

# Rotaract NEWS



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**On the cover:** A member of RAC Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce taking classes in English, Math and Hindi for children at a park as part of the club's Project Udaan.

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## Editor's Note



# The gender challenge... for the haves and have-nots...

As yet another International Women's Day rolled by in March, let's try and find some answers for a couple of critical questions. Are working conditions getting any better for women? One of the best sources to find some information is the "glass ceiling index" done by the iconic magazine *The Economist* every year. And what about countries, such as Afghanistan, where forget working in an office, a little girl can't even attend school?

Each year, to mark International Women's Day, *The Economist's* research team crunches the numbers on ten indicators — from labour force participation and salaries to paid parental leave and political representation — for 29 members of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development). The magazine defines this group as "a club of mostly rich countries"; and expectedly it includes countries such as US, Japan, Germany, Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, France, Turkey and South Korea. Sorry, despite

the many pats we keep giving ourselves on the back in recent years, India is not on that list.

Returning to the Glass Ceiling Index, the magazine article admits that since they began this exercise in 2013, "the pace of change has been glacial, but in most places, things are at least moving in the right direction." Coming to the chart comparing women's professional opportunities with those of men, Iceland continues to top the list for the second year. No prizes for guessing... and we have seen this in political leadership too... the Nordic countries have always given their women a level playing field and whether it is in the political, business or educational arenas, Nordic women have always scored high. And again, no surprise, at the bottom of the glass index of these countries are South Korea, Japan and Turkey. To their credit, Australia and Poland had made great progress — both up by five spots compared to last year.

You'd think education was a key factor in one's professional and economic development. Yes, and no. In so many countries, more women, than men, graduate from

universities, and yet they make up a lower share of the workforce, and this is true of this glass ceiling index too, being "most notable in Turkey, Greece and Italy, where less than two-thirds of adult women are employed." The result is a slower climb on the corporate ladder; "in the OECD women earn around 12 per cent less than men," found the survey. But the good news was that in this group, 33 per cent women had made it as directors on the boards of companies, for the very first time.

By the way, in November 2022, the European Parliament formally adopted the new EU law on gender balance mandating that by 2026, corporate boards would compulsorily need to have 40 per cent women among the non-executive directors or 33 per cent among all directors in companies. Our data on this aspect is dismal. It took a decade... 10 whole years... after the implementation of the Companies Act 2013, which mandates at least one woman director on company boards in India, for the Nifty-500 companies to have at least one woman director on the company's board.

And this compliance too came only after several reminders from those in power! If you look at the percentage of women directors, there is only one woman director in five on the boards of Nifty 500.

**B**ut leaving aside the privileged part of the world, let us look at the situation of women in conflict-torn zones such as Gaza, Afghanistan, or Ukraine. For lack of space, let us just look at one aspect — women journalists in Afghanistan, where radio networks, supported mainly by the western world, are the only medium of employment for trained female journalists.

In Afghanistan, where radio is the main source of information for a larger part of the population, particularly women, through an EU-funded project, UNESCO is supporting 28 regional and local radio stations. *Muska*

It took 10 whole years after the implementation of the Companies Act 2013, which mandates at least one woman director on company boards in India, for the Nifty-500 companies to have at least one woman director on the company's board.

*Radio*, a local community radio, is one of them and provides job opportunities to women journalists in Helmand province in the south of Afghanistan, one of the most restrictive places for women journalists in the country. From 2008, this independent radio station is dedicated to serving a female audience and their families. It has had a bumpy ride thanks to the country's regressive policies on women's education and employment, but has struggled on heroically nevertheless, disappearing for a while, but re-emerging, like a phoenix!

*Radio Begum* is another feisty network that has turned out to be a lifeline of hope for girls who have been banned from school. It provides educational material, on-air-schooling, mental health support and financial literacy classes to Afghan women and girls. This radio has reached an astounding audience of around 5.9 million in 19 provinces, 63 per cent being women and girls.

According to a UNICEF report, "with Afghan girls having been out of school for over two years, women being banned from working in many sectors, and often being confined to the house, the psychological impact and trauma on an entire generation is increasingly felt." Following the ban on women working for NGOs and the UN, *Radio Begum* recorded an increase in the call-in programmes providing psychosocial advice first by 33 per

cent and later by 156 per cent, as a result of the antenna extensions. Said a recent UN women's survey: "Their psychological programming is the most listened show of the station — a sad testament to the mental health crises facing women in Afghanistan, with 90 per cent stating their mental health was bad or very bad."

Let's end with the story of Fatima, a 15-year-old girl blind since birth, and a beneficiary of the Informal Education Classes aired by *Radio Begum*. With no access to a school in her province, she remained illiterate, and along with her elder brother, who is also blind, used to listen to Radio BBC before *Radio Begum* started its broadcasts. But once she discovered this radio, she never misses a programme, and feels included in the community after talking to the presenters of *Radio Begum* because they are all girls!

Her ambition: to become a radio presenter someday! But right now, she is soaking up all the information she gets on authors, poets, different health issues as well as psychological issues through the radio. She says she might never get a chance to attend a blind school or learn how to write but being able to get educated through the radio is a great asset for her, for which she is grateful.



**Rasheeda Bhagat**

# Project Udaan lifts 100 kids in Delhi

V Muthukumar

Over the last two years, *Project Udaan* (flight) of RAC SGGSCC, RID 3011, has reached out to

around 100 slum children at Pitampura, a neighbourhood in north-west Delhi, providing them with working skills in basic math, English and Hindi. “Every Thursday, we engage

around 25–30 children at the District Park, Pitampura, where 10–12 Rotaractors teach them literacy skills. Besides, fun sports, singing and dancing are also held to keep them in good

spirits. Sports like kho-kho and kabaddi are played to create bonding among them,” says Jasnoor Kaur, club president.

All the 28 Rotaractors at the Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce take turns to teach children at the Pitampura park. “We teach moral values and the importance of ethics in life through storytelling which is the most awaited session among the children,” she says. Recently, a cancer screening camp was held at Mahipalpur, a slum colony near the Indira Gandhi Airport, in which five doctors from the Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute examined 100 women for cervical, oral and breast cancer. “Consultations and prescriptions, wherever necessary, were given to all the patients.” The camp was held jointly with the Samarpan Foundation, a local NGO.

In April, a dental check-up camp was conducted with the help of Clove Dental, a local clinic, at the Lal Bagh Park in which “people of all age groups were

Rotaractors teach children at *Project Udaan*.





examined for oral deformities. They were advised on the need to maintain oral hygiene with preventive care.”

In a show of solidarity with college authorities, “we distributed sweets and new clothes worth ₹4,000 to 10 non-teaching staff and campus workers before Diwali.” The Diwali gesture was much appreciated by the college staff, says Jasnoor. More than 150 people were screened at the eye check-up camp at Mahipalpur in a joint event with two local NGOs, Serve Samman and Little India

Foundation. Around 40 spectacles were distributed to patients.

The club has plans to hold a marathon to create awareness on the rights and social inclusion of LGBTQIA community in June. “We are expecting a huge turnout of people, as it is open to the public. Our district Rotaractors and college students will throng the venue,” she says. But adds, the project is still under drafting stage.

### Good mentorship

At the weekly club meetings, “all our members come out with their project ideas at the



A Rotaractor teaches a student.



brainstorming session. We discuss and build a consensus on taking up projects in the near future,” smiles Jasnoor. The parent Rotary, RC New Delhi, extends guidance and monetary support to Rotaractors, if needed, in project implementation. Rotary club president C P Sharma has helped Rotaractors quite often with funds and guidance, and “we are very thankful to him for this kind gesture.”

Another father-like person is Rtn Vimal Gupta, “who is a great mentor who offers valuable advice and suggestions on Rotaract projects,” says Jasnoor.

An annual fee of ₹600 per head is charged, of which ₹500 goes to RI dues, and ₹100 for the district fund. Doing her second year, Bachelor of Management Studies, she says, “it has been a beautiful two-year journey as Rotaractor during which I learnt many life lessons. One of the most important traits I learnt is how to deal or handle different people in your daily life.” She was also an Interactor at the school.

