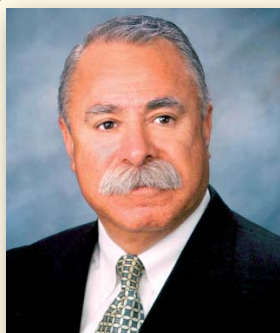




“Caravan of Dreams”



the Highlighter

The Official Monthly Newsletter of Rotary District 5300

Eugene J. Hernandez, Governor 2008 - 2009

Volume 82, Issue 9

The Rotarian Magazine...in the beginning!

April is “Rotarian Magazine” month in the Rotary International calendar. The Rotarian is the official English-language magazine. The regional magazines are published in more than 20 languages and distributed in approximately 130 countries. Each magazine retains its individual identity, national flavor, and editorial freedom. They have a combined circulation of more than 700,000.



The first issue of *The National Rotarian*, as it was known, was published in January, 1911. This twelve-page tabloid was considered the best way to distribute an essay written by Rotary founder, Paul Harris. The essay was titled, “Rational Rotarianism.” There were also club news and advertisements. About 2,000 copies were produced by printer, Harry Ruggles, one of the first members of the Rotary Club of Chicago. Soon the issue went back to press for another 2,000 copies.



The second issue appeared in July, 1911. It contained a “President’s Corner,” news from clubs, and more than 20 advertisements. Soon after, the magazine started its monthly publication schedule. In February, 1995, the magazine published its 1,000th issue. The name was changed in 1912, by action of the RI Convention, to the name we recognize today, *The Rotarian*.



In that second issue, Paul Harris wrote in the President’s Corner what I believe to be a very profound statement on media responsibility. He stated, “One of the most powerful influences in the civilization of this day is the press, and yet many American journals whose tremendous circulations constitute indubitable proof of their influence and power, wield such influence and power with about the same degree of tender regard to principle and truth as would a bar room full of drunken sailors. It is to be hoped that “*The National Rotarian*” may possess an influence and the power to spread the principles of Rotary throughout the land and that its publishers may never become unmindful of the fact that the

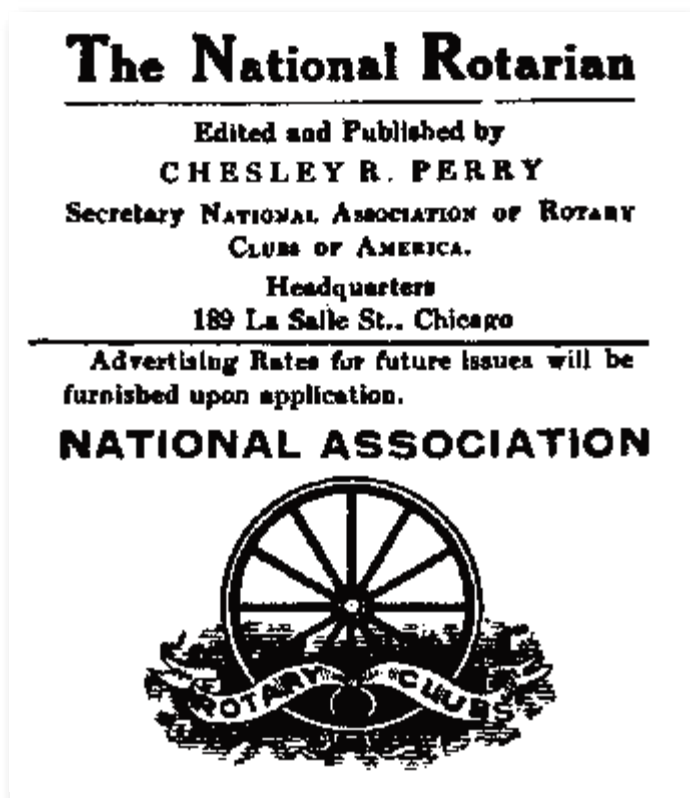
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acquisition of influence and power means the assumption of great responsibility.”

As envisioned by Paul Harris, the purpose of that first National Rotarian was to “provide a means for the exchange of ideas between Rotarians throughout the world, not to give the national officers an opportunity to express their views. These messages are not written merely to fill space: nevertheless we look forward to the day when they will be literally crowded out by surging mobs of virile Rotarian ideas struggling to be heard.” I think Paul Harris can rest in peace knowing that his vision has been realized.

