

Rotaract NEWS



Do you know **Someone**
who is **advancing women**
in **Rotary?**

**NOMINATIONS
DUE 31 AUGUST**

for the

**SYLVIA
WHITLOCK
LEADERSHIP
AWARD**



Dr. Sylvia Whitlock is a Rotary pioneer, an educator, a humanitarian, and a longtime advocate for women in Rotary.



Any Rotarian or Rotaractor can nominate one member for consideration from 1 to 31 August.
<https://bit.ly/SWL-Award>





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RI Director **Raju Subramanian**

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Zone 4, 5, 6 & 7**

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Heatwaves, cool waters, green shoots...

The heatwave under which the world is reeling is a petrifying reminder of how the human species' extreme greed, selfishness and thoughtlessness are contributing to devastating climate change. In utter helplessness, this summer we've watched most regions of India reeling under a record heatwave. At least 37 cities recorded temperatures above 45 deg C, with some exceeding the dreaded 50 deg C mark, forcing schools to have an extended summer vacation. The extreme heatwave is caused by burning fossil fuels, cutting down forests and green covers, which are replaced by buildings, all this resulting in an explosion of greenhouse gases and global warming, which has now reached alarming levels.

Many European countries, considered a dream summer escape for well-heeled Indians, experienced heatwaves, resulting in several deaths. In Greece, five hikers died due to extreme heat. Urban India is hit much more than rural India; the garden city of Bengaluru experienced an unprecedented water crisis last year and as I write this edit, Delhi's Education Minister Atishi Singh and some other AAP leaders have begun a hunger strike at Rajghat, demanding release of water from Haryana to save the parched citizens of Delhi, which is now experiencing a water crisis.


Amidst all this gloom, the cheerful news is that with the environmental protection being added as Rotary's seventh area of focus, Rotarians across the world are engaged in meaningful projects to save Mother Earth. These include water conservation and augmentation, building of check dams and water bodies, greening the earth by planting trees and mangroves, creating eco parks to give the much-required lungs to cities gasping under the thick layers and levels of pollution. As pointed out by Meenakshi Venkataraman, director, Projects (2022-24), Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group, and TRF Cadre, Environment, in a recent issue of this magazine, climate action not

only prevents emissions but protects our health by reducing deadly particulate air pollution from fossil fuels. Examples include helping low-income taxi drivers to access e-auto rickshaws and increasing urban tree cover to reduce excessive heat. Clubs in India can do projects to give out clean cookstoves; such a project using induction stoves powered by hydro energy is being done through a global grant in Nepal, RID 3292. Funding an EV charging station by a club is another great way to promote the elimination of polluting petroleum products.

With the kind of destruction of our planet that we are seeing today, only passionate, collective and affirmative action on climate change will save our world. It came as a shot in the arm of Indian Rotarians working for sustainable livelihood of our *annadata*, the farmers, and greening our country while doing so, when this year's Programs of Scale grant worth \$2 million, given out every year by TRF, was awarded to the Rotary Club of Delhi Premier for sustainable farming. This issue carries a detailed article on how this club has been greening the desert areas of Rajasthan by building check dams and conserving water bodies, which has not only increased the income of farmers substantially but also arrested and even reversed migration to cities from villages.

But this is only the beginning; the enthused club members have already raised an additional \$2 million (over ₹16 crore) from CSR funds of Indian corporates for expanding their work on sustainable farming, and are confident that much more money will come in for this heartwarming cause as companies see verticals related to their area of business in this work.

Good luck and godspeed to this club!


Rasheeda Bhagat



Rotaractors, NGO volunteers and the public at the clean-up drive on the banks of Yamuna River.

A mega river clean-up at Yamunanagar

V Muthukumar

Every Sunday morning, around 12–14 Rotaractors from RAC GNKITM, RID 3080, go to the banks of Yamuna River, and clean up the ghat area littered with plastic waste, broken bottles and other garbage dumps that pollute the water body. “Since June this year, we have joined hands with Eco Dost, a community group, who also invite the public in the clean-up drive at Yamuna river.

We have got positive feedback for the river restoration work, and once exams are over, more college students will take part in the clean-up drive,” said Ridhi Sharma, club secretary.

Project Nukkad Natak (street play) is done every month at different places such as government schools, bus stands, parks and across villages with the focus on drug de-addiction. Around 12–13 students including Rotaractors go to the chosen venue

or village and stage a play at a vantage point to drive home the message of a drug-free life among the people, said Ridhi. DRR Chinmay Abbhi (2023–24) presented the Most Innovative District Project Award to the club team at an awards event in Chandigarh as “we have adopted a novel approach to create awareness on drugs and its ill-effects on the society.” *Under Project Annapurna*, the Rotaractors distributed food to poor families, and also provided for

cows, stray dogs, fishes and other animals for a week.

In another gesture, the club adopted a four-member family at Baadhi Majra, a slum colony at Yamunanagar, who had lost their sole breadwinner to Covid. The middle-aged widow, a domestic help, found it hard to make both ends meet as “she has to take care of her two grown-up daughters, aged 22 and 18, and a 13-year-old boy. So, we will be giving them monthly rations, clothes and other daily essentials for a year. Also, we are trying to put the boy in a good school and all his study expenses will be paid by us,” said Ridhi.

While exams are going on at the Guru Nanak Khalsa Institute of Technical Management (GNKITM), “we will meet either July last week or first week of August to discuss, plan and work out our project schedule for the year,” said club president Vansh Singla, doing final year B Pharm. Once the admission starts for the new academic year, “we will induct at least 20 new members, taking the membership to around 33–35.” They make it a point to have club meetings on Saturday, “but it will be either physical or online mode depending on our convenience and mutual understanding.”

Their parent Rotary, RC Yamunanagar Riviera, is more than

helpful to Rotaractors. “All the Rotarians are available 24x7 for us to contact and seek guidance on service projects or any other initiatives we take. We are thankful to them for their mentorship on a regular basis,” said Singla. Though he joined the six-year-old club, “just last year, Rotaract is close to my heart for it brought me new friends and I enjoy bonding with them.” He wanted to be a Rotarian like his brother Rahul Bansal, a businessman.

Ridhi is doing her B Pharm (3rd year) and having been in Rotaract for two years, “I have not yet decided if I want to be a Rotarian or not. But I thoroughly enjoy being a Rotaractor,” she smiled. ■

A garbage dump being cleared on the river banks.



The woman who always says YES in Rotary

Rasheeda Bhagat

Believe it or not, but when she was growing up, your incoming RI President Stephanie Urchick wanted to become a spy! “I wanted to become a spy and work for the government,” she says with a twinkle in her eye.

So she must have seen all the James Bond movies, I ask her. “Of course; I’ve watched all of them,” she smiles. Her favourite James Bond was Sean Connery; “He was the best... and the original, but Daniel Craig was good too in the recent ones and he was so handsome!”

After we exchange notes on how Pierce Brosnan was another very handsome James Bond, we return to her quest to become a spy. “I did all my education in Pennsylvania and my major was international studies. Since I wanted to be a spy and work for the government, in my final year in college I applied to a lot of US government agencies, the FBI, the CIA, anything that had an alphabet,” she grins.

But with the applications requiring detailed family background, and her grandparents

hailing from Eastern Europe, she had to submit the names of all family members who were still in that region. Perhaps that was the reason that she, unlike her friends, never got any interview calls! She went on to do her Masters, followed by a PhD in leadership at the Indiana University in Pennsylvania.

Stephanie, currently a member of RC McMurray, is on a tour of India, and her programme is choc-a-bloc; I catch up with her in Bengaluru for this interview, which has to be done during the drive from the airport to Karunashraya, a palliative care facility for chronic cancer patients. Despite the early morning flight, she is relaxed, easy to talk to, and comes through as a plain-speaking person.

On how she joined Rotary, Stephanie says her parents were middle class, “nobody in my family had been in a service club so when I heard about Rotary it was completely new to me. When I was working in a small college in Pennsylvania, a





RI President Elect
Stephanie Urchick

woman walked into my office and said would you like to come to a Rotary meeting. I said what the heck is Rotary? She talked about what Rotarians do and when she got to the international part, I said ‘oh yeah, I want to go’.”

She joined the Rotary Club of California, Pennsylvania, in 1991, and “got engaged in club activities right away...

I never looked back.” By the fourth meeting she was doing the club’s newsletter and 18 months later, became the club president. Asked how difficult it was to become district governor, she says, “It wasn’t difficult at all, because everything in Rotary sounds exciting to me. No matter what people ask me to do, I say yes, yes, yes. So, when people ask me how did you get

to be RI president, I say I just kept saying ‘yes’!”

When I protest saying it can’t be that easy, Stephanie says firmly: “Oh yes, it is. When I was growing up, I had a mantra... and still have it... that life is always more exciting on the other side of *Yes*. Say yes and just figure it out. As long as it is legal. That way you get to do more, and see more and be more.”

Asks to define the best qualities required of a good leader, she says, “At the top of the list for me is always communicate, communicate, communicate. You need to listen to the people who

When I was growing up, I had a mantra... and still have it... that life is always more exciting on the other side of *Yes*. Say yes and just figure it out. As long as it is legal.



RIPE Stephanie Urchick announcing the Presidential theme — *The Magic of Rotary* — at the International Assembly in Orlando, Florida.



With PRIPs Jennifer Jones and Shekhar Mehta at the Visakha Vista Rotary Zone Institute in Visakhapatnam.

are working with you and share information with them, and it goes both ways. Communication is key, the absolute key,” she responds emphatically.

Also, she adds, “people have to trust you, or else they won’t trust your vision. A good leader also has to understand the value of praising people, telling them they’ve done a good job, and doing that publicly. And when they have not done a good job, tell them privately.”

How Stephanie chose her theme — *The magic of Rotary* — has an interesting story, dating back several years to when she “was on a Rotary mission in the Dominican Republic, to put water filters in homes.” She was in one home with two women and three little boys. “We put the filter together, then put dirty water in, and it would come out clean, and we



From L: RIDN K P Nagesh, Paola Dakoju, RIPE Stephanie, RI Director Raju Subramanian and RID 3192 DGND Ravishankar Dakoju at Bengaluru.