Jasnoor is looking forward to join her parent Rotary club by the middle of 2026, “as by that time I would be in good position in life,” she smiles. ■



Delegates from across South Asia at the Rotasia conference in Bengaluru.  
 Right: RI Director Anirudha Roy Chowdhury (L) and PDRR BK Harshavardhan.



# 25<sup>th</sup> year of Rotasia

## Team Rotary News

**R**otasia, the South Asian Rotaract convention, is on its silver jubilee year and was hosted by RI districts 3191 and 3192 from Feb 29 to Mar 3 in Bengaluru. Over 1,400 Rotaractors from across South Asia attended the conference in which RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury was the chief guest.

A live streaming of address by John Hewko, RI general secretary, followed the inaugural session. Over the next two days, celebrities

and achievers formed panellists and speakers. Notable among them were former Indian cricket pacer Javagal Srinath, Indian ambassador and advisor to PM Deepak Vohra, member of parliament Tejaswi Surya and film artist Prakash Belawadi.

Dr Priya Abraham, director of the ICMR - National Institute of Virology, Pune, was recognised at the event for spearheading the country's battle against Covid. From handling the logistics of

sending the testing kits to various labs to keeping a close watch on all emerging variants, she and her team enabled India to make huge strides in curbing the spread of the virus.

A special panel on startups had Aisswarya DKS Hegde, Sujit Kumar of Udaan and Shesh Rao





*Yakshagana, a traditional dance of Karnataka.*

Paplikar from BHIVE Group sharing their views on startups. This Rotasia conference featured the first ever 'Opportunity Pavilion' where 20 startup companies by Rotaractors in India and Sri Lanka pitched their concepts to potential investors. This was followed by

mentoring workshops for budding entrepreneurs before the final round that determined the winners.

The Mr and Miss Rotasia pageant was choreographed by two former Miss India finalists and judged by professionals from the fashion industry.

The conference team was headed by PDRRs BK Harshavardhan and Hemanth Bekal, along with counsellor PDG Nagendra Prasad, advisor PDRR Srimatesh, DRRs Arun Teja and Kiran SHS. DGs Udaykumar Bhaskara (RID 3191) and Srinivas Murthy (RID 3292) supported the event. ■



Rotasia counsellor PDG Nagendra Prasad (centre) with the conference team. RID 3191 DRR Arun Teja (2<sup>nd</sup> from R) and RID 3192 DRR Kiran SHS (L) are also in the picture.

# Joy of Giving touches over 10,000 lives

## V Muthukumar

Over the last eight years, *Project Joy of Giving* has brought smiles and happiness to at least 10,000 children, issueless aged couples and elderly people through distribution of sparingly used clothes, toys, cooking

utensils, stationery items, bags, shoes and a range of groceries which were collected from houses across Mumbai. Explaining the flagship project of RAC Mumbai Salt City, RID 3141, club president Pranati Chheda says, “We do this project in three phases. A few days before

Rotaractors with children at the ‘Joy of Giving’ event.



Diwali we reach out to poor children in an institution or charity home and provide them with all useful items including clothes, utensils and crockery which we had collected in a special drive.”

In November last year, around 800 houses in Sion, Mulund, Matunga, Worli and Nerul have donated huge bundles of “give-aways which were then sorted out based on gender, age group and application type; and packed neatly by Rotaractors.” They went to the Government Ashram School, Shahpur, and donated the neatly wrapped packages to 380 children who were looking forward to visit their villages for Diwali. “Also each beneficiary got rice, wheat , sugar,



**RAC Mumbai Salt City president Pranati Chheda at the Government Ashram School, Shahpur.**



moong and tur dhal (1kg each) under the first phase of the project.” During the second phase, the club has roped in Nimesh Tanna Trust, an NGO supporting childless elderly couples living in different housing societies. “We gave 50kg of rations to the NGO which cooked delicious meals for 165 elderly couples living alone in different areas of Mumbai and don’t have any sources of income.”

During the final leg of *Joy of Giving*, they visited Shree Care, an old age home in Mulund, and

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*It was an amazing five-year journey in Rotaract for me. I was able to create impact with community projects; win great friends with like-minded views on life.*

**Pranati Chheda**  
president  
RAC Mumbai Salt City

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donated around 50 sarees and clothes to the elderly inmates. Each year, the club used to reach out to at least 2,000 beneficiaries with clothes, utility items and groceries. “But in the first two years of the project, the beneficiaries were much less as we were yet to pick up momentum,” says Pranati.

In February, they hosted Salt City Literary Fest at the Navbharat Nutan Vidyalaya, Mulund, in which 25 types of competitions like story-telling, oratory, essay writing and debating were held for 300 students in four languages. Certificates were given to the winners at a colourful event chaired by the school principal and attended by Rotaractors and parents. “We will be painting the walls of a neglected government high school under *Project Rangeela* (colours) shortly. We plan to paint scenic landscapes with proverbs, quotes and sayings of great leaders on the walls to inspire the children,” says Pranati.

### **Good mentorship**

RC Mumbai Salt City president Ramachandran Iyer is in regular contact with Pranati and her team to provide suggestions on service projects. “Both Iyer and Rtn Balan Narayanan, club treasurer, offer us ideas, and ways and means of doing projects. We are grateful to them,” says Pranati. Doing her third year in BLS LLB, an integrated Law course, she recalls that it was “an amazing five-year journey in Rotaract for me. I was able to create impact with community projects; win great friends with like-minded views on life.”

Her colleague, Vineet Kakkad, club’s PR director, says, “in the last three years, I have taken part in all our Rotaract projects, which gave me self-confidence to face life’s challenges.” The nine-year-old, community club has 96 members, all of them being college-goers from different parts of Mumbai. ■



**Rtrs Diksha Kamble and Rishi Jain with children at *Project Joy of Giving*.**

# Focus on children's mental health

Team Rotary News

**R**AC KC College, RID 3141, launched a collaborative effort with the Red Boys Foundation, a team of dedicated individuals working for the development of youth in the slums of Mumbai, and Purple Ribbon Collective, an NGO committed to mental health awareness and fighting domestic violence, to address mental health issues of children in Bandra, Mumbai. The initiative centred on fostering mental resilience and overall well-being among youth, and featured educational sessions and engaging activities.

Close to 120 enthusiastic youngsters participated in the event. Speakers from the Purple Ribbon Collective shared insight, followed by interactive games fostering learning and laughter. With support from another NGO, chocolates were distributed to the participants. ■



**Above:** A speaker from Purple Ribbon Collective addressing a session on mental health.

**Below:** Children at the mental health programme.





# A fun day out for girls

Jaishree

**A**round 150 young girls were the centre of attraction at the VR Punjab Mall in Kharar as they shopped for new clothes to their heart's content at one of the posh boutiques there. These children in the age group of 8–15 from an orphanage were escorted to the mall by the members of RAC Chandigarh Himalayan, RID 3080, under the club's project *Choti si Khwaish*. "It was heartwarming to watch their gleeful faces as they picked and tried on various garments. It was a

magical two hours as their laughter echoed through the store," says club president Perna Kashyap.

This is the seventh edition of this annual project and every year the club extends this experience to 150 little girls housed in various NGOs. The children are escorted in a bus by the Rotaractors and a staff from the institution, and are gifted a whole day of joyful experience. "It could be a combination of venues — anything that will give them eight hours of joy and a lifetime of memories," she says.



Children choosing clothes at the store.





This year, the girls were taken to the mall where they were let off to shop for clothes within a prescribed budget; then it was time for a sumptuous lunch and a Punjabi movie thereafter. “Lunch comprised pizzas, pastas and burgers, accompanied by fizzy Coke or Sprite, and wrapped up with ice cream. For most of them the elaborate menu was a first experience and it was sheer delight to see them all indulge in the flavours, savouring every bite,” smiles the club president. Jass Bajwa, a popular Punjabi singer, graced the event with

his presence which made the girls even more happier.

The club volunteers visit the home a day before their scheduled day out to get to know the girls. The project’s objective is to provide them with a day of happiness, empowerment and inclusion, allowing them to experience moments of laughter, excitement and delight — activities that are often taken for granted by others, says Prerna.