I look forward to reading The Rotarian each month. I enjoy the invaluable words by D.K. Lee in his monthly message, as well as the articles on Health and Management. The World Roundup of Rotary (news in brief from around the globe) is as stimulating to the brain as working the crossword puzzles submitted by Rotarians. I have only touched the surface of the importance of The Rotarian. It is a magazine by the people, for the people. I encourage you to see for yourself and share The Rotarian with family, friends, and business associates.



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Polio Progress, One Operating Table at a Time

by **Smita Mehta, Rotary Club of Mesquite Sunrise**



Interact Club of Virgin Valley High School with Dr Mathew Varghese and Club Advisors



Presentation to Rotary Club of Mesquite Sunrise on corrective surgeries By Dr Mathew Varghese

Divyesh Choudhri, President of the Interact Club of Virgin Valley High School (IC VVHS), Mesquite, Nevada, and club advisors, Mrs. and Mr. White, raised funds for children affected with polio disabilities to get free surgery and rehabilitation at St. Stephen's Hospital (SSH) in Delhi, India.

Dr Mathew Varghese heads the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at SSH. He visited the two Mesquite clubs and gave presentations on the program at SSH that provide the free care to polio-affected patients called "Polio Camp."

The operating table SSH was using was in disrepair after having broken down several years previously. There were several other inadequacies with the table. After his presentations, IC VVHS and Rotary Club of Mesquite Sunrise agreed to jointly raise funds and apply for a matching grant from The Rotary Foundation to provide SSH with a new operating table.

The project was spread across three continents.

Different clubs in D5300 and RC Panchshila Park (New Delhi, India, D3010) pledged funds. The operating table

manufacturer, Maquet GmbH, is located in Germany. Constant phone and e-mail contact between RC Mesquite Sunrise and everyone else ensured a reputation of a "pit bull with a sock in its mouth" for their hapless Youth Services Director!

RC Mesquite Sunrise was joined by eight other clubs in D5300 (Mesquite, Las Vegas, South Pasadena, Arcadia, Las Vegas West, Las Vegas Southwest, Glendora and Chino); the host country partner



Formal handing-over of new operating table to St Stephen's Hospital by RC Panchshila Park (India)

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was RC Panchshila Park. Rtn Maj Gen YK Kapoor of RC Panchshila Park was the counterpart in India.

The operating table was sent to the hospital Christmas, 2008. The first patient, a child with disabilities due to poliomyelitis, was operated upon on December 26, 2008.



First patient to be operated upon on the new table, a child with polio disabilities



Old operating table held together by rust and duct tape in St Stephens Hospital

The old table did not have any attachments that allowed for complex surgeries to be performed; the new table has several attachments and accessories for this purpose. Patients with multiple handicaps and deformities can now be operated upon with ease as opposed to surgery on the old table where some clinical defects would be left uncorrected/partially corrected, as the old table could not be used for complete repair of their clinical problems.

Prevention of radiation exposure to OR staff is another advantage of the new operating table at St. Stephen's Hospital. The new table allows for easy X-ray imaging and less radiation exposure. The previous table could not be manipulated to change patient position and, therefore, needed longer operating times for surgery. The new table allows for shorter operating times. Because of reduced operating time, patient exposure to anesthesia is also reduced (anesthesia has its own set of complications, especially when prolonged).

A big thank you to all the clubs that participated to make this a huge success!

Bicycle Project

*by **Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Henderson Nevada***



Rotarians Barry Thibodeau and Reuben Merchant getting the bicycles together.

Over the past several years the Rotary Club of Henderson Nevada has given away thousands of bicycles to our local children. Barry Thibodeau has chaired the project working diligently to obtain donated bicycles and purchased bicycles to meet the needs of our community's children.

Wal-Mart has helped to meet our needs with providing brand new bicycles for less than \$30 each. Wal-Mart also provides our club

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with bicycles that need to be repaired for free. Several of the Rotarians and their spouses go to work putting together the bicycles and making them ready and safe for the children.



Ralph Fyke, Barry Thibodeau, and Reuben Merchant

Bicycles have been provided to our elementary, junior high, and high school students as incentive awards or drawing prizes. Sometimes these bicycles have been the only mode of transportation for students to get to school.

Once we took a bicycle over to a student in need of one only to find out that his birthday was that day. Wow was he surprised.



Rotarians Maureen Thibodeau, President Barrett Adams, Barry Thibodeau



Bicycles galore.

