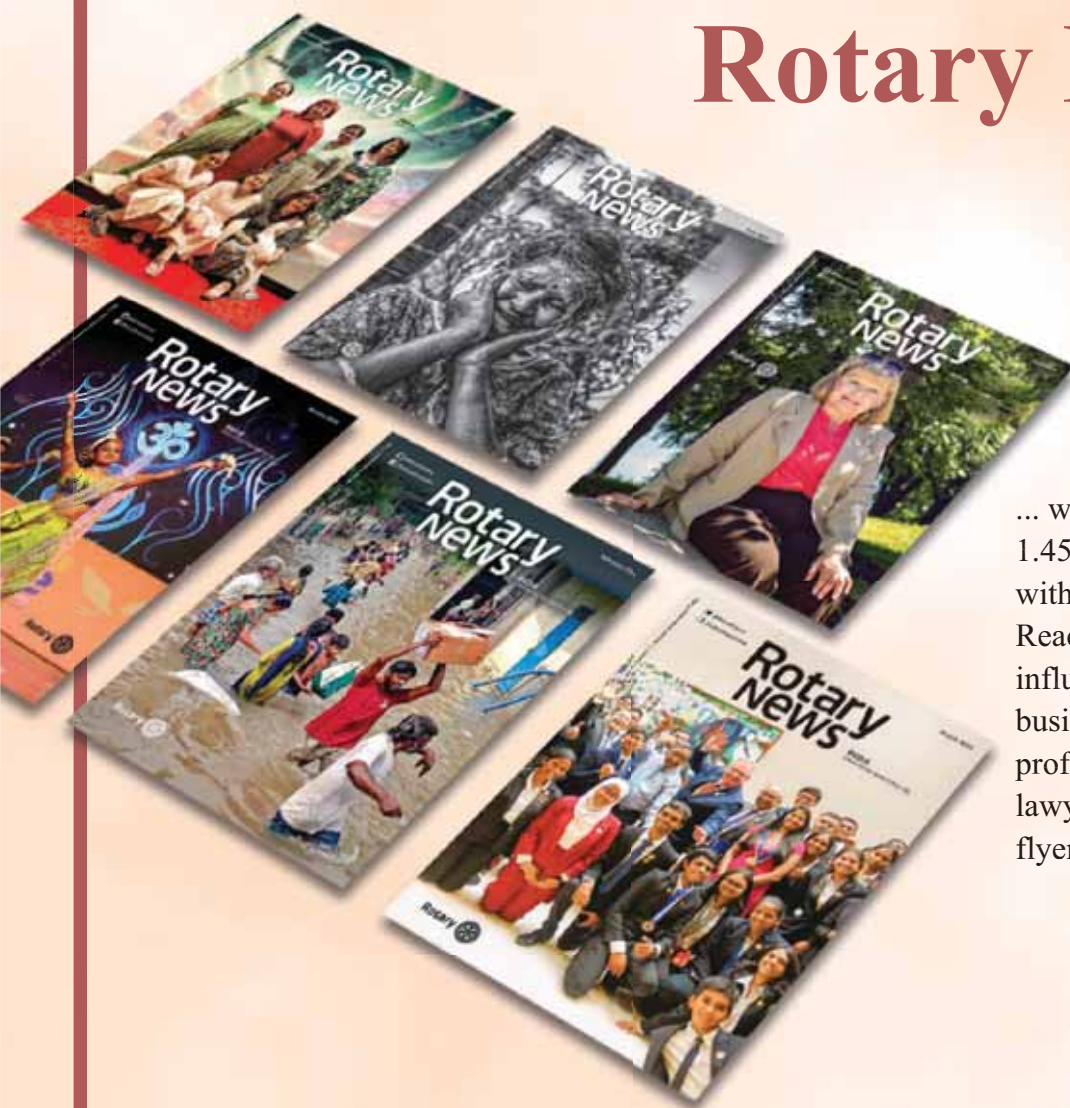


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6 A voice for the abused



10 A chat with RI President Francesco Arezzo



14 Garba festival a showstopper in Patan

On the cover: Children with paper craft taught by members of RAC Delhi Mid Town Maitreyi as part of the club's *Project Prabal*.

Inside

- 26 Service in scrubs
- 32 A youth skilling centre in Vijayawada
- 38 Rotaract power to women entrepreneurs
- 46 Supporting the Warkaris
- 52 Rotaractors redefine a community in Delhi



21 Not just another talent show



48 Pune Rotaract distributes 1,000 school kits

RI Director **M Muruganandam**

RI Director **KP Nagesh**

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Grace in giving

As death and destruction, threats, flexing of muscles, and unleashing of raw military power plunged parts of our world, yet again, into uncertainty and fear, came the heartbreaking news about an Air India Ahmedabad-London flight with 242 people on board crashing in the blink of an eye after taking off from the Ahmedabad airport. All the 242 on board, except one who miraculously snatched his life from the claws of death by jumping out of the burning aircraft, perished... their hopes, dreams and plans for the future burnt to ashes. As the entire nation mourned this heartbreaking disaster, and we marvelled at the few who missed the flight for some reasons, with one woman being denied boarding because she was held up in traffic, a myriad of thoughts flashed across the mind's eye. The faith of those who believe in providence, destiny, god, a superpower that rules the world, the alignment of planets, etc was strengthened and the inevitable thought was about how fickle life can be and how the end can come in so many unexpected ways.

The natural progression of thought, once you accept this, revolves around the need to lead the one life we all have as decently as we can. No, this is not an essay in moral science. Such phenomenal tragedies, and the war and strife-torn world we live in today, send out strong signals about the ephemeral nature of our existence. Once we accept that with a calm mind, then all of Rotary's core values come into a much sharper focus... the ones on truth and fairness, equity and diversity, and making a difference to the less fortunate in our communities through not only the sharing of our wealth but also our skills and expertise. For corporates in India, CSR is mandatory, but for those with large hearts, giving comes naturally. Consider

the case of Ravishankar Dakoju from Bengaluru, who shocked the Rotary world a few years ago by announcing the gift of ₹100 crore (\$14 million) to The Rotary Foundation. Or Rajashree Birla from Mumbai, who continues giving large sums to Rotary International for polio eradication, and also locally for Rotary's community welfare projects. The other day in a casual chat, past RI Director Ashok Mahajan told me simply: "She has never said no to me; whatever sum I've requested for Rotary, she has given it with a smile." Add to this, Dakoju's refrain... 'I had nothing; society has given me everything, so I am returning it to people who live in our world.'

Isn't this grace in giving?

But money is not the only way through which you can display generosity. A kind word or deed... just a warm, caring smile to those in distress can work magic. Once we accept that our time on earth is limited, and the inevitable might be just around the corner, it becomes so much easier to shed the heavy load of negativity... hate, anger, greed, desire for revenge, which we often take to ridiculous lows.

Let's throw all these out of the window, and let in some fresh air. The ending of hate and desire for revenge is the beginning of peace. History... not ancient but of the mid-20th century has shown us how the oppressed and helpless of yesterday can turn into heartless and merciless oppressors of today. So let's shun negativity and choose the path of peace and progress...

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Rasheeda Bhagat'.

Rasheeda Bhagat

A voice for the abused

Jaishree

The Rotaract Club of Delhi Midtown Maitreyi, affiliated to the Maitreyi College, a women's college in New Delhi, was chartered by the Rotary Club of Delhi Mid Town, RID 3011, three years ago. The Rotaractors are passionate about supporting survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse. Most of their service activities are centred around empowering women and young girls.

It all started with *Project Raha* in August 2024, when the club members took out a Peace Walk





to pay homage to a 31-year-old trainee doctor of the RG Kar Medical College, Kolkata, who was brutally raped and murdered in the seminar room of the college campus. "It was a peacefully conducted walk where around 750 students from our college and other neighbouring colleges participated. We carried placards with slogans reiterating women's safety and advocating justice for the family of the rape victim," says Mahi Azad, the club's IPP, who was also its charter president.

The next phase of *Project Raha* included a series of self-defence workshops conducted by Nicky Dubey, an Israeli martial arts expert. Over three weeks around 250 participants learnt various protection techniques and powerful strikes, equipping themselves with confidence and resilience to face real life challenges.

Other initiatives under the multi-phased, ongoing project includes 'boundary' education for slum children, making them aware of good and bad touches, and teaching them to identify indecent conversations and bad intentions from strangers, friends and family members. "We would visit various localities in teams and conduct awareness sessions for children and young adults. Boys were also included in these conversations," says Mahi.

The third phase included storytelling sessions which provided a safe platform for survivors to share stories, inspire others and build collective

strength. The event encouraged members to share with a four-member panel, some of the most difficult experiences they've faced. "The session became a space for vulnerability, courage and connection. *Raha* reminded us that healing begins with being heard, and that even in our most painful moments, we are never alone. The strength shown by our speakers touched every soul in the room and brought our community closer, fostering empathy, support and mutual understanding. This was more than just a session; it was a reminder of the power of shared humanity," she says.

Gaining strength from the *Raha* project, the club put together *Project Prabal*, another three-phase initiative to address human trafficking through skill development, awareness and economic empowerment. As the first step, the Rotaractors organised a legal literacy workshop where expert lawyers shared information about legal rights, protective laws and helpline numbers with women and adolescents at the Salaam Baalak Trust. These important details were distributed in printed flyers among the participants to serve as ready reckoners. "Being armed with information is the first step towards building confidence," she smiles.

The next step was arranging craft classes for survivors of human trafficking. Around 25 women supported by the NGO Vihaan were taught to make bracelets, fashion accessories, phone charms, wind charms and other knick-knacks. "We provided the base material and helped them market their products at events in our college and other compuses." The revenue generated was given to them, promoting sustainable income and independence. "We are promoting their skills in our known circles so that they get continued business," she says.

Phase 3 of *Project Prabal* comprised building creative skills in 30 children at an NGO in Janakpuri West. They were taught to paint and draw, or write stories, based on their interests. "Our aim was to instil self-worth and confidence in these children and we were thrilled to see their faces light up with joy as they explored their talent."

The club has made an eight-episode video series called 'Femora' addressing key women-



related issues such as sex trafficking, domestic violence, gender inequality and workplace discrimination. These videos have been uploaded on YouTube.