Gaurav Ghai, a member of the parent Rotary, RC Himalayan Ranges, Mansa Devi, is the event

**Left:** Volunteers from RAC Chandigarh Himalayan with the girls at a cloth store in the mall.



**The young guests enjoying their pizza and soft drink.**



Children all set to go on their outing with Rotaractors.

initiator and sponsors for the project every year. “We call him ‘a man with a diamond heart’,” says Perna.

So what drives him to spend ₹7–8 lakh for the project annually? “Orphans generally do not get what they want; they get what donors want to give. So I believe in this event, where children get what they actually want,” he says, and relates an incident when he had visited an orphanage on his birthday a few years ago. “The children were

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Orphans generally do not get what they want; they get what donors want to give. In this event children get what they actually want.

**Gaurav Ghai**  
member, RC Himalayan Ranges,  
Mansa Devi.

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expecting a serving of *daal chawal* and chips. But when I asked them what did they want, there was 15 minutes of silence and then a voice feebly said, ‘Pizza?’ Soon all 130 children excitedly joined in and requested for the Italian dish. That was the best birthday I had ever celebrated,” says Ghai, a diamond merchant and a Rotarain of five years. He makes sure that the young beneficiaries shop and eat at the best venues, enjoy and make the most of the day. ■

# Craft-making for school students

V Muthukumar

**H**aving joined Rotaract this year, Waasifa Fakhri, club president, RAC SNTD Women's University, Juhu, RID 3141, is happy that she is able to "interact with diverse people, Rotaractors from the district and college students in Mumbai. It is very nice to see that we are also helped by NGOs in our projects that include fun games and lively socialising that create a strong bond between us and the communities."

Recently, through *Project Creativity Building* around 450 students from Class 1-7 at the Mumbai Public School, Kabutar Khana, were engaged in making paper bags

out of wastepaper and newsprint. "We joined hands with ConnectFor, an intermediary group that helps to connect with volunteers and NGOs, for the craft-making workshop at the school," says Waasifa. The students were taught riddles and puzzles, moral stories were narrated with the aim to teach them life values.

With the support of 10 doctors from the Nanavati Max Super Specialty Hospital, a health camp was held at the college. "A range of tests were conducted for BP, blood sugar, BMI, cholesterol level and blood check-up on 350 people including Rotaractors, college students and faculty. Eye screening was also done for them. A blood donation

camp was also held at the venue," she says.

Sponsored by RC Mumbai Royales, the five-year-old Rotaract club has 20 members who pay ₹550 per head as annual club fee. "Our parent Rotary helps us in our contributions to RI dues. Rotarians are supportive and provide help in many ways in organising our projects and events throughout the year," says Waasifa, who is doing her final year masters in Resource Management and Ergonomics.

She wanted to join a Rotary club after finishing her postgraduation. "I like to join any Rotary club in my neighbourhood and expand my service to the community in the years to come," she smiles. ■

Rotaractors with students at the Mumbai Public School at the craft-making workshop.



# Delhi Rotaractors do winter-related projects

V Muthukumaran

**A** young entrepreneur decided to form a new Rotaract club in Delhi after he convinced around 15 Rotaractors who had either quit a club or looking for a new group to share their like-minded views and ideas to join his brainchild. “Earlier I used to be in a community-based club, but members started leaving to join other district clubs for personal

and other reasons,” recalls Rajat Kapoor, charter president, RAC Delhi Dynamic Leaders, RID 3011.

After getting chartered on July 23, 2023 as an independent Rotaract club (without sponsorship from a parent Rotary club), “we have done 15 service projects reaching out to communities in the national capital region (NCR). Our membership of 20 Rotaractors is made up of a good

mix of youngsters, mostly final year college students, and working professionals. Thanks to their efforts, our project funding is done through member donations and their family support,” he explains.

During Christmas, they engaged around 130 children at the Ratan Wala Park, Model Town, in various fun activities. “We named our event *Project Christmastide* as we formed



groups to explain the historical facts behind Christmas to children, distributed Santa Claus caps to all, and provided delicious food including sandwich, juice, biscuits and chips,” he says. In turn, Rotaractors were entertained with songs and dance performance by the young ones with ZRR Ritik Aggarwal presiding over it as the chief guest. Gift bags were given to all children.

Around 200 woollen blankets were distributed to homeless families and destitute across the NCR in a two-day drive. “We collected ₹16,000 from our members, friends and well-wishers to purchase blankets for the less privileged families exposed to wintery nights,” he says. On Republic Day, they spent time with 110 orphaned inmates at the DMRC Children’s Home at Tis Hazari near the Kashmiri Gate. DRR

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After getting chartered on July 23, 2023 as an independent Rotaract club (without sponsorship from a parent Rotary club), we have done 15 service projects reaching out to communities.

**Rajat Kapoor**

president

RAC Delhi Dynamic Leaders

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Kriti Malhotra hoisted the national flag, after which stationery kits were distributed to children. Snacks including muffins, sandwich and juice were given to them.

Makar Sankranti and Lohri were celebrated at the Apna Ghar Ashram, Budhpur, an old age home with 450 elderly inmates. “We served dinner to senior citizens and ration items worth ₹10,000 were donated to the special home.” In April, a mega *bandara* (food distribution) reached out to 1,500 beneficiaries at Janakpuri, followed by Project *Chabeel* (a mix of water, Rooh Afza and milk) in May in which chilled rose milk will be served to over 2,000 pedestrians and commuters “as refreshment during summer.”

**New Rotary club**

Kapoor is in discussion with around 7–8 members who as past presidents of Rotaract clubs have good experience in service projects. “We have members from RID 3011, 3012 and 3070, and some of them have more than 10

**Rotaractors with children at the at the DMRC Children’s Home during Republic Day celebration at Tis Hazari, Delhi.**



**Right:** Dinner being served to elderly inmates at the Apna Ghar Ashram, Budhpur, on Makar Sankranti.

**Below:** Food and snacks being distributed to children at a park on Christmas.





**Above:** Rotaractors with children at the Republic Day celebration.

**Below:** Children waiting to get Christmas gifts.



years of Rotaract experience. I am also in contact with DRR Kriti and DG Jeetender Gupta for chartering a new Rotary club with members from our Rotaract club,” he explains.

Having been in Rotaract for four years, he runs a marketing agency in the food and beverage sector that caters to restaurants and cafes. “We use social media handles and digital marketing in a big way, which are also leveraged to promote our Rotaract activity,” he smiles. Over the last 10 months since they came into being, “we had exchanged over 100 letterheads with Rotaract clubs across 30-plus districts in India,” Kapoor signs off with pride. ■

# Shaping young minds through RYLA

Jaishree

**R**otaract District 3011 organised a RYLA programme which had a participation of 220 Rotaractors from 80 Rotaract clubs in the district, 30 Interactors and 10 Rotarians.

The two-day event featured insightful sessions by 12 speakers including a financial literacy session by Rtn Sanjai Seth from the Rotary Club of Vasant Valley and a digital literacy programme by Onkar Khullar, popularly known

as ‘Digital Gandhi’. Lessons in leadership, time management and communication skills also formed part of the schedule. “We had RI President Gordon McNally inspire us through his virtual address,” says DRR Kriti Malhotra.

The delegates had a fun time playing Holi the second day. “It gave everyone an opportunity to bond and build friendships that would last a lifetime,” she smiles.

The district organised a training assembly called *Lumos* for 140 aspiring Rotaract leaders. More

than just imparting crucial knowledge on Board roles and responsibilities, *Lumos* offered a unique Hogwarts-themed experience, fostering camaraderie and enriching the learning journey, smiles Kriti.

Seasoned trainers expertly guided participants through sessions on leadership skills, operational management, member engagement and communication strategies. Interactive workshops provided practical tools, while a dynamic team-building activity further solidified bonds and

RYLA participants with Onkar Khullar (extreme left).