World Rotaract Week

The annual World Rotaract Week took place March 9-15, 2009. This is an invitation for all Rotaract clubs around the world to participate in the four avenues of service throughout the week. This can range from any number of community service projects to attending Rotary lunch meetings. World Rotaract Week is a celebration of Rotaract. The first officially sponsored Rotaract Club was chartered on March 13th which explains why this week is celebrated

during the second week of March. The Rotaract Club of Las Vegas celebrated World Rotaract Week with a bang!

Sunday March 8th: The club started a day early and held a food drive at the UNLV Dining Commons for non-perishable food items. Each week, on-campus residents are able to “cash out” their meal plan for foods such as easy mac, cup of noodles, and snacks. The club had a booth set up to collect as many food items as people were willing to donate.

Monday March 9th: The food that was donated the



Rotaractor Lauren Holden at the Dining Commons Food Drive

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night before was given to the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth. The club heard that due to the poor economic state, the organization unfortunately lost their food vendor and were going to be relying on donations for food. The Rotaract Club of Las Vegas donated hundreds of food items to the organization to help stock their food pantry and refrigerators.

Wednesday March 11th: A visit to the Rotary meeting of co-sponsoring club Las Vegas Central. Four Rotaractors were able to attend the lunch meeting and give an update on the events they have had this Rotary year.

Thursday March 12th: Another lunch visit to the Rotary meeting of co-sponsoring club Las Vegas Rotary. The club was able to share a re-cap of how the Rotary year has brought in new members and exciting speakers.



Rotaractors Rachel Diehl, Erica Kemper, and Amanda Hurst with the food donations



President-Elect Ed Haliwell, Rachel Diehl, Lauren Holden, Nolen Nanbu, and President Amanda Hurst at the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth sorting the food and stocking the food pantry.

Friday March 13th: Several Rotaractors participated in an etiquette presentation. General Manager of Lawry's Prime Rib, Ed Lepere, gave a presentation on the ins and outs of proper etiquette. The Rotaractors learned useful bits of information such as how to properly eat shrimp cocktail.

Saturday March 14th: To celebrate Rotaract and fellowship, the club had a night of good food and fun at Margaritaville.

Sunday March 15th: The week ended with their general meeting for the month of March. Handwriting analyst Kathleen Dickinson did a presentation on what handwriting can reveal about a person. The President Amanda and President-Elect Ed also inducted two new members to the club.

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Pasadena Sunrise Rotary Supports Local Educational Institutions

Sunrise Grants fund projects and material for local teachers, volunteer efforts devoted to school children.

by Roger McKee, Rotary Club of Pasadena Sunrise

For the 2008-2009 academic year, Pasadena Sunrise Rotary donated over \$8000 to 23 teachers from various schools in Pasadena. Grants were awarded to assist teachers in obtaining technical equipment, books, computer programs and field trips for students. Sunrise

Grants are serving math teachers, social studies teachers, art teachers and language teachers.

“Best of all, Pasadena Sunrise Rotary Club is demonstrating to the teachers of our community that we support them, admire them, and stand behind their responsibilities to make the future of Pasadena the best that it can be,” said Katy Klotz, Chair of the Sunrise Grant Program.

Pasadena Sunrise was the first Rotary Club in Pasadena to adopt a local elementary school. Since adopting Field Elementary School decades ago, members of the club have performed many projects there to assist teachers, parents and students. Sunrise members have read to the children, painted their classrooms and planted

flowers, bushes and trees to beautify the campus. The club hosts an annual awards ceremony to honor excellence in academics and serve the students and their families a celebratory dinner. Each year, Pasadena Sunrise Rotary also donates books and equipment and sponsors grants to fund classroom activities the teachers could not otherwise afford.

In seeking ways to expand the club's efforts, a few years ago, current club President, Chip Ossman, urged the membership to expand its commitment to children. That led to creation of the Sunrise Grants Program. For 2008-09, the club was able to expand the effort so that every school in the Pasadena area was contacted and their teachers asked to submit simple grant applications.

