross-country cycling for over 24,000km by pedalling across 29 states and three UTs in 6–7 months. The youth are attempting a Guinness Record for cycling the longest distance within a country and RC Bangalore Whitefield Central, RID 3190, their sponsors, is “taking all efforts to make this venture a success. A WhatsApp group formed with five members is in regular touch with the duo to take care of their needs and arrange for their stay

in the course of their journey,” says Prasanna V, club president.

While the two hybrid polygon cycles were donated by Rtn Dr Durga Prasad Reddy, chairman, Vydehi Hospital, Whitefield, the parent club with generous contributions from its members, Shishu Mandir Education Centre, Hella Nagar, and Maithri Aquatech are funding the cycling marathon of the duo. “The primary aim is to create awareness on global warming and literacy among people they meet during their journey across the country,” he says. The WhatsApp group consisting of Rotarians Hari Prasad Reddy, Manoj Kabre, Rtrs

Nandini G, IPP of RAC Shishu Mandir, Manoj Kumar and Shammu is in constant touch with the cyclists. “We provide all the back-up support to them as they record their daily experience, travails and joys on WhatsApp. We make arrangements 10 days in advance for their stay in their scheduled transit places,” explains Prasanna.

The cycles carried messages on global warming and literacy, and “during their interactions with school students, villagers and Rotarians, the duo highlight social issues like climate change, natural disasters and the importance of good education for children to spread the message.”





Above: DG Fazal Mahmood flags off the cycle expedition in Bengaluru.

Below: Hemanth and Dhanush (in whites) along with RC Jowai president S K Lato (in jacket), Rotaractors and members of Jaintia Bicycle Forum.



Pandemic challenges

Dhanush and Hemanth, as passionate members of an extreme sports club at the Government Ramnarayan Chellaram College of Commerce, Bengaluru, had taken up mountaineering, rock climbing and cycling across Karnataka.

It all started a year ago, when Hari Prasad Reddy was approached by Dhanush and Hemanth for help in taking up a cycle rally as it needs sponsors and logistic support. “They are local boys trained in extreme sports. With involvement in social activities, I decided to help them out. I took up the idea of cross-country rally with my club and began to plan for it with a dedicated team. But due to pandemic restrictions, we could not go ahead at that time,” says Reddy. The rally was supposed to have been launched in Feb-March 2021, but it got delayed and “finally it was inaugurated at Whitefield by our charter president Purna Chandra Rao on July 11 with much fanfare.” On the





Hemanth (L) and Dhanush (4th from R) along with Meghalaya cyclists and local Rotaractors.

same day, members of the International Fellowship of Cycling Rotarians (IFCR), Rotarians and Rotaractors cycled together till Vidhana Soudha, the state's legislative complex, where DG Fazal Mahmood flagged off the cycling marathon with a host of district office-bearers of RID 3190.

The North-East challenge

Right through the duo's journey through the northeastern states, PDG Kalpana Khound, RID 3240, was guiding them across the difficult terrains and on what sort of people to look out for. "I was in communication with them daily through my mobile phone

ever since they entered Malda district of West Bengal. Also, I instructed the Rotary clubs in RID 3240 which are on the way of their journey to provide lodging, food and other essentials to the cyclists," says Kalpana. In Meghalaya, RC Jowai led by its president SK Lato made arrangements for the cyclists. "Two Rotaractors, along with members of Jaintia Bicycle Forum, escorted the duo till the Assam-Meghalaya border." During her interaction with the young cyclists, she found them "totally unfamiliar with the topography of the northeast, but were passionate to carry on with their pedalling marathon despite hurdles." They wanted to reach Arunachal Pradesh and "sought guidance from me for the uphill journey." When they reached Nagaland, they were given a warm reception and felicitated by Rotarians and Rotaractors at an event hosted by RC Dimapur.

Grand vision

In their early twenties, Dhanush and Hemanth were inducted into Rotaract by Reddy a year ago so that "they can successfully explore opportunities for extreme sports and strike friendship with like-minded people."

While Dhanush from Kadugodi, a city suburb, is working as an admin staff at the Vydehi Hospital, Hemanth from Yadagondanahalli in Whitefield is an agriculturist, helping his parents in their traditional vocation. However, both shared a passion for high-endurance activities during their college days.

Taking a one-day halt at Bhubaneswar, Dhanush says, "we are grateful to Rotary and happy to take up as our campaign two focus areas of Rotary — environment and literacy." After completing this cross-country journey, they want to do another mega cycling project in a year under the Rotary banner. "We want to attempt another Guinness Record by doing the longest cycling in a state with Karnataka Rotaractors with as much riders as possible."

They want to set up training facilities in adventure sports at schools in and around Bengaluru in the long run. "This type of activities will strengthen the mental and physical well-being of students." For Hemanth, every day is a "joyful learning experience as we are cheered by Rotarians and Rotaractors all along the way and are enjoying their hospitality." ■

Every day is a joyful learning experience as we are cheered by Rotarians and Rotaractors all along the way and are enjoying their hospitality.

Hemanth Y B, a cyclist





DRRE Deepika Sharma fixing artificial bird nests.

Building nests for birds

Kiran Zehra

Pollution, rapid urbanisation, lack of food and a place to nest has led to decline in the number of sparrows in cities. “Matchbox-styled houses and apartments have made it difficult for birds to build a nest. We did a little research on their nesting pattern to find out how we can help in bringing back the sparrows,” says Diksha Thapar, president, RAC Austin Institutes, RID 3070. “We wanted to do more than just put out a pot of water and food in our balcony for the winged visitors,” she adds.

Efforts to place artificial bird nests at parks and places with green cover in Jalandhar have been started by the club. “This is a conscious effort to create an atmosphere to revive the visit of birds,” says DRRE Deepika Sharma who helped source the nests from roadside vendors. “The vendors are from underprivileged backgrounds and live on the footpath where they sell these

nests. This project has helped them earn a living too,” she adds.

The nests are made with broken sticks, dry leaves and husk. Recently the club set up 30 handmade nests at Pratap Bagh, a park in Jalandhar. A tree plantation drive was also carried out at the park. Club members, along with Zonal Rotaract chair Rtn Ajit Paul Singh Naphrey, planted 70 saplings.

Promoting Rotaract

Deepika is also actively promoting Rotaract in local colleges “at every opportunity I get. Rotaract has transformed my life and it can do the same for other individuals.” Recently she addressed the students of Hans Raj Mahila Vidyalaya, Jalandhar, and they were “excited to know that Rotaract clubs raise funds to implement service projects locally while giving us an international platform to learn new skills and meet like-minded people. They want to start their own club!” she smiles. ■

A mid-air installation of SEARIC Prez Kaushal

Jaishree

Rotary is indeed the fun wing of Rotary and this event showcases how Rotaractors mix business with pleasure, and essentially enjoy Rotary...

PDRR Kaushal Sahu took charge of leading the SEARIC MDIO (South East Asian Rotaract Information Centre) this Rotary year in a unique manner when he was 'hijacked' blindfolded to

the Surat airport to board a chartered aircraft. DRFC PDG Ashish Ajmera, the installing officer, installed him as president mid-air. The programme was hosted by RID 3060. "The mid-air installation was

a total surprise for Sahu and he was very much pleased with it. All of us felt thrilled planning the programme," said DRR Vatsal Khimasiya, RID 3060. *Aagaz*, the installation programme, happened

PDG Ashish Ajmera, DGN Nihir Dave, DG Santosh Pradhan, SEARIC MDIO President Kaushal Sahu, Rtr/Rtn Aakash Bhesaniya, Event secretary PDRR Khushal Shah and chairman DRR Vatsal Khimasiya ready to board the flight.



when the host team had anxieties in planning the event on the ground amidst the Covid pandemic. “We planned this main event with just nine of us and Rtn / Rtr Aakash Bhesaniya of RC / RAC Surat Diamond City helped in arranging the charter flight. The entire event lasted just 45 minutes.” The rest of the board members were installed in a large swimming pool in Surat, in the presence of 15 DRRs and district leaders from RID 3053, Sahu’s home district, and the host district.



SEARIC MDIO President Sahu takes his oath at the swimming pool.



All delegates had to carry an RT-PCR test report and random tests for Covid were conducted at the pool venue. The visiting delegates were accommodated in a serviced apartment complex in the city. “The idea was to do something new and exciting. We had already had a DRR installation event in a swimming pool in 2017. The flight programme was totally new but Rotary connections helped,” said Khimasiya. Bright floral shirts added colour to the pool party and a special DJ nite made it all the more memorable.

As a guest of honour participating in the installation event both onboard the aircraft and at the pool, RID 3053 PDG Harish Gaur commented that he regretted not having been a Rotaractor. “They were having so much fun and such involvement,” he said.

Khimasiya was the programme chairman and

PDRR Khushal Shah, the secretary. Members from 10 Rotaract clubs of RID 3060 volunteered in organising the event.

Sahu said that he had come a long way from “having begun my first ever Rotaract project in 2015 sitting on cement bags, along with my club members, and packing refurbished clothes for distribution to orphanages and destitute homes. I have enjoyed being in Rotaract ever since. It has shaped me with leadership and humanitarian qualities.”

SEARIC comprises 40 districts across seven countries — India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Timor Leste. “With guidance from RI’s Rotaract chair PDG Ravi Vadlamani my focus is to strengthen Rotaract with 25,000 new members worldwide by the year-end. We have inducted 12,000 new Rotaractors



PDRR Sahu with the board members of SEARIC MDIO after their installation by the pool.

till September,” he said. Establishing a strong communication network between the districts and its Rotaractors, and between Rotaractors and Rotarians, is his other agenda. Over 150 international delegates have already registered for the annual SEARIC summit to be held in Gwalior for

three days during mid-December. “We expect at least 300 registrations this year.”