But *Project Jagruti* seems to be close to Mahi's heart as was evident by the warmth and joy in her voice while talking about it. The club has 136 Rotaractors, and "all of them are part of this project." The club has adopted a slum in the capital and focuses its welfare projects here. "We are teaching various subjects to the school-going children here for two hours every day."



Mahi visits the locality on Wednesdays to teach them English, and other members take turns to visit the locality every week and brush up the children's lessons in whatever subjects they are good at. The response from the parents, who are mostly illiterate and are engaged in low paying blue-collar jobs, is amazing, says Mahi. "Earlier the children were sent to private tuition classes that charged them ₹400–500 monthly. So when we told the parents that we'll coach the children without charges they were excited. And the children enjoy the classes with us. Their marks are also improving now," smiles the Rotaractor.

Through *Projects Sanjeevani* and *Ayushman* the club conducted series of health and medical camps throughout the year in the city, benefitting around 1,000 people. Blood donation camps conducted by the club helped enhance blood reserve in centres treating children with thalassaemia disorder.

Having completed her graduation, Mahi has now moved to the Shriram College of Commerce



in the city for her postgraduate course. She, along with her 47 course mates, have joined the Rotaract Club of Delhi Genesis, a community-based club newly chartered by the Rotary Club of Delhi Genesis. This new club has now kickstarted its welfare initiatives with cancer awareness programmes targeting women and young adults.

At the beginning of this new Rotary year, the club had organised special camps for women to screen for breast and ovarian cancer. "With the help of medical experts, we taught the visitors self-examination techniques to detect cancer early and educated them on the importance of prompt medical consultation to nip the disease at the bud," she says. ■

A chat with RI President Francesco Arezzo

Etelka Lehoczky

RI's new president talks about his top Rotary moments, his goals as president, and his love of olive oil and opera.

RI President Francesco
Arezzo

Francesco Arezzo was sitting with a friend at his district conference when he received a call, asking him to leave the room and join a Zoom meeting with the Rotary International Board of Directors. A few minutes later, Arezzo learned that he'd been chosen as RI president for 2025–26, the third Italian and the first from southern Italy to lead the global membership organisation. Since the news hadn't been officially announced, he couldn't tell anyone. But soon, he noticed phones coming out all over the room.

When the news arrived on social media at about 11pm, “we were in the middle of the gala dinner. You can imagine more than 400 Rotarians all finding out on their phones. It was quite an unforgettable moment. All of a sudden, they all lined up to kiss me and offer their congratulations. I was deeply touched,” he says.

A week after the Board held a special session in June to select Arezzo to lead Rotary, he flew to Calgary, Canada, for the convention. There, he was warmly embraced by members from around the world. Thousands of attendees interrupted during his speech with ebullient applause at the closing session as he was officially introduced.

A member of the Rotary Club of Ragusa in Sicily, Arezzo has been part of Rotary for more than three decades. He has served as vice-chair of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee, RI director, and chair of the 2023 International Convention Committee for Melbourne, among other leadership

roles. Throughout his Rotary journey, he has supported initiatives that strengthen RI's impact and expand opportunities for engagement across generations. He has served as president of Fondazione Rotary Italia, a national initiative that makes it easier for Italian citizens to support Rotary's humanitarian projects around the world.

The following interview was conducted during multiple conversations with Arezzo in Calgary — in the hallway during breaks, inside a minibus enroute to a Rotary event, and at a makeshift office inside the convention hall, where Rotary members frequently stopped by to greet and hug him. Despite his packed schedule, he set aside time to talk with *Rotary* magazine about his life, his Rotary journey, his plans for the organisation, and two of his other passions: opera and olive oil.

You've worked as an orthodontist for many years. Are there things about your job that make you an effective Rotarian?

I've been a practising orthodontist for 46 years now. I work mainly with young people, and it's very important to try to understand them before beginning treatment. You have to win their cooperation. Forging those relationships is one of the best aspects of my job.

And you now have grandchildren of your own, right?

I have two wonderful grandchildren. The elder one, who's three years old, has my name: Francesco. The younger is one



year old, and she has my wife's name. So we have another Anna Maria and another Francesco.

You've been a Rotarian for more than three decades. Do you remember why you first wanted to join?

At the beginning, Rotary was just a place to meet new friends with different points of view. It wasn't until I became club president that I began to really understand Rotary. Now, when I speak to Rotarians, I tell them to change the verbs they use. You don't "go to" Rotary like you go to the cinema, where you sit and watch other people doing something. Rotary is something you do. You have to participate. And then you begin to grow.

How have you grown in Rotary?

When my club first proposed that I become president, I didn't want to accept. I had a stutter, so I was terrified of being obliged to address my club. But it wasn't so bad. Then they invited me to be a district governor, and again, I didn't want to accept. But once more, they convinced me. Now, when I think about the fact that I'm going to be the Rotary International president and speak onstage in another language, I understand how much Rotary has changed me in a positive and lasting way.

How can Rotary convey a sense of this impact to members and potential members?

We have to improve our communications with club presidents, because they're on the front lines of dealing with members. While we do a wonderful job of instructing district governors on the importance of membership and new clubs, the district governor often speaks with a club president only two or three times a year. There are too many club presidents who don't have any idea why our membership goals are so important.

What challenges do you anticipate you'll face during your term as president?

I'm very conscious that I'm beginning very late. Even if I begin studying problems and setting goals now, I can't do very much. Rotary isn't a scooter that can change direction quickly. It's like a big cruise ship: If you want to make a turn, you have to begin many kilometres in advance. I hope to work very closely with President-elect SangKoo Yun. I think SangKoo and

I can create a two-year plan that will be really effective.

What has been one of your most memorable moments in all your years in Rotary?

One moment that was very, very moving for me was when, as district governor, I organised a Rotary Youth Leadership Awards event for districts bordering the Mediterranean Sea:

Italy, France, Spain, North Africa, Greece and Turkey. The problem was putting together Turkish and Italian young people, because they looked at one another as very different. The first day was tense; it was clear that they didn't like each other. But after a few days, they began to discover that they had the same tastes and the same dreams.

When the last day came, they sang John Lennon's "Imagine" together and performed a skit they'd written about the cultural differences between their countries. It was one of the most beautiful things I can remember.

In your professional life, you've led trade organisations for dentists and for olive oil producers. What group is most difficult to unite in a consensus: Dentists, olive oil producers, or perhaps Rotary members?

From my experience, it's the olive oil producers. Each producer of olive oil is strongly convinced that his olive oil is the best in the world. So they usually don't want to cooperate sincerely with others.

How long have you been producing olive oil?

My family has produced olive oil for more than a century now. I am the last, I fear, because my daughters are not interested in this field.

I understand you love opera also. What's your favourite opera or composer?

A composer I like a lot is Vincenzo Bellini. He was born in Sicily, and he died very, very young. He did only a few operas, but they are all of a very high quality. And of course, there are many other great composers — Puccini, Verdi, Mozart. It's hard to pick one.



President Arezzo and his family pose for a holiday photo. Front row (from L): Arezzo, holding grandson Francesco; and Arezzo's wife, Anna Maria, holding granddaughter Anna Maria. Standing (from L): Arezzo's daughter Elena; his son-in-law Magnus; and daughter Raffaella.

Cardiac care by Belgaum Rotaractors

Jaishree



Over 200 people from BPL families benefitted from *Project Cardiacare*, a heart health camp organised in Belgaum, Karnataka, by RAC Belgaum South, RID 3170.

This is the second consecutive year the club is holding such a camp in the city. “We began this project in memory of Abhishek Pujari, a social worker who died, very young, of heart attack. He was active, particularly during the Covid pandemic when he single-handedly cremated 50 dead bodies for which there was no claim from any family,” said Monika Asundi, past district secretary and a member of the club. The camp was conducted with the support of Vijaya Hospital in the city. Besides general medical checkup, patients with high-risk symptoms of

heart disease underwent ECG and Echocardiogram tests at the camp. CPR training was also included as part of the camp. People were taught to administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation as a first aid procedure when they encounter someone suffering a cardiac arrest.

“Normally this health checkup package costs ₹1,200–2,000, it is not affordable for low-income families, and they often neglect any heart ailment symptoms, resulting in loss of life. We have decided to adopt *Project Cardiacare* as a flagship project for the coming years, and plan at least four camps every year,” she said.

Another signature project of the club is *Utsava* where every member contributes anywhere between ₹2,000 to ₹30,000 on their special occasions

such as birthday or wedding anniversary. “We spend such funds at the end of the year on an impactful community service project. Last year (2024–25) we equipped a local school with an interactive smart board and set up a computer lab with three computers.”

The club has adopted this school as part of a district programme — One Club, One School, One Purpose — and has conducted a sports fest and a dental checkup camp for students. “We visit the school on weekends and conduct classes in English and computer basics for the students,” said Monika.

Although the club was chartered 33 years ago, “it has become active in the last five years and the membership has improved from seven to 107 now.” ■



Cash awards and mementos were given to the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty at a colourful event under *Project Shaurya Sandhya*.

Garba festival a showstopper in Patan

V Muthukumaran

Come Navratri, the nine-day festival of celebrating Goddess Durga, the historical town of Patan, 120km north of Ahmedabad, will bristle with Garba dance and music as the Rotaract Club of Patan, RID 3055, will host a 10-day fun fair titled *Rankaar*. “The Navratri event is our nine-year-old flagship project and last year (2024) we spent ₹37 lakh in organising the Garba event with generous donations from sponsors and gate collections as it is a ticketed programme. Each day, we have thousands of visitors,

including around 125 Rotaractors and their families, performing and enjoying the Garba mela,” says Milan Paresh Patel, club president (2024–25).

The huge dance arena reverberates with musical tunes and beats from artistes who play different instruments, while traditional and film songs with catchy rhymes create a magical ambience in the dance hall.

“Last year, we hired 17 artistes to perform music, and the response from the public is awesome,” he says. Patel is hopeful that in



Navaratri Garba dance under *Project Rankaar*.



A kin of a soldier killed in action turns emotional.

this new Rotary year too, “we will recreate the Garba magic with good participation from the locals and sponsorship from local enterprises.”