Pasadena Sunrise Rotary is dedicated to providing service to the community of Pasadena and supporting efforts locally, regionally, nationally and internationally to improve the lives of other people. Through service, the club and its volunteers have assisted with polio eradication



left to right - Katy Klotz (Sunrise Grant Coordinator, Pasadena Sunrise Rotary Club) Ana Maria Apodaca (Principal, Field Elementary School) Kelley Oxley (Academic Coach, Blair Magnet School) Rich Boccia (Principal, Blair Magnet School) Vilma Martinez (Arts, Blair Magnet School) Nadirah Nayo (Math and Science, Norma Coombs Alternative School) Vanessa Watkins (Principal, Norma Coombs Alternative School) Chip Ossman (President, Pasadena Sunrise Rotary Club)

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programs in India, built homes in Mexico and provided countless hours of service in Pasadena and surrounding communities.

left to right - Chris Hunter (Principal, Assumption) Ilinca Voinea (Latin, Assumption) Jessica Neimann (Reading Specialist, Assumption) Lina Kerr (Development Director, St. Philip) Daryl Haselton (Speech & Debate Club Coordinator, St. Philip) Katy Klotz (Sunrise Grant Coordinator, Pasadena Sunrise Rotary Club) Janet Emmett (2nd grade teacher, St. Philip) Ernie Doran (Kindergarten teacher, St. Philip) Janet Roldan (Computer specialist, St. Philip) Rosie Duran (2nd grade teacher, St. Philip) Margaret Doherty (3rd grade teacher, Assumption)



Book Donation Project

Sponsored by **the Rotary Club of Henderson Nevada**



Assistant Principal Dr. Alan Seidenfeld, Librarian Kim Stubitz, Lib. Aide Maria Carlson, Rotary Past Pres. Pat Jordan.

Pat Jordan and Reuben Merchant both Rotarians of the Rotary Club of Henderson Nevada were instrumental in working with two of our at risk elementary schools to get them a \$1,000 worth of badly needed books for the students.

Robert Taylor Elementary School just moved into a new building this year. The big new library needed to be filled with lots of new books. The Rotary Club of Henderson came to the rescue with boxes and boxes of new books for them.

CT Sewell Elementary School needed student chapter/level reader books to improve the student reading levels. The school staff and parents have been working diligently to maintain a high level of education

for all of the students at the school. The Rotary Club donation of books has aided in this endeavor.



Rotary Past President Pat Jordan, Principal Dr. Carrie Larson, Asst. Principal Jennifer Born, Counselor Renee Fairless, Rotarian Dianna Fyke

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South Pasadena Rotary Club Completes Phase 2 of Disaster Preparedness Plan

by **Sara Munshin, President-elect**

In the Southern California town of South Pasadena, home to over 25,000 residents, the Rotary Club took an active hand in trying to help people to be more aware and prepared. Dan Watson, a Rotarian who serves as the South Pasadena Chief of Police, knew that the combined police and fire forces would not be able to reach everyone during a major disaster and

sought ways to encourage residents and business owners to become better prepared for these eventualities.

Richard Ross, a retired veterinarian and Rotarian, agreed to chair a committee on disaster preparedness. A committee of Rotarians and a couple of ex officio members from the town's volunteer Public Safety Commission joined forces to inform residents, provide them with resources and training, and keep disaster preparedness in resident's minds. After an initial awareness campaign including a logo contest in the local schools, the committee began working on Phase Two. The culmination of the second stage of their efforts will result in a twelve-



The picture shows several Rotary members of the Disaster Preparedness Committee. They are, from left to right, Elisa Mann, South Pasadena Public Safety Commissioner (newest South Pasadena Rotarian), Steve Fjeldsted, Althea Bassett (immediate past president), Dick Ross (Committee Chair), and Sara Munshin (president-elect). Other committee members not in the picture are Rotarians Fon Leong and Dan Watson.

page magnetized disaster preparedness guide based on a Salvation Army document being sent to every one of the approximately 11,000 households in the town.

The South Pasadena Rotary Fall Chili Cook Off produced the seed money for the project. A District Simplified Grant was obtained to support the project. Additional contributions from local business owners, the City Council, and political representatives brought the total collected to around \$19,000. The guides have gone to the printer and will be distributed during Earthquake Awareness Month in April, 2009.

This will not be the end of the project. In Phase Three, the committee will continue to increase community readiness by recruiting Rotary members and others to participate in Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training.