DRR Kriti Malhotra (L) with DG Jeetender Gupta and his spouse Deepti.

encouraged teamwork. “*Lumos* wasn’t just about acquiring knowledge; it was about creating a vibrant community. The Hogwarts theme, complete with house sorting and immersive activities, added a touch of magic, making the experience both memorable and enjoyable,” she adds. Participants left equipped with newfound skills, strengthened connections and a passion to contribute positively to their clubs and the district.

*Game on* was another district event which brought the Rotaractors together. Over 100 Rotaractors participated to display their athletic prowess and competitive spirit at the Rotary Public School grounds in Gurugram. Cricket, athletics, badminton, chess, carrom, and a thrilling treasure hunt were among the varied games that captivated the participants and onlookers alike.

Rotary Club of Gurgaon supported the sporting extravaganza. DG Jeetender Gupta visited the venue and encouraged the Rotaractors. ■



**Above:** Winners of the Game On event with their cups and medals.

**Below:** Delegates with DRR Kriti Malhotra at the training assembly, Lumos.



# Celebrating Holi with children

## Team Rotary News

**T**his Holi was special for the 250 children residing at the SK Foundation, an NGO in Janakpuri, New Delhi, as they got the opportunity to revel in the colours of the festival, all thanks to the Rotaractors of RAC DPSRU (Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research University), RID 3011.

“We played flower and colour Holi with the children all through the day. It was an overwhelming experience,” said project

in-charge Shagun. Festival food was served and the Rotaractors engaged the children in other games too.

*Sanskriti*, an online cultural exchange connecting clubs across borders, hosted by the club was a huge hit, she says. Over 400 Rotary, Rotaract and Interact clubs from across 14 countries participated and discussed the cultures and traditions followed in the respective regions. The programme was conducted in four phases over the year. ■





# Diwali charity mela raises funds for community initiatives

**Kiran Zehra**

**M**onths of meticulous planning and coordination preceded the heartwarming spectacle of the Diwali charity mela organised by RAC Delhi, Yuva, RID 3011. Club secretary Arth Nangia highlights “the tireless efforts of club members in curating a diverse lineup of stalls and managing logistics to ensure a seamless experience. We ran intensive promotional campaigns on social media to attract widespread participation, aligning with the mela’s aim of supporting small businesses and fundraising for community projects.”

The event featured 15 stalls showcasing a diverse array of products, all handmade or homemade, ranging from clothing, travel, and accessories to learning and educational stalls. Small businesses and new-age brands were given the opportunity to showcase their offerings. “We firmly believe that while established brands and corporations play a significant role in the market, backing small businesses and emerging brands during our charity events fosters a more inclusive and vibrant economic environment, benefiting both entrepreneurs and the community,” says Nangia.

Stallholders were charged between ₹3,500 to ₹5,000 for the space, and tickets

for the fair were also sold to attendees. Despite covering expenses related to logistics and planning, the club managed to raise ₹40,000 by the end of

the event. These funds will be allocated to the club’s ongoing projects, Karuna and Sambhav.

Under Project Karuna, the club identifies old age homes



lacking in medical resources and donates essential equipment such as blood pressure and sugar checking machines. “Last year alone, we supported two such institutions with much-needed medical supplies,” says Nangia.

Project Sambhav focuses on menstrual health management, raising awareness about sanitation and hygiene practices. Through initiatives such as pad donation and awareness drive the club has been actively promoting women’s health and well-being.

Reflecting on the success of the Diwali charity mela, the club secretary expressed gratitude to “all our club members and the participants. The event not only provided a platform for local businesses but also gave us a chance to learn management skills and have fun at the same time.”■



**Rotaract Club of Delhi Yuva**  
Presents  
**Jashn**  
ALHOTRA  
sident  
PARMEET SINGH  
Event Chairperson

# Diverse Rotaract projects in Chandigarh

V Muthukumaran

Just being in Rotaract and getting themselves involved in service projects give the members of RAC Chandigarh, RID 3080, a “shared identity and wonderful experience of serving the community,” says its club president Navnita Rajput. Among the 67 members, around 70 per cent are college students and the rest are young working professionals of this 51-year-old, community-based club sponsored by RC Chandigarh, the oldest Rotary club in the union territory, the capital of both Punjab and Haryana.

Speaking about their service projects, Rotaract District Health Service chair Manu Gupta says, “our thrust is on healthcare, literacy, hygiene and vocational services. Recently, we celebrated Holi at our Rotary House and *Pot Luck* was conducted with fanfare.” In this event, 10 Rotaractors prepared sweet dishes at their homes and brought their cuisines for

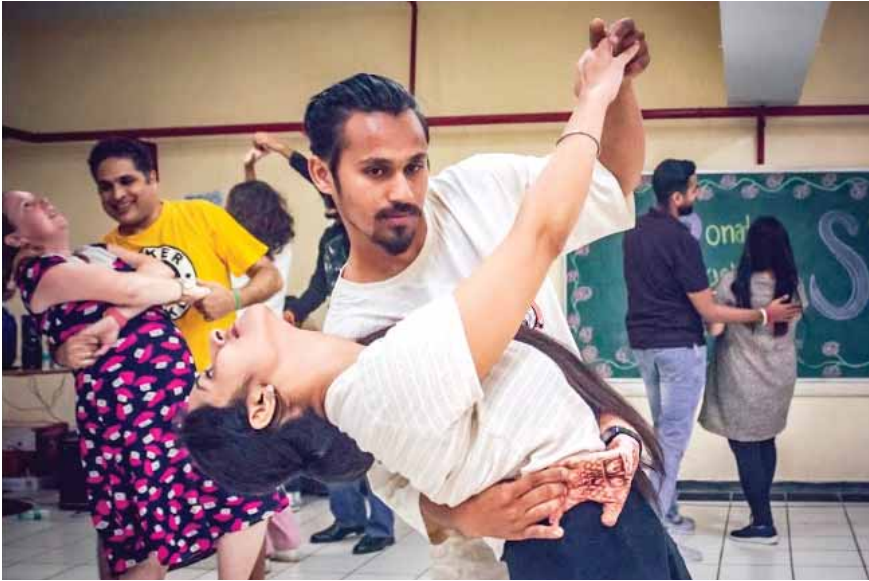
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A fundraiser titled *Donate, Dosti, Dance* (D3) was organised at the Rotary House to mobilise funds to provide relief material for the flood victims in Himachal Pradesh.

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Food, refreshments being distributed to patients and their attendants at the Government Hospital, Sector-32.



### Left from top:

*Project Donate, Dosti and Dance* to provide relief material for the Himachal flood victims.

Vitamin supplements being distributed to slum children at Sector-25.

and relief material worth ₹1 lakh was distributed to the families of flood victims through *My Rotary* portal. Our club got a certificate of appreciation from RI for the flood-relief work,” explains Navnita.

Every month, a select few Rotaractors visit Cheema Foundation, an NGO, to do audio recording of academic books for the benefit of visually-impaired students. Under *Project Ummeed Ki Awaaz* (Voice of Hope), “we are given time slots and a set of books for us to do our voice recording. After doing at least six hours of audio recording, we get certificates from the NGO,” says Vachika Goel, PR director of the club. As a permanent project, the club is doing this novel work for the last six years.

*Project Annasparsh* has distributed buttermilk, food packets, biscuits and water bottles to over 200 patients and their attendants at the Government Hospital (Sector-32) to mark Rotary new year on July 1. The project was sponsored by Rtrs Sarthak Bansal, Sahil Gupta and Dipinder Kaur. Around 20 Rotaractors took part in a HPV seminar with Dr Heena Chawla from Apollo Hospitals, giving a talk on cervical cancer at the Rotary House. “We are giving sanitary pads over the last three years to women in the slum areas across Chandigarh, thus benefiting over 350 of them, and they were educated on adopting best

sharing with others, and the best dishes were recognised.

Lohri and Makar Sankranti (harvest festival) were celebrated at the Kartar Aasra, an orphanage and old age home, with children and elderly inmates. “We had fun games with 25 children who were given snacks and dry fruits; gifts were distributed to 15 elderly people at the special home,” says Navnita. Around 15 doctors from Sri Sukhmani Dental College Hospital and Dr Harvansh Singh Judge Institute of Dental Sciences examined 100 children and adults for dental deformities at an oral hygiene camp held at the Press Club (Sector 27). “Free

treatment was given and medicines were distributed to needy patients,” says Gupta.