Enjoying Pizza at a restaurant in Italy.

At a glance

Relax: Dancing! I was in Italy and they did a disco night for me... I love dancing! Yes, dancing does that for me. And retail therapy. No, I'm not a shopaholic, I don't spend money unnecessarily, but love to go and look around.

Fitness: Now it is walking because I have a bad knee... old age, I suppose. But when my knee was better, it was cycling. I like to bike... in Pennsylvania we have special, separate biking trails.

Religion: I practise Russian Orthodox.

Food: Anything that I don't have to make myself. It's not that I don't like cooking; actually I do, but I am all by myself, so it's no fun to cook for just one person. No matter how much you cut down on the recipe, you still have too much.

Indian food: I love it, and my spice tolerance is rather high. We were at lunch the other day in Delhi and we got served lamb curry and





somebody asked me is it too hot for you and I said not hot enough! Do you know why my spice tolerance is rather high? When we were young we would go to church and after church we would go to my grandparents' home and my grandfather would serve us hot peppers he had made; he was a farmer. We, the grandchildren, would sit around the table, and eat hot peppers till our cheeks were red. So that's how we have tolerance for spicy food.

Music: I listen to all sorts of music, the only thing I don't understand is rap. I've tried, trust me. But some of the rap lyrics are not good... they denigrate women! But I listen to country music, international music...

Feminism: I don't like the word 'feminist' because it has taken on a negative connotation. I much prefer 'equalism'... something that gives opportunities to all, no matter what your gender is.

Movies: Rarely have time for them.

Favourite actor: Meryl Streep. I enjoy watching movies in which she is there.

I believe every single Rotarian has had some experience that they have seen or been part of, that has made them say: Wow, this is why we do what we do.

Reading: Spy novels... I've got two in my bag, which I am reading. There is a writer called Lee Child... I've read all his Jack Reacher novels.

Favourite novels: That's a tough one, I have so many favourites. I've read a lot of Jack Welch when I was going through my doctoral programme, there are so many things he talked about which made a lot of sense, and one of these is quality in the field of education.

Favourite holiday destination: (Laughs) That is like asking who's your favourite child. Every time I come to a city for the first time... I find so many beautiful, stunning things. When I am done with being president of Rotary, I will have a lot of miles and I will use them to go to beaches.

Quality of members: We have to grow Rotary for sure; but growing membership is not about putting people in seats. It's about ensuring that the right people come into Rotary. People who share our core values, fellowship, leadership, integrity, diversity and service. And we know such people... they are there in our families and friends.

Future vision: I worked very hard on the Action Plan and the most important part of our vision is to act together, I can't do it by myself. We bring lasting change by paying attention to how we work together and take action. Too often we fail to recognise the change that is happening in us; when I work on behalf of someone, or for a cause, I change too. ■



With PRIP Jennifer Jones.

on how adaptable this theme is and can be used in so many different ways.”

Coming to her priorities as RI president, she is very clear that the first priority is “membership growth. We have to grow our organisation. Rotary is the strongest and best organisation in the world, and I don’t want to see it go away. For 30 years or more, we’ve been talking about membership and talking about it... but we are people of action and we have to do something about it. I know its hard work, it’s not like

did that a few times, and when we stopped, one of the boys grabbed my sleeve and said: ‘Lady, lady, show me that magic again.’ He saw that as magic but the real magic was the change in that family’s life thanks to Rotary giving them clean water.

And I believe every single Rotarian has had some experience like this that they have seen or been part of, that has made them say: Wow, this is why we do what we do.”

She is happy with her theme, as “everywhere I go people comment

Despite all the marketing and advertising we’ve done, people still think we are an organisation of **rich old men eating out**, but that’s not who we are.



Family celebration after being nominated.



At a Rotary event
in Mexico.



you can just wave a magic wand and it will happen; it has to be intentional.”

To grow Rotary, she adds, “we have to do three things at the same time. We have to attract members to our existing clubs, we have to keep members in our clubs because it is no use bringing in members and the existing ones leave, and we have to start new clubs. The world is changing and there are people who are not attracted to our existing clubs, they want to do it differently.”

She points out that way back in 2016, “we had a CoL that gave us the option to have different kinds of clubs, corporate clubs, e-clubs, satellite clubs and passport clubs. With so many options, we can tell people that if they have the hearts

Indian Rotarians take
Rotary very seriously.
They are proud to
be Rotarians.



With club members.

Rotary in India

When asked about her impressions of Rotary in India, both the positives and the negatives, particularly in the background of the recent strongly worded letter jointly issued by RI President Gordon McNally and herself, regarding election disputes and other negatives, RIPE Stephanie Urchick says: "I think Rotary in India is fantastic, there are so many fabulous things happening here and we can, and do learn so much from this part of the world. You are the first country that really established Rotary's partnership with CSR in a big way, and we are learning from it, and this model is working in some other countries, even though it (CSR giving) is not mandatory in those countries. We are finding companies who want to do good in the world and become our partners."

In TRF giving too, India is doing so well... it's a very generous country, and there is huge potential here. She cites the instance of "the current DG in Delhi who took raising funds for TRF as a challenge." Last year, in his district, 700 people had donated to TRF. But this year, he asked Rotarians to give just \$25 to TRF. "Though not a big amount, it made people who have never given to TRF to begin the culture of giving, and 1,700 people contributed."



RIPE Stephanie with a Rotaractor at the Visakha Vista Rotary Institute.

But what she admires the most about Rotary in India is "how revered it is as an organisation. This is one country... for instance, the young man on the flight knew what Rotary is. If it was in the US or Canada he would have asked what are you talking about? This tells me that there is so much service by Rotary happening in India. And because Indian Rotarians take Rotary very seriously. They are proud to be Rotarians. In several other countries, even developing countries, I don't get that sense."

But, she adds, "the whole thing about phantom clubs, and election issues are a blemish, that diminish the rest of the work

Rotarians do in India. People focus on the negatives; it's like putting a rotten apple in a barrel full of good apples. The rest of them may be of great quality but eventually that rotten apple will spoil all the others. So that's why President Gordon came out strongly, because we've talked for years saying clean up, clean up, but nothing happened. So he took that very strong step."

So will she continue to take action against the erring clubs/districts? "Of course, we are people of action. We have to make sure that we clean the way, so that all the good work that Rotary is doing in this part of the world is put in the spotlight and not this stuff." ■

DEI and gender

Any interview with a woman RI president-elect is incomplete without seeking her views on DEI and women in Rotary. So how well is the DEI mantra working in Rotary, I ask Stephanie Urchick. “I believe it is working. In Delhi, Rotarians were telling me about a club with only transgenders, so it is getting better.”

As for women in Rotary, “I believe that women have always been in Rotary. When I went to the Paul Harris Home for the first time, I saw on the wall pictures of Paul Harris, and Jean is standing right behind him. When we look at the earlier conventions... in 1912, a woman got up and said women should be included in Rotary,” says Stephanie.

Even at training events, be it the International Assembly or training for presidents-elect, “when I hear a woman get up and say I am just a partner, I say stop, take out the ‘just’. You are a partner, and if your spouse has been doing Rotary, you’ve been doing it too. So women have always been there. We’ve just not been smart enough about bringing them into Rotary membership.”

When asked if she encountered any difficulties or obstacles in her way because of her gender, her response is a resounding ‘No’. “I am a Rotarian not because of

my gender but because I want to change the world. But having said that, I also recognise that people look to others as role models. So I can see a woman looking at me and saying, if she could do it so can I.”

Again, the same thing holds true for her single status. “There are so many single people in Rotary and many of them, both men and women, come up to me and say I don’t have a partner either. So the underlying clear message is that if she can do it without a partner, I can do it too.”

On whether women are better communicators or communicate differently, she says, “Definitely, they communicate differently; the world reacts differently to women and men. That is why I believe so strongly in having a gender balance.”

Importance of peace

When I ask her about the world being a troubled place, with

so much of conflict happening all over, Stephanie says, “It’s a complete mess. But we in Rotary approach peacebuilding through a humanitarian lens; that is our goal. We are not going to stop wars, or negotiate to get hostages back. But what we can do, through the programmes we already have, is work on building peace one person at a time, one student at a time, one community at a time. It’s like the story of the star fish. The little boy, when told by a man that he wouldn’t be able to save them all, says I saved this one.”

We have an online programme on Economics and Peace, a very simple two-hour session that shows the difference between negative and positive peace. Our Peace centres around the world are a major, major peacebuilding initiative. More than 1,800 graduates who have gone through these centres are using their knowledge in peace and conflict resolution through practical applications.” ■



and the hands for service and if they believe in our core values then there is place for them in Rotary.”

But, while going around the world and after talking to people, she has found that “despite all the marketing and advertising we’ve done, people still think we are an organisation of **rich old men eating out**, but that’s not who we are. So when I talk to Rotarians I always say, we’ve changed, we’re different. But then we’ve also had the same meeting model for 100 years.”

Underlining the need for change and attracting more young members, Stephanie relates the story of the young Indian man, around 31, seated next to her on her recent flight from Milan to Delhi. “I started talking about Rotary and he said,



With her aide PDG Tom Gump, RID 5950, US.

We have to grow our organisation. Rotary is the strongest and best organisation in the world, and I don't want to see it go away.

“Oh Rotary, my parents were in Rotary, that’s an organisation for older people. And I told him no, it’s an organisation for you and I’ll tell you why.”

By the end of the flight, they had exchanged cards, and the DGE concerned has already contacted him and guided him to come into Rotary.

On what needs to be done to attract and engage younger people, Stephanie says: “We have to tell people that we are different because they have the wrong perception of Rotary. Young people today want to make an impact fast, quickly... they want things done, like now. One of the things they are interested in, and what makes me so happy is the environment. Because we need action on the environment.”