He has led the launch of a Rotaract Business Connect platform this year through SEARIC, in association with RID 3132. “This will help Rotaractors establish connections with the SE Asian countries

and it will be mutually beneficial. SEARIC will also help to streamline Rotaract membership data with RI so that Rotaractors benefit from RI’s various policies and programmes,” said Sahu, adding that zonal meets have been planned for the year to provide orientation to DRRs.

He aims to double Rotaract membership and encourage dual membership in his district that presently has 31 Rotaract clubs. His home club, RAC Gwalior Youth is setting up ‘entrepreneurship clubs’ in government schools to train higher secondary schoolchildren on business skills and provide career counselling.

Sahu leads his district’s first dual member club — Rotary Club of Gwalior Ace — chartered this year. “Sixteen Rotaractors from my Rotaract club are its members,” he smiles. Both his clubs are presently active in organising *Stop NCD* health camps in Gwalior.

RID 3060 DG Santosh Pradhan, DGN Nihar Dave, PDG Pinky Patel, RID 3053 PDG Harish Gaur, PDRR and past president of Rotaract South Asia MDIO Yatin Sehgal and PDRR Nirav Trivedi were present at the installation event. ■



DRFC PDG Ashish Ajmera collars PDRR Sahu as SEARIC MDIO president on the aircraft in the presence of DG Pradhan and DGN Dave. DRR Khimasiya and PDRR Shah are also seen.

A cycle rally creates Covid vaccine awareness

Kiran Zehra



DG Fazal Mahood flags off the cyclothon.

In a unique initiative, RAC Bangalore South and RC Bangalore South, RID 3190, in association with United Hospitals, Bengaluru, hosted ‘Cyclothon 2021’, to celebrate Independence Day and create awareness on Covid vaccination. “Despite the proven effectiveness of vaccines and the

chair Sumedh G Bharadwaj.

The 7.2km ride not only raised awareness but also helped participants register for free jabs at the United Hospitals. Bharadwaj said that over 160 of the 250 participants who weren’t part of Rotary registered for the vaccine using their participation certificate.

lives it has saved, most people are hesitant to take the jab. So, we decided to dedicate this year’s cyclothon to campaign for the vaccine,” says project

He added that the route of the rally was thoughtfully put through residential areas to ensure that the message reached the right audience and help people understand that the vaccine is not difficult to access. With 85 per cent of the population having got at least one dose of vaccine “Bengaluru has done much better than other cities. But with the third wave hanging on our heads like a sword of Damocles, vaccine hesitancy must be addressed on a war-footing.”

The rally was flagged off by DG Fazal Mahmood (RID 3190) and local MLA Ravi Subramanya. District Youth Service director John Bruno was also present at the flag-off. ■



Participants at the cyclothon.

A Rotaract literacy project makes waves in Gujarat

Team Rotary News

A new project *Each One Teach One* was launched by RC Navsari Young Turks, RID 3060, with an aim to provide basic education to children affected adversely by the Covid pandemic. “Due to the extended lockdown, it was observed that rural students were deprived of school education as they don’t have smartphones to learn online,” said club president Gargi Patel.

Apart from educating children, the project reaches out to adult learners and strives to empower women through financial literacy. “We have been working over the last three months with these objectives. It all began at a financial literacy programme the club hosted for women of Samapore village

in Navsari district of Gujarat,” said DRR Vatsal Khimasaiya, RID 3060. Around 100 rural women, along with the village sarpanch, were there at the event in which Rtr Chirag Bhadkan, a government-certified financial literacy trainer, gave a motivational talk to the participants.

In his talk, Bhadkan informed the delegates the various pension and insurance schemes available for women. He gave a step-by-step approach to save money and how to invest for better returns in future. “The financial literacy seminar was handled by eight Rotaractors and with good feedback, we got another opportunity to conduct a job fair seminar in the same locality,” said Patel.

After educating the women, the club approached a primary government school at Gadat village on the outskirts of Navsari. The students at this school were from backward classes and “did not have the resources to learn.” In August, the second part of *Each One Teach One* was held for students of this school with four Rotaractors teaching them basic English and drawing at a *Fal-iya Shala*, a makeshift school in the village. “We taught 16 students from Classes 2–5 and were stunned by their response as they wanted us to visit them the next week too.”

Finally, on Teacher’s Day (Sept 5), the third month of *Each One Teach One* initiative, the Rotaractors celebrated



An Each one Teach one session at a government school in Gadat village.



A Rotaractor teaching rural children.

with students of Gadat school. “From 16, the number of students rose to 25. Now students who could hardly spell their names in Gujarati are speaking in English, a great transformation,” recalls Patel.

Around five Rotaractors taught English and arts through games to

children. The winners were rewarded with chocolates. And in the morning, free breakfast was given to all children.

“More than the children, their parents encouraged their wards to join us. This was the biggest achievement of our club,” said club secretary Surbhi

Jodhani. While each session cost around ₹1,000 to buy food and stationery for the children, it was definitely worth spending as the Rotaractors brought a new interest among rural children at the Gadat village. The club has decided to continue with this project every month in the coming years too. ■

2022 ROTARACT PRECONVENTION

3-4 JUNE



Rotary-Rotaract synergy in RID 3291

Jaishree

Rotary clubs in RID 3291 are creating a role model by associating with Rotaract clubs to implement service projects and design various programmes. “It has been an exciting journey for Rotaractors since the start of this year,” says DRR Arka Kumar Nag as he leads the district’s Rotaract team to work with Rotarians. He was invited as a guest of honour for the installation of DG Prabir Chatterjee and a special guest for the installation of 15 Rotary club presidents, all of which he considers a “great honour”. Rotarians have also attended his installation as DRR, he says.

Rotaract’s elevated status was a landmark decision approved by the 2019 CoL to make Rotary more

appealing to young professionals, thanks to PRIP Barry Rassin who formally proposed the move for Rotary membership to include both Rotary and Rotaract and batted for Rotarians to treat Rotaractors as equals and engage them in their community activities. The fallout of the CoL saw several positive policy changes including one which encourages Rotaractors to serve alongside Rotarians on district and RI committees.

Each of the 18 Rotary committees in RID 3291 has a Rotaractor as co-chair. “This has enhanced the morale of Rotaractors. It gives us an opportunity to contribute effectively to Rotary’s overall goals. For instance, the co-chair of the Rotary Interact Committee who is a

Rotaractor is responsible for adding more Interactors and Interact clubs. This becomes easy as Rotaractors can connect easily with schoolchildren,” says Nag. On the other hand, PDGs have been appointed as chief advisors and mentors at the district Rotaract council.

Rotary and Rotaract clubs are working together in three significant service projects in RID 3291 — a mega blood donation camp; an empowerment programme for girls/women called *Veerangana*, that includes life-skill training, self-defence workshops and legal counselling; and the *Hariyali* project that aims to plant 10,000 saplings across the district by the year-end. “It was good to accompany our DG and assistant governors to various project sites. I have learnt a lot from such visits on designing and implementing service projects, choosing deserving beneficiaries and sourcing supplies at competitive rates.”

The Rotary-Rotaract team is setting up a high school for tribal children at Pakur village. The school will be run by a Christian missionary and will have houses (groups) named after the four Indian RI presidents — PRIPs Nitish Laharry, Rajendra Saboo, Kalyan Banerjee and RI President Shekhar Mehta, and the auditorium will be named after Paul Harris. The foundation for the school was laid in mid-August.

Nag, a dual member, joined RAC Tollygunge in 2017 and served as its



DRR Arka Kumar Nag (R) with RI President Shekhar Mehta and RID 3291 DG Prabir Chatterjee (L).



DRR Nag and DG Chatterjee in one of the *Veerangana* programmes of the district.

president for three consecutive years. He joined RC Tollygunge this year as a Rotarian and serves as the club's Conflict Management chair. He is an advocate by profession.

As a Rotaractor he led his club to honour the artists who make huge Durga idols for *pandals* across Kolkata during Durga Puja. "We did this with guidance from our parent

club, RC Tollygunge, and the state labour department."

Other Rotaract projects done during his leadership include fixing 500 taps and stopping the water flow from the open pipes across Kolkata; providing books in Braille and white canes to the visually-challenged; and creating legal awareness in the community in association with RotaLaw (Research Organisation for Teaching and Advancement of Law).

As DRR his agenda includes organising eye wellness camps throughout the year and distributing spectacles. "Initially we have begun eye-screening for police personnel and municipal corporation workers in Kolkata and the Sundarbans. We aim to donate 20,000 spectacles through our Rotaract clubs and based on the programme's success, RI President Mehta has promised to help us expand it nationwide," he says.

Encouraged by Mehta's suggestion Nag is battling to transition

more Rotaractors into Rotary as dual members. The district had 47 dual members last year and he is hopeful of adding a considerable number this year. "We have a target to increase Rotaract membership to 1 million by 2029. When I updated the president that we Rotaractors will also work on *Each one, bring one* (EOBO), he modified it as EOBOR — that is each Rotaractor bring one dual member to Rotary. Then both Rotaract and Rotary membership will increase," says the DRR.