Then DGN Nigam Chaudhari (2026–27) was the chief guest at the felicitation of 13 families of soldiers killed in their line of action under *Project Shaurya Sandhya*. “Each soldier’s family was given a cash reward of ₹1.11 lakh and mementos as token gestures for the supreme sacrifice of their husbands/sons who laid down their lives in protecting our nation on the borders,” says Patel Shivam Jayeshkumar, the then club secretary, and new club president. Patriotic skits, storytelling, dance performances and a musical tribute by live orchestra with heartfelt songs enriched the programme with strings of vibrant emotions and nostalgia among the audience.

Veteran army men recalled their battlefield incidents, and beneficiary families shared their irreparable loss of their breadwinners on stage, which made the event a poignant

During the Jagannath Rath Yatra 80 Rotaractors reached out to thousands of devotees visiting this small town and distributed 13,000 ice cream cups and cones as summer relief.

one that will not be forgotten, says Jayeshkumar. “We are honouring the families of soldiers killed in action over the last four years in partnership with our parent RC Patan and Prayas Welfare Foundation. DGN Chaudhari was all praise for Rotaractors and Rotarians of Patan for conceiving and doing this impactful project of felicitating the bravehearts’ families for years,” he says.

Under *Project Baby Bliss*, the club has distributed 755 newborn wellness kits to mothers at the government civil hospital, Patan. “A group of

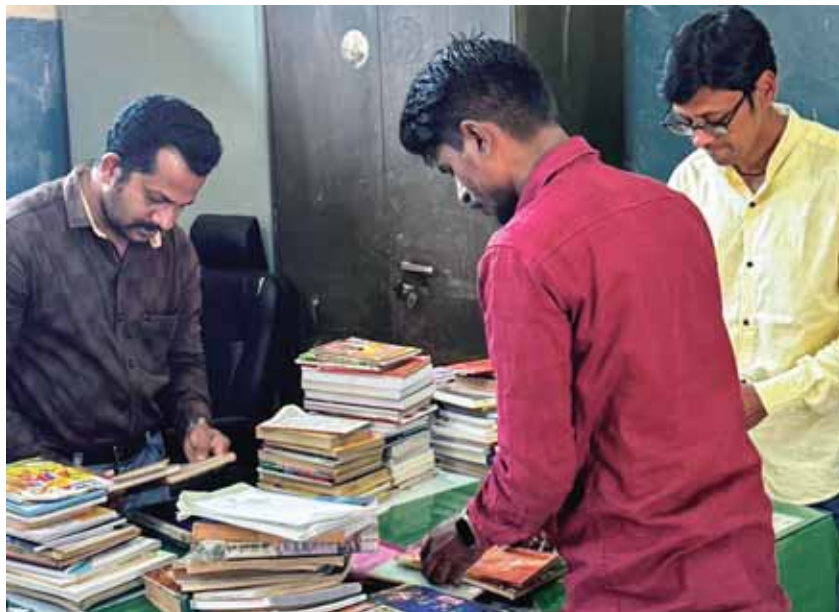
Rotaractors used to visit the hospital and present the newborn kits to 6–8 mothers each day, thus lifting our public image and also creating awareness about Rotary-Rotaract among the patients and in the neighbourhood,” says Milan Patel.

During the Jagannath Rath Yatra, an annual event in Patan, around 80 Rotaractors reached out to thousands of devotees visiting this small town and “distributed 13,000 ice cream cups and cones to them as relief from harsh summer in June this year. In July 2024 too we had another seva camp for devotees of Lord Jagannath, and have been rendering service to pilgrims arriving in Patan for eight years or so,” he explains.

Having been in Rotaract for 13 years, Milan Patel (29) is a wholesale dealer in construction materials. “I will join RC Patan, the parent club of Rotaractors, after two years and continue my service there too as I have done in Rotaract,” he smiles. The 32-year-old RAC Patan has 100 Rotaractors with college students and professionals in equal numbers. ■

Bringing books and hope to juvenile jail

Kiran Zehra



Books to be sent to the city's juvenile jail being labelled and sorted.

RAC Pune Camp Pioneers, RID 3131, turned a new page for a group of young jail inmates by launching the initiative *Page Turners for a Second Chance* at the city's juvenile jail.

For a month, the club collected and donated more than 200 books, including motivational literature, poetry collections, and age-appropriate storybooks. Ranging in age from 12 to 18, the inmates now have access to stories that comfort, challenge and inspire, offering the much-needed emotional and mental nourishment.

"This project is not just about reading. These young individuals often come from difficult backgrounds. Books allow them to dream, reflect, and see themselves differently," says Ameera Sheth, the project lead.

RC Pune Sarasbaug gifted a strong bookshelf so that the books wouldn't just be a one-time gift, but the start of a small library that can grow over time. "Now, we can keep adding more books and keep the learning going," says Ameera. Club members also met with the jail officials, a probation officer, the superintendent, and even a judge to talk about doing more in the

future, "like organising workshops or training classes for the inmates."

"This is not just about giving books," says Sanjay Shivajirao Shinde, president of RC Pune Sarasbaug. "It's about showing these young people that we care, that they still matter, and that there's a way forward for them."

Ameera points out that "in India, when we talk about young people in jail, it's usually about punishment. But this project changes that. By giving them books, we're giving them a chance to learn, grow, and dream of a better future. Education and kindness can change someone's entire life, that's what we're trying to do — plant a seed of hope."

The books were collected through a campaign run by the Rotaract club. Members reached out to schools, colleges and neighbourhoods, asking people to donate storybooks, poetry, and motivational reads. "Some of the Rotaractors parted with their favourite books, teachers donated old collections, and some even bought new books just for the cause. Within weeks, we had over 200 books, all carefully sorted and packed with handwritten notes of encouragement inside them," she smiles. ■



Rotaractors in the newly set up library.

Delhi Rotaract offers 'Suraksha' against cancer

V Muthukumaran

If you wonder what a new Rotaract club can do in terms of projects and community outreach, then you only need to look at RAC Delhi South East, RID 3011, a less than two-year-old club which has just completed the fourth phase of its cervical vaccination campaign under *Project HPV Suraksha Sankalp* (ensuring protection).

Explaining in detail about the vaccination drive, the club's charter president Kartik Dawar says in the

first phase they conducted an awareness session for over 700 parents and students at the Bosco Public School, Paschim Vihar. This was followed by a virtual event for 120 Rotaractors from RIDs 3011 and 3012 where "both male and female members were invited to get themselves vaccinated."

During the third phase, 280–300 persons were vaccinated including Rotaractors, teachers and students at the Bosco School; and in the next phase, around 300 students, both



Rotaractors of RAC Delhi South East at *Project HPV Suraksha Sankalp*.



A cervical vaccination camp in progress.



boys and girls, were inoculated against the cancer at the Bal Bharati Public School. “So far, the expenditure cost of ₹70 lakh was made good through CSR grants,” says Dawar.

As the WHO prescribes a minimum of six months gap between two mandatory doses against cervical cancer, “we have to wait for some time before we proceed with the next two phases of our vaccination project at these two schools.”

Eco-swap activities

In July last year, they planted 500 saplings at the Dilshad Gardens in East Delhi to kickstart “a multi-phase initiative on environmental protection through sustainable development. Later on, they conducted a webinar on this critical topic in which 470 participants, including 250 Rotaractors from India, and members from Nepal and Sri Lanka, exchanged their

views on ways to protect the fragile environment which is vital to sustain life on the planet, explains Dawar. Among the speakers were three honchos of companies working in the sphere of ecological protection.

In a massive work to remove plastic waste from various sources, “we collected around 500 kg of discarded plastics at three different locations. On Gandhi Jayanthi (Oct 2), 150 volunteers mobilised 150kg of plastics from the Yamuna Ghat in a mega clean-up drive. Then DG Mahesh Trika and over 20 Rotarians also took part in collecting the plastic debris and other litter from the riverbank,” recalls Dawar.

Leading dailies gave a good coverage of the Rotaract’s clean-up drive at the Yamuna Ghat the next day. Next, they set up a huge collection cage at the Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Technology, Rohini, in



RAC Delhi South East president Kartik Dawar (3rd from L) along with his Rotaract team and Rotarians of RC Delhi South East.



A Rotaractor being vaccinated.

North Delhi, which helped “us to ship out 200kg of plastic waste from the college campus.”

In the last leg of their *Eco-swap* project, 70–80 volunteers and Rotaractors collected 150kg of plastic discards from their houses, and nearby areas, and delivered them to Rotary Plastic Warriors. “We also gave a sizeable quantity of plastic waste and discards to private recyclers who segregate, sort and use them for making fancy products,” which are either sold or given as mementos in various events.

Through *Project Swasth Sethu* (healthy bridge), four health check-up camps and four blood donation camps were held in different areas in a time-bound manner. “Around 7,800 beneficiaries at different communities and government schools were screened for health issues; while we collected 500 units of blood,” says Dawar.

Expressing happiness over his five-year Rotaract stint, the final year Law student of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, North Delhi, is “looking forward to join Rotary once I get settled in my profession in the next few years,” Dawar smiles. He is doing internship at the Delhi High Court and Supreme Court. ■

Not just another talent show

Kiran Zehra

An open shed was converted into a concert hall; the audience sat on green cloth sheets, and the stage was simply the cement floor. But for eight-year-old Manish, it might as well have been the stage of *Indian Idol*. Barefoot and beaming with excitement, “he held the mic like a bar of chocolate and sang a popular Hindi song, which brought a fun vibe and in the last part of the song, we all sang along,” recalls project coordinator Manan Parekh.

“Who knew this tiny fellow had such a powerhouse voice?” he laughs. “We were all

just expecting some cute nursery rhymes, but he made us dance.”

This performance was just another audition round for *Manzil 4.0 - Kalakaar Ki Nayi Pehchaan*, a talent shows organised by RAC Ahmedabad Prahladnagar, RID 3055. “But for this little boy, and hundreds of children like him, it was their chance at being seen, heard, and maybe even celebrated like the stars they believe they could be,” says Parekh and adds that “these kids don’t usually get applause, let alone a stage. We wanted them to feel that they are seen, celebrated, and most importantly, worthy.”



Judges interacting with a participant.



Participants at auditioning for *Manzil 4.0*.



The event was open to children from NGOs, low-income schools, and those with physical and intellectual disabilities. For the club, “this wasn’t just about scouting talent, but about amplifying voices that go unheard. We didn’t want to separate them by labels. To us, they were all performers, all artists, all

dreamers, who came as participants, and left as stars.”