She adds that communication with youngsters has to improve; “when I talk to Rotarians they say: ‘Ah, these young people, they don’t know anything, they are wet behind the ears.’”

And when I talk to the youngsters, the Rotaractors, they say, ‘oh, we don’t want to work with the Rotarians, they are fuddy duddies and they don’t know technology... we have to bring them together so that we can enjoy the benefit of both the groups.’”

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat and special arrangements

Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S



With TRF Chair Elect Mark Maloney at the International Assembly, launching the Rotary-UNEP global partnership for water.

Teaching people to save lives

Jaishree

Over 10,000 people were trained in administering CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) through *Heartbeats*, an initiative of the Rotaract Club of Medicrew, RID 3141. It was a nationwide endeavour where special camps were organised in Delhi, West Bengal, Mumbai, Mangalore, Baramati, Sambhajinagar, Rajkot, and other cities and rural areas. Around 200 volunteers from the club trained the public in this life-saving technique.

The project's main aim was to create awareness among the public on how to respond effectively in emergencies. "We want to empower individuals to perform CPR confidently and competently, thereby increasing survival chances in cardiac emergencies," says club president Dr Jessica Gupte.

The club, chartered in 2020 by Rotary Club of Bombay Pier, has 4,000 medical and paramedical students as its members. The club is present in nine other countries, including Russia, Philippines, China and USA. "Our service projects are focussed on providing healthcare to the community, even in the remotest areas. We also place strong emphasis on the personal and professional development of our members," she says.

The club, in collaboration with the Wadia Hospital, Jan Kalyan Yojana and Vasti Parivartan, conducted breast cancer screening and awareness



campaign over three months, reaching out to over 250 women in 36 slums of Mumbai. "We sensitised people about the rising prevalence of breast cancer and educated them about affordable diagnostic services and government welfare schemes such as Jan Kalyan for women. We also taught them self-examination techniques for detecting breast lumps and recognising warning signs."

Around 80 volunteers, including students from MBBS, BDS, BPTH and allied health courses, participated in the screening camps. Experienced doctors also participated in the camps, overseeing mobile screening units in ambulances. "The ambulances were installed with specialised equipment, including X-ray and thermal imaging technology which were all used for screening patients for free," says Jessica.

During the last Rotary year, the club had done around 370 service projects including 100 health camps. Under *Project Samruddhi*, six camps in locations such as government



Above: Club members at an old age home, teaching the inmates about hygienic handwashing.





Left: Rotaractors teaching CPR technique to the public; Rotaractors with beneficiaries at a health checkup camp.



Below: Rotaractors educating women about menstrual hygiene in a slum.



schools and slums in Kandivali and Charkop screened 1,000 people for hypertension and diabetes. Medicines were distributed onsite.

Under *Project Haathon ka Sankalp*, 80 Rotaractors visited schools, orphanages and old age homes, engaging a total of 1,000 people across 15 sessions on handwash and hygiene. Ten blood donation camps across Mumbai saw 900 people donate blood under *Project RaktDaan*.

The club has introduced the 'LGBTQIA+ Avenue' this year where a series of impactful events were launched. Debates, podcasts and seminars promoted understanding, empathy and inclusivity to create a supporting environment and challenging stereotypes in the society.

Personal growth

Activities were designed for the personal growth of the club members. Ten delegates from the club participated in a national medical exchange programme at the MGM Hospitals in Chennai. The delegates was given an

opportunity to choose a specialty of their interest, allowing them to tailor their learning experience to their career aspirations. Students from across India came together to explore various medical specialties, enhancing their practical skills and knowledge during a week-long observership programme. Participants delved into obstetrics and gynaecology, medicine, surgery, paediatrics, and emergency medicine, gaining invaluable firsthand experience in a dynamic hospital setting. The programme gave the students a chance to witness procedures and engage with seasoned professionals.

'Tete-a-Tete with Bioethics' is a podcast programme being run by the club for the fourth year this year. This series disseminates crucial bioethics information globally via Spotify, reaching audiences in over 17 countries. "With over 250 per cent increase in listeners, a 370 per cent rise in total streams, and new entries into New Zealand and Peru, our podcast now boasts a presence in every continent!" smiles the club president. ■

Mapping Goa's biodiversity

V Muthukumaran



Once a pristine oasis of greenery, scenic waterfalls and exquisite, bluish coral beaches, “Goa is being swamped by unbridled tourism which is badly affecting our ecosystem, and so we thought of a unique project that will create awareness among the public and visitors about our diverse flora and fauna, and the dire need to save them from extinction,” said Brett Sequeira, past president, RAC Panjim, RID 3170.

A brainchild of Rtr Rohitash Sutar, *Project Regenerative Tourism* was aimed to promote eco-friendly and sustainable tourism in Goa's hinterland. “We see tourists litter around the place with liquor bottles, cigarette butts, plastic warts and tetra packs which affects our environment. While efforts are on to protect our beaches, not much is being done to protect our soil and air in the interior villages of Goa bearing the brunt of crass tourism,” he said.

A team of Rotaractors met Goa Tourism director Suneel Anchipaka and its deputy GM Deepak Narvekar to brief them about their plan to go on a nature trail from Tamdi Surla, a scenic hamlet 50km east of Panaji and perched on the Western Ghats. With the aim to document the flora and fauna in the dense forest on the ridges which





Left: RAC Panjim past president Brett Sequeira, along with Rotaractors in the background, during the nature trail on the Western Ghats.

Above: Rotaractors spotting a rare flora during forest trek.

nestle several tribal hamlets, a group of 20 trekkers consisting of 13 Rotaractors, six photographers and a mapping specialist went on a long and exciting, but arduous journey by walk so “that we could literally feel and enjoy the wide biodiversity of this ecosystem,” recalled Sequeira. “We trekked on steep hills, waded through streams, and engaged at least three tribal communities who depend on virgin forests for their living.”

After completing their one-day field mapping work on the mountains, that ended at the cave temple in Khandepar

village on the banks of Mandovi river in the middle of thick forest, “we returned to Panaji and ran a social media campaign through Instagram from June 5, World Environment Day, through which we reached to over 30,000 people. We explained to them about our mapping survey to protect our biodiversity. We also wrote to UNEP about our work to preserve the ecosystem and got the certificate of appreciation from the UN body.”

More than 100 Rotaractors from South East Asia attended



Rotaractors and specialists at the Cave Temple, Khandepar.

a training session on community assessment and project planning hosted by the club in partnership with RSAMDIO. “We had ESRAG directors Meenakshi Venkataraman, Christopher Puttock from the US and its secretary Denize Vural from Turkey interacting with the participants, and answering their queries which educated us on how to identify a community project, set the goals and go about in achieving them in a half-day Zoom session,” said Sequeira.

New Interact club

An Interact club was chartered at the Fairyland High School, Velha, an institute with a mix of normal children and those with learning disabilities. Called the Interact Club of Infinity, “we are holding one-on-one workshops, RYLAs, special trainings and group sessions with the students.”

With 62 members from the community made up of college students, doctors, engineers and businessmen, the Panjim club is one of the oldest and prestigious Rotaract clubs in Goa. “Though the club was formed in 1971, we lost our charter after some years, but restarted it in November 1998. Quite a few Rotarians in Goa were Rotaractors from our club,” explained Sequeira (23),

After completing their one-day field mapping work on the mountains, that ended at the cave temple in Khandepar village, Rotaractors returned to Panaji and ran a social media campaign.

who takes care of his family’s real estate business.

The Rotaract club partners with the organisers of the Purple Fest, an annual six-day event for people with disabilities, in Goa. “We helped organise a blind car rally this year where visually-impaired give directions from an instruction sheet in Braille for the drivers to navigate through in the motor race.”

Recalling his three-year stint in Rotaract, Sequeira said, “my journey has pushed me into an enjoyable growth path as I made lifelong friends, cherish some great memories, and have grown as an individual with distinct personality.” Shortly, they are going to charter a new satellite Rotary club where “our senior Rotaractors and others will find a right place to carry on their journey in community service, along with fellowship,” he smiled. ■

RID 3240 sets World Record

Jaishree

The Rotaractors of RI District 3240 set a world record for creating the 'largest sanitary napkins mosaic' comprising 7,843 biodegradable pads, spanning 1,665sqft, arranged in just 4 mins 33 sec. The activity surpassed a previous record of 4,560 pads. The event was done on the grounds of the Ukhra Adarsh Hindi High School in Ukhra town in Bardhaman district, West Bengal.

"When we decided on this event our aim was to create awareness among adolescent girls and women about menstrual hygiene and the use of sanitary napkins. Most of them shy away from using sanitary pads and do not address menstrual issues as it is considered a taboo. For a couple of years now we've been working on various awareness campaigns to break the practice and encourage them to follow a healthy lifestyle," says DRR Parna Deb Roy who led the initiative.

The event was organised in collaboration with RAC Ukhra, and with the support of RC Ukhra and the Rotary Clubs of Greater Tezpur and Malda Central. After adjudication by the Global Records and Research Foundation, the sanitary pads were distributed among 2,200 girls who attended an educational session where Rotaractors explained to them about the use of biodegradable sanitary pads that are safe for the environment. ■



Above: Members of RAC Ukhra with DRR Parna Deb Roy and club president Shubham with the World Record certificate and trophy.

Below: 7,843 biodegradable sanitary napkins arranged to form the largest sanitary pad mosaic.



Changing the face of Ahmednagar villages

V Muthukumaran



Rotaractors engage schoolchildren.

Project *Aashayein* (hope) of RAC HR College, RID 3141, has adopted three villages in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra in partnership with other stakeholders like WOTR, an NGO working to alleviate rural

poverty through capacity building of villagers.

“Over the last 10 years, we had installed many solar lights, panels; set up 18 wells and borewells (each costing a little over ₹1lakh); gave seed money of over ₹1.5 lakh to 10 budding entrepreneurs; and handed over 1,500 sanitary pads

at the menstrual hygiene sessions in the villages in and around Ahmednagar,” said club president Shikha Shah.