Nag is keen on Rotaract branding and plans to enhance Rotary and Rotaract's public image in all possible ways. The Rotary-Rotaract clubs are planning to distribute benches and desks to schools as suggested by RI Rotaract Committee chair Ravi Vadlamani. All the furniture will sport the Rotary and Rotaract logos. The logos will also be printed on the tree guards to be installed around each of the 10,000 saplings to be planted. ■

The co-chair of the Rotary Interact Committee who is a Rotaractor is responsible for adding more Interactors and Interact clubs. This becomes easy as Rotaractors can connect easily with schoolchildren.

Gangtok Rotaractors on an organ donation drive

V Muthukumaran

For the first time, RAC Gangtok Hills, RID 3240, will be taking up a mega organ donation campaign across Sikkim with focus on eye and heart transplantations for needy patients. “To begin with, we will identify two patients by networking with hospitals — they should be residents of Sikkim and from under-privileged families, in need of either heart or eye transplant. And for the donors, we will leverage our Rotary and Rotaract contacts across the country for timely delivery of the organs,”

says Pintu Sharma, club president.

Rotaractors will carry out a year-long campaign to create awareness on organ donation at the four revenue districts of Sikkim through social media and field events such as distribution of handbills and roadshows, says Sharma.

A Rotaract team is working out the modalities to conduct a 4-day motivational workshop for prisoners at the Rongyek Central Jail, Gangtok. “Each day we will address a topic such as Life, Hope, Family and Livelihood to instil

a sense of belonging in convicts and help them to merge with the mainstream society.” In the long-term, vocational training will be imparted to them, but this year a library will be set up on the jail premises so that “the inmates can channelise their energy in creative pursuits by learning new concepts and getting to know the world through reading of books, journals and dailies,” explains Sharma.

School library

Under the Literacy focus area, the club has set up well-stocked libraries in

five government schools.

“All the five libraries are popular with students who make good use of them to enrich their knowledge, search for reference material for academics, and to get updated with the local events and current affairs,” says Sharma, a final year student of BTech (computer science), at NIT, Sikkim, who is also the zonal Rotaract representative.

Sponsored by RC Gangtok South, the seven-year-old club has 21 members. “We normally meet twice or thrice a month. But if

Club president Pintu Sharma (2nd from R) and secretary Nim Tshering (left) with Rotaractors.



there is an upcoming event or programme, then it will be preceded by a number of brainstorming sessions, group and executive meetings to chalk out the finer details of that event or service project.” Pintu Sharma leads his team in scouting for private sponsors and donors for funding Rotaract projects and outreach initiatives. “Our parent Rotary club supports in whatever way they can, mostly through mentorship and the Rotarians attend all our projects and events.”

Only two clubs in Sikkim

Following a RSAMDIO notification, RACs Gangtok Hills and SRM University, Gangtok, only two recognised clubs in

this northeastern hill state, have lent their support to Rotary clubs in organising mega *Project Positive Health* camps (Sept 29) across Sikkim. Health

parameters such as BMI, blood sugar and BP were tested and consultations were given on healthy living to beneficiaries. Club secretary Nim

Tshering says, “living in the northeast, we don’t get good coverage for our events and projects in national media and papers. But we are not disillusioned. We firmly believe that we are doing a ‘selfless service’ through myriad events, projects and programmes we organise through the year.”

On Independence Day, the club members distributed sweets to inmates at the Mayalmu Home, an old age home. “But due to the pandemic and strict Covid protocols being observed there, we were not allowed to enter the home. We handed over the sweet packets to the guardians who distributed them to the elders and destitute.” Each year, the club members visit this shelter home to celebrate I-Day with the destitute as a gesture of love for them. ■



Elders at the Mayalmu Home enjoying the sweets.

Healthcare and vaccine camps help communities in RID 3141

Team Rotary News

The Rotaract clubs of RI District 3141 came together to organise health camps in five localities — Sion, Chembur, Dharavi, Parel and Byculla — under Project *Aarogyam*. Around 500 people were screened for various ailments and medicines were prescribed. Those who needed further treatment were referred to hospitals with which Rotary had a tie-up.

Twenty-five Rotaract clubs, in association with the Think Foundation, organised *Jeevandaan*, a mega blood donation camp, and it helped to collect 700 units of blood. “This is a legacy project of our district. In these tough times, even the smallest bit of help could create a significant impact. We are happy to see people coming up to donate blood through our donation drives,” says Aastha Parekh, the district’s chairman-Publication. A vaccination drive conducted by the district, along with Rotaract Club of

Mumbai Ghatkopar, benefitted 50 people.

In tune with RI President Shekhar Mehta’s focus on empowering girl child, the district, along with the Rotaract South Asia MDIO, distributed baby kits comprising essentials



and hygiene products to 100 families with daughters.

The clubs together raised ₹30,000 to distribute 100 ration kits to people in Kolkata affected by Cyclone Yaas. The distribution was done in coordination with the Rotaract clubs of RID 3291.



DG Rajendra Agarwal speaking at the leadership summit for Rotaract leaders. DRR Bharat Patel is seen second from right.





Rotaractors at the Covid vaccine camp.

Around 50 Rotaractors and 10 Rotarians led by PDRR/Rtn Rohan Dalmia went on an industrial visit to Kisan Mouldings, a polymer manufacturing company in Tarapur. “The trip helped in developing a bond between Rotarians and Rotaractors,” says

Aastha. Rotary Clubs of Bombay Midcity and Mumbai Downtown Sealand led the tour and it was cohosted by RACs Mumbai Downtown, SNTDWU, Medicrew, UCOE and Bombay Powai. Sanjay Aggarwal, the CEO and managing director of Kisan Mouldings,

PRID Bharat Pandya’s advice
was apt for the present era, for not
only our journey in Rotaract, but
everything we take a step ahead in.

Aastha Parekh
Chairman-Publication



received the delegates to his factory.

Rotaract Yellow Pages

The district has published a digital ‘Rotaract Yellow Pages’ with details of district governors, DRRs and international service directors of all districts of South Asia and few international districts. It’s a tool that can be used to connect with Rotaractors of various districts around the globe to identify partners for service projects, and further friendship,

says Aastha. The directory was designed by Rtr Shreehari Nair.

District Assembly

The 54th district assembly was held with fanfare at Mumbai. PRID Dr Bharat Pandya, the chief guest, spoke on the ‘3Cs’ — Confidence, Competence and Commitment. “His advice was apt for the present era, for not only our journey in Rotaract, but everything we take a step ahead in.” DG Rajendra Agarwal adorned a pin on DRR Bharat Patel and shared his vision for the year. He urged the Rotaractors to focus their service projects on RI President Mehta’s thrust area — empowering girls. DGE Sandip Agarwalla and

The Rotaract Yellow Pages can be used to connect with Rotaractors of various districts around the globe to identify partners for service projects, and further friendship.



Donors at the blood donation camp organised by RID 3141.



A medical camp under Project Aarogyam in progress.

DRRE Gemin Shah were also present at the Assembly.

The district organised the Governing Officials Advanced Leadership Summit (GOALS), a three-day training programme for district council members, Rotaract club presidents and secretaries. PDRRs Pankaj Phatarphod and Ravi Kiran Apte and district trainer Kushal Bhuvra, and other district Rotaract officials were the resource persons. DG Agrawal and Rotarians Rajan Dua, Kamlesh Kharade and Mohit Agarwal were also present. “The sessions were motivational and informative. The programme was universally appreciated by the Rotaractors,” says DRR Patel. ■

Cheering up little children in Jammu

Kiran Zehra



Children at an art competition.

Festivals are a good time to raise funds for RILM,” says Stuti Sharma, president, RAC Jammu Tawi, RID 3070. The club raised funds through an exhibition-cum-sale on the occasion of *Raksha Bandhan*. Rotaractors sold handmade *rakhis*, gift items and lamps at the Rotary Bhawan in Jammu. Rotaractors and Rotarians supported the sale with zeal. “We had a great time organising the event and got an opportunity

to interact with Rotarians and Rotaractors from Jammu. We also raised ₹8,000,” smiles Stuti.

The funds were used to provide children living in the slums of Nanak Nagar with new clothes, handmade *rakhis*, sweets and stationery kits. Stuti, along with few club members, visited the slums and interacted with the children. “We cheered them up by conducting an art competition and we were

amazed to see the creativity and talent in the young minds.”

The stationery kit included a school bag, notebooks, drawing pad, colours pencils, paints, erasers, sharpeners and a mask. The club partnered with LFO-BH Foundation, a Jammu-based NGO, to distribute food packets to the needy during the lockdown.

Club members, along with the Jandail Biradari Sabha, planted 30 saplings in a park. ■

Rotaractors gain traction in Hailakandi

V Muthukumaran



A teacher (third from L) being felicitated on Teacher's Day by club president Kaushik Chakraborty (Left).

Each year after Durga Puja, the much-awaited Sharod Utsav hosted by RAC Hailakandi, RID 3240, honours puja committees across the district with trophies and prizes for organising the festival in a traditional, grand manner. “But due to Covid restrictions, we are having a subdued puja celebration. However, the two-day Rotaract zonal conference (Nov 12–13) will surely compensate for the absence of Sharod event

with up to 50 delegates slated to participate,” says club president Kaushik Chakraborty.