### **Donate, Dosti, Dance**

A fundraiser titled *Donate, Dosti, Dance* (D3) was organised at the Rotary House to mobilise funds to provide relief material for the flood victims in Himachal Pradesh. “Under D3, we hosted a three-day workshop on *Salsa Bachata*, a popular western dance and music, in which over 350 youngsters took part. We gave a cheque for ₹50,000 to a government school in Himachal through our DRR Chinmay Abbhi;

practices in menstrual hygiene,” explains Navnita. Around 25 stray dogs were given winter jackets to give a protective shield during cold nights and rainy season for the first time under *Project Garmaahat*. The 14<sup>th</sup> edition of *Mahadaan* collected over 100 units of blood which was donated to the Rotary Blood Bank in the city.

Stationery items were donated on two occasions to 60 orphaned

students at the Kartar Aasra home. “In January first week, tea and biscuits were served to 500 patients and their attendants at the Government Hospital (Sector-32),” says Vachika, doing her final year BCom at the MCM DAV College for Women and into her second year as Rotaractor. “The Rotaract journey is memorable. Earlier, I was an introvert before moving from Ambala. Now, I interact with



A stray dog being clothed with winter jackets.



Sanitary napkins were distributed to women at Sector-38.

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All the members of the parent Rotary, RC Chandigarh, have been of great help to us as they come out with project ideas, provide valuable tips and even offer monetary support, if needed.

### Navnita Rajput

president, RAC Chandigarh

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my Rotaractors at the hostel which give me confidence to enhance my social life which was absent earlier,” she smiles. She will continue to be a member of her Rotaract club even after shifting out from the city for doing MBA in another city, she says.

Echoing her views, club president Navnita, working as an assistant manager of digital marketing in a private firm, says, “this is my third year as Rotaractor and it has been a wonderful experience for me. I have grown in both professional and personal fronts after joining Rotaract. And I will continue in my club as long as possible now that there is no age limit for being a Rotaractor.”

### Support from Rotarians

All the members of the parent Rotary, RC Chandigarh, have been of “great help to us as they come out with project ideas, provide valuable tips and even offer monetary support, if needed. Their club president Anil Chadda helps us in project funding through proper guidance or direct support whenever we approach him,” says Navnita. An annual fee of ₹1,600 per head is levied from Rotaractors, of which ₹800 goes to RI dues, ₹200 for the district fund; and the balance ₹600 is meant for club activity. ■





A Rotaractor interacts with a woman during the menstrual hygiene awareness programme.

Bottom: Beneficiaries, along with the Rotaractors, at the sanitary pad distribution drive.

## Addressing menstrual hygiene in Delhi slums

### Team Rotary News

**U**nder *Project Sankalp*, spearheaded by RACs Sushant University and Young Visionaries, RID 3011, 18,000 sanitary pads were distributed across 11 locations in Delhi and Gurgaon.

Teaming up with Mission Hop, an NGO based in Delhi, volunteers

actively initiated dialogues with women residing in the slums to address social taboos related to menstrual health. “Discussing menstrual hygiene isn’t just about breaking taboos... it’s about promoting health, empowering women, and creating a more inclusive society,” says club president Tanisha Garg.

Young girls who have entered the menstruation phase were taught how to correctly use and dispose of sanitary pads to “ensure effective and safe usage. We also discussed menstrual hygiene practices to help them dispel myths and misconceptions and take charge of their menstrual health.”■



# Empowering communities in MP

Jaishree

Over 550 physically-challenged people experienced the gift of mobility, thanks to the Rotaractors of RID 3040 comprising Madhya Pradesh and eastern Gujarat. A mega prosthetic limb distribution camp was organised in Bhopal, in association with Narayan Seva Sansthan, an NGO based in Udaipur. The Rotaractors helped identify 457 individuals from slums, railway stations, bus stands and other marginalised areas and brought them to the camp site. Ten Rotaract clubs of Bhopal, along with the Rotary Club

of Bhopal Hills, extended support for the project. Measurements were taken and prosthetic limbs were fitted for the physically-challenged, enabling them to walk with ease. A wheelchair distribution camp organised in Khandwa in MP benefitted 100 individuals. RAC Khandwa and RC Khandwa helped in executing the project.

The district Rotaract clubs executed *Project MAA* (Mental health Awareness Acts) focused on promoting mental health and peace in the community. Awareness campaigns, counselling sessions with experts,

'Free Hug' campaigns, art therapies and jamming sessions were conducted across the districts. These programmes aimed to address the stigma surrounding mental health issues and provide support to those in need. The endeavour also got Rotaract good visibility, said DRR Aman Khan. With the involvement of psychologists and mental health experts, this initiative has impacted around 9,500 people across the district, he added.

Nirogya, a health checkup camp for the holistic wellbeing of Rotaractors, was organised by the district in Indore.



A painting contest for schoolchildren organised by Rotaract clubs as part of the inter-district *Matritva* project.



A Free Hugs campaign at a mall, as part of Project MAA.



Sanitary pad distribution as part of Project Matritva.



A blood donation camp as part of the *Project Mahadaan*.

Over 270 Rotaractors participated in the camp, benefitting from health tests, nutritional consultations and vital check-up conducted by experienced doctors. The event also served as an opportunity for fellowship and camaraderie among Rotaractors, said District Rotaract secretary Saurabh Nayak.

The district, which has 50 Rotaract clubs, celebrated World Rotaract Week (March 13-19) with gusto. Several service initiatives across various domains were rolled out which the

Rotaract clubs did with dedication and enthusiasm. Seventy-six community enhancement activities such as painting the walls in slum areas and adorning them with Rotary's various service initiatives including creating polio awareness, cleaning and renovating government schools and anganwadis, and donation of essential items to old age homes and orphanages, were undertaken by the clubs, he said.

At the ninth edition of the international blood donation campaign,

*Mahadaan*, the district collected around 600 units of blood through numerous blood donation camps. Rotaractors, Rotarians and the general public came forward to donate blood.

RID 3040 spearheaded an international event *Matritva*, collaborating with three other districts — RIDs 3011, 3220 (Sri Lanka) and 3292 (Nepal) — to organise impactful service initiatives focusing on empowering women and children. Humanitarian projects such as distribution of sanitary pads, installing incinerators in schools, promoting menstrual hygiene awareness, organising women's wellness camps and supporting girls' education were done by all the clubs in the participating districts. "Clubs also organised clay modelling and self-defence classes, and painting contests in schools," said Nayak.

An inter-district youth exchange programme, *Safar*, hosted by the district helped strengthen bonds among Rotaractors from seven districts. For three days from Feb 9, 100 participants engaged in various activities which culminated with a dinner hosted by DRR Aman Khan, said Nayak. The participating Rotaractors were hosted by the district team and "they got a taste of our culture and traditions. We even involved them in our service activities," he added. ■



DRR Aman Khan (L) at a wheelchair distribution event.

# Reflective collars for street animals

## Team Rotary News

In the streets of Yamunanagar, Haryana, on cold winter mornings in January this year, members of RAC Yamunanagar, RID 3080, extended gestures of kindness and treats to street dogs. “Equipped with reflective collars we approached the strays with care and patience. With practiced swiftness, we then secured the lightweight collars around the dogs’ necks,” says Priyanka Sharma, the project coordinator.

“This may seem risky, but in the misty cold weather, strays are susceptible to being hit by vehicles or inadvertently provoking a defensive reaction from passersby. Our aim is to ensure the safety of both the dogs and the people. By adorning strays with these reflective collars, they become more visible to motorists and pedestrians, thereby minimising the risk of accidents,” she says. ■



# Promoting early detection and cancer awareness



Club members along with the medical team at the cancer detection camp.

Commemorating National Cancer Awareness Day, the Rotaract Club of Ingenious Minds, RID 3011, under its *Project Nivaran*, hosted a cancer screening camp in Dwarka. Over 70 individuals participated in the camp, undergoing comprehensive screenings facilitated by healthcare professionals. The camp successfully conducted over 120 screenings, specifically targeting three types of cancer — cervical, oral and breast cancer. The initiative was done in collaboration with the Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre.