While the project work is almost completed at three adopted villages, “we are in the process of installing facilities and educating people in 10 more villages. An event *Gazaab*



A solar lighting system being erected in a rural home.



Women with sanitary pads at an awareness session at a village in Ahmednagar.

Maharashtra is held each year to hand out seed money to youngsters who are striving to become entrepreneurs,” she explained.

Inter-school competitions in performing and fine arts, literary

arts, and an informal sport meet are held at *Project We are the World* and “every year, around 2,000 students display their multifaceted skills at this three-day arts festival which is a 22-year-old legacy event of our club.”

Last year (2023–24), the club had done 380 service projects, events, drives, campaigns and other community activities in all. The value of community projects alone would be ₹4 lakh for last year, said Shikha.

With 450 members, the institution-based, 39-year-old club has the advantage of inducting new college-goers who had just come from their junior college (Class 11–12) on the same campus at Churchgate, South Mumbai.

Doing her second year management degree (BMS course), Shikha turned nostalgic over her four-year Rotaract journey: Rotaract has changed me completely, with a 360 degree transformation in my personality. “Right now, I am quite happy to be a Rotaractor, and have not given any thought about being a Rotarian,” she added. ■



A fun donation drive

Kiran Zehra





Above: Members of RAC Churchgate.

Left: Students participating in the fun activities organised by RAC Churchgate.



In and out of the busy streets of Crawford Market, Mumbai, Shazmeen Khan, Insiya Chittorwala, and Rishik Singh, members of RAC Churchgate, RID 3141, were searching for notebooks, stationery items, chocolates and sports equipment. “We wanted good quality products at reasonable prices,” explained Khan, the club secretary. This search was part of *Project Shiksha*, an initiative by the club to provide essential educational items to students at a zilla parishad school in Dahanu, a suburban area of Mumbai.

The inspiration for *Project Shiksha* came from Rtrs Madhav Solanki and Insiya Chittorwala. During an earlier visit to the school, where the club conducted educational activities, “We identified the school’s needs. To gain a clear understanding, Insiya reached out to the school and began planning the initiative. Club member

Shirley Singh presented the project passionately to our parent club, RC Bombay North, who agreed to fund the project.”

The Rotaractors received ₹28,220 from RC Bombay North, covering the cost of the stationery items requested by the school.

“Instead of just delivering the supplies and leaving, we conducted some fun activities for the students across all grades and divided the day into three segments: Education, Extracurricular Activities and Sports.

In the Education segment, interactive sessions on basic English, math and general knowledge sparked curiosity among the students. “They asked us so many questions, and we illustrated our answers on

the blackboard. These sessions helped strengthen the students’ foundational skills,” he said.

Next, extracurricular arts and crafts, music, and dance activities created a joyful atmosphere. “The joy on the faces of the children was priceless,” added Solanki. After a refreshing lunch provided by the school, the Rotaractors conducted sports activities, where students enjoyed playing football and volleyball.

At the end of the day, educational kits were handed out to “the eager students. Their reactions left our hearts full of gratitude and fulfillment,” recalled Solanki. The school authorities were very pleased and requested the Rotaractors to conduct more such sessions in the future. ■

Trekking for a cause

Jaishree

We are happy that our efforts have helped save 17 little children so far,” says Bhuvan Raghavendra Yadalam, charter president of RAC Banashankari, RID 3191. The club has been organising a fundraiser annual event, *MegaTrek*, since 2016, a year after it was chartered. Treks are organised to hills around Bengaluru for an entry fee of ₹349. The funds raised from the event is given to the Jayadeva Institute of

Cardiology, Bengaluru, to support neonatal heart surgeries.

“MegaTrek isn’t just a trekking extravaganza; it blends adventure with philanthropy,” says Anuja Torvi, the club’s past president and project coordinator.

“We have raised ₹3.5 lakh in our seven editions of the event and this has helped sponsor cardiac surgeries for 17 infants,” says Yadalam. Every year 1,000–1,100

youngsters participate in the trek. “Most of them are college students who love adventure. Rotaractors also participate in large numbers.”

During the seventh edition of the *MegaTrek* this year, 700 participants from RACs Jyoti Nivas Collage, BIT, BMSCE, Jain Evening College and Bhuvaneshwari Nagar were taken to the Kunagalu Hills, Ramanagara.

The club has also created records through this event. “We got a place in the India Book of Records in 2017 when we organised the *MegaTrek* for 2,100 people to the Madugiri Betta in Tumkur district. It is a single hill and the second largest monolith in Asia,” he says. Another record was created with the Asia Book of Records in the event’s third edition when 2,509 youngsters trekked to the Handigundi Betta in Ramanagara, 50km from Bengaluru. “It is a rocky trail with some muddy interventions.”



Lessons in science under the *Skill a Week* project.





A Rotaractor teaching money skills to schoolchildren.



Participants relax after a trek.



Buses are arranged to transport the trekkers to the starting point of the chosen venue; Rotaract volunteers and NCC cadets assist in making the trek comfortable and memorable for the participants. Breakfast and lunch are also provided.

Recalling the trek to Hutridurga Betta, Yadalam says that the *MegaTrek* programme has made the hill so popular that the state tourism department has added it to its visit list. It was built by Kempegowda in the 16th century and it was also the military bastion of Tipu Sultan against the British. “We had to cross through seven forts and this excited the trekkers. Soon photographs of the hill was trending on social media and it became popular.” Other iconic locations included AG Hills and Kootgal Betta. “The emphasis is on easy grade trekking and we choose places which are largely unexplored,” he says.

Skill a Week

For the last three years the Rotaractors have undertaken an initiative, *Skill a Week*, at a government school in Bilekahalli on the suburbs of the city. The aim is to empower students with essential lifeskills beyond the academic curriculum.

“We have adopted the school and extend all possible support for the children studying here. We have given them our used laptops when we go for an advanced system,” says Yadalam. Through *Skill a Week*, students are introduced to a diverse array of skills including dance, public speaking, self defence, financial literacy, art and craft, and more. Each week the focus is on one skill, providing hands-on training and theoretical knowledge to the enthusiastic learners. “We focus on students of Class 9–10. Those of us good in subjects such as science and math teach them their lessons. We also teach them simple coding.”

The Rotaractors focus all their educational initiatives on this school to ensure continuity with the students. ■



Bengaluru Rotaract holds mega eye camps

V Muthukumar

a three-year-old Rotaract club, RAC Bangalore Revolution, RID 3191, is organising mega eye camps at government and private schools, screening over 2,700 students, and has distributed spectacles to 270 children till now. *Project Active Eyes* ropes in NGOs and eye hospitals to screen children for eye defects in the last two years. “In July 2022, we tied up with the Sankara Eye Hospital, and in July 2023, we roped in Globe Eye Foundation, a local NGO, to conduct the eye check-up camps,” said Preksha YL, club president. So far, the project has reached out



Students being screened at an eye camp.

to eight government and private schools across Bengaluru.

Usually, it is a three-day eye camp arranged by a team of 15 Rotaractors and patients are screened by a panel of 7–8 doctors. “This year, we have planned three eye camps, preferably in July–August, at orphanages and rural areas of Karnataka. The third edition of *Active Eyes* is still under planning stage,” she said. Another noteworthy



initiative is *Project Code Red* wherein a door-to-door campaign on menstrual hygiene is conducted, along with the distribution of sanitary pads to women. “We have visited five slum colonies and distributed over 8,000 sanitary pads to beneficiaries who were also taught best hygiene practices,” said Preksha. During their whirlwind MHM campaign,



Above: A student’s eyesight is being tested.

Left: From L: RAC Bangalore Revolution secretary Afnan Kazim, Kushal Gayekwad, president Preksha YL, Pooja Jha, Faiza Anjum and Saeema Iram, along with students holding spectacles, at the Trillium Public School at *Project Active Eyes*.

they found the newborn babies were “put under unsanitary conditions, resulting in their being exposed to infections and viral diseases. So we will be giving out 50 baby kits under a new project to mothers of newborns in these slums.” Each baby kit will have a feeding bottle, diapers and packs of baby food formula.

Along with their parent, RC Bangalore IT Corridor, the Rotaractors took out a student rally titled ‘Eco Warriors Unite’ to turn the spotlight on environment issues as the city is plagued by rising air and water pollution, apart from massive erosion of green cover across the urban landscape, once known as ‘the garden city’. The rally drove home the message of the urgent need to ensure a “greener future for city residents with over 260 students holding a huge banner in front and with multiple placards raised slogans against the worsening environment in Bengaluru.”

Expressing her gratitude to their parent Rotary’s past secretary

Shrirang Pande (2023–24) “for helping us connect with Rotarians and providing logistic support to our service projects,” Preksha said most of their activities and community initiatives were sponsored by their parent club. With 48 members, the community-based club is located in Whitefield, an IT hub in the eastern periphery of Bengaluru, through most of its members, engineering students, are residents of Hebbal in northern neighbourhood. Two of its members are Indian students studying in Russia and Germany.

Doing her third year BE, Computer Science, at Atria Institute of Technology, Hebbal, the club president is keen to join a Rotary club. “I have improved a lot in communication skills, built my social networking through a long list of friends, and connecting with new people on Rotaract. I look forward to become a Rotarian in the near future,” smiled Preksha. ■

Smearing paint and spreading joy

Kiran Zehra

Members of RAC Sriganganagar Visionaries, RID 3090, some crouched beside the children, others standing back to observe, offered gentle guidance and encouragement to a group of children sitting in front of a canvas about to begin a painting. Club secretary Nandini Arora says, “We explained how each colour can be a mood, a feeling, or a story. One member pointed to a swirl of blue and asked, ‘What does this colour make you feel?’ and a child with a bright, toothy grin replied, ‘It’s like the sky, and it makes me feel calm!’”

This was part of an event titled *Colours of Happiness* hosted by the club in May 2024 intending to bring joy and creativity to the lives of orphaned children. The event took





place at a local gurudwara in Sriganaganagar, where around 40 enthusiastic children from orphanages were gathered for a freehand painting session.