A host of guest speakers and experts will deliver lectures on current topics of interest for the youth, followed by a gaming session, cultural fest, a Rotaract Got Talent event which will showcase the myriad skills of Rotaractors with judges deciding the top three winners, Rota Quiz and finally a DJ Night to wrap up the fellowship conclave. “The zonal meet is still in the drawing board and we are yet to finalise

the speakers and meeting agendas,” says Chakraborty. But for the larger public of Hailakandi, 312km southeast from Guwahati and a district headquarters in the Barak Valley of Assam, the joy of witnessing the awards ceremony at the Sharod festival in which around 15 trophies of various categories such as best idol, best theme, best lighting and best procession are presented by the club will surely be missed, he says. Most of the service projects are either mentored by their parent, RC Hailakandi,



Rtr Nilanjan Das gifts a sapling on Independence Day.

or sponsored by Rotarians and corporates.

On Independence Day, a team of 15 Rotaractors visited a CRPF cantonment at Kuchila village and interacted with 60 jawans. “We felicitated and spoke to them. We heard their lives of sacrifice, valour and grit in protecting our borders facing great odds,” says Rtr Samrat Dey, the club’s community director. With diabetes kits given by Rotary India and 12 lab technicians from a pharma firm, the club hosted a blood sugar detection camp in which 180 patients, mostly elders, were screened.

Shortly, they will be visiting the S K Roy Memorial Old Age Home at Katlicherra village and donate essential items for the 35 inmates to make their life comfortable. “If we get funds, then we will also donate new clothes on Durga Puja for the elderly at the home.”

Rotaract motivation

As a government teacher, Dey (30) says being a Rotaractor

for over one-and-half-year “has opened up a great channel for me to motivate people and expand the Rotaract network in Hailakandi.” During August, the membership development month, the club has inducted 10 new Rotaractors in zone-3 of RID 3240, he smiles.

The parent Rotary, RC Hailankandi constantly gives

suggestions, provides resources and “if necessary, financial aid for Rotaractors to take up service projects,” says Dey. Recently, they have adopted 14-year-old Rupom Paul (Class 9) to sponsor his school education and medical expenses for a year. “As the boy’s parents are daily labourers, he could not go to school. But we will make sure he gets a good education,” he says. The club is also thinking of extending the sponsorship to more than a year.

The 20-year-old club has 40 members, “but the number will surely go up with people taking note of our social work and outreach activities in the last few months,” says Dey. In fact, Chakraborty says he is aiming to induct at least 10 new Rotaractors in the coming months. “We invite prospective members to see our monthly activities and our field work. In the last two years, we have added 22 new members.” He says efforts are on to “expand the number and size of Rotaract projects in Hailakandi to gain more visibility in this town” which will boost membership. ■

Rotaractors at a tug-of-war with the CRPF jawans.

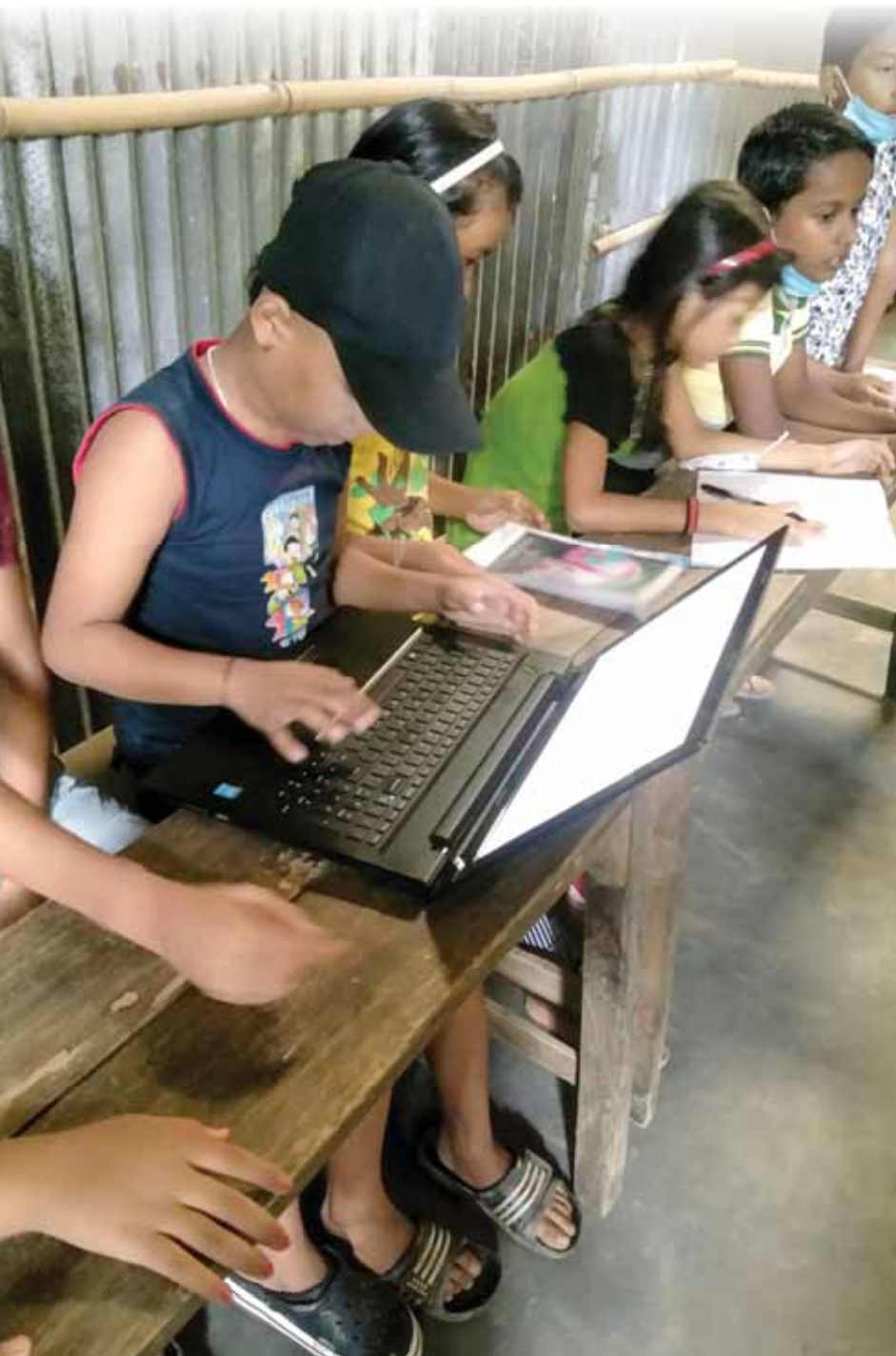


Promoting literacy in Silchar

Jaishree

Rotaract Club of Silchar Royals, RID 3240, launched a functional literacy project titled 'Hosla' at the Madhuramukh School in Dudhpatil village near Silchar. The project, begun in July, is a three-month computer training programme and 50 children from Classes 2–10 have been enrolled in the first batch. Computer basics such as MS Word, Excel and Paint are covered in the programme and course completion certificates will be issued to students at the end of the training. "It is such a huge success that even teachers and some parents have also joined to learn about computers," says club president Animesh Paul.

The Rotaractors visit the school every Sunday at 11am and handle the classes. "We also teach the older students and teachers about the various government education schemes such as scholarships, and how to fill various applications," says club secretary Kirandeep Kaur Arora, adding that some of the students have even availed scholarships this academic year. The Rotaractors teach the students banking procedures such as filling up a cheque, applying for an education loan, opening a savings account, and also online





A literacy class at Dudhpatil village in Silchar

banking. “The students, as well as the teachers, are interested to attend our classes and there is no absentee on Sunday mornings,” smiles Paul, adding that the team trains teachers

to operate Google Meet and Zoom to conduct online classes.

The club plans to extend this programme for the entire year and “if the next year’s leadership is interested, we

will go ahead and even include more schools,” says Kirandeep.

The one-year-old club has implemented a number of plantation drives jointly with other Rotaract clubs. “This synergy was encouraged so that our Rotaractors could get an opportunity to mingle with members of other clubs,” she says.

With a suggestion from the Rotary India Literacy Mission team, the club plans to organise adult literacy classes for women in the surrounding rural areas. RILM has promised to help the Rotaractors with resource books for teaching the adult learners.

A team of Rotaractors from the club visited an NGO, Embassy of Hope, that takes care of orphaned children. “We played games, and sang and danced with them. It was such an exhilarating experience,” she says. The club distributed drawing books and crayons, picture books, chocolates and various goodies to cheer the children. ■



Students being trained on computer applications.

Rotaract projects create impact in RID 3012

V Muthukumaran

Ever since he took over the reins of district Rotaract leadership, RID 3012, DRR Vipul Agrawal has never hesitated to announce new service projects across the national capital region (NCR) in Delhi with clear instructions for his 60-plus clubs to implement them in a time-bound manner. “During my installation, I found two noteworthy club initiatives — Project *Rang De* (Let’s Paint) and Project *Saahas* (Courage) — which are suitable to be elevated to the status of district programmes as they have good reach and impact in society,” says Agrawal.

Around 36 Rotaract clubs form teams to visit slum areas and paint the walls of houses, schools, public buildings like anganwadis and health centres with natural scenes, portraits and Rotary messages that attract eyeballs. “So far, we have done wall painting at nine slum colonies and our target is to cover at least 50 slum tenements this Rotary year,” he states.