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Walnut Valley Rotarian to Pedal from San Francisco to Los Angeles for AIDS

by **Anita van der Kruik, Rotary Club of Walnut Valley**



**Bruce Dennis, President-Elect,
Rotary Club of Walnut Valley**

**AIDS LifeCycle 8
7 days, 545 miles
San Francisco to Los Angeles
May 31 - June 6, 2009**

This coming June, Walnut Valley Rotary Club's President-elect, Bruce Dennis, will once again be participating in the AIDS/LifeCycle, a 7-day, 545-mile bicycle ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles to make a difference in the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS. While the aging process has taken him to the ripe old age of 50, (old by cyclists standards) which certainly has not made the ride any easier for him, his commitment to the cause has not diminished. Bruce not only has to ride between 1,500 - 2,000 miles from January through May to prepare for the ride, he also serves as a training ride leader (TRL) for his AIDS LifeCycle training group. As a TRL, he helps to train first-time riders and newbies, some of whom have not ridden more than 5 miles since they were a child.

Bruce rides to honor the memory of his sister, Kathy, who passed away in 1994, after a long fight against AIDS. So many of us have witnessed the total devastation of this disease and the fight is far from over.

HIV infection is on the rise again among youth under 25. Proper education and treatment would save the lives of thousands of these people and allow those already stricken with the disease to live longer and healthier lives. Because of new drug treatment regimens, thousands of people are able to live longer and healthier. These same medications are very expensive which is why the need for health services and medications is greater than ever.

Bruce has committed to raise a minimum of \$3,000 for this cause and hopes to achieve his personal goal of \$5,000. Please support his challenge by becoming one of his sponsors, either with a club or personal donation. If you wish to donate online, simply go his personal AIDS Life Cycle homepage, where you may make a secure contribution, <http://www.tofighthiv.org/goto/BruceDennis>

The ride helps to fund nearly 120,000 visits each year for HIV treatment and services and distributes approximately one million dollars in free and low-cost medications per month. The ride also funds ongoing education and prevention programs. The ride also funds 1,500 -1,800 free HIV tests a month in the fight to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

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Riding 545 miles in seven days is perhaps the hardest thing he has ever done, yet it is nothing compared to what people do in fighting daily for their lives.

As Bruce would say, "You provide the support and I will provide the sweat."

H2O Everywhere and Not Fit to Drink

by Roger A. House, International Chair, Claremont Rotary Club

The country of Uganda is slightly smaller in size than the state of Oregon. It is a land-locked country bounded by The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan and Tanzania. It is inhabited by approximately 31,367,972 people. This estimate explicitly takes into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality, higher death rates, lower population growth rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected. The life expectancy at birth: total population: 52.34 years; male: 51.31 years; female: 53.4 years. Major infectious diseases with a very high degree of risk are food or waterborne diseases: bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis A and typhoid fever along with vector borne diseases: chikungunya, malaria, plague and African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) and with water contact disease of schistosomiasis.

"Uganda has substantial natural resources, including fertile soils, regular rainfall, and sizable mineral deposits of copper, cobalt, gold, and other minerals. Agriculture is the most important sector of the economy, employing over 80% of the work force. Coffee accounts for the bulk of export revenues. Since 1986, the government - with the support of foreign countries and international agencies - has acted to rehabilitate and stabilize the economy by undertaking currency reform, raising producer prices on export crops, increasing prices of petroleum products, and improving civil service wages. The policy changes are especially aimed at dampening inflation and boosting production and export earnings. During 1990-2001, the economy turned in a solid performance based on continued investment in the rehabilitation of infrastructure, improved incentives for production and exports, reduced inflation, gradually improved domestic security, and the return of exiled Indian-Ugandan entrepreneurs. Growth continues to be solid, despite variability in the price of coffee, Uganda's principal export, and a consistent upturn in Uganda's export markets. In 2000, Uganda qualified for enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt relief worth \$1.3 billion and Paris Club debt relief worth \$145 million. These amounts, combined with the original HIPC debt relief, added up to about \$2 billion."*