This wasn’t a one-day event either. It began with seven separate auditions across schools, reaching around 300 children. Every child who stepped up was appreciated with motivational gifts. Parekh’s favourite memory from the

event is of “a special child who clutched his gift and kept repeating ‘I’ve never won anything before.’ That moment alone made the project worth it.”

After the auditions, 50 semi-finalists were selected and invited to perform before a panel of professional judges. Snacks and refreshments were served to all. “You should’ve seen the energy in the room, it was electric. For many of them, this was their first time being evaluated for something they loved doing.”

The grand finale was held in an auditorium, attended by more than 180 people. Eighteen finalists took the stage with winners taking home cash prizes totalling ₹45,000, but no one left empty-handed. Every participant received a stationery kit worth ₹200, and everyone,

including Rotaractors, enjoyed a grand dinner. “We didn’t want them to just perform and leave. We wanted them to stay, celebrate, eat together, laugh. That’s what belonging feels like,” adds Parekh.

The entire event was sponsored, “from prizes to snacks to dinner every rupee was raised through partnerships and goodwill. It was humbling to see how many people came forward when they heard what we were doing,” he says .

The feedback from parents, schools, and the community has been “overwhelmingly positive. Many are already asking when *Manzil 5.0* will take place. But for us we didn’t just create a show. We created memories, confidence, and maybe even new dreams. That’s the real prize,” smiles Parekh. ■



Rotaractors with the participants.

DRRs share notes at virtual meet

V Muthukumaran

It was an occasion for Rotaract fellowship and sharing notes on best practices as 30 DRRs from RI districts in India interacted at a virtual meet called *Project Infinity Talks* hosted by RAC Vizag Diamonds, RID 3020. Rotaract leaders narrated their leadership experience and gave insight into some of their exciting journeys while carrying out service projects and community initiatives.

Around 20 members from the host club and co-partner RAC Vizianagaram Central Ekta also took part in the virtual interaction. “We wanted to create a digital platform for Rotaract leaders to share their leadership journey and inspire others so that we can take up impactful

projects and also bond among themselves,” says club president Kiriti Yarramsetty (2024–25). The idea of holding an online meet with DRRs across India was first mooted by past president Sagar Suneendra at RAC Vizag Diamonds.

During her presentation, RID 3020 DRR Harshitha Ramadugula pointed out that Visakhapatnam is the cultural hub of Andhra Pradesh with a great history and heritage sites. “She also listed out some of the district projects like *Sikha Sethu* — educating schoolchildren, and other community initiatives of the Rotaract clubs; while other DRRs shared some of their iconic service initiatives at the two-hour online meet,” he says.

For the first time, the club trained around 100 girl students (Class 7–10) from five government schools in self-defence techniques under *Project Veerangana* (brave woman). From December to April 2025, an expert in martial arts trained the girls at a 20-day workshop in each school, and “it was a rewarding experience for the project team as the training boosted the morale of the girls, especially those from the underprivileged backgrounds.” The club joined hands with RACs Vizag Champions and Visakha Satellite City to train school girls in martial arts.

In partnership with RAC Thane Downtown, RID 3142, “we conducted *Raksha Patra 9.0*, a letter-writing competition for 15

RAC Vizag Diamonds president Kiriti Yarramsetty (centre) along with Rotaractors at *Project Veerangana*.





Above: Vizag Rotaractors at the End Polio Now rally.

Below: Girl students being trained under *Project Veerangana*.



After collecting the letters, the Rotaractors posted them to the Army Headquarters, Delhi. He clarifies that his club has only partnered for the first time with the Thane club which has been doing this letter-writing competition for nine years.

Following the landslides at Wayanad, Kerala, in August 2024, a team of six Rotaractors led by Yarramsetty collected relief material including packed food items, clothes, medical kits, and mattresses and other essentials, made them into bundles which were sent by train to reach the disaster site. “A couple of Wayanad Rotaractors received the relief

consignment and despatched to the around 35 affected families,” he recalls. The collection and despatch of relief material was made possible through “donations by our Rotaractors in cash and kind, and also we used our club funds.”

In 2023–24, he got the Best Club Secretary Award at the RID 3020 awards ceremony titled *Masth* (fun in Telugu). “I am confident that I will bag the Best President Award for this year in the coming months,” he says. Doing a B2C marketing for living, Yarramsetty, 22, says, “I want to join Rotary in the next eight years, and will take up some out-of-the-box projects for communities,” he adds. ■

Service in scrubs

Jaishree

The Rotaract Club of Medicrew was chartered in 2020 by the Rotary Club of Bombay Pier, RID 3141. The club has 6,102 medical student Rotaractors from 10 countries, including India, USA, England, Switzerland, Australia, Nepal, Pakistan, Belgium, UAE and Canada. “Since the club was launched in Mumbai, we are part of RID 3141,” says Saloni Shah, the club’s past president and a final-year MBBS student at KJ Somaiya Medical College, Mumbai. She joined the club in her first year and remains committed to its mission.

With members in 37 Indian cities and 50 cities globally, the club has seen rapid growth — doubling its strength from 3,000 members just a few years ago. “While we’ve always had a strong base in Maharashtra, Gujarat and South India, this year we’re seeing increased membership from Gurgaon, Delhi, Faridabad and eastern India as well,” she says.

Over the past five years, Medicrew Rotaractors have led a wide range of impactful

service initiatives. In 2024–25 alone, they organised 479 events across India: “a milestone achievement,” smiles Saloni.

One of their flagship programmes is an annual webinar that offers guidance to over 1,000 high school students aspiring for careers in medicine. “Many of them dream of becoming doctors but are unsure of the options and the path to take,” she explains. The sessions provide clarity on different medical courses, institutions, and what to expect from each of them.

Each Rotaractor contributes to service projects based on the needs of their local community and geotagged photos of service projects executed worldwide are uploaded on the club’s website. Project planning and approval rest with the club’s core committee and elected Board of Directors. A dedicated HRD Subcommittee, consisting of 1–2 state directors per country and regional international ambassadors, coordinates activities and inductions. “We recruit ambassadors through per-

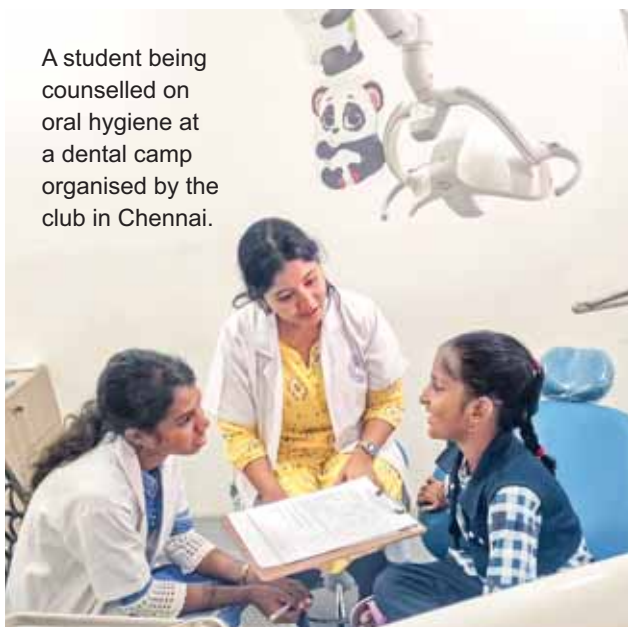
sonal networks and Instagram. Once selected, they handle inductions — either offline or online,” she says. Orientation programmes introduce new members to the club’s past initiatives, networking opportunities and upcoming plans that focus on both community service and personal development.

As a club of medical students, health-related projects form a core part of their service. One such initiative, *Diabeaware*, held nationwide diabetes and blood pressure screening camps in collaboration with local partners. Participants reviewed the readings, and gave personalised health advice and follow-up referrals. “More than just diagnosis, our goal was to spread health literacy and help prevent complications,” says club president Jessica Gupte from Pune. In Mumbai, the Rotary Clubs of Bombay Pier, Mumbai and Mumbai



Rotaractors test an elderly woman at an old age home for blood glucose.

A student being counselled on oral hygiene at a dental camp organised by the club in Chennai.



Rotaractors promote awareness about anaemia among children.

Down Town Sea Land partnered in the initiative. Another vital project, *Rakt ki Shakti* (Power of Blood), addressed iron deficiency (anaemia) through awareness and screening camps in schools and underserved communities across Mumbai. In partnership with NGOs Bhumi

and YuWaah, the camps educated participants on symptoms, iron-rich diets, and causes such as worm infestations. Iron supplements were distributed, especially to adolescent girls and women at risk.

Lift the Lip, a pan-India dental screening initiative in partnership

with Smile Train India, focused on addressing dental issues and early detection of cleft conditions in children. Held across Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai, the week-long drive involved dental and maxillofacial surgeons, orthodontists and 50 volunteers. Over 200 children

A volunteer educating school teachers about child sexual abuse.





Rotaractors of RAC Medicrew with children after giving them school supplies.

were screened, with many referred for free cleft surgeries and follow-up care. Families were also counselled on post-surgical support, reinforcing that the cleft lip is a treatable condition with proper intervention.

Tackling the sensitive issue of child sexual abuse, the club launched *Shielding Innocence*, a project aimed at protecting vulnerable children. Volunteers underwent training in child psychology and legal protocols, learning to use gentle, open-ended questioning and understanding reporting procedures. They conducted sessions on safe and unsafe touch and educated older children about their legal rights and available support mechanisms.

Through *Project Shiksha*, the club supported the education of orphaned children by donating

school supplies and conducting career counselling sessions. Donation boxes placed in college canteens encouraged contributions in cash or kind. This year alone, 1,600 children from 35 orphanages across the country benefitted from the programme.

Another academic initiative, *Foundations for Future*, focuses on foundational education in math, science and language for underprivileged children aged 6–14. Conducted in partnership with Child Rights and You, and Robinhood Army, weekend classes blended academic concepts with playful learning. “Rather than traditional lectures, we focused on joyful engagement,” says Jessica.

Whether it was a math relay to teach basic arithmetic operations,

‘Hangman’ game for vocabulary, poetry recitation to improve Hindi, or a simple nature walk to observe the surroundings, innovative ways were adopted to make learning more interesting. “Science and English quizzes kept teams on their toes, while Cadbury chocolates came handy in teaching fractions and decimals. Reading fluency was assessed through role-plays using Ladybird storybooks, and storytelling circles invited participants to retell *Panchatantra* tales in their own words.” The sessions also emphasised cultural learning, with festival-based activities and competitions fostering a sense of belonging and mental well-being.