Sponsored by his uncle Dinesh Mahajan, a paint manufacturer in Ghaziabad, Project *Rang De* has created “a sense of ownership of their living spaces for marginalised families living in numerous slums across

the NCR,” says Agarwal. Under Project *Saahas*, Rotaractors are providing stationery items to slum children and setting up libraries at government schools located in the neglected *jhuggi jhopdi* (slum tenements) areas. “We have donated stationery kits to 10,000 children already, and the target is over two lakh beneficiaries for this year. Two libraries with over 5,000 books across genres were installed so far, and we will be setting up at least eight more book houses at different schools.” As a dual member from RC Ghaziabad and RAC Delhi Riverside, Agrawal does not have

Project *Saahas* team with DRR Vipul Agrawal (sitting right).



to bother about funds or resource mobilisation for taking up mega service projects. “We have Rotarians and corporates willing to sponsor our community initiatives. Also, we hold fundraiser events like movie premiere and social get-together for Rotaractors. Now we are developing a mobile App for social networking among teenagers which will provide us a good source of income to carry out service projects,” he explains.

Under Agrawal’s initiative, Project *Aaina* (Mirror) takes up sex education for underprivileged

Under Project *Saahas*, Rotaractors are providing stationery items to slum children and setting up libraries at government schools located in the neglected *jhuggi jhopdi* (slum tenements) areas.



DRR Agrawal distributes stationery kits.

families with Rotaractors engaging parents and students on best hygiene practices. They also distribute sanitary pads and hold MHM sessions for women and adolescent girls. The Rotary clubs of the district supply sanitary pads to Rotaract clubs through their Project *Rotary Health Awareness Mission*. “So far we have distributed 10,000 pads. We also teach ‘good touch, bad touch’ to girls in slums and backward colonies at the NCR areas.” Agrawal is confident of distributing over five lakh sanitary pads by the end of this Rotary year.

Sustainable projects

Around 55 Rotaract clubs are collaborating to implement at least six district projects through the year. “In the last 3–4 months, our clubs have reached out to large number of beneficiaries and these service projects can be easily sustained for 5–6 years which will help in lifting communities to better living

standards.” The bottom line is, says Agrawal, every family in the NCR region must follow safe hygiene and give importance to education of girl children.

He is urging the 2,500-plus Rotaractors in the district to involve Rotary clubs, Rotarians in their service activities and community outreach.

The DRR’s grouse is that 80 per cent of Rotarians are not aware of Rotaract activities and projects, or “the way we function as an extended arm of Rotary.” This gap between Rotary and Rotaract can be bridged, he says, “by involving more Rotarians in Rotaract projects, district events and our regular meetings where we discuss our plans, fundraising and future programmes.” A trader of industrial products, Agrawal is all for a ‘stronger collaboration’ between “Rotarians and Rotaractors for a robust public image of Rotary doing good to society,” he says. ■

Public health and literacy, especially education of girl children, will be the priority areas for RAC Ekamra Kalinga, RID 3262, in the coming years. “But most of the Rotaract clubs depend on their parent Rotary clubs for execution of projects for want of resource material and funds. This should change so that our community activities and outreach are expanded in the near future,” says Dr Soubhagya Muduli, district secretary and club trainer.

A number of health camps are being conducted through the year benefiting a large number of tribals, women and children. Rotaractors from Ekamra Kalinga, along with five other Rotaract clubs from Bhubaneswar, conducted an oral hygiene camp for transgenders at a community hall in Bharatpur, a slum colony on the outskirts. “We screened 110 transgenders and advised them on oral hygiene,” says Muduli. Project chair Liza Swain, zonal Rotaract representative, took care of logistics and coordinated with Dr Satyabrata Kar and Dr Sipra Dash who screened the transgenders. Started in 2012 as a community-based group, the club has 31 members drawn from various professions including PhD students.

Rotaractors took up a mega tree plantation drive at

Odisha

Rotaractors reach out to tribals

V Muthukumaran



An oral hygiene camp for transgenders at Bharatpur.

government schools in and around Bhubaneswar. “We planted fruit-bearing trees and most of us camped at Uttara, a suburb, to plant saplings at a school,” says the club trainer. A veterinary surgeon who is into research too, Muduli and his team will be doing an e-learning project, as part of TEACH, at Chandaka village. “We will be donating smartphones to 14 students in the first phase for them to attend online classes and it will be expanded to reach out to more rural children at the upper primary school there,” he explains.

Right: Rotaractors at Project Maithali. RAC Ekamra Kalinga president Saswat Kumar Mishra (third from R).



A health check-up camp at Uttara village along with the parent Rotary club. District secretary Soubhagya Muduli at the centre (sitting).

Project Maithali

RACs Ekamra Kalinga and Barabati are jointly teaching tribals under Project *Maithali* which aims to provide basic literacy skills to “some of the most backward communities in India.” The families can’t even speak Odia, the native language of Odisha, as they have their own lingua such as Santhali and other tribal dialects.

With the help of a government teacher, the Rotaractors shortlisted 45 tribal students and some adults

who are now being taught Odia, English and basic numeracy at Balugaon village in Khordha district. Earlier, they had chosen this hamlet for a food donation drive and were shocked by the pathetic condition of its inhabitants. “Every weekend, a team of 16 Rotaractors visit this tribal area to teach students. Our special focus is on 25 students who are in higher secondary classes and will be appearing for the board exams,” says Muduli.

Mentoring from Rotary

From providing funds to resource material and project mentors, Rotaractors depend on RC Bhubaneswar Kalinga, their sponsors, for taking up service projects. Rtn Sharmistha Mohanty, chairman, Rotaract Committee of parent Rotary, inspires Rotaractors with her mentorship. “For largescale projects, our Rotaractors led by club president Saswat Kumar Mishra look up to Rotarians for sponsorship and other help for implementation,” informs Muduli, as “mobilising finance and support systems for our outreach activities with our own effort is difficult.”

However, over the last 2–3 years, Rotaract projects in RID 3262 have grown in size and reached out to large beneficiaries, especially in the rural areas of Odisha. “While the district clubs have done 1,030 service projects in RY 2020–21, RAC Ekamra Kalinga has completed 64 projects in all during this period.” In the coming years, the district clubs are looking forward to “increase membership by doing events and programmes that attract youth to Rotaract,” says Muduli, adding that at the service level, clubs will be holding more medical camps, health awareness drives and education projects that empower girl children in the next few years. ■

A Rotary Leadership Institute for Rotaractors

Team Rotary News



RLI participants with DRCC Usha Ajith Prasad and DRR Sujith Raju.

The District Rotaract Council of RID 3231 organised a Rotary Leadership Institute (RLI) at the beginning of this month in Chennai. This is probably the first such programme in South Asia for Rotaractors, said Rtn Usha Ajith Prasad, District Rotaract

Committee chairman (DRCC), RID 3231.

The two-day hybrid programme was inaugurated virtually by DG WM Nirmal Raghavan in the presence of DRR Sujith Raju. It had a participation of 25 Rotaractors. RI director AS Venkatesh, in his

valedictory address, appreciated the DRC for organising the orientation programme and said that it will give the Rotaractors more insight into Rotary and help them appreciate the organisation which they are a part of.

PRID Kamal Sanghvi, in his virtual address,

motivated the Rotaractors to deliver their best and inspire their friends to join Rotary. He urged them to act on RI President Shekhar Mehta's *Each One Bring One* (EOBO) agenda to enhance membership.

Rtn Binod Khaitan, vice-chairman, RLI



South Asia, explained the significance of the programme and how it will help Rotaractors understand better the various aspects of Rotary.

The RLI programme was an opportunity for Rotaractors to understand more about the Rotary Foundation, Rotary's



A session in progress.

organisational structure and ethics, identifying a community's needs and implementing service projects, and engaging members to make clubs stronger. The participants also learnt the nuances of making effective communication, and leadership and team building skills. Seasoned Rotarians such as PDGs Rekha Shetty,

A Subramaniam, George Sundararaj, Thirumaran, V Harish, Seshadri and Sridhar were the resource persons.

PDG C R Chandrabob was the district RLI coordinator and Rtn Vijayanarayanan was the chairman. Certificates were given to the participants at the end of the programme by Rtn

Kishan Chand, District Youth Service director. Guest of honour DGE JKN Palani contributed ₹10,000 for the programme and promised his support to the Rotaractors. Rotarians of RC Tambaram Central were also present.

District Rotaract secretary Srivathsan delivered the vote of thanks. ■



Group discussion with PDRR Udhayakumar Srinivasan (fourth from R).

Clubs need to update info on *MyRotary*: DRR Gowtham

V Muthukumaran

One of his primary goals as DRR is to motivate the ‘inactive and non-recognised’ Rotaract clubs in RID 3020 to upload their projects and information on the RI portal, My Rotary (www.rotary.org) so that “everyone can appreciate our multifaceted work and community initiatives we are doing for years,” says Venkata Gowtham Kalla. Out of the total 55 clubs, only 30 have registered

on the Rotary website. “We have applied for re-chartering with RI for the rest of the 25 clubs. Though they have done some good, impactful projects, due to non-reporting on the website, these clubs are taken off the parent roster,” he states.

On a positive note, Gowtham says his district Rotaract team is hopeful of adding at least 15 new clubs this Rotary year. Around 2,000 Rotaractors in the district are involved

in Project *Praanam* (Life), a mega blood donation campaign that aims to collect 3,020 units of blood. “Already we have collected over 600 units of blood, thanks to generous donors consisting of youth, students, Rotaractors and Rotarians. Clubs partner with the Rotary blood banks or any such facility in their localities to hold camps through the year.”

Project *Success Wings* holds regular workshops on personality

development and communication skills for Rotaractors. But the key component of this project is grooming the students of government schools for a bright future through career development, time management, and ‘how to face exam stress’ workshops.

“Our workshops have so far reached out to 5,000 students out of the targeted 20,000 beneficiaries,” he says.

Multidistrict RYLA

Gowtham and his team are planning to host a four-day multidistrict RYLA either in Visakhapatnam or Araku Valley, near the port city, by the second week of November.

