

Rotary

The Official Magazine of Rotary International in Great Britain & Ireland

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February/March 2019

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A MOTHER'S STORY

My son was
groomed online
and murdered

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