Incoming president Radharani, who is also from Mumbai, is all set to carry the initiative through in the coming year, while adding some more meaningful service projects, adds Saloni. ■

Making a difference

Reflective collars for street dogs

More than 185 street dogs got reflective collars under *Project Bezubaan ki Awaaz* (voice of the voiceless), an initiative of RC Ahmedabad Transcend, RID 3055, with contributions from donors, volunteers, and other well-wishers. They also conducted a health check-up for elderly under *Project Ayakshma* in which the caretakers were given medical equipment to support their patients. ■



A Rotaractor ties reflective collars on street dogs in Ahmedabad.



Rotaractors donate blood at the *Mahadan* camp.



Rotaract Week projects at Guntakal

During Rotaract Week celebrations, members of RAC Guntakal Elites, RID 3160, took part in a series of community activities. They collected over 60 units of blood at the *Mahadan* camp held at the Government Blood Centre, Guntakal; exam pads were distributed to over 50 students appearing for Class 10 board exams at government schools; and a yoga session was conducted for 200 students which will help them to lead a healthy life. ■



A shoelace and a little feat

Kiran Zehra

Four-year-old Aarav ran around his classroom doing a happy dance, pointing at a little bow on a cardboard cutout shaped like a shoe and chanting like a rhyme: “I tied my own shoelaces today!” The source of his excitement?

“The knot was slightly lopsided, but his confidence was tied up just right,” smiles Anuradha Mandapati, secretary, RAC Sabala, RID 3020, which recently launched *Life Skills for Little Ones* — a project designed to teach everyday skills to children in schools across Tuni, Andhra Pradesh, in the most playful and practical ways.

That DIY shoe, made from scrap cardboard and bright red laces, became one of the star teaching tools in the programme. “Not the ABCs, instead our project focuses on basic life skills like communication, problem-solving, emotional awareness and independence,” says Anuradha. “We just want to help children believe they can do things for themselves.”

The sessions were far from formal. Children learned by doing. For shoelace-tying, cardboard shoes with punched holes allowed tiny fingers to

fumble, figure out, and finally succeed. “Watching them thread, knot, and cheer when they got it right was pure joy,” she adds.

Emotional expression was explored through storytelling and emotion cards, where kids matched facial expressions to feelings. Problem-solving became a fun challenge with team games and puzzles, where they learned to collaborate and think aloud. Communication skills were built through roleplays, teaching them to ask for help, take turns, and use polite phrases. “The idea was to keep it fun-filled and relatable. We wanted the kids to feel like they were playing — not being taught,” Anuradha explains.

Parents and caregivers were an integral part of the experience. They observed, participated, and picked up ways to reinforce these skills at home. Many parents were willing to teach them the fun way to improve their confident, communication, and emotional wellbeing.

“*Life Skills for Little Ones* is for kids like Aarav, for whom tying a shoelace is a big deal. And sometimes, that’s all it takes to start walking confidently into the world,” smiles Anuradha. ■

Glimpses from the project



A youth skilling centre in Vijayawada

V Muthukumaran

Rural youth, deprived women and school dropouts have found this Rotaract project manna from heaven as Rotaractors at RAC PSCMR College of Engineering and Technology (PSCMRCET), Vijayawada, RID 3020, are creating awareness on the new Vocational Training Centre they have started in September 2024 with the support of Rotarians.

Project R² Connect is focused on empowering youth and rural women through a month-long training in a clutch of IT and non-IT applications “that are designed to the specific needs of the market and the industries. “Till now we have placed 50 successful candidates including 22 women at different companies in Vijayawada after

they had undergone training that varied from two weeks to a month,” says Asrith Bharadwaj, immediate past president of RAC PSCMRCET.

Before the launch of *R² Connect*, they promoted the training centre through a massive social media campaign on platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp and followed by the word of mouth. “Out of 400 applications we got for the first batch of training, we selected only 50 candidates after careful vetting, and all of them were placed in corporate jobs,” he says.

While their parent Rotary, RC Vijayawada Midtown, is paying the monthly rent of ₹25,000 for the first-floor premises of the single storey building, “we avail the free



RID 3020 IPDG Venkateswara Rao (centre), along with RC Vijayawada Midtown IPP Gudapati Kishore (3rd from L), club's vocational services director Karambir Kaur, and RAC PSCMRCET IPP Asrith Bharadwaj (left), at the inauguration of *Project R² Connect*.



Rotaractors doing a part-time job after finishing a crash course at *Project R² Connect*.

teaching services of 12 professionals who train our students. We are thankful to them as they are offering a free service of skilling youth for a remunerative career.”

A wide range of industry-specific courses are being taught at the vocational centre, such as tailoring (garments), Tally accounting and Excel spreadsheet (offices), IT coding like Java Script, Python for IT firms, and VLSI (very large scale integrated) assembling of computer motherboards in IT hardware firms.

While inaugurating the vocational centre, IDPG Venkateswara Rao complimented the Rotaractors and Rotarians of Vijayawada for the “empowerment courses and training as this skilling will create jobs for the rural youth and ensure their livelihood.” He assured RID 3020’s support for this vocational training project and urged the Rotaractors to “continue the skilling programme in the coming years as it is a boon for the rural, less privileged

families.” RC Vijayawada Midtown’s immediate past president Gudapati Kishore and its vocational services then director Karambir Kaur were also present.

Medical camps

During the nine-day Dussehra festival (2024) at the Indrakeeladri hill temple dedicated to Goddess Durga in Vijayawada, “we screened around 4,000 devotees at three medical camps for chronic diseases like BP, sugar, joint pain etc. Medicines were given after consultations.” The Rotaract volunteers gave buttermilk to pilgrims visiting the temple, while the physically-challenged were helped to have darshan of the presiding deity.

Recalling his four-year stint in Rotaract as a “fantastic journey of being groomed in leadership and communication skills, apart from overcoming stage fear while addressing a huge gathering at Rotary or public events,” Bharadwaj, the final-year ECE student, points out

he had formed his own network of Rotary-Rotaract friends “which will enable me to carve out a lucrative career.”

The 15-year-old Rotaract club at this technical college has 21 active members, with 100 volunteers, “non-members who take part and help us in our service projects.”

After exiting from the college, Bharadwaj will join a community-based RAC Vijayawada Sena, a two-month-old club for which he is an advisor now. Though chartered in April this year, “we inaugurated the club in June only, sponsored by RC Vijayawada Midtown.” He was chosen as RID 3020’s professional services director for the new year, and “in this new role I will make *R² Connect* a district project so that all Rotaract clubs take up this skilling initiative on a massive scale.”

At 20, he wants to continue his Rotaract journey for the next 12 years, “and then I will join my parent Rotary,” he smiles. ■

A club of fitness enthusiasts

RAC Vijayawada

Jaishree

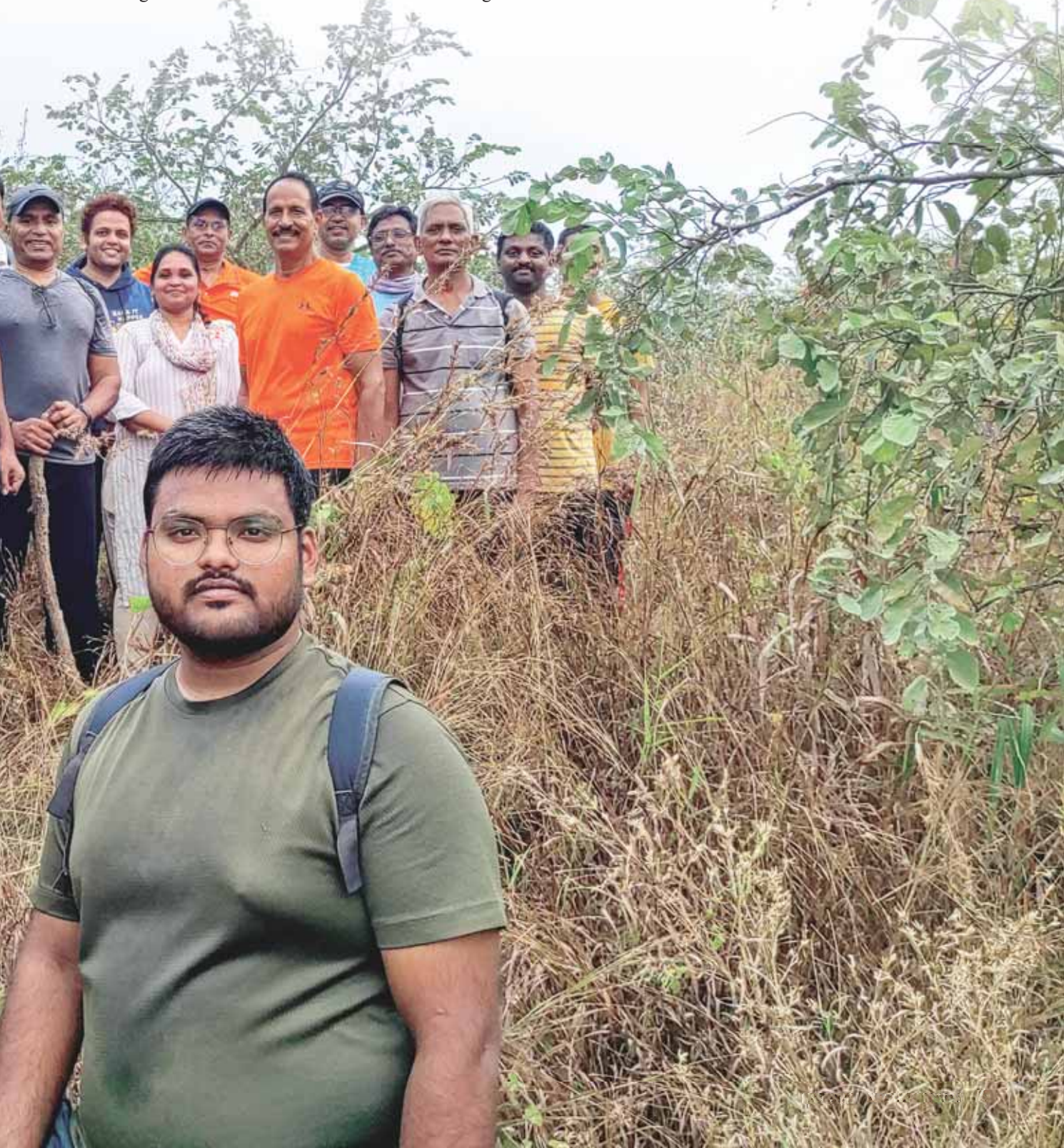


The Rotaract Club of Vijayawada, sponsored by RC Vijayawada in 1968, is the oldest Rotaract club in RID 3120. The club paused its activities for four years between 2018–21, due to administrative reasons, says club president Jayadeep Ravulapati, who is leading the club for the second

consecutive year in 2025–26 too. “We are a 30-member-strong club now, thanks to the year-long membership drive last year, but all Rotaractors are passionate about growing our club and are involving themselves in various service activities.”