“We have designed the RYLA project with a



budget estimate of ₹15 lakh, which was made possible with generous sponsors, our well-wishers and contributions from Rotarians. Following this, we had discussions with our DG Rama Rao, district Rotaract chair TLM Murthy and RYLA chair Jay Krishna,” says Gowtham. Around 100 Rotaractors, 50 delegates from RID 3020 and from other districts, are expected to participate in the RYLA.

A two-day Rota Sports was hosted by RACs Vijayawada Midtown and Rajahmundry River City as part of *Sammelanam*, district assembly, which was inaugurated by RI Rotaract Committee Chairman Ravi Vadlamani in the presence of DG



Rotaractors with DRR Gowtham (back row, 2nd from L) at a peace march.



DRR Venkata Gowtham Kalla cleaning statues on Beach Road at Vizag.

Rama Rao, IPDG M Satish Babu, DGE Rajasekhar Reddy (RID 3150), DGN Ravuri Subba Rao, PDGs Veerabhadra Reddy (training officer) and MV Prasad. It was a fun-filled sporting event with around 350 Rotaractors from over 80 per cent of

district clubs taking part in a range of games. “After staying indoors due to the pandemic, the games offered us an opportunity to interact and know about fellow Rotaractors from our district. We also shared notes on events and projects which we will

DGN Ravuri Subba Rao (second from L), DRR Venkata Gowtham Kalla, RI Rotaract Committee chair PDG Ravi Vadlamani, IPDG Satish Babu and IPDRR Sampath at the Rota Sports in Vijayawada.

be doing soon,” he says. Trophies were given to the winners.

Going MAD

A monthly Rotaract journal titled *Mad Mag* is being published with a theme line: *Make a difference (MAD)* to share projects and juicy anecdotes among Rotaractors. With an aim to create goodwill and promote fellowship, “we have sent creative gifts to 40 DRRs who were pleasantly surprised by our gesture. Shortly, we will be delivering similar gift articles to 77 Rotary club presidents in our district. This will build a good image for us among Rotarians.”

The district Rotaractors have brought out a RID 3020 directory as handy tool for Rotarians and clubs to interact with each other and open up an effective communication channel between Rotaract and Rotary. ■

Reaching out to flood victims in Assam

Jaishree



Above: Rotaractors all set for a boat ride to the Laika village.

Below: Relief kits ready for distribution.

When the members of RAC Duliajan, RID 3240, came together in the first week of September to form their Rotaract club, little did they think that they will be initiating a supportive disaster relief service activity in a forest village just two weeks after their club was chartered.

Laika is one of the seven little hamlets situated amidst a forest near Duliajan in Assam. Situated on the banks of the Brahmaputra these villages are prone to floods most of the year. In September

Laika was submerged under water after a week-long incessant rains. The Rotaractors of RAC Duliajan were encouraged by their parent club, Rotary Club of Duliajan, to help the flood victims.

The Rotaract club ran a campaign for two weeks and collected clothes, utensils, bedsheets, mats, mosquito repellents, infant food, biscuits and all other essential items and toiletries, from across Duliajan and the members pooled in some funds to support the villagers. The parent club also lent monetary support for the relief





A Rotaractor gives a food kit to an elderly woman.

activity. A flood relief team of Rotaractors went to Laika and distributed the material among the people. “We had to travel one hour by road and a boat-ride for four hours on the Brahmaputra river. When we reached there we were stunned. The water had drained but the people were at their wits end

trying to salvage whatever they could. Their paddy fields were destroyed and they had lost almost everything,” says club president Anabil.

The team distributed relief material worth ₹1.5 lakh. “We had packed vegetables, ready-to-cook noodles, oats and cornflakes which made

the flood victims happy. We had segregated the clothes gender-wise and for children, and had neatly made packets of essential items for each family,” he says. Sanitary napkins were distributed to young girls and women and the Rotaractors educated them on maintaining menstrual hygiene.

“We have chalked out a plan to provide total support to the village in all ways possible. These villages are backward because government aid do not reach them as they are not in the revenue records. So they lack basic facilities such as water, electricity, health-care and education. We are organising a health camp there in October,” says club secretary Nibaron.

The members of this institution-based club is all set to take on more service projects including a self-defense workshop for youngsters, a mobile book bank and a cloth bank. “We still have some clothes left after the distribution at Laika and our parent club suggested that we set up a cloth bank which will help more people,” says Anabil who is pursuing his post-graduation in political science. The 40-member club has a mix of students and young entrepreneurs. ■



Gift a Smile brings cheer at Dharmanagar

V Muthukumaran

As the festive season is around the corner,

Rotaractors at RAC Dharmanagar, RID 3240, are busy mobilising resources and collecting donations from philanthropists for gifting new clothes to poor children in this scenic town, 170km northeast from Agartala, with a large number of Bengali families. “We have taken up a number of service projects for underprivileged families, but the one most awaited is during Durga Puja when we all come together to donate new clothes to children to celebrate the festival,” said Rtr Sambhu Sankar Chakraborty.

New clothes are bought after pooling in the donations and member contributions under Project *Gift a Smile*. Over the last two years, they had distributed 250 sets of clothes to children. Sponsored by RC Dharmanagar, the two-year-old Rotaract club with 40 members is donning radium collars to stray dogs to protect them from being hit by speeding vehicles at night due to poor visibility. The radium reflects brightly when headlights fall on it and this will enable drivers to spot the dogs



Club IPP Ananya Bhattacharya (right) with Rotaractors at Project *Gift a Smile*.

and avoid mishaps,” says Chakraborty.

Saplings are being distributed to the public

across residential zones in the city with an aim to beautify the urban pockets. “We plan to distribute

around 250 saplings this year,” he says.

A diabetes-screening camp was held with



A workshop on self-defence techniques.

support from Rotary India and Research Society for the Study of Diabetes in India (RSSDI) who had given the club 100 testing kits. “We could do diabetes tests for 100 patients only, but we will expand the size of the camp with more beneficiaries in the near future,” says IPP Ananya Bhattacharya.

MHM sessions

The club will be installing a sanitary pad vending machine at the Government High School, Sakaibari. This is the third such unit after the club had installed one at the Government Girls HS School and the Degree College, Dharmagar, over the last two years. “We hold MHM sessions and distribute hygiene pads to the girls at these places,” says Ananya.

Project *Plate of Happiness* ensures the poor families and their children, mostly in rural

areas, have good food to eat and don’t go to bed hungry. “We collect the leftover foods at weddings, family get-together and social events, and deliver the same to families in dire straits.”

On the medical front, Project *Drop of Life* provides blood to patients under critical care. “We have a contact list of donors who under short notice are ready to donate blood during emergency.



A Rotaractor donates food under Project *Plate of Happiness*.

New clothes are bought after pooling in the donations and member contributions under Project *Gift a Smile*. Over the last two years, they had distributed 250 sets of clothes to children.

Over the last two years, we have reached out to around 145 patients,” says Ananya.

Pet talks are held annually with a tagline ‘Every life matters’ and “we create awareness on pet animals like dogs and cats. During the second lockdown, the members fed stray dogs for a month, earning goodwill among residents,” she adds.

Before the Covid outbreak, a two-day workshop with four sessions on self-defence techniques for women was held under Project *Defend the Dark*. “Once the situation gets normal, we will be holding more such programmes to empower girls,” she says.

After hearing the plight of two poor children, Priyatosh Nath and Marina Darlong, the club has adopted them and is sponsoring their entire school expenditure including uniforms, shoes, bags and other essential needs from September 2020. ■



Exercise for a cause

Jaishree



The Rotaractors of five clubs of RID 3240 led by RAC Greater Tezpur — RACs Manali, Indirapuram Pariwar, Silchar and Dimapur — are promoting the ‘Steps for a Cause’ initiative of *Impact*, a fitness App that keeps tracks of

the steps walked or jogged and the distance covered. Sponsors linked with the App company contribute ₹5 for every km walked or jogged by the user. The user has to download the App on his mobile phone or fitness tracking device and the App measures the steps and distance. The user can

During Covid lockdown and until August, the club members donated cooked food to street dwellers and to 15 people in an old age home.



Members of RAC/RC Greater Tezpur felicitate traffic personnel. RAC Greater Tezpur president Rupanjali Devi is seen on the right.



Above: Rotaractors donate cooked food during the Covid lockdown; **Below:** Policemen gifted with neon jackets.



direct the money earned from his or her exercise for any cause such as feeding the hungry, education, environment care etc. The money will be contributed by corporate sponsors.

“We have promoted the cause to 110 people until September and it has helped raise ₹25,000, and we are still counting. We want to reach out to more fitness enthusiasts

We have promoted the cause to 110 people until September and it has helped raise ₹25,000, and we are still counting.

to use the App and raise at least ₹1 lakh by the end of this Rotary year,” says Rupanjali Devi, president, RAC Greater Tezpur. The clubs are promoting the initiative through their programme called *Rota-Greater-Run*. “We even inspired our counterparts in Turkey and Australia, and Rotaractors in these two countries are walking and jogging maximum distances everyday to keep the funds-clock ticking,” she adds.

The Rotaractors of RAC Greater Tezpur have set up a mini library and equipped it with books at the Naba Prabhat Ashram, an orphanage in Sonitpur district and distributed stationery kits to children in another orphanage. During Covid lockdown and until August, the club members donated cooked food to street dwellers and to 15 people in an old age home.