The primary aim of this project was to conduct free screening, focusing on detecting potential issues early and raising awareness about cancer prevention. ■

# Rotaractors meet at railway stations

Jaishree

**V**aibhav Godkar, a member of RAC Dombivli Midtown Youth, RID 3142, came up with an innovative way of networking with Rotaractors of other Rotaract districts, when he planned to travel from Bandra, Mumbai, to his hometown Veraval in Gujarat to attend his sister's wedding. "When I planned to travel by train I came up with an idea of meeting other Rotaract club members at the

railway stations en route where the train halts," he says. He conveyed the idea to his club president Pranita Pawale who improvised on it and suggested Godkar to flash his travel plans on Instagram and invite Rotaractors to meet him at the stations.

Of the 20 Rotaract clubs identified enroute Bandra and Veraval, eight clubs showed interest to meet him at their respective railway stations. He was travelling

by the Veraval Express and plans were worked out to meet the Rotaractors accordingly. "The train would pass through some of the railway stations at night and so I planned to meet the Rotaractors in those stations on my return journey."

He messaged his coach number and the time when the train will pull into the station to the participating clubs. "It was such an exhilarating experience to meet the



Vaibhav Godkar, member of RAC Dombivli Midtown Youth with members of RAC Vapi Riverside at the Vapi railway station.

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My nana and nani with whom I was travelling were super happy to see me interacting with my fellow Rotaractors.

**Vaibhav Godkar**

RAC Dombivli Midtown Youth

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Rotaractors. We exchanged letter-heads, some of them had got me bouquets. We attracted attention. My nana and nani with whom I was travelling were super happy to see me interacting with my fellow Rotaractors,” says Godkar who is the International Service director in his club. This is his first year in Rotaract and “I am happy I made the right decision to join this elite organisation.”

Though the aim of this meet was to establish physical contact with Rotaract clubs of other districts, Godkar says that the meeting has taken the club relationship to a higher level. “Now we are ready to do service projects jointly that would benefit both communities.” Recently, the Dombivli Rotaract club had launched a service project to put reflective collars on the necks of stray dogs. “Each collar costs ₹35 but RACs such as Vadodara, Parul University came forward to donate for the cause. This is just a start. We will soon be working together on larger projects,” he says.

Among the signature projects of RAC Dombivli Midtown Youth, he says that the club observes Independence Day with great fanfare for the last 14 years. Competitions are held in schools, orphanages or old age homes. This year “we conducted a roadshow on Phadke Road to showcase the



history of Dombivli through a video presentation.”

Chai and vada pav were distributed to the delivery boys working with delivery firms such as Swiggy and Zomato on Friendship Day, and during Navaratri, the club organised a Navratri Mandal contest which had a participation of 24 mandals. An entry fee of ₹500

per head was collected from the participating teams. Cricket tournaments are conducted every year among local teams in the locality to promote the club’s public image.

This year the club, along with RACs Bhaktapur Nepal, RID 3292, and Solapur Midtown Phoenix, RID 3132, had organised an inter-club youth exchange. ■

# Eco-friendly stoves make women happy

V Muthukumaran



RAC Panvel Elite president Samruddhi Munot (2nd from right) and her team giving a demo of biomass stove to a tribal woman.

All the 10 tribal families at Sindalachiwadi village in Raigad district of Maharashtra are happy that they don't have to suffer the daily ordeal while preparing meals in their mud huts. With their new biomass, smokeless stoves donated by RAC Panvel Elite, RID 3131, "cooking has become easy and painless for us. Also, the cooking time is reduced by around 40–50 minutes," says Pallavi (35). Earlier, she recalls, "with mud *chullahs* we were exposed to excessive smoke, suffered from frequent cough and eye irritation." Also, the *chullah* had to be fed with firewood from tree branches, thus it resulted in shrinking green cover in their locality.

Rotaractors led by their club president Samruddhi Munot hosted a one-day Garba dance and music at

the Sindhi Panchayat Hall, Panvel, on Navaratri festival to raise funds for their service projects. "We raised around ₹75,000 out of our Garba programme, and used ₹35,000 for the smokeless stove project. We gave a demonstration to each beneficiary at their houses on how to use the stove that does not need either electricity or battery to run it," explains Samruddhi. First, a couple of coal briquettes are pushed into the side funnel of the stove, and they are lighted. Then small, dry twigs are shoved, which will result in instant flame on top. "We can cook one dish at a time, and any type of vessel of different sizes can be placed on top of the stove," she says.

Now 45-year-old Kunda has got more spare time to do "other household chores and look after my children better. I am also thinking

of taking up a part-time job at home to supplement our monthly income." Apart from improving the air quality, the biomass device called Panval Rocket Stove (PRS-v5) is eco-friendly and sustainable in the long run, thus being tailor-made to suit the convenience of rural housewives.

Chartered in 2019, the Rotaract club is going to take up a mega tree plantation drive in five government schools shortly. "Over 1,000 saplings of diverse varieties will be planted on the school premises; and each tree will be taken care of by a student." At a recent medical camp held at the Jain Hall, 200 patients were screened by a team of 12 doctors led by Dr Nilesh Banthia, a neurologist, from Neo Clinic and Eco Centre, Panvel. To help thalassaemia patients being treated at the MGM Hospital, the Rotaractors



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We raised around ₹75,000 out of our Garba programme, and used ₹35,000 for the smokeless stove project. We gave a demonstration to each beneficiary at their houses.

**Samruddhi Munot**  
president, RAC Panvel Elite

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collected over 50 units of blood at a blood donation camp.

### Fundraisers

Rotaractors hold fundraisers like Garba dance, Diwali Milan and other fun programmes on festivals to mobilise funds for service projects.



Club president Samruddhi registers a patient during a medical camp at the Jain Hall, Panvel.



At a blood donation camp along with her father Ritesh Munot, board member, RC Panvel Elite.

“We have an annual club fee of ₹2,300 per head, of which ₹300 goes to district fund, ₹785 to RI dues and the rest is used for projects. We pay a token amount of ₹1,000 per annum to district as multimedia charges,” says Samruddhi.

With a headcount of 26, “our club is being mentored by Ritesh Munot, board member and past president, RC Panvel Elite. He gives us fresh ideas, motivates and guides us on procuring resource material for service projects,” she explains. They also take up online campaign and crowdfunding to mobilise funds. “Recently five stray dogs got afflicted with jaundice. We took up an online campaign, raised funds and treated the canines successfully.”

A final year Law student, Samruddhi says, “my five-year journey in Rotaract is eventful as I learnt many new things in life.” She is doing internship in a private law firm, and “I will become a Rotarian after 3-4 years once I establish myself in my career,” she smiles. ■

# Helping cancer patients

Jaishree

Members of RAC Chandigarh Midtown at the Game Palacio in the Nexus Elante Mall.



Cancer treatment is expensive and it is unfortunate if the poor is further burdened by the disease. We try whatever best we can do to help these people. We identify families with low annual income and support the chemotherapy and other medical expenses for the afflicted family member,” says Aman Garg, president, Rotaract Club of Chandigarh Midtown, RID 3080.

The club has been organising a fundraiser event called *Bowl Out Cancer* to raise vital funds to aid individuals battling cancer in their arduous journey towards recovery. This is the third edition of the programme, the first version of the fundraiser was done in 2017 and the next was in 2023. “We supported two children in the two years, but sadly, both of them succumbed to the disease,” he says.

This year the club organised 255 games for two days at a gaming arena, The Game Palacio at the Nexus Elante Mall, in the city. The event team ensured extensive publicity for the games through social media, print and radio. Pamphlets and posters strategically placed at restaurants and coffee shops publicised the programme among youngsters. “An unexpected treat was the participation by English cricketer Sam Curran and few others from the New Zealand team. They were visiting the mall and it was a chance occasion,” smiles Garg.