Project Shakti, a self-defence training session organised by the club for girl students of the

Siddhartha Mahila Kalasala in Vijayawada won appreciation from parents and friends. The club had engaged a martial arts expert B Kishore to teach karate and essential self-defence skills to the young women. “With rising safety concerns, this programme was a much-needed step towards awareness and preparedness,” says Ravulapati.



Another initiative that won accolades for the club included a career consultation programme for the hearing and speech-impaired students. The club did the ground-work and studied in detail various career options available for them and addressed the higher secondary class students of the Madonna School for the Deaf. “We upped their confidence by shining light on the courses that can make them employment-ready and spoke to them in detail about the various government schemes and alternate vocations.” The club members spent a day with the students, engaging them in games and cultural activities.

A cancer screening and awareness camp was organised at the HCG Hospitals in the city. Another health-related programme comprised a session for people against sedentary, desk jobs such as those in banks and software companies. An orthopaedician addressed them on ergonomics, sitting postures and related exercises.



Students in a game at the Madonna School for the Deaf.



Club president Jayadeep Ravalupati examining the eyes of a visitor at a camp.



A cyclist engaged in a campaign against substance abuse during a cycle expedition.

We are a 30 member-strong club now, thanks to the year-long membership drive last year, but all Rotaractors are passionate about growing our club and are involving themselves in various service activities.

Jayadeep Ravalupati
president, RAC Vijayawada

Ravulapati, being a fourth-generation optometrist, organised a vision screening camp for Rotaractors and Rotarians in the city. The programme, conducted at his clinic, was also extended to members' families.

The club has a mix of fitness enthusiasts who are also nature lovers. Every month, club members embark on a cycling expedition or a trekking programme, along with members of a local club, Amaravati Bicyclers. "We prepare and carry seed balls during these trips and disburse them along the way," he says. The club also hosts fitness programmes inviting Rotaractors across the district for month-long exercise routines of 30-minute duration. "We name the events based on Telugu months because we found that many youngsters are not well-versed in Telugu month names, and this way they get to learn them. This month's event is called '*Pushya masa* fitness challenge', " he explains.

Ravulapati is a Rotaractor since five years; his father Ramu Ravalupati, a past DRR is presently the District Rotaract Coordinator. ■



Rotaractors along with Amaravati Bicyclers members ready to disburse seed balls during a trekking event.

Rotaract power to women entrepreneurs

V Muthukumaran

Project Ekta Mela 2.0 has opened a platform for women entrepreneurs and artisans in Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh, to sell their products and secure a regular income for a sustainable livelihood.

Explaining in detail about this fundraiser exhibition, RAC Vizianagaram Central Ekta president Aishwarya Manchukonda says, “the aim is to promote small scale ventures of rural women in and around this town by exhibiting their diverse products like handicrafts,

clothing and accessories, furniture to potted plants, antique jewellery and food items by putting up stalls at the one-day fair. This year, we had installed 20 stalls at the Masonic Temple with our RID 3020 DG Venkateswara Rao and local MLA Aditi Gajapathi Raju as guests of honour at the inauguration.” The net proceeds of ₹25,000 from two exhibitions done so far are being spent on service projects for the underprivileged families.

IPDG Rao and MLA Raju praised Rotaractors for “the meticulous planning that went into organising the trade exhi-

bition which benefitted the self-employed rural women,” she recalls.

As a policy, this all-girls’ Rotaract club never uses plastics in their projects, events or community initiatives, Aishwarya states, “for we focus on spreading awareness on sustainable and eco-friendly growth narratives among the people.”

With empowering women being their main plank, they have conducted eight workshops and seminars for around 250 women on “remunerative topics like screen printing, how to use Canva App for digital and

AI-based visual presentations, and career counselling for girls and young adults.”

Around 300 youngsters (18–24 age group) took part in the two-day Youth Icon of Vizianagaram that showcased their extracurricular talent. “We hosted the youth icon event in partnership with our parent, RC Vizianagaram Central, for the first time, and it was a good learning experience for us. A range of sessions and events on personality development, honing leadership skills and another one on corporate HR policies had a good number of footfalls

RAC Vizianagaram Central Ekta president Aishwarya Manchukonda (centre) along with her club members.





among the college-goers,” explains Aishwarya.

They also had a talent hunt in which participants were guided on the selection of right higher education courses for multiple careers, and equipping them with resume creating skills.

Recalling her three-year Rotaract journey, she

says, “the social networking group offers a unique platform to shape our personality, sharpen our communication skills, and make us successful leaders across disciplines.” Doing her MBA at the Maharaja College of Business, after completed BCom, she is looking forward to become a

Above: RC Vizianagaram Central president Nageswara Rao, along with Rotaractors and club president Aishwarya, at the *Ekta Mela 2.0*.

Below: Stalls at the exhibition.



Rotarian soon. “Next year (2025–26), as the district Rotaract secretary, I will ensure a good administration with proper records keeping, and strive to expand the headcount in our district.”

Aishwarya, a Paul Harris Fellow, is keen to

join her parent Rotary club in the next 4–5 years, and till that time, she is quite happy to continue with her Rotaract projects. “I would like to expand my networking and further learn new aspects of leadership traits by joining Rotary,” she smiles. ■

Cyber safety, and celebrating sanitation workers & elderly

Kiran Zehra

With cyber threats on the rise globally, RAC Ahmedabad Midtown, RID 3055, launched *Cyber Shield 2.0*, a month-long social media campaign educating citizens about digital safety. The initiative aimed to tackle alarming

statistics: every 39 seconds a cyberattack occurs globally, and more than three billion phishing emails are sent daily.

“We wanted to help people understand that cybersecurity isn’t just an IT problem, it’s a personal safety issue,” says Supan Shah,





A senior citizen being examined at the health camp.



A Rotaractor hands out the festive sweet kit to a sanitation worker.

the project lead. “By sharing simple tips on how to spot phishing scams, create strong passwords, and use two-factor authentication, we hope to empower people to protect themselves online.”

The campaign used engaging graphics and byte-sized information to explain complex cyber threats such as ransomware, identity theft and financial fraud. The goal, Shah adds, was “not just to inform, but to shift mindsets and build a culture of digital responsibility.”

Focusing on community health, the club organised a health check-up camp at Avval Foundation’s old age home, offering medical consultations and physiotherapy support to senior residents.

“Many of the elders here don’t have regular access to doctors,” explains Shah. “We wanted to ensure that their basic health needs like blood pressure, sugar levels and BMI were checked, and that they received the necessary medication.”



Alongside check-up, the club introduced daily mobility exercises with the help of a physiotherapy expert. Following the success of the camp, the club now plans to make it a monthly event. “A one-time camp is helpful, but consistent care is what truly makes a difference,” says Shah.

Marking the festival of Makar Sankranti, the club, along with the Rotaract Clubs of Ahmedabad Asmita and Ahmedabad Majesty Stars, organised the *Sprinkles of Joy*, an initiative to celebrate the city’s unsung sanitation heroes. Over 150 civic conservancy staff were honoured with festive kits of *chikki* and *murmura* laddus.

“These workers start their day before sunrise, ensuring our city stays clean no matter the weather or occasion,” says Supan Shah, the project chair. “This was our way of saying ‘thank you’ for their silent yet essential service.”

Donations from Rotaractors and their families “made the distribution possible, transforming a modest effort into a touching tribute. It was humbling to see their smiles. It reminded us how a small gesture can make someone’s day.” ■

Fun, frolic & bonding at RID 3132

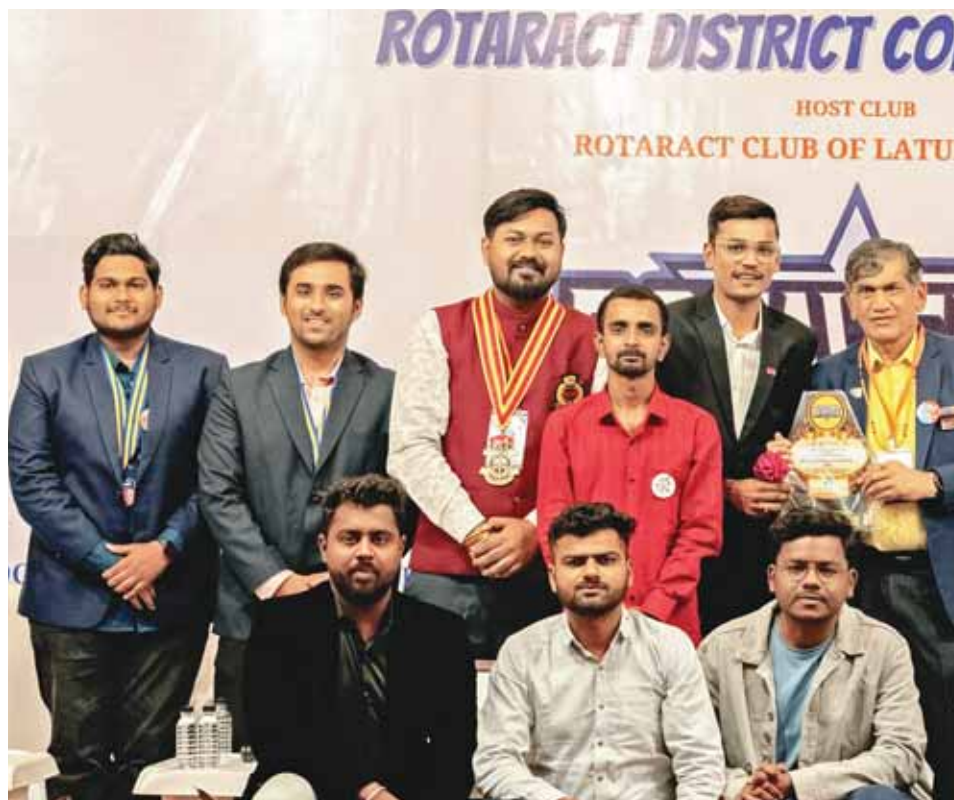
V Muthukumaran



A two-day Rotaract district conference on Jan 4–5 brought together 86 Rotaractors of RID 3132 at Shivam Resort, a scenic locale at Udgir which is 50km west of Latur, Maharashtra. “Udgir is a small picturesque hamlet dotted with serene landscape and a few industrial units. We stayed at a 30-acre private resort which is being developed to attract domestic tourists from all over the country,” recalls Aaditya Lature, secretary, RAC Latur Mid Town (2024–25), which hosted the discon titled *Rotaverse* with a tagline ‘Galaxy of RID 3132’.