Recently, the club members distributed neon jackets to 40 traffic personnel which will alert motorists of their presence on the roads during night and avoid accidents. “This activity was widely publicised in the media,” smiles Rupanjali. ■

Mangalagiri Rotaractors keen to take up big projects

V Muthukumaran



Club president Bindu Sneha presents a gift to a child at the Sharon Children Home.

Chartered in June 2021 with 30 members, the community-based RAC Mangalagiri, RID 3150, is taking up at least three events and projects a month by associating itself with its parent Rotary — RC Mangalagiri — “as we are still learning the ropes and hoping to take up big projects soon,” said club president Bindu Sneha.

On Independence Day, the Rotaractors planted 20 saplings, along with Rotarians who planted 30 saplings, at the Eco Park in Mangalagiri.

“We thank RC Deccan Hyderabad which has donated ₹2 lakh to our secretary Sadiya Almas, a weightlifter, to meet her expenses,” says Bindu.

Club secretary Sadiya Almas gets a sponsorship from members of RC Deccan Hyderabad.



Sadiya was also assured that her future sporting needs and travel expenses will be sponsored fully by the club.

A team of seven Rotaractors visited the Sharon Children Home in Navaluru village and they were entertained by 40 children who performed thematic cultural shows to mark Krishna Janmasthami.

The club organised a painting contest on International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer (Sep 16) at the Vijeta Higher Secondary School. Around 35 students

On Independence Day, the Rotaractors planted 20 saplings, along with Rotarians who planted 30 saplings, at the Eco Park in Mangalagiri.



A tree plantation drive along with Rotarians.

took part in the event. “We gave mementos to three winners from each class. Rtn Sakhamuri Uma Maheswara Rao, secretary

of our parent Rotary, who is also the school’s director presided over the event.”

Just a three-month-old Rotaractor, Bindu says she

has to turn down the offer from RID 3150 regional secretary Munagala Mohan M Teja to host a Rotaract meet in the first week of November. “We will be participating in the Rotaract meet wherever it is being held, but as a newbie in the Rotaract world, we are in the process of getting familiarised through regular interactions with Rotaractors and Rotarians.”

The third-year B Tech student at the Vasireddy Venkatadri Institute of Technology, Namburu, near Guntur, is confident that in the “days ahead we will gain confidence to take up big service projects on our own under the mentorship of our parent Rotary.” ■



Rotaractors subscribe dailies for students

V Muthukumaran

After a grand revival of their club last year (2020–21), Rotaractors at RAC Coimbatore Texcity, RID 3201, are now ready to do impactful projects to celebrate its silver jubilee year. On July 1, the club launched Project *Tex Thanthi* which was conceived to inculcate reading habit among rural students. “At present, 10 students are getting free copies of *Daily Thanthi* at Bovulampatti village, 30km from Coimbatore. We have paid their one-year subscription charges. We will add 10 more students in our list of free readership under this project which was first mooted by our club president Varalakshmi,” says Rtr A K Thanghapaniyeaan, club advisor-cum-mentor.

Students from underprivileged families are now getting the



IPP Logesh Bharani hands over the baton to club president Varalakshmi.



RAC Coimbatore Texcity president Varalakshmi (centre) with parent Rotary club president Mohamed Irfan to her left and newly-installed office-bearers.



Beneficiaries reading newspapers.

newspapers daily at their homes “and being a year-long project, we are confident of making regular reading of journals a habit among the youth of this village,” he says.

Multipurpose bags with the club’s logo were distributed among 75 tribal students at Sadivayal village, near Siruvani, a city suburb. This project funded by private sponsors and Rotaractors will support four tribal villages. “We will soon take up wall painting depicting Rotary’s good work at a strategic locality. Our parent club will get permission from the municipality for doing this mural work, and later we will extend it to few more public walls depending on the budget,” says Thanghapantieyaan.

At the general body meet before the installation (Aug 14), “we had a brainstorming session on projects and initiatives to be implemented during this special year. We want to do a mega healthcare project in a rural area as most of the villagers

could not access modern healthcare during the pandemic,” he says.

However, Varalakshmi is working with her project team currently on an idea of creating awareness on sanitation and hygiene among tribals in a village through regular sessions with them. “We want to provide sanitary pads and other essentials to improve the cleanliness and hygiene of tribals. We will monitor their progress on a regular basis,” she says.

The club has created a theme ‘Become Beyond Belief’ for this year with a tagline ‘Let’s Lead, Let’s Inspire Change’. “Motivation is the key to setting ambitious goals, drawing a roadmap to achieve them, and finally striving hard to make it happen,” he explains. Hence, the club’s theme and tagline will inspire Rotaractors to give their heart and soul to various initiatives at the grassroots-level, he avers. Formed in 1997–98 as a community-based club, it was dormant for around five

years from 2015–16. Following the efforts of its IPP Logesh Bharani, Thanghapantieyaan and Rtn Maruti, the club was revived last year despite the pandemic challenges.

State-level sports meet

To celebrate their silver jubilee in a fitting manner, a state-level sports meet for schoolchildren across Tamil Nadu has been planned, says Varalakshmi. But she hastens to add, “it all depends on the Covid situation. If it is near normal, we will host a one-day athletics meet in Feb next year.” She is confident that her parent Rotary club will pitch in with their contributions and also help Rotaractors to get sponsors for the signature event.

On a broader perspective, she is happy that the club members are being invited at the weekly meetings of RC Coimbatore Texcity and “we put forth our ideas for new initiatives and strike a rapport with Rotarians as they help in implementing a number of Rotaract projects,” she explains. ■

Global fellowship through webinars at RID 3011

V Muthukumaran

Covid fears and the extended lockdown have curtailed the service projects of RAC Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, RID 3011, Delhi, but the Rotaractors are not sitting idle as they are networking with Rotaract clubs around the world through webinars. Project *Sanskriti* extended a virtual platform for showcasing India's rich cultural heritage to Brazilian and Mexican Rotaractors through a power point presentation. "Around 200 Rotaractors including those from South America took part in a three-hour programme. We will hold two such online cultural exchanges with Rotaractors from South Africa and the US which will have more participation from Delhi colleges and Rotaract clubs, RID 3011," says Suyash Jaiswal, club secretary.

A series of webinars on menstrual hygiene, de-addiction and cybersecurity have given opportunities for the club to tie-up with local NGOs to distribute sanitary pads, stationery items and other utility items to beneficiaries, says Rtr Piyush Narnoli, head, international wing of the club. "We are planning monthly episodes under Project *Kissa Goi* (storytelling), the first one held on Sept 15 was a big success with Rotaractors, professionals and authors narrating stories to around 80 delegates. In the coming months, there will be international speakers to entertain with their storytelling abilities,"

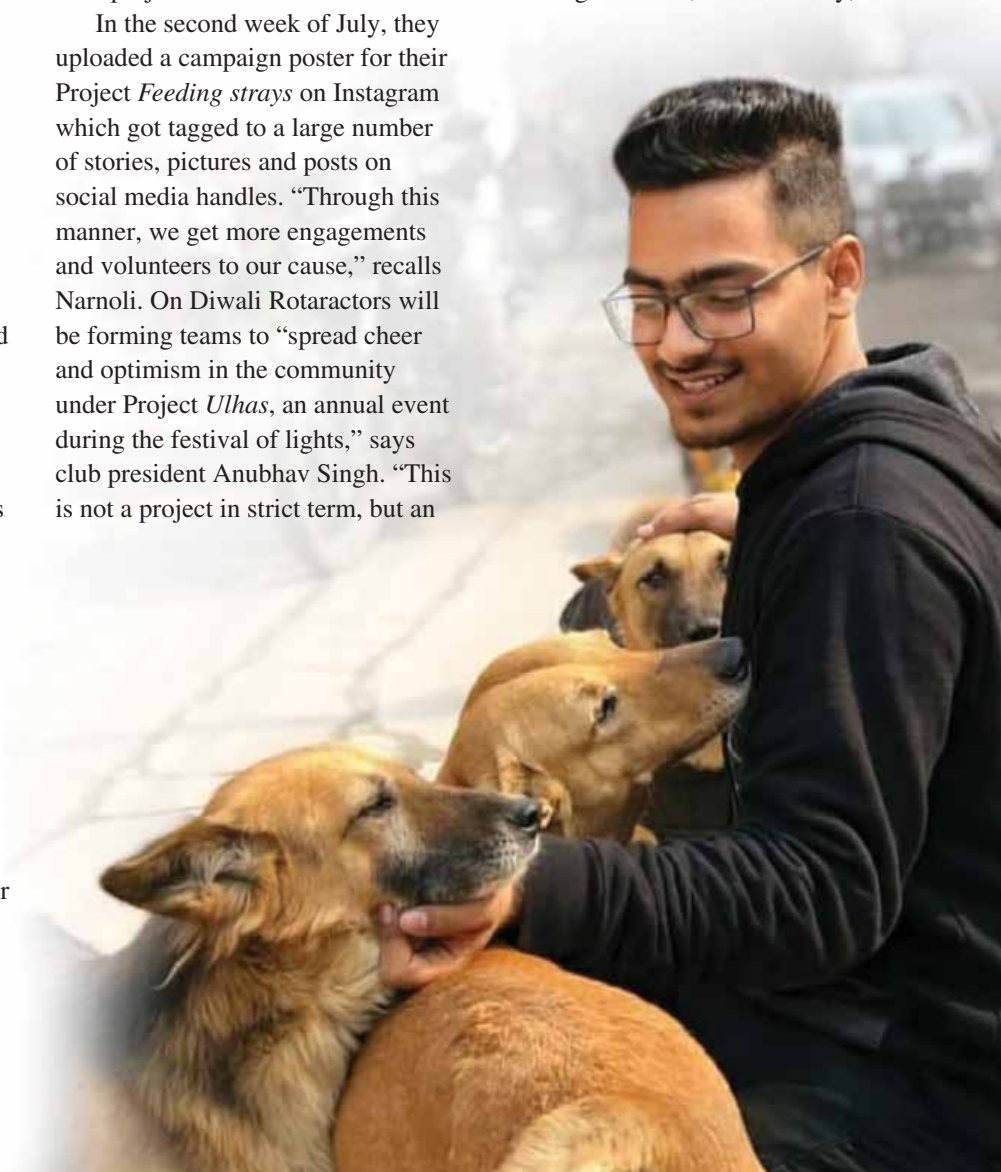
he says. Also, *Sanskriti* will be held more often for broader exchanges with foreign students and Rotaractors, "but we are looking forward to attend college from January so that we can plan and do field projects."