A five-metre-long canvas and vibrant acrylic paints were provided, “allowing the children to express their creativity and paint their minds freely. Some children, brimming with confidence, eagerly began smearing paint across the canvas. Others, initially shy, hesitated, but we encouraged them to join in, creating colourful handprints across the canvas. We emphasised the therapeutic benefits of art and explained how creativity can alleviate stress and bring happiness. Watching the children light up as they painted was truly magical,” recalls Nandini.

To add to the excitement, various fun games were organized, and gifts were distributed to the children, making





Left: Rotaractors pose along with the children.

Above: A Rotaractor helps a child to paint.

Below: A child spreads red paint on club secretary Nandini Arora's hand.



the day even more special for the young participants.

The children and Rotaractors gathered for a group photo in front of the canvas. "They were eagerly pointing out the sections they had painted, each one proud to show off their work. We had to wait for them to finish excitedly sharing their creations before they came to stand behind the canvas for the picture. Their excitement was priceless," she says smiling.

The Rotaractors also felicitated the founder of the gurudwara.

The club also conducts regular clothes donation drives in slum areas and participates in various animal welfare activities throughout the city. Recently, club members spent a day at a local *gaushala*, where they fed the cows and helped with their care. The inmates of Apna Ghar old-age home were treated to a scrumptious lunch by the club. ■

Reaching out to cancer patients

V Muthukumar

Cancer patients being treated at the Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology, Bengaluru, who find it difficult to pay the hospital bills are approached by members of RAC BMS College of Engineering, RID 3191, and “after doing a quick background check and consulting the doctors, we clear all their pending bills,” said Vinit Jain, club president.

Under *Project Give for Good*, a team of 80 Rotaractors led by three project chairs do all the field work, verify the economic status of the

patients’ families, and settle the bills without any fuss.

With the help of three admin staff at the Kidwai hospital, “we get a list of BPL families whose near and dear ones are being treated at this cancer institute. They forward details of their families, including their addresses and phone numbers. Our team visit the families, enquire with them, and if they are genuinely not able to pay the medical bills due to dire financial status, then we will settle the pending amount at the hospital,” explained Jain. The Rotaractors make sure the money is used for the intended purpose

with the help of the friendly staff at the hospital. Over the last two years, the medical project led by Jain, Rtrs Pavithra and Varsha has touched the lives of 37 patients.

Another legacy project is *iTeach* wherein 25 Rotaractors go to Kanaka High School, Basavanagudi, on weekdays to teach students from Class 1–5 basic literacy skills including writing, reading English, doing simple arithmetic, understanding science, and hands-on training in simple arts like painting and drawing. “For the phase-19, we have sought permission from principals of few government schools for

Rotaractors at a rally to create awareness on *Project Give for Good*.



extending our *iTeach* to their students. While we have scheduled the project for September, it will take at least 2–3 months to complete a phase with the support of our team members.” Over the last 10 years, the literacy project would have benefitted 1,300 primary students of government schools, he said.

Career counselling

In a new initiative, the club will be taking up career counselling sessions at six government schools for students from Class 8–10. “We are in talks with the school principals and teachers to work out the modalities of the new school project for which 30 Rotaractors will be trained so that they can hold classes on different avenues for career growth for the students,” said Jain.

Doing his third year BE (Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning), he wanted to join Rotary as soon as possible. “Joining Rotaract two years ago is a turning point in my life as I have built a huge network of friends, which helped me to serve the society.”



School students at *Project iTeach*.

This Rotaract club is sponsored by RC Bangalore Banashankari, and “I will be working more to foster great bonding between Rotarians and Rotaractors of our club,” smiled Jain. He is also geared up for the challenge of holding club meetings regularly without fail, which

are held twice a month, one of which is through online. “We have to inform all our 500-plus members well in advance and plan the schedule in between our academic pursuit which is tough with regular exams and assignments,” he added. ■

Cervical vaccination camp in Panvel

Team Rotary News

Members of RAC Panvel Elite, RID 3131, helped their parent club, RC Panvel Elite, with registration and logistics during an HPV vaccination camp against cervical cancer as part of *Project Hope Guard* led by the Rotary club. The club aimed to vaccinate 190 girls from underprivileged girls against cervical cancer.

The *Say No to Junk* initiative of the Rotaractors has helped educate 1,500 children on the health risks of junk food, while advocating for healthier eating habits. ■

Dr Swati Likhite, member of RC Panvel Elite, vaccinating a girl. Samruddhi Munot, a member of RAC Panvel Elite, is also seen (centre).



Unlocking potential in children

Jaishree

Come Saturday morning, 40 boys and girls around the slums in Paschim Vihar in Delhi are excited to assemble at the local park, all set to attend classes on various topics. The Rotaract Club of Genesis Midwest, RID 3011, runs a 'Weekend School' at the park as part of their project *Shiksha ki Seedhi: Empowerment Academy*.

This is a comprehensive, two-tiered programme designed to equip children with the skills they need to succeed, says club president Vansh Saini (2024–25). The children are in various age groups; while some attend the neighbouring schools, many are school dropouts or have not been to school. "So we counsel the parents to enrol the children in school. Some parents are receptive, while few others say that they cannot afford the school fee and other related expenses. We are trying to find a solution to help these families," he says.

At the Weekend School which functions every weekend as the name suggests, Rotaractors and other interested volunteers teach children various topics, making it all interesting through games and interactive sessions. Under the first tier, English, math, science, public speaking, digital literacy and other vocational skills are taught. These classes equip students with essential knowledge and skills, preparing them for further education



that will open new opportunities, explains Saini.

The second tier focuses on communication skills, problem-solving abilities, teamwork and collaboration and financial literacy — skills required to navigate life’s challenges and build a bright future. The Rotaractors also provide students with essential needs such as stationery items, lunch boxes, footwear and uniforms. “We distribute recycled notebooks prepared at a facility adopted by our club,” he says.

The project is popular and transformation in the children is so visible that the Rotaractors are enthused to expand the weekend school concept to three more areas in Bahadurgarh (Haryana), Noida (Uttar Pradesh) and Paschim Puri (New Delhi). “This year we are also planning to include adult literacy in our programme, and rope in more volunteers from the neighbourhood,” says Saini.

The programme could ignite the entrepreneurial spark in some, encouraging them to translate their new-found skill into income-generating business.

Vansh Saini
president, RAC Genesis Midwest

Menstrual hygiene

Under *Project Break the Taboo* the club members, along with the Rotaractors of RAC USME, RID 3012, distributed around 700 eco-friendly sanitary napkins made from bamboo fibre to girls and women in the slums of Kirti Nagar and Azadpur in Delhi.

The Rotaractors educated them about menstrual hygiene and encouraged them to break the taboos surrounding menstruation. An awareness seminar on cervical cancer and its prevention was conducted for the slum residents and another online programme on the same topic was provided for the club members.

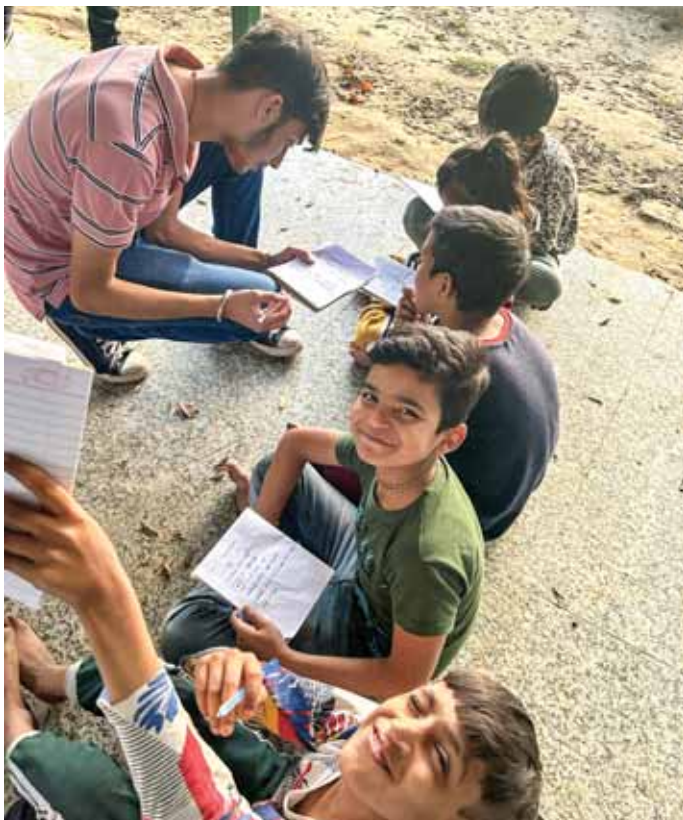
A week-long initiative, *Nayi Roshni, Nayi Sapne, Nayi Raah, Ek Badlaav!* trained youth from BPL families in various vocational skills. Children and teenage girls were taught mehendi designing, block printing, bracelet making and jewellery designing in the first phase which lasted for three days. In the second phase, young adults were shortlisted and taught skills such as gardening and tailoring. “We even taught video editing for those children exhibiting some digital knowledge. We identified resource persons from our Rotaract circle and



Rotaractors with children at a session in the Weekend School.



Rotaractors teach artwork to children.



A Weekend School in progress.



Sanitary napkins being distributed in a slum colony.

hired experts for some activities. The programme transcended skill development; it could ignite the entrepreneurial spark in some, encouraging them to translate their new-found skill into income-generating business,” smiles the president.

Under *Project Operation Joyride*, the Rotaractors, along with Interactors, visited the Hari Nagar slum in the Delhi NCR region and over 11 days, distributed goodies to the children there. The Rotaractors joined the parent club, RC Delhi Midwest, and the Beti Foundation of IIT Gate, Hauz Khas, to celebrate *Kanya Pujan*, an endeavour to rejoice the girl child. Around 350 girls from less privileged families were served a sumptuous feast on the occasion. Around 100 pre-cooked food boxes were distributed to street dwellers, in association with the Brijwasi Foundation.