Delivering his inaugural address, the then DGE Sudhir Lature (2025–26), father of Aaditya, said “Rotaract will provide a strong foundation for future Rotarians.” After witnessing a treasure hunt game for Rotaractors, he said, “organising such fun games will help them to climb the learning curve for hosting mega events in the future. Even Rotarians can learn a few lessons from the way the discon is being hosted by the district Rotaractors.”

DG Suresh Saboo releases a Rotaract calendar along with (from L) RAC Latur Mid Town secretary Aaditya Lature, president Raman Tiwari, project chairperson Ankita Birnale, DRR Rohit Chavan, AG Kishor Deshpande, and Rotaract district secretary Amit Bhosale.





Above: A group discussion at the *Rotaverse* discon.

Below: DG Saboo honours RAC Ambajogai president Jatin Karnawat in the presence of RAC Latur Mid Town members and district leaders.



DGE Lature urged the youth brigade of Rotary to adopt ‘Serve above Self’ as their life motto for an “enriching and rewarding experience.” He advised the Rotaract clubs to set ambitious goals for the upcoming year.

Fun games, excitement

It was a medley of fun games and interactive sessions such as tug-of-war, Cultural Night, stock market seminar, and a “lively panel discussion on how to improve the performance of Rotaract clubs in our district,” says Aaditya Lature. Also, to add zing to the conclave, a poolside party, box cricket and a Rotaract quiz to test how well-acquainted are Rotaractors on some fundamentals of Rotary and its basic tenets gave a one-of-its-kind experience to the participants.

In his valedictory address, IPDG Suresh Saboo pointed out Rotaract

empowers the youth to “create real change within themselves and in their communities.” He asked the district team to aim for over 150 registrations for the next Rotaract discon and “try to charter at least 50 new clubs in the new year.”

Addressing the delegates, DRR Rohit Chavan said, “college students have an opportunity to organise social events, host career development sessions and club bonding activities at Rotaract.” He said all the project goals and performance metrics have been achieved, thanks to the “collective efforts of Rotaractors across RID 3132.”

Four teams contested at the Rotaract Premier League, *RPL-3*, a seven overs a side cricket tournament for club members, held at the Grandslam Turf, Latur. Each team with seven players, including two women, fought in a competitive spirit that enabled club members to bond among themselves. “The winners, Victory Vipers were given a trophy and medals, while



DRR Rohit Chavan being honoured at a cultural fest in the presence of RC Udgir Central president Saraswati Choudhary (left) and PDRR Prasad Warad (right).

the runners up, Infinity Warriors got individual medals. The cricket match held in the night made us to network and bond among themselves,” says Raman Tiwari, club president (2024–25).

One of the flagship events, *Ganpati chi karyashala* is being conducted over the last three years to promote eco-friendly Ganpati idols by avoiding harmful plaster of paris (PoP) and other chemicals. “Around 250 students from 80 government and private schools across Latur took part in the one-day workshop which is usually

held on September first week each year,” he says. The club levies a registration fee of ₹250 per head for the idol making workshop, and “this year Jadhav Raman and his four assistants tutored the students on the making process of clay Ganesh idols.” In the last three years, around 800 school students would have benefitted from the Ganpati idol workshop, he says.

Looking back at his presidential term, Tiwari says, “one of my objectives was to bring together our scattered members who rarely met and

interacted. Now we meet regularly and there is good bonding and personal rapport among us, and I am satisfied with what we have achieved.” He has added 15 new members “after each one of them attended a club meeting and took part in a Rotaract project following the induction protocol,” he says. A Rotaractor for three years, he says, “my father Dhiraj Tiwari, a member of our parent, RC Latur Mid Town, is my role model, and I will join my father’s club after I turn 30.” At present, he is taking care of his family-owned restaurant and also wholesale business of Exide batteries.

Aaditya Lature will join Rotary after five years, “as I am 25 now. Only through Rotaract events and projects, I became a confident person. Earlier, being an introvert and shy person, I hardly mingled with others.” Like his colleague, he had an eventful three-year Rotaract journey, “learning many aspects of leadership in the course of time.” Lature is into his family’s construction business.

The 31-year-old Rotaract club has 48 members, most of them into their family-owned enterprises or trade in Latur, a town in the Marathwada region famous for religious and historical sites. ■



From L: RAC Latur Mid Town secretary Lature, president Tiwari and DRR Chavan at the district conference.

Salem Interactors blaze a trail

V Muthukumaran

It was a much-awaited ‘dream project’ for the outgoing president S Hemanath of RC Salem Phoenix, RID 2982, to start an Interact club at a government school where sanitation facilities are minimal. “A grouping of students mentored by our club will create a positive change, both in the school’s physical conditions and the morale of the children,” he says.

After much planning and deliberations, the club inaugurated its maiden Interact Club of Phoenix, “at a government school in Salem with 23 charter members, who are students of Class 8–10, with the then AG Badrinarayana Gupta presenting the RI citation to charter secretary Ansal Sunil.” During the Interact installation at the Government Higher Secondary School, Maniyanoor, near Salem, an RO filter unit worth ₹8,000 was installed for providing drinking water to 900 students (up to Class 12) and 30 teachers. “A sanitary pad vending machine (₹7,000) was also set up, and we directed charter president Sujithra to ensure that the device is put to good use and restocked every fortnight,” recalls Hemanath.

Shortly, the Interactors will be co-hosting jointly with its parent Rotary a mega drawing competition for government and private schools in Salem. “We will conduct the sketching event in August, and there will be no entry fee for students from government schools. Our Interactors will play a major role in hosting this art competition,” he explains. In the coming months, the club will erect a Rotary-Interact signage at the school’s entrance which will boost



AG Badrinarayana Gupta presents the charter citation to Interact club secretary Ansal Sunil as its charter president Sujithra (right) and RC Salem Phoenix president S Hemanath look on.

“our public image in the neighbouring villages. Also, a push cart donated to an elderly woman selling small snacks and fancy stuff near the school compound wall will be repurposed with Rotary Wheel logo and RI messages to spread the idea of what Rotary is all about among local people,” says Hemanath.

When they came to know that the children’s 40-bed dormitory at the Annai Sathya Illam, a huge orphanage spread over 3–4 acres in Gorimedu village near Salem, was in a derelict state, “we swung into action renovating the dorm at a cost of ₹1.35 lakh. Apart from masonry work, 23 new beds, each having a cot, mattress and pillows; and 40 cupboards were donated to the hostel.” Electrical fittings including lights and fans were replaced, and a fresh paint coating was given to

the walls. “We have given a new, sprightly look to the primary block of the orphanage that has 400–450 inmates in all.”

Children were sensitised on environmental issues at a tree planting drive in which 20 new saplings were named after the inmates of this special home to celebrate the new year. Outgoing DG V Sivakumar presented RI’s Significant Service Award to Hemanath for renovating the orphanage at a public image seminar.

With 39 members, four Paul Harris Fellows and one Major Donor, the Salem club brings out a monthly bulletin, *Phoenix Talks*, edited by Hemanath. “The incoming DG Sivasundaram has made me GML editor for the new Rotary year, impressed with my club projects detailed in our bulletin,” he smiles. ■

Supporting the Warkaris

Jaishree



Rotaractors of RID 3131 at a stall to help pilgrims with essential items.

June-July is the time of the year when thousands of *Warkaris* participate in the revered annual Palkhi procession to Pandharpur, a town in Maharashtra known for the Vitthal-Rukmani temple. The Palkhi procession, also known as Pandharpur Wari, is a 1,000-year-old tradition in Maharashtra where *Warkaris* (devotees) walk to Pandharpur, carrying the *padukas* (footwear)

and *palkis* (palanquins) of Sant Dnyaneshwar and Sant Tukaram.

This annual pilgrimage takes place in the Hindu months of Ashadh (June-July) and Karthik (October-November). The procession involves two main routes: Alandi-Pandharpur and Dehu-Pandharpur. The journey typically lasts around 20 days and covers approximately 250km.

It's a major spiritual event in Maharashtra,

symbolising devotion, harmony and love of devotees towards their deity, Vitthal (Krishna).

The Community Service Avenue of RI District 3131, extending across Pune and other cities of Maharashtra, designed a project to extend care and support to the *Warkari* community participating in the annual pilgrimage. Rotaract clubs of the district volunteered in various service activities

such as providing water, food, refreshments and medical help. Stalls were put up on the pilgrimage route by various Rotaract clubs, and Rotaractors distributed essential items to the devotees, explained Aryan Devne, director, District Community Services. ORS sachets were provided to the devotees who travel long distances by foot, to save them from dehydration. First aid stalls manned by



Above: A Rotaractor distributes ORS sachets to *Warkari* women.

Below: Medical support being provided to the devotees.

medical experts treated over 1,000 *Warkaris*.

Devne is member of RAC Pune Samrajya which mostly comprises lawyers and law students as members. “We provide basic legal literacy to women’s groups and NGOs supporting the less privileged and victims of violence,” he says. The club also organises blood donation camps every month at the Shivajinagar District and Sessions court campus.