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As in so many emerging countries, water is a major issue. In Uganda, as in many other similar countries, the old saying, “Water, water everywhere nor any drop to drink,” really has a true significance. Uganda is not water deprived, but it is clean water deprived. Polluted water sources are a major contributing source of many of the previously mentioned diseases. So how did the Rotary Club of Claremont become interested in this quagmire? Simple, as most Rotarians, we are not isolated from the rest of our community but active participating members interfacing with a broad dichotomy of people in our geographic area. Our water project brings new meaning to “Do you know someone that....?” “Yeah, I know someone that knows someone who knows someone,” and so on. When our President-elect, Bobby Hyde, asked our President-elect, elect-elect, John Tulac, to find a water project for him months ago he, in turn, said, “Ah, I know about this nonprofit organization, Village Network Africa, which is very much involved in Uganda helping develop rural communities. Their philosophy is *One Village at a Time* to help that town to become a self-sustaining, economically viable village.” Now by chance (not really), there happened to be a member of this charity, Father John Bosco Musinguzi, who originated from one of these villages in the Kibaale District in Uganda, currently on study leave here from his Church duties in his Ugandan community. He pointed out the dire need for clean water sources, thus, the seed for our project was planted. Our President- elect then asked the author of this article to spearhead the project. Our Club then teamed up with The Rotary Club of La Verne and The Sunrise Rotary Club of Claremont, to partner in this International Humanitarian Project. The Rotary Club of Kibaale agreed to be the host club and our project was implemented. To say the logistics of applying for an International Matching Grant is a challenge is a gross understatement. We are so used to our everyday conveniences, like regular and reliable electricity, reliable and consistent internet services amongst the use of state of the art, up-to-date computers with its attendant programming. Well, my fellow Rotarians, this is not the real world of the International Matching Grant process. Suffice it to say, after much gnashing of teeth and rendering of flesh, we have finally achieved approval of our aggregate \$43,150.00 project. This project will result in the construction of at least 17 hand dug wells with pumps in 17 different communities that will benefit approximate 444 families with a total of approximately 4,000 people.

The wells will be a significant help in decreasing polluted water sources for these villages. There will be many impacts. Many inhabitants need to walk extensive distances to obtain water for their everyday needs and, in most instances, the sources are unprotected and subject to contaminants that manifest in the previously mentioned diseases. With the

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construction of hand dug wells, the water sources are protected against external pollutants and will provide clean, potable water. In addition, there will be an extensive educational effort amongst the village inhabitants. The impact will be multifaceted, in that illness will decrease with proper sterilization of the water, and travel time decreased to obtain the life-sustaining fluid which will allow other productive activities that will enhance the overall lifestyle, quality of life, and increase in standard of living of the inhabitants. The cooperative impact in working with Ugandan Rotarians will foster better understanding and cooperation amongst our people and be an excellent example of the Rotary principle, "Service above Self." Our journey together has now just begun the implementation phase.

* quoted from: The Central Intelligence Agency's The World Factbook website:
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ug.html>,
Updated 5 March 2009

Note statistical Information: The Central Intelligence Agency's The World Factbook website: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ug.html> Updated 5 March 2009

Montebello Rotary Club is Recognized by Montebello Mayor Rosemarie Vasquez for 85 years of Service at February 25 Council Meeting

by Anne Donofrio-Holter



Left to right - Tom Millhouse, Norma Segoviano, Ted Jones, Vasquez, Robert Monzon, Anne Donofrio-Holter, Rena Garcia, Byron De Aracal, Aurora Jackson. Also pictured, Elaine Kirchner, third from left.

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ROTARY CLUB OF MONROVIA



POLIO Before & After

Presentations by:

**Rotarian Shirley Pozzuoli, Polio Survivor
Rotarian Greg Jones**

After 20 years of hard work, Rotary and its partners are on the brink of eradicating this tenacious disease, but a strong push is needed now to root it out once and for all. It is a window of opportunity of historic proportions. Shirley Pozzuoli will share her experience as a 5 year old with Polio and speak on Post Polio Syndrome. Greg Jones will share his heartfelt experiences during his participation with National Immunization Days in a polio-affected country.

**Saturday, April 18, 2009
Monrovia Community Center
119 W. Palm Ave
12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**Free
Call (626) 256-8246 for additional information**



The Rotary Foundation Memorial and Tribute Gifts

Looking for a meaningful way to honor or memorialize a loved one? Having a difficult time finding the perfect birthday, wedding, or holiday gift for the person who has everything?

Why not make a gift to The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International in honor of or in memory of that person and let your gift build a bridge of hope for those less fortunate all around the world? Your generosity can provide food for a hungry child, clean water for an entire village, medicines for the sick, and thousands of other good works in our global community.

When you make a tribute or memorial gift, The Rotary Foundation will send a letter to the recipient or the recipient's family to let them know of your gift. The amount of your gift is not disclosed. We also will send an acknowledgment to you the donor. You will receive a separate tax receipt for gifts above \$25.