RAC Genesis Midwest hosted a one-day programme, titled *The Harmony Within*, at the Maharaja Agarsain Public School to address mental well-being and self-care. Rotaractors and Interactors of Delhi attended the programme which included guided meditation and art therapy sessions. A mental health expert addressed a webinar exclusively for men. Abhinav Singh Katyar provided insightful perspectives on the unique challenges men face regarding mental well-being and introduced practical mindfulness techniques to manage stress and promote calmness. ■



PRIP Kalyan Banerjee (2nd from R) adorns the president's collar on PDRR Sahil Gandhi; former RSAMDIO president Girish Easwaran assists PRIP Banerjee. DG Nasir Borsadwala (L) and DGE Sharad Pai (R) are also seen.



PDRR/Rtn Karthik Kittu receives the Lifetime Achievement Award from PDRR Easwaran. RSAMDIO president Sahil Gandhi is seen 3rd from right.

Rotary body gets new president

Team Rotary News

Past RI president Kalyan Banerjee installed RID 3170 PDRR Sahil Gandhi as president of the Rotaract South Asia Multi-District Information Organisation (RSAMDIO) for 2024–25. The event, hosted by RID 3170, was held at Panjim, Goa, on June 15 and 16. It brought together Rotaractors from across South Asia for two days of insightful discussions, formal ceremonies, and cultural experiences. The RSAMDIO serves around 4,000 Rotaract clubs in South Asia across eight countries comprising India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

PRIP Banerjee gave an inspiring speech about the world of Rotary, Rotaract and networking. PDRR Visakha Pednekar chaired the installation event of the incoming RSAMDIO president; PDRR Aniket Jadhav was

the event secretary. Host DRR Pranjal Marathe and DRRE Nikhil Chindak ensured the smooth and seamless progress of the programme.

RSAMDIO's president for 2023–24 PDRR Girish Easwaran and his entire team were present to support the incoming president and the new leaders who were introduced, and their roles and responsibilities were formally handed over, symbolising a seamless transition and the continuous growth of the organisation. Host DG Nasir Borsadwala and DGE Sharad Pai highlighted the responsibilities and duties of the new team and inspired them for effective leadership and community service in South Asia.

ROAR Awards

RSAMDIO president (2023–24) Girish Easwaran felicitated the leaders for their outstanding contri-

bution last Rotary year. Karthik Kittu, the founding president of RSAMDIO, was felicitated with 'Lifetime Achievement Award'. He was a past district Rotaract representative and past president of the Rotary Club of Bangalore Southwest, RID 3191. Other award categories included district citation, new member district recognition, outstanding DRRs and district Rotaract secretaries and outstanding club, community, professional and international services.

The MDIO's general secretary PDRR Ganesh Bhat and Gemin Shah, the editor of its newsletter *RSA Connect*, were honoured with 'Outstanding MDIO Board Officer' Award. Seventeen DRRs received the 'Outstanding DRR Award' for 2023–24. ■

A five-day Rotaract project, *Hausla* (will-power) being conducted by RAC Shri Aurobindo College, RID 3011, for the last five years has benefitted over 1,500 Rotaractors and college students as they were inculcated with a proactive mindset to take care of their mental well-being through a series of programmes.

In September last year, Hausla reached out to 250-plus students through five different events — group therapy session, Google online meet, yoga session, art therapy and a day out with friends — all of which promoted mental wellness by creating awareness on the need to avoid depression, anxiety and stress.

Dr Ekta Khurana, psychologist, gave an inspiring talk to 150

Mental wellness project gains traction

V Muthukumaran

participants in the group therapy session on stressful challenges faced by students during exams, their emotional turmoil and the societal pressure to do well in their life. “She interacted with them and answered all their queries, doubts at the Q&A session,” said Shivangi Pandey, club advisor.

On the second day, 50 students exchanged their views at an online meet on how to fend off depression and mental worries through ‘self-care’. “From listening to music to unwind, taking to art like painting, jotting down warning signs or markers, to cultivating new hobbies that make life interesting,



Children being taught by a Rotaractor.



An adult literacy class under *Project Vidhya*.



An art therapy session under *Project Hausla* in progress.

the students poured their hearts out and exchanged novel ways to stay positive in a competitive world,” explained Shivangi.

Yoga master Balendru Ray taught simple yogic postures (*asanas*) for around 15 students at

a private garden at Malviya Nagar, South Delhi, to ward off stress and toxic feelings that erupt into depression, while on the fourth day, artist Sarla Chandra moderated a workshop for 15 participants under art therapy. In the final leg

of *Project Hausla*, “around 10 Rotaractors went to Hauz Khas, a shopping arcade lined with eateries in South Delhi, to chill out and relax with friends in a congenial ambience.”

Regular classes on basic English, Hindi, reading and writing and simple arithmetic were held by five Rotaractors for over 60 children and illiterate women at the CGHS slum colony near Vasant Vihar under *Project Vidhya*. “We held the classes for four days in the afternoon, each not more than one-and-a-half hours, and it was a satisfactory project for us.” Last year the club did 11 diverse projects that reached 10,000 beneficiaries, and “this year, we hope to touch over 12,000 beneficiaries by continuing with the same set of projects and initiatives,” said club president Rahul Singh.

Some of the projects like *Green Hands* (planting trees, cleanliness drives), *Tamacha to Tobacco* (anti-tobacco campaign), *Rudhir* (MHM sessions), *Hope for Paws* (caring for the stray dogs) and *Taleem* (literacy projects) would be carried through “with greater intensity and drive to create good impact,” said Singh. Having joined Rotaract a year ago, “I changed from being an introvert to an outgoing person willing to make friends. Being in Rotaract made me feel good about myself as I enjoy the outreach activities for the community.”

Rahul Singh is keen to become a Rotarian after completing BCom. His colleague Shivangi, who is a Rotaractor for three years now, has completed her BA (English) and “I am looking out for a suitable job. I may become a Rotarian in the near future,” she smiled. Sponsored by RC Delhi South West, the 11-year-old Rotaract club is mentored by Rotarians on project implementation and in getting sponsorship for service projects. ■



Apply yourself

As part of the family of Rotary, members are people of purpose, people of influence and people of action. Each year, committees that support Rotary and The Rotary Foundation focus on putting Rotary's strategic priorities into action, challenging clubs to increase their impact, expand their reach, enhance participant engagement, and increase Rotary's ability to adapt.

Would you like to contribute to Rotary's success?

RI and the Foundation are searching for qualified Rotarians and

Rotaractors to apply their leadership skills and serve on a committee in the 2025–26 Rotary year. These positions offer an opportunity for you to share your vocational expertise and skill set and help ensure diverse perspectives within each committee. Rotarians and Rotaractors with areas of expertise as detailed on the opposite page are encouraged to apply. The number of openings is limited. If you are not selected this year, you are welcome to apply again next year.

All committees correspond through email and on virtual platforms, typically with one mandatory

in-person meeting per year. Rotaractors are encouraged to apply to any area of expertise based on their background and the skills and experience detailed for each area. Dual members of Rotary and Rotaract are especially encouraged to apply.

To be considered for committee membership or to recommend someone for an appointment, visit on.rotary.org/application2024. Applicants must be registered on My Rotary at my.rotary.org and should make sure their My Rotary profile includes current contact information. Applications are due **August 15**.

Area of Expertise	Function	Prerequisites	Openings
Audit	Advises leadership on audited financial reports, internal and external audits and internal control systems	Independence, appropriate business experience, and demonstrated financial literacy in accounting, auditing, banking, insurance, investment, risk management, executive management, or audit governance	One position with a four-year term
Communications	Advises leadership on Rotary's overall public image, branding, communications, content strategy and approach	Professional background and experience in internal and external communications, marketing, public image, brand and content strategy	Three positions with three-year terms
Diversity, equity and inclusion	Advises leadership and assists in the regional implementation of a diversity, equity and inclusion action plan	Professional or educational experience related to diversity, equity and inclusion	Three positions with three-year terms
Finance	Advises the RI Board on Rotary's finances, including budgets and sustainability measures	Professional background in a finance-related field with nonprofit experience preferred. Candidates should have experience in financial matters at the club and district levels.	Two positions with three-year terms
Fund development	Provides guidance and advice to The Rotary Foundation Trustees on all aspects of fundraising	Significant professional experience in fund development or fundraising. Committee members actively fundraise and support the Foundation.	Two positions with three-year terms
Investment	Oversees the management of Rotary's investments and the implementation of investment policies	Experience in investment and/or foundations or endowments with a preference for institutional investment experience	One position with a four-year term
Learning	Advises leadership on the creation of effective learning opportunities for Rotary leaders and members	Adult learning expertise within or outside Rotary. Experience in the professional learning field including e-learning and/or experience with planning and implementing learning events at the member, club, district, zone and international levels.	Three positions with three-year terms
Operations review	Advises leadership on the effectiveness of operations, administrative procedures, and standards of conduct. Serves as the advisory compensation committee to the Executive Committee of the RI Board.	Experience in management, leadership development or financial management, and thorough knowledge of Rotary's operations. Appointments are limited to past RI directors and past Foundation trustees.	One position with a six-year term
Strategic planning	Advises leadership on matters relating to the strategic plan	Significant experience in long-term planning, financial management, and RI and Foundation programme activities	Two positions with four-year terms
Technology	Advises leadership on enhancing technology practices, products, and strategy to improve the member and participant experience at Rotary	Expertise in technology development, product management, user/participant experience, and security and data privacy. Non-Rotarian technology experts may be appointed.	Two positions with three-year terms

Club Matters

RAC Delhi Rajdhani

RID 3011

Project Yemek Daan (Yemek means food in Turkish, Daan means 'to give' in Hindi) distributed 120kg of ration supplies to underprivileged families in a joint initiative with RAC Izmir Ekonomi, RID 2440, Turkey. Big ration packets were also donated to an old age home, while the Turkish club distributed small food boxes to the communities around them.