In the second week of July, they uploaded a campaign poster for their Project *Feeding strays* on Instagram which got tagged to a large number of stories, pictures and posts on social media handles. "Through this manner, we get more engagements and volunteers to our cause," recalls Narnoli. On Diwali Rotaractors will be forming teams to "spread cheer and optimism in the community under Project *Ulhas*, an annual event during the festival of lights," says club president Anubhav Singh. "This is not a project in strict term, but an

effort to create social bonding in the public space."

Doubling membership

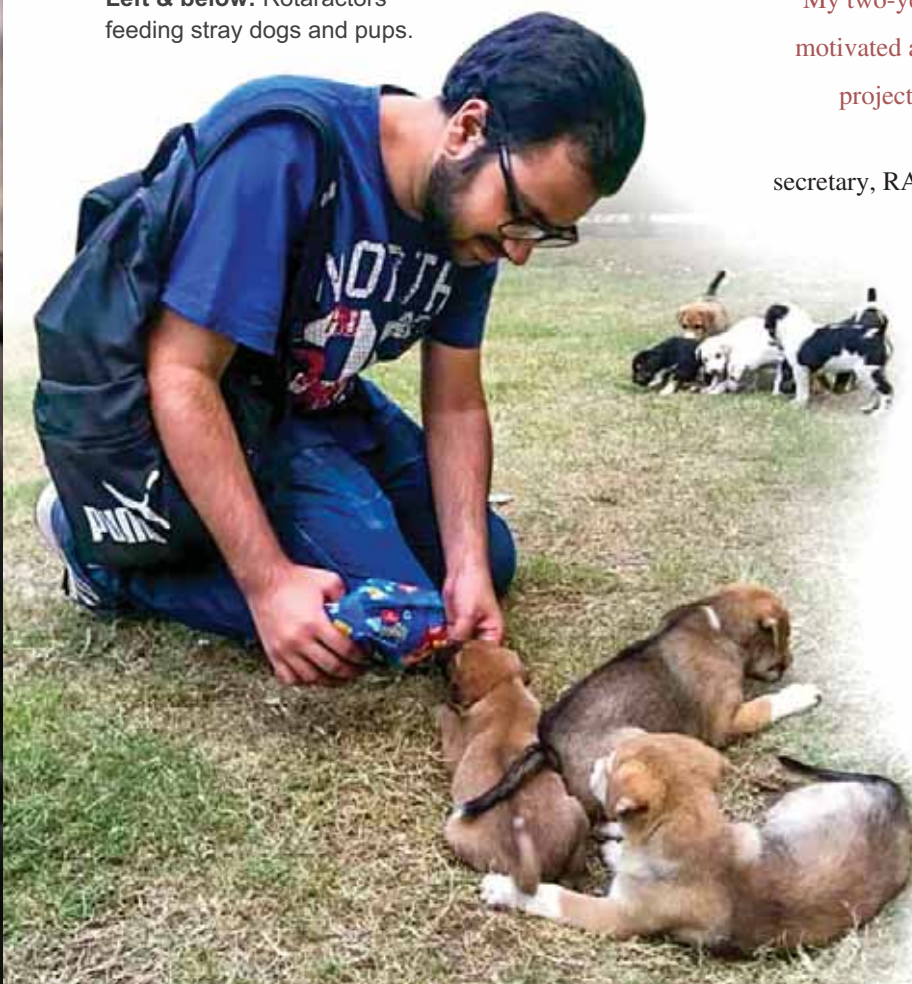
With 50-plus Rotaractors in all, the club will be inducting a large number of college freshers, come January,





RAC Shaheed Bhagat Singh College president Anubhav Singh (front, seated) with Rotaractors.

Left & below: Rotaractors feeding stray dogs and pups.



My two-years of Rotaract experience had motivated and taught me to take up service projects for the cause of humanity.

Suyash Jaiswal

secretary, RAC Shaheed Bhagat Singh College

and “we are confident of doubling our membership by the first week of February next year,” says Jaiswal, a final year BCom student.

Having grown up in Kanpur, “I was amazed by the mega Rotary projects which create a buzz in our colony during my childhood. At that time, I wanted to join an Interact club, but no schools in my city had such a social group.” Though he had not interacted with any Rotarian so far, Jaiswal is keen to join a Rotary club either in Delhi, “if I stay put in the national capital after finishing my UG”, or become a member of a Kanpur club, “after going back to my native place.” His two-years of Rotaract experience had “motivated and taught me to take up service projects for the cause of humanity,” he says. ■

Fighting hunger

Jaishree

On the first Sunday of every month the Rotaractors of RAC Gwalior Youth, RID 3053, visit slums across the city to distribute food packets to the under-privileged. “We choose a locality every month and visit the place earlier to assess the number of people who may need our help. We procure food from a local *dhaba* with whom we have developed a good rapport and about 15 of us go over to the venue at noon and

distribute about 100 packets,” says Riddhi Uppal, the club’s vice-president.

Each packet costing ₹30 includes some *rotis* and *subzi*, or *dal-chawal*, and a packet of buttermilk or juice; the menu is different each month. “Other clubs also join us in the endeavour.” RACs Bardoli (RID 3060) and Morena Achievers Point (3053) partnered with the club in the food donation drive in September, marking the 100th Sunday. Funds for the project are raised from

among the members of the club and its partner clubs.

The club members celebrated Friendship Day (July 30) in a unique manner. They visited one of the slums and invited the children to cut a cake. Chocolates were distributed to them. “It was a special and a soul-satisfying Friendship Day,” she smiles.

At the beginning of this Rotaract year the club members planted saplings in residential areas in Gwalior and visited the

Adarsh Goushala in Lal Tipara to feed the cows housed there.

Recently, the club, along with RACs Gwalior Ace and Gwalior Mahanagar, organised a diabetes-screening camp. About 150 people attended the camp and four doctors helped in performing the sugar tests, said Riddhi. The readings were given to the people and those with high or low sugar levels were advised to follow a dietary discipline. ■

RAC Gwalior Youth president Pavitra Tiwari (R) and vice-president Riddhi Uppal (L) with the residents after distributing food to them.



Ageing blues

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan



It's not an easy lesson to learn, especially if you have been around for a long time and become accustomed to people paying attention to whatever you are saying, even when it's a lot of rubbish. But it is a lesson everyone has to learn as they grow older: younger people simply don't pay attention to you. When this infuriates you, as it does me from time to time, I tell myself that I was exactly like that just a few years ago.

I recall gatherings where there were older colleagues or relatives trying to be a part of the conversation. I also remember how we, the younger lot, would only half-listen, nodding but not caring a fig before excusing ourselves to join our contemporaries. I also remember the resigned look on the faces of the older people who would have liked to excuse themselves too, but could not because they had come with someone who was going to stay past midnight. They would then go and sit down in a corner and just watch patiently, declining both food and drink because it was simply too late in the evening for them. Once in a while, out of sheer politeness, someone would join them for a few minutes. On the whole, however, they were on their own.

I have reached that stage now, as indeed many of you must have too. Even without this virus thing I was always quite selective about the

soirées or professional gatherings I attended. But now I have stopped altogether because what's the point of going somewhere if no one cares whether you came or not? It's triply worse when you tell them you are not coming, and they reply "I understand, Sir/Uncle. Take care." But on balance that part is fine.

What is not so fine, however — but should be — is when your own children start treating you with unctuous consideration when it comes to your third whiskey — sorry, no more — while ignoring you otherwise completely. You try to say something and realise that they are quite oblivious to your bleating and are going on with

their conversation, heedless of the fact you are telling them they have got it all wrong. The thing, you see, is they don't accept that they are wrong; they think they are right. And that's the only thing that matters to them, as it did to all of us when we were young too.

But being a nasty and clever fellow, I have devised a very cruel form of revenge. Once or twice a year I arrange gatherings, professional or private, where the average age is 70 only because I have invited one or two youngsters to attend. Then we all ignore them, treating them like waiters if it is a gathering of old colleagues and sons/daughters/nephews/nieces. Believe me, it's fun to see how utterly bored they get. The trick is to invite no more than three of them, two boys and one girl or two girls and one boy. I have noticed that while the girls manage to get through the evening in good humour, the boys are ready to start climbing walls. Sometimes some of them get drunk because the booze is free and their wives are not there. I tell you, it's great fun.

For some reason, retired women command a lot of respect and attention from the younger crowd. I thought of this as one of those great mysteries of life till one of the older ladies told me that having been ignored all their lives, they have learnt how to handle it. "By accepting old age with dignity," she said, "you men should try it." ■

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