An eye donation awareness camp conducted at the beginning of July saw good support with many people signing the pledge to donate their eyes. “We are extending this awareness programme to schools now with an aim to educate students who in turn will take the message to their parents and friends,” he says. ■





**Rtrs Aryan Kudale and Ishita Mathur with children
at the Zilla Parishad School, Mundhwa.**



Pune Rotaract distributes 1,000 school kits

V Muthukumaran

In a mega distribution of school kits to less privileged children, *Project Daan Utsav*, a flagship initiative of RAC Pune City Fortune, RID 3131, has reached out to over 1,000 students (Class 1–4) across 30 zilla parishad schools in Maharashtra. “We raised the project cost of ₹2 lakh through crowdfunding and then procured school kits, each having a school bag, water bottle, two notebooks, drawing/sketching book, crayon box, pencil pouch and an eraser,” says Omkar Patil, club president (2024–25).

When it was done for the first time in 2023–24, they distributed the school kits to 50 children of zilla parishad schools. To forge bonding with the communities and do impactful projects, “we have coined a club theme in a tagline *Sanghe Shakti* (unity is strength). I can proudly say that we are the only Rotaract club in RID 3131 with such a unifying theme that binds Rotaractors with the people, and this will boost our public image in our neighbourhoods,” he explains.

During Raksha Bandhan (Aug 2024), around 150 Rotaractors tied

raakhi (sibling thread) on the wrist of 10 LGBTQ members under *Project Krutharath Bandhan* (showing compassion). “Through tying *raakhi*, we want to assure the transgenders that they are part of the society, and nothing impedes their progress in life. Our Rotaractors bonded well with the LGBTQ people.” Over the last two years, they celebrated Raksha Bandhan with policemen and conservancy workers of the municipal corporation.

Eye check-up camp was held in partnership with the ASG Hospital, Pune, for around 100 Rotaractors and their families with a team of doctors screening the patients, and giving consultations. In the new Rotary year (2025–26), Shilpa Toshniwal, president of their parent, RC Pune Fortune, has assured “support and mentoring for us to do some impactful projects in the coming months,” says Patil.



RAC Pune City Fortune president Omkar Patil distributes school kits to children under *Project Daan Utsav* at the Zilla Parishad School, Mundhwa.



Rtr Ankita Kulkarni distributes school kits at the Zilla Parishad School, Solapur.

He has taken charge as Rotaract district officer of RID 3131, thus joining the leadership team of DRR Dwijesh Nashikkar in the new Rotary year. “I have taken up the idea of making our club project, *Daan Utsav*, a district programme this year with the new DRR, and very soon, we will be expanding the school kit distribution across many schools in Maharashtra,” says Patil. He says the school kit project was much appreciated by DRR Drishti Singh (2024–25) and PDRR Siddesh Gaikwad, and “now it is my responsibility to take this initiative forward by expanding to as much rural schools as possible.”

The four-year-old Rotaract club has 40 members drawn mostly from engineering and other professional backgrounds. Patil, a civil engineer and a Rotaractor for two years, wants to join his parent Rotary club next year, and “I will straightaway do some impactful service for the communities,” he smiles. ■

Making a difference

A college event promotes mental health

It was a nice blend of music, art, storytelling and interactive sessions at *Dear Zindagi 3.0*, which aimed to usher in mental well-being and emotional stability among college students at the Indira Gandhi Delhi Technical University for Women. Staged by RAC IGDTUW, RID 3011, at the college auditorium, more than 300 students attended the event which had a series of stage performances that turned the spotlight on mental health issues. The highlight is a three-round rap music competition adjudged by Sahaj Khatter, CEO of Spitdope, that brought together many artistes. ■



Members of RAC IGDTUW at *Dear Zindagi* event in front of their college auditorium.



A Rotaractor teaches basic computer skills to children.

Equipping students with computer skills

Project Cyber Shiksha (education) of RAC Ingenious Minds, RID 3011, equips students (10–13 years) with computer skills to bridge the digital divide between cities and rural India. This bi-monthly project is being done with the support of Gyan Adhar Welfare Society, and through its well-framed curriculum, both theoretical and hands-on training, has reached out to over 50 students through 17 training sessions till now. ■



Rotaractors redefine a community in Delhi

Kiran Zehra



Rotaractors with the children of Palna, a home for orphaned and abandoned kids.

RAC Delhi Genesis Midwest, RID 3011, is trying to live by the mantra that “change doesn’t always need a podium or a protest. Sometimes, it walks gently through a garden, sits beside an elder, or simply helps someone write a better CV,” says Vansh Saini, club president.

The club kickstarted the year with *Project Raah-e-Itihas*, a heritage walk that meandered through Delhi’s Lodhi Garden and later, the ancient ruins of Tughlaqabad Fort. “We didn’t just admire domes and tombs. We listened to forgotten stories, exchanged interpretations, and reconnected with our city. It is easy to live in Delhi and never know Delhi,” said Saini, who led the walk. “This was about reclaiming our connection with where we come from.”

The Genesis Youth Conclave ’25, held in February at the Satyawati College, featured a Pitch Tank for green startups, a Model UN on the refugee crisis, a Youth Parliament

addressing workplace safety and reservation policies, and even a simulated IPL auction for cricket strategists. Plastic-free operations and a spotlight on sustainable enterprises earned the conclave its badge as an Eco Action Event. “More than being intellectual, we wanted it to be responsible. You can’t change the world if you’re trashing it,” says Sanskriti Singh, one of the organising members.

On the eve of Republic Day, club members spent time with the children of Palna, a home for orphaned and abandoned kids. Named *Sangam* the project was a day of storytelling, art, and handmade flags “waved by tiny, ink-stained fingers of the children from the home. We brought stories of India’s freedom to life and then watched these children enthusiastically paint the Indian flag,” says Sanskriti.





Holi celebration at the Silver Lining Old Age Home.

Below: A workshop on data literacy in progress.

Rotaractors spent the club's Charter Day at Silver Lining Old Age Home, carrying musical instruments and a cake to spend an afternoon "of old songs, shared memories, and tears of joy. We didn't go there to teach or perform," club member Hitanshi Dhingra recalls. "We went to listen. And they gave us their stories like gifts."

In March, *Project Aarohan* brought the colours of Holi to the same old age home. "We went back there this time with organic *gulal* (colour powder), staged classical performances, and laughter shared over *gujiyas* (deep-fried dumpling or pastry) and folk tales," says Hitanshi.

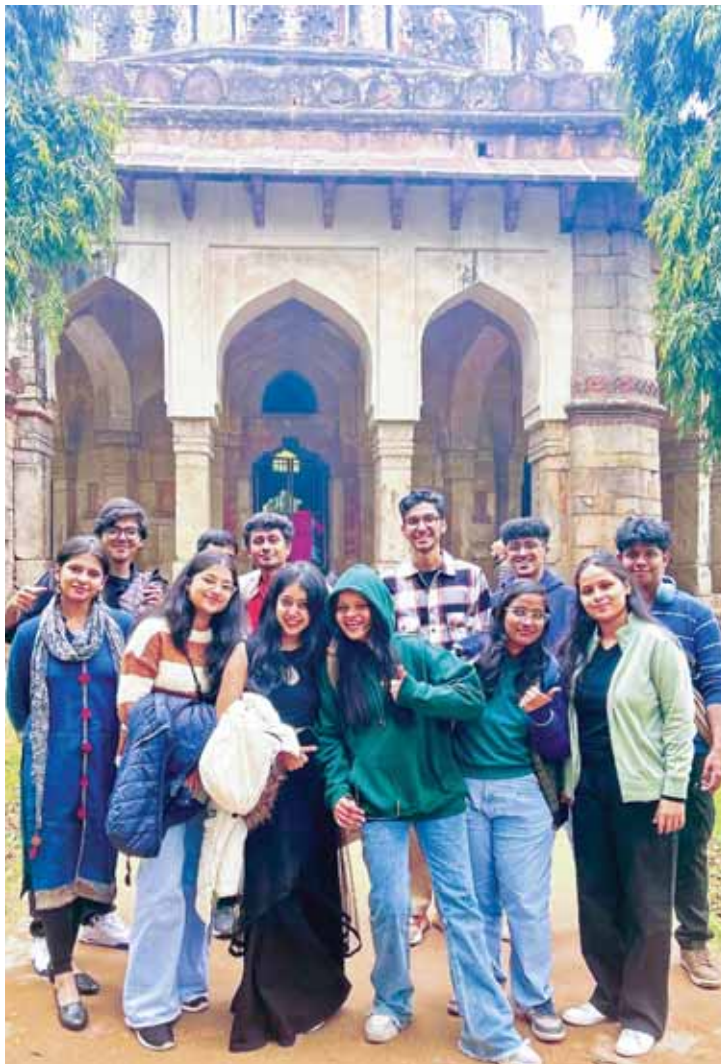
The Rotary Skill Development Centre in Pusa became a launchpad for over 150 young minds when the club decided to host sessions on business communication, LinkedIn building, personal branding, and CV writing. Over 75 per cent of the participants updated their LinkedIn profiles during the programme. Phase 2 and 3 of the initiative focused on leadership and advanced career strategy.

With AI and analytics dominating job markets, *Project Empower U*, a hands-on workshop on data literacy, trained students on Excel tricks to interpreting datasets. "Participants left with knowledge and confidence. This was like a flashlight in the





Rotaractors at their Charter Day celebration.



Members of the club at Tughlaqabad Fort.

dark. Many of us have degrees but no idea how to navigate digital workspaces,” says Saini and adds that “programmes like these are the need of the hour.”

The Eco-Trail Adventure began with a scavenger hunt, not for treasure, but for litter. Rotaractors cleared the B2 Park in Paschim Vihar, planted saplings, and engaged with local vendors to discuss plastic alternatives

As part of *Project HPV Hustle*, the club first organised a session at Dwarka International School, where doctors from AIIMS Hospital explained what the HPV vaccine is and why it’s important for preventing cervical cancer. This session, held under *Project Break the Taboo*, encouraged open and honest conversations about women’s health between students, parents and teachers, helping to clear myths and reduce fear or embarrassment around the topic. In the second phase the club worked with Apollo Hospitals to organise a vaccination drive that helped over 120 girls get vaccinated against HPV.

At the same time, another project called *Harmony Within 2.0* focused on mental health for schoolchildren. The club invited a psychologist to talk to over 50 students about issues like stress, anxiety, peer pressure, and how social media affects them. There were also fun activities like games, dancing, and a drawing contest on the theme. ■

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