RAC Chandigarh

RID 3080

An 'open mic' fundraiser was held at The Existential Café which extended a platform for budding artists to showcase their talent in dance and other solo performances. In partnership with their parent Rotary, the Rotaractors donated 80 rape evidence collection kits to healthcare providers and other stakeholders, thanks to CSR funds from Tietoevry, an IT company.

RAC DAV (C) Dental

RID 3080

Thalis worth ₹800 were distributed to street vendors and their children under *Project Unity Palates*. Along with thalis, fruits worth ₹200 including apples, oranges and bananas were included in the food menu served to the daily wage earners and their wards.

RAC TIET

RID 3090

Around 100 participants ran the 5km and 10km races at *Climathon*,

touted as carbon-neutral marathon, organised in tie-up with Saturnalia, the organisers of the techno-cultural fest of Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology (TIET), Patiala. With the event kits having essentials like t-shirt and route map in their hands, they passed through iconic landmarks to sensitise the public on the need to usher in a greener future. A menstrual hygiene awareness event was held at the Masti ki Pathshala where students aged 12–15 were educated about following best hygiene practices. Sanitary pads were also distributed under phase-4 of *Project Sarv Shakti*.

RAC BIT

RID 3191

In a joint initiative with RACs Bangalore Koramangala, Bangalore Southwest, Bishop Cotton Women's Christian College and Aagneya, a winter donation drive was held that collected



Chandigarh



Bengaluru HSR



DAV (C) Dental



Delhi Rajdhani





BIT

**RAC Jyoti Nivas College
RID 3191**

As part of Christmas outreach, 700 educational kits containing a water bottle, notebook and pen were distributed to students at three government model primary schools in Koramangala. Four faculty members including Rotaract coordinator Chirag accompanied the Rotaractors in the distribution drive at schools. The club received the Outstanding Impactful Initiative Award for this project at the Limitless Awards 2023–24 from RID 3191.



Jyoti Nivas College

over 15,000 clothes. The primary aim was to provide warmth to children at Angels and Rakum orphanages. The distribution drive brought instant joy on the faces of children. The State Disability Conference, along with a health camp, was held in partnership with Saksham, a national body working for the rights of the disabled, at the Kuvempu Kalakshetra, Bengaluru. Over 750 delegates took part in the meet that discussed ways to tackle the challenges faced by people with disabilities.

**RAC Bengaluru HSR
RID 3191**

Through the crowdfunding platform, Milaap, the club raised ₹22,400 for buying winter clothes for 200 children in the slums. Under *Project Diwali Uduogore 3.0*, donation boxes were placed at apartment complexes and offices to collect money for purchasing new clothes for less privileged children living on the margins of society. The Rotaractors also joined hands with other Rotaract clubs and NGOs to mobilise donations.

**RAC NMIMS College
RID 3191**

Rotaractors visited Ebenezer, a child care NGO, and engaged in fun games and activities with around 30 inmates that lifted their social well-being and a sense of belonging. *A Nukkad Natak* (street play) was held on Church Street to turn the spotlight on water scarcity in Bengaluru and other environmental woes being faced by the residents. Around 30 participants took part in the play which educated the public on water conservation through sustainable models of social progress.

**RAC RVCE
RID 3191**

More than 620 audio recordings were done in different regional languages over two months in collaboration with 60 NGOs under *Project Awaaz*. These were compiled into academic audio books and distributed to government schools in the Hindi heartland, Gujarat, West Bengal, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The aim of this project is to make education more inclusive and accessible. ■



NMIMS College



A library being set up at a government school under *Project Ummedein*.

Lala Lajpatrai Rotaract boosts public image

V Muthukumar

Here is a 15-year-old Rotaract club, RAC Lala Lajpatrai College, that has built up its brand identity through legacy projects which not only boosted its public image, but also “led to a strong bonding among district Rotaractors who look forward to take part in our events and flagship programmes,” said Taher Lokhandwala, past president, and director, Professional Development of RID 3141.

As a platform for the differently-abled, *Project Astitva Ek Pehchaan* (one’s identity) is a 10-year-old, week-long talent fest

wherein students with disabilities are given opportunities to exhibit their extracurricular skills in singing, dancing, fine arts, sports, literary field and performing arts. It is being held in either October or November in partnership with NGOs and special homes. “Under this festival, a sports meet is held on a ground away from our college as we don’t have one on our campus. Paralympic games and athletics, blind cricket and other sports for people with disabilities are held with much fanfare,” said Lokhandwala. ‘Open Mic’ is filled with solo stage shows, group skits, poetry recital and other individual expressions of talent.

Rotaractors join hands with the participants to hold flash mobs at busy places like CSMT Railway station-Churchgate, Marine Drive etc to turn the spotlight on the diverse skills of the differently-abled, while a souvenir bulletin, *Astitva*, which is a compilation of poems, short stories and other literary work of people with special needs is released at the literary event. “We also include drawing and paintings in this bulletin which is a sought-after book after the event gets over as it is a collector’s item.”

The organisers also visit the NGOs to hold special events for the disabled “who suffer from mobility

restrictions and could not come out of their comfort zone. Since inception, *Project Astitva* would have touched the lives of at least 5,000 persons with disabilities.”

Under *Project Ummedein* (ray of hope), Adarsh Vidyalaya, a government high school in Utavali village in Palghar district, was adopted by the club four years ago with the “aim to give their children a new perspective that will enrich them with skillsets required for a successful life,” said club president Nirbhay Oberai. Multiple workshops and sessions are held on menstrual hygiene, good touch, bad touch and cleanliness, while motivational classes aim to develop skillsets for students to flourish in their career, he said.

Special counselling is given to students of Class 9–10 on how to excel in their public exams with right preparation and mindset. “Rotaractors visit children at their homes in Utavali village to convince parents to allow them pursue higher education. Every year, around 400 children from Class 4–10 are benefitted, and in the last four years, we would have motivated 1,600 students at this rural school,” recalled Oberai. Last year, an electric bell (₹7,000) was installed and

a library (₹10,000) was set up at the school as a fillip to its infrastructure.

Bombay Culture

As a public image project, *Bombay Culture* is celebrated during World Rotaract Week (March 1–7) with a plethora of events like fun trip of around 60 Rotaractors to “bond among ourselves and enjoy the day out,” followed by a heritage walk for 2km in which around 40 walkers rediscover some of the historic places in Mumbai.

A community service is part of *Bombay Culture* in each edition of this flagship event which includes a visit to old age homes and special NGOs “where we donate bedsheets, mattresses and pillows to the inmates.” Last year, they visited the Salvation Army Old Age Home and donated sleeping mats and bedsheets. It is customary to honour people who had done ‘selfless service’ at the Hall of Fame event at the college auditorium, and last year “we felicitated 30 tireless workers including dabbawallas, policemen and ex-servicemen.”

Local rappers and folk singers in regional dialects slug it out in a tough competition to win prizes as “their innate skills are recognised opening new avenues of growth for them.”

Billboards are erected to showcase Rotaract during the week-long *Bombay Culture* events. “Last year our hoarding at Bandstand, a busy spot in Mumbai, lifted our public image among the Mumbaikars,” said Oberai, a final year student of BA (MMC). He thanked RC Bombay Mid-Town, their parent Rotary, for “being helpful whenever we approached them for guidance or mentorship of service projects.”

On his three-year Rotaract journey, he said “I was a shy person with a very few friends before I turned a Rotaractor. Now I have a huge network of friends and am confident to speak at a large gathering. Thanks to Rotaract, I learnt a few management skills which will aid my career growth, and am looking forward to become a Rotarian.”

His Rotaract friend Lokhandwala is into the seventh year in Rotaract and a visiting faculty at private schools in Mumbai for communication skills, “I wanted to continue my Rotaract journey in Rotary too with same passion and enthusiasm. After I finished my course at Lala Lajpat Rai College, I have joined the Rotaract Club of Churchgate,” he added. ■

Rtr Malcolm Vakharia (right) donates a special kit to a faculty of Adarsh Vidyalaya School, Utavali village in Palghar district, under *Project Ummedein*. Club president Manav Shah (2023–24) is in the middle.





Cataract surgery restores eyesight of 2,500 people

V Muthukumaran

Above: IPDRR Siddhesh Gaikwad donates blankets and sparingly-used clothes to children at a special home under Project Gift of Life.

Below: A girl being vaccinated against cervical cancer at a government school.





An eye camp in progress in a village as IPDRR Gaikwad looks on from behind.

In a mammoth initiative reaching out to the rural belts of Maharashtra, Project Theia (vision), the brainchild of IPDRR Siddhesh Gaikwad, RID 3131, had done 53 cataract screening camps in Raigad and Pune districts which benefitted over 3,000 people, mostly elderly villagers. “The eye camps had identified patients in need of cataract procedure, and we have completed 2,563 surgeries at the Surya Eye Hospital, Panvel,” said Gaikwad.

Giving an overview of the eye surgical camps, he said, “around 75 Rotaractors from 18 clubs were involved in the project, and the screening camps are held on the weekends

on the outskirts of Pune and Raigad.” Led by Rtr Rugved Kandpile, also a Rotarian, from RAC Panvel Industrial Town, each camp runs into many days, and “was ticked as completed in our checklist only if all the identified patients have undergone the surgery.” And the Rotaractors who had “sleepless nights in organising the camps, and taking care of the logistics felt very happy that they were able to restore vision to over 2,500 people across 30 villages that have little access to modern health-care,” recalled Gaikwad.

Project Dnyanganga (river of education) has adopted 100 children from less privileged families in and around Pune and studying in government

schools. “We have paid the school tuition fees of these students from Class 5–10, and in the new Rotary year (2024–25), we will reach out to 200 such children,” he said. Towards the end of last year, Rotaractors have taken up *Project Mamr* (motherhood), an initiative of RC Pune Bibwewadi, which is aimed to vaccinate 7,500 girls in the age group of 9–14 against cervical cancer. “We are targeting girls at government schools in and around Pune and the vaccine doses are funded by a CSR grant. Rtr Anvita is coordinating with project chair Rtn Jignesh Pandya.”