How to Make a Memorial or Tribute Gift

To make tribute or memorial gift, make your check payable to The Rotary Foundation and send it with the honoree and acknowledgment information to:

UNITED STATES:

The Rotary Foundation 14280 Collections Center Dr. Chicago, IL 60693

CANADA:

The Rotary Foundation (Canada) Box B9322

P.O. Box 9100 Postal Station F Toronto, ON M4Y 3A5

CREDIT CARDS

Credit Card Contribution Form -United States Fax to: 847-328-5260

Credit Card Contribution Form -Canada Fax to: 519-471-8982 or online at www.trfcanda.org

ONLINE MEMORIAL OR TRIBUTE GIFTS:

To make an online Memorial or Tribute Gift, make an online contribution or www.trfcanda.org. You may then email the contribution information with Confirmation number along with honoree and acknowledgement information to: memorials@rotary.org (or Tributes@rotary.org)

Note: Memorial Envelopes for the United States (Form 111EN) and Canada (Form 112EN) are available gratis from Rotary's Order Desk. To place an order, please go to shop.rotary.org, call 8478664600 or fax to 8478663276

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The Rotary Foundation – Thoughts from Our Ambassadorial Scholar in Ecuador

by **Bob Novell, District Foundation Chair**

Chip Ossman, our D 5300 Ambassadorial Scholar, asked our Ambassadorial Scholars to reflect on the US Presidential Inauguration that they were experiencing while on their assignment in another country (D 5300 has a scholar in Turkey, India, Ghana, Ecuador, and finally Colombia). Three of these scholars sent back thoughtful reflections of their experiences and we have chosen to publish Jesse Last, who is now in Ecuador. It is not easy trying to study overseas, and also being an Ambassador of your country, with the obligations to explain what it means to be an American.

“Friends – Quito sends its best wishes! Lindsay Slote’s (India) experience is fairly different from mine, although there is certainly some overlap. On the one hand, the vast majority of people I speak to – students and professors, wealthy and poor, Rotarians and non-Rotarians – are impressed by Obama. They feel he is very smart and thoughtful, and above all perhaps, not George Bush. The newspapers put him on the front page numerous times over the last week, and followed up with detailed stories about his biography (there is a huge fascination with his being biracial) and some of his policies (especially on economic and “War on Terror” issues.) There is certainly excitement and a repressed hope.

The repressed part is what is so different, and it stems from a fundamental skepticism of the United States. Unlike in India, neither Democrats nor Republicans are seen as very good for Ecuador – the United States is viewed in many ways as exploitative and hypocritical, and no one man – not even a considerate President – will change this. In particular, there is profound objection to Guantanamo, perhaps because of Latin America’s history of human rights abuses, sometimes supported by the United States. Its closure will help, but our credibility was pretty badly damaged.

Another major issue is Plan Colombia and the “War on Terror’s” spillover. There is plenty of resentment to a US involvement in the region that is perceived as one-sided and hegemonic. How Obama engages these issues will make a difference in how the United States is perceived, but I must admit I occasionally feel hopeless in the face of the bitterness

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some of my peers project. [A disclaimer: the university I attend is considered to be left of center, and some students are certainly radical. My sense is that the rest of society is somewhat less critical – my host Rotarians certainly are more positive on the US.]

Despite all this, the hope is there. If it were not, nobody would even pay attention to the election – and everybody did! Beneath the openly voiced objections to many US policies, there lies a deep curiosity and a profound desire for Obama to succeed in closing Guantanamo, ending the Israel/Palestine conflict (another huge issue here in which almost all view the Palestinians with sympathy and the Israelis as oppressors), re-starting the economy, and simply reaching out and showing interest in the region.

I tried to do my small Ambassadorial part by inviting several of my University friends to join me at a bar in watching the event. We had a diverse international group – an Ecuadorian, Bolivian, and Colombian joined me and did their best to understand Obama's speech. They were impressed by what they understood, and certainly by the obvious enthusiasm it generated among the millions watching. I know they also felt my excitement and generously shared in it, listening to my reflections and asking questions. For all the skepticism generated at the United States as whole, there is a tremendous kindness and caring showed to me as an individual.

Anyway, that was probably more than anyone was hoping for, but if you made it this far, congratulations! I hope everyone is doing well at the start of the New Year!! Best wishes, Jesse