Over 200 people participated in a variety of games. “The arena charged us a discounted rate of ₹300 a game and we charged the participants ₹450. When we explained to them the cause, they willingly participated in more games and tried to be a part of our programme,” he says. The



**RAC Chandigarh Midtown president Aman Garg with a cancer afflicted child for whom the club provided funds for treatment.**

endeavour helped the club raise ₹2.5 lakh which is being used to treat a 9-year-old girl battling blood cancer at the PGIMER, Chandigarh. “The annual income of her parents is a meagre ₹50,000 and they could not afford the medication and treatment.”

The club chartered in 1983 presently has 55 members. Other service projects done by them include distributing stationery and school

bags to less privileged students and visiting orphanages and old age homes to cheer the inmates and provide support to them. The club recently conducted a TB awareness rally and distributed nutrition packs to people afflicted with the disease. A blood donation camp was organised on a large scale to help children with thalassaemia disorder as they need frequent blood transfusion. ■

# Mega anti-tobacco campaign in Delhi

V Muthukumar

In a major health campaign, all the 27 Rotaractors at the RAC Shri Aurobindo College, RID 3011, are involved in *Project Tamaacha to Tobacco* (slap to tobacco) which is held in phases through five-day camps on the outskirts of Delhi. This year, they conducted the mega anti-tobacco campaign from October to March by holding awareness-cum-treatment camps at seven city suburbs — Old and New Seelampur, Sangam Vihar, Samalkha, Madangir, Jaitpur and Govindpuri.

Dr Sajeela Maini from Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi, examined and treated around 600 patients, rural people who were addicted to tobacco

products like gutka, beedi and cigarette. “On the first day, we hold an awareness session in which the rural people were told about the dangers of consuming tobacco. From the second day onwards, Dr Sajeela will diagnose and treat patients. She also distributes free medicines,” says Himan Deka, project coordinator.

At least 6–7 Rotaractors will be there at the camp in rotation on all five days. They distribute pamphlets and flyers to visitors explaining to them the harmful effects of tobacco products, he says. The six-year-old anti-tobacco campaign is targeted at the rural families like farmers and artisans living on the periphery of Delhi. Earlier, the campaign was called *Last*



**Above:** Dr Sajeela Maini from Sir Ganga Ram Hospital giving consultation to patients addicted to tobacco products.



**Rural patients register at the anti-tobacco camp for treatment.**



*Puff*, but it got a new name and a brand identity, thanks to the mentorship from Dr Sajeela.

*Project Rudhir* (blood) aims at creating awareness on menstrual hygiene among girls in slum colonies. “We have distributed 12,000 sanitary napkins to 1,200 girls, each got two packs of five pads, so far this year. It is difficult to estimate the number of beneficiaries over the last seven years, but during Covid times our MHM campaign was disrupted,” recalls club president Sonakshi Arora. For the first time under this project, “we have started holding awareness sessions at three schools, covering around 150 students who were taught personal hygiene and managing periods in a healthy manner.”

Around 250 participants including Rotaractors, college students, NGO volunteers and the public came together for a walkathon under *Project Beti 8.0*, a flagship event on women’s empowerment. “Each year,

we choose a different venue to flag off the walkathon and in April, we staged our rally from the north campus of Vishwavidyalaya, that houses many top universities,” says Sonakshi. The walkathon was followed by music and dance by Rotaractors which culminated in a flash mob. “We distributed over 100 pepper sprays to less privileged girls to protect themselves from stalkers and violent eve-teasers.”

Sonakshi is trying to find a sponsor for providing HPV vaccination to around 250 girls against cervical cancer and “I am confident of providing vaccine doses to girls soon.”

In the last week of April, *Project Amal* (hope) will hold five different events at different venues as part of community outreach. “Giving food packets to Zomato delivery boys, distributing ration kits to families in slum areas, putting up a juice stall at a busy location in summer to provide chill relief to commuters and pedestrians are some of the events we had finalised

under *Project Amal* which is still being worked out.”

### **Club meeting**

All the Rotaractors make it a point to attend their weekly club meeting. “Also our board members meet once a month to chalk out projects and do a quick brainstorming of our activity,” says Sonakshi. Out of the annual membership fee of ₹800 per head, around ₹500 goes to RI, ₹100 to the district fund and the balance ₹200 is used for club projects.

Doing her final year BA (English), she looks back at her three-year Rotaract journey and says, “it has been a rollercoaster ride with many ups and downs. But I enjoy being a Rotaractor as it taught me a lot about leadership skills and time management.” At present, Sonakshi has not given a thought about becoming a Rotarian. “It is too early for me to say anything about being in Rotary now,” she smiles. ■

# Spreading compassion through various projects

Kiran Zehra



Binay Das sitting on his new wheelchair along with club president Payal Shil (third from R) and other members.



Club members at Sri Sri Gyan Mandir School after donating the water filters.

It was a chance encounter during her duty for the NGO Sanghadip that led Payal Shil, president of RAC Dharmanagar, RID 3240, to meet 14-year-old Binay Das, a spirited young boy fighting cerebral palsy and locomotive disorder. She learned that Binay's education was at stake as he couldn't be carried from home to school and back by his mother.

Recalling their interaction, Payal says, "He had a wonderful smile on his face and was able to respond and understand what we were talking. When his mother mentioned that he wouldn't be able to go to school, his smile vanished. I wanted to help him continue school."

Moved with "a desire to make a difference," Payal shared Binay's story with her team during a club

meeting. Utilising her own funds, she purchased a wheelchair costing ₹6,000 and, through the club, donated it to Binay. "It was a moment of pure empathy," she says, adding that she also wanted to "set an example for our club members and encourage them to step forward and contribute to causes that resonate with them."

To guarantee clean and safe drinking water for the students at Sri Sri Gyan Mandir in Tripura, the club donated two water filters worth ₹5,000. "The school authorities thanked and informed us that the funds saved from the school budget will now be redirected towards purchasing educational material for rural students," smiles Payal.

Led by project chair Sandip Kumar Dey, all members of the club have pledged to donate their eyes. "This initiative was undertaken with the dual intentions of contributing to the noble cause of eye donation and raising awareness about its importance, to inspire others to consider pledging their eyes," says Dey. ■



Rotaractors with their eye donation cards.

# Bonding through music

V Muthukumar



RAC MMK College president Shweta Chaube (sitting, 3<sup>rd</sup> from L) and secretary Leander Fonseca (standing, 3<sup>rd</sup> from R) at the Navaratri event.

With the aim to develop bonding among district Rotaractors and create awareness about Rotaract in the community, RAC MMK College, RID 3141, hosted a one-day fellowship event called *Zillion Stories* at the De' Monte Park, Bandra, in April. "It was basically a youth festival in which we had over 1,200 footfalls. We had put around 30 food stalls in the morning at the venue, followed by a light music concert in the evening. As it was open to the public, we put up banners and posters to create awareness about Rotaract to people of different age groups at the event which served as a bridge between us and the society," says Leander Fonseca, club secretary.

A popular youth club at the Smt Mithibai Motiram Kundnani (MMK)

College, Bandra, that offers UG, PG courses in commerce and economic streams, "we are a three-year old organisation with 55 members. *Project Aasha* is being done a few days ahead of Children's Day, for which we identify a slum area or an underdeveloped locality in Mumbai and distribute sparingly-used clothes, books, stationery, toys and blankets to the families. This year, we visited a government primary school at Kasara Ghat, a city suburb, and distributed all the useful items to 60 children," he explains. Further, they donated groceries to the institute for preparing noon meal for their students.

An ORS (oral rehydration solution) camp was held in partnership with RAC Medicrew at the KB Bhabha Hospital. The Rotaractors distributed

ORS sachets to over 50 patients and their attendants, and "told them the importance of being hydrated, especially during illness, to sustain their well-being." At the second edition of *Raktidaan*, around 85 units of blood was collected and donated to the Breach Candy Hospital.

The club has a graded membership with three sets of fee packages. In the first package, out of ₹650 per head, ₹400 goes to RI dues, ₹100 to the district fund and the rest, ₹150 is used for service projects. For the ₹900 package, while the amounts are same for RI and district dues, ₹400 is set aside for projects that includes ₹200 for club t-shirt; and in the top segment, out of ₹1,500 per head, 1,000 is used for projects including ₹200 for t-shirt. "We hold a club meeting for all



members and a board meeting for 12 office-bearers in a month. At the board meet, we usually have brainstorming sessions to chalk out future programmes,” says Fonseca. Recalling his two-year Rotaract journey, the student of BMS (Bachelor of Management Studies) says, “this is nothing short of a wonderful experience for me. I have gained in leadership and management skills, and have the confidence now to take up new challenges in life.”