Focus on membership

Towards the end of June, there were over 3,230 Rotaractors across 138 clubs in

RID 3131. “I have advised the incoming DRR Drishti Singh to devise projects and community initiatives that will attract new members, and make all Rotaractors to get involved with enthusiasm, which is the key factor to increase our strength,” said the IPDRR, who is a board member of RSAMDIO (Rotaract South Asia Multi District Information Organisation). He is a member of RAC Pune Kalyani Nagar.

Having been in Rotaract for eight years has “given me a new identity, and a grand vision to proceed with confidence in my life. I will become a Rotarian after I cross 30,” said Gaikwad who looks after his family’s real estate business. ■



DRRs with PRID Mahesh Kotbagi, DG Manjoo Phadke, PDG Prashant Deshmukh and grooming consultant Sneha Gharmalkar.

Lessons in leadership

Team Rotary News

Fifty-five incoming district leaders — DRRs-elect and district secretaries-elect — from 30 districts underwent elaborate training in various Rotary aspects such as growing members, strengthening The Rotary Foundation, working with grants etc at the Rota-

ract Zone Institute hosted by RID 3131 and held in Pune from March 21–24 this year.

PRIP Shekhar Mehta and PRID Mahesh Kotbagi inspired the delegates and enhanced their knowledge of Rotary and its concepts. RID 3131 District Governor Manjoo Phadke

inaugurated the zone institute and conducted the goal-setting seminar.

PDG Prashant Deshmukh spoke on the roles and responsibilities of a Rotaract district secretary. Sneha Gharmalkar, the title winner of the *Mrs India Pride of the Nation 2023*, gave tips on grooming and etiquettes for the Rotaractors.

Other topics covered included roles and responsibilities of the district Rotaract leaders, Rotaract-Rotary relationship, and communication within the district. PDG Ravi Vadlamani, PDRRs Karthik Kittu, Thansen Paandi, Arjun Dev, Harikrishnan Pillai and Akash Chikate shared their knowledge and experiences, empowering delegates with valuable insight.

A multi-dimensional panel discussion featuring PDRR Kishore Babu, DRR Arun, DRRE Shanel and DRRN Mahi Bahn was moderated by PDRR Sahil Gandhi.

PRIP Mehta distributed the certificates to the incoming district leaders at the end of the zone institute.

PDRR Arjun Dev was the institute chair and DRRE Drishti Singh, the secretary. Host DRR Siddhesh Gaikwad (RID 3131) was appreciated for the smooth progress of the event. ■



Outstanding Rotaract projects recognised

Team Rotary News

The South East Asia Rotaract Information Centre (SEARIC MDIO) recognised outstanding community service projects done by Rotaract clubs during the Rotary year 2023–24 at a grand event, titled *TURF*, hosted by RID 3040 in Indore.

The organisation serves as a resource centre for Rotaractors and includes 45 RI districts across nine countries. It provides information and facilitates exchanges and communication among Rotaract clubs in the participating districts. There are 26 MDIOs (multi-district information organisations) worldwide. RSA MDIO (Rotaract South Asia MDIO) also caters to the South Asian Rotaract clubs.

PRID Kamal Sanghvi presided over the felicitation meet which was chaired by the MDIO's president PDRR Abhishek Goyal. DG Ritu Grover, DGE Anish Malik, DGN Sushil Malhotra and DGND Sanskar Kothari from the Rotary fraternity were also present. The event chair Yatharth Golchcha, along with event secretary Nikunj Goydani, ensured the smooth progress of the event.

RID 3040 DRR Aman Khan won the Outstanding DRR Award and *Project Matritva* of the district was adjudged the Best Community Service Project. The project, a collaborative effort of Rotaract clubs of RIDs 3011, 3131, and international districts 3220, 3290 and 3192, made remarkable strides in transforming communities, said RID 3040 district secretary Saurabh Nayak.

The project saw distribution of over 85,000 sanitary napkins among 75,000 girls. Menstrual hygiene lessons were imparted to students across 37 government schools and slum regions. Nearly 2,000 girls were taught self-defence techniques. Rotaractors engaged in various initiatives such as providing essential diets, fruits and vitamin supplements to pregnant women.

The Best Club Award was presented to RACs Lake City Bhopal, TIT and Science, Indore City Young Leaders, SVVV, MLB College and Acropolis Professionals. Gautam Sharma and Bhumika Barethiya were recognised as Best Club Presidents and Muskan Patidar and Dewang Vaid won the Best Club Secretary Award. Tanzila Sheikh was adjudged the Rotaractor of the Year. ■



PRID Kamal Sanghvi presents an award to RID 3040 DRR Aman Khan.



Rotaractors and volunteers praying before starting the *Chabeel Sewa*.



A Rotaractor handing out a glass of rose milk to a two-wheeler rider.

Refreshing Relief

Team Rotary News

The Rotaract Club of Delhi Dynamic, RID 3011, organised a *Chabeel Sewa* (a sweet cold drink stall) at Janakpuri, serving refreshing rose milk to over 10,000 people enduring the summer heat. Volunteers set up distribution points along the road, handing out drinks to pedestrians, two-wheeler riders, cyclists and rickshaw pullers.

The event was meticulously planned and smoothly executed by the organising team. Volunteers

efficiently managed the crowd, ensuring everyone received their drink without delay or disruption.

Event chair Navdeep Singh Oberoi recalled a local's relief after receiving the drink. "He appreciated the effort and said, 'This gesture means a lot to us, especially in this heat.' It was a blessing to see everyone enjoying the drink and experiencing instant relief from the summer heat," he said.

In a similar project, RAC Chandigarh Midtown, RID 3080,

in collaboration with RC Chandigarh Mid Town, carried out *Project Rahat*, a seven-day initiative providing 150 lassi packets to traffic police and construction workers, 200 water bottles to rickshaw and rehri pullers and 100 water bottles to patients at the Government Hospital in Sector 16, Chandigarh. The effort extended to PGI Hospital and the Civil Hospital in Panchkula in the presence of DGN Rita Kalra. The project concluded with *Chabeel Sewa* serving lassi to over 2,000 people. ■

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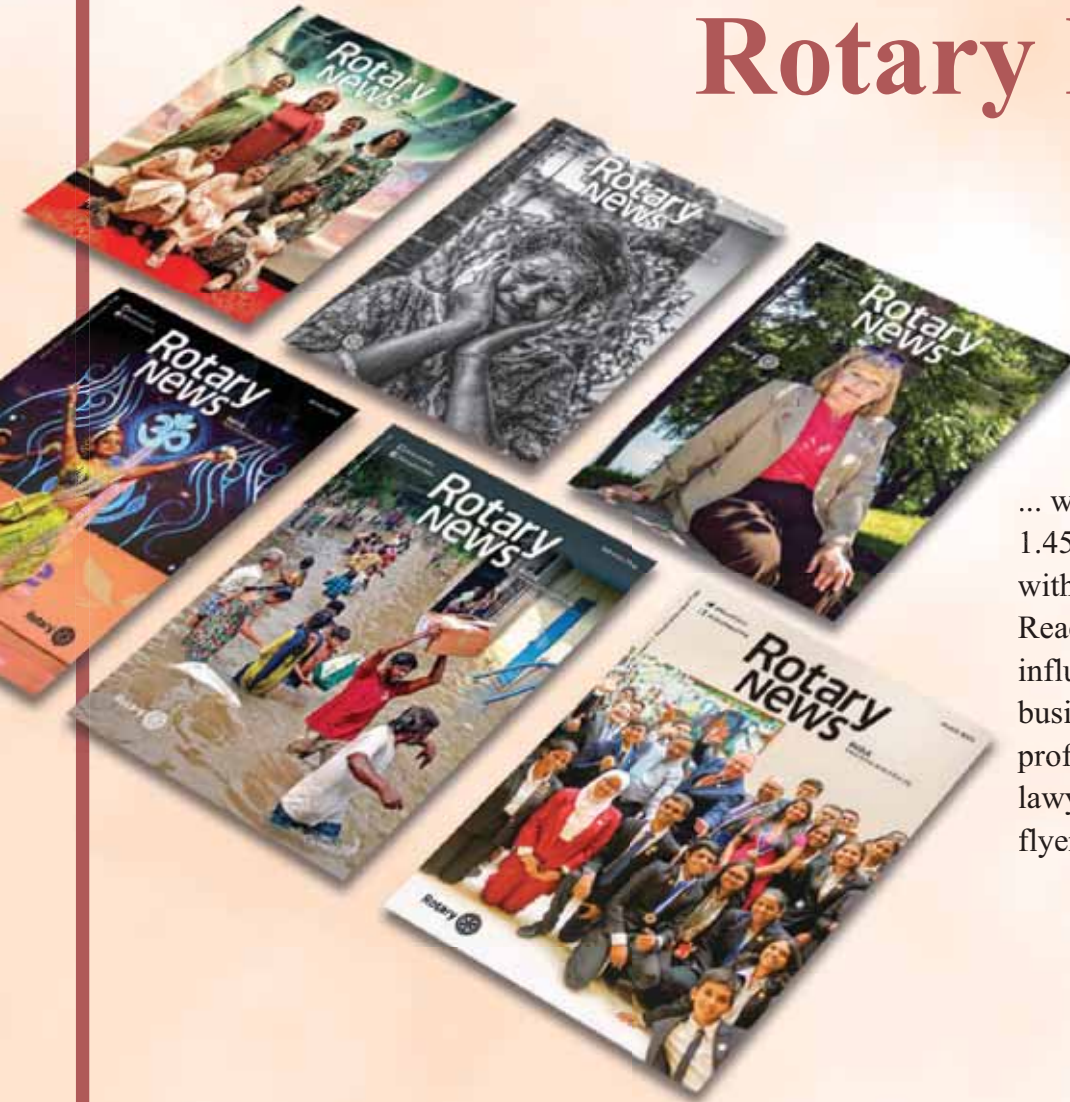
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