Their parent Rotary, RC Mumbai Iconic extends monetary support as well as guidance in securing resources for Rotaract projects, events and fundraisers. Explaining her objectives, club president Shweta Chaube says, “I had a set of goals at the start of the Rotary new year which I had accomplished with the support of my board members.” ■



Club president Shweta (3<sup>rd</sup> from L), secretary Leander (middle back), college principal Kishore Peshori (2<sup>nd</sup> from R), vice-principal Asha Bhat to his right at the *Raktdaan*.

## Shelter for strays

### Team Rotary News



On hearing the “*pukhar* (call) of street animals in winter,” members of RAC Chandigarh Shivalik, RID 3080, “started a B&B to help them find a safe space to rest,” says Sarvgya Rana, the project financial head. “We decided to call it *Project Pukhar* as a response to their cries.”

While some club members hustled for sponsorships others got creative, “turning drums from a chemical factory into cozy retreats padding them with thermocol sheets, and loads of blankets. We didn’t just randomly leave these shelters anywhere — they were strategically placed in spots where many street animals were spotted,” he adds.

Talking about “room service” he says, “we made sure our furry guests received biscuits daily throughout the winter.” While 10 shelters have already been placed around the city “we plan to add more of these shelters in the city,” he adds.

“We have added a QR code on the drums to provide project information and receive shelter requests. So, next time you hear a street critter’s call, remember to scan the QR code on the drum because there’s a BNB just around the corner for our furry friends,” he smiles.

The Rotaractors have placed small terracotta bowls regularly filling them with grains and water to feed birds, and also visit *gaushalas* to feed cows. ■

# E-waste collection drive in Himachal

V Muthukumaran



RAC Wagnaghat president Swastik Jha speaks during installation at the Rotary Town Hall, Shimla.

As digital technology grows in leaps and bounds with our increasing screen time, RC Wagnaghat, RID 3080, has earned praise from government officials and Himachal Pradesh State Pollution Control Board (HPSPCB) for its efforts to create awareness on the urgent need to recycle electronic waste. *Project E-Waste Encore*, a maiden initiative, was held in two phases. “First, we conducted a two-hour zoom meet in which around 200 college students and members of

the public from different walks of life took part and expressed their concern about the menace of electronic waste,” says Swastik Jha, club president.

The 17-year-old institution-based club for students of Jaypee University of Information Technology at Wagnaghat, a small town 20km from district capital Solan in Himachal Pradesh, has taken up the e-waste drive as “we have easy access to computers, PC motherboards, IT peripherals and other digital gizmos including high-end mobile phones and chargers. As we are

exposed to these electronic devices, it has harmful effects on our mind and body,” explains Jha. A recycling company, Karo Sambhav had pitched in three executives to speak on the “toxic effects of e-waste that pollutes the soil and water at the online campaign.”

From the club, Jha, Rtrs Roodranch, Saurav and Sanya gave a talk on “ways to resolve the pollution caused by e-waste and revive the earth to its healthy state.”

Following the zoom interaction, the club has put up two collection boxes at its college hostel

and academic premises for depositing old computers and other disused electronic items. “In three days, we collected 20kg of e-waste, and a team from Karo Sambhav came and picked up these harmful gadgets from our college,” says Jha.

## Down memory lane

In a first-of-its-kind initiative in Rotaract, they are compiling a book that will recall the life experiences of senior citizens living in old age homes across the country. “So far, we had contacted 25 old age homes and asked the inmates to either write down their life experience

with interesting anecdotes or just narrate them for our Rotaractors to write it down. We had a draft of 22 real life stories from 14 states in India and we have a target to reach at least 20 states, so that our 'life book' will reflect the rich diversity of our country," he explains.

Called *Project Tajurba Kehta Hai* (experience speaks), Flairs, Delhi, has agreed to publish the new book with the same name (TKH) online through Amazon. The aim of the book compilation is to educate the young generations with the varied experiences of senior citizens "so that they could derive the knowledge and wisdom by reading it and strive for a bright life ahead."

Their parent Rotary, RC Shimla, has been a pillar of support for the Rotaractors. "Club president Amit Sood is briefed on our projects and we also send monthly activity report to him as a regular feedback. He appreciates our work and offers guidance as well as monetary support, if needed," says Jha. Studying final year BE (Computer Science), he says, "being a Rotaractor for four years is like enjoying every bit of living in your sweet home. Once I became the international service director of the club in the third year, I began to put my heart and soul into my Rotaract activity."

Will he continue in Rotaract after leaving college? "Wherever



Rtr Saumya Sharma along with e-waste collection.

my job takes me, I will become a member of a Rotaract club in that locality. Once I start

earning and get settled in my career, I will join a Rotary club of my choice," he smiles. ■

## Postnatal healthcare in Mumbai

### Team Rotary News

Rotaractors of RID 3141 present medical equipment at a maternity hospital in Mumbai.



Rotaract clubs of RID 3141 have provided nine essential medical equipment including weighing scales/machines and fetal dopplers to six maternity hospitals across

Mumbai through an initiative called *Project Aanchal*. "Through this endeavour we want to make a lasting impact on the wellbeing of mothers and their newborns,"

says DRR Aastha Parekh. These devices are pivotal in monitoring and ensuring the health and development of both expecting mothers and newborns. ■

# Focus on women-centric initiatives

Jaishree





**Above:** An impromptu dance with the inmates at the home.

**Left:** Rotaractors of RAC Delhi Midtown Maitreyi with acid attack survivors at the Apna Ghar home of the Brave Souls Foundation.

**I**t was a magical yet an introspective day, on March 20 — International Happiness Day, for the 10 Rotaractors of RAC Delhi Midtown Maitreyi, RID 3011, who volunteered to spend the day with the acid attack survivors at the Apna Ghar shelter run by the NGO, Brave Souls Foundation at Janganpura, Bhogal. With this initiative called *Project Shakti*, the members aimed to celebrate the indomitable spirit of the acid attack

survivors. “Although 40 of us volunteered for the project, only 10 were shortlisted to participate due to space constraint at the home,” says club president Teesha Jain.

The Rotaractors dedicated their day to spread joy among the inmates at Apna Ghar. They engaged them in games, songs and heartfelt conversations. Project chair Samridhi Rai notes that the most transformative aspect of the day was listening to their stories



Rotaractors at the Nehru Camp community in Bijwasan as part of *Project Ping*.

of resilience. “It gave us shivers when one of the girls related that she was a victim of the attack when she was just three, and another inmate shared that her *jiju* (brother-in-law) threw acid on her following a silly argument. But their courage in overcoming such intense adversity left an indelible mark on all our hearts and minds,” she adds. The Rotaractors left the home after giving special gifts to the survivors.

On International Women’s Day (March 8), the club launched *Project Ping* which aimed at addressing ‘period poverty’ in Nehru Camp, a

community in Bijwasan, “often plagued by resource scarcity,” says the club president. Women here lacked access to sanitary products, forcing them to resort to unhygienic and crude practices that jeopardised their health and wellbeing.

Sanitary napkins sponsored by women’s hygiene brand Pink Polka were distributed among women and adolescent girls. Recognising the deep-rooted stigma surrounding periods, the club embarked on a comprehensive awareness campaign that focused on dispelling myths, stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding menstruation. The women were encouraged to clear their doubts

and share their experiences. The Rotaractors facilitated a demonstration of proper pad usage and ensured their good understanding of menstrual hygiene. “We could instil a sense of confidence in them in managing their periods with dignity,” says Teesha.

Fuelled by this newfound zeal, the club is determined to take its initiatives further, advocating for women’s rights and well-being on a grander scale.

Earlier the Rotaractors, through their *Project Seeds of Change*, planted saplings in various places across Delhi collaborating with local partners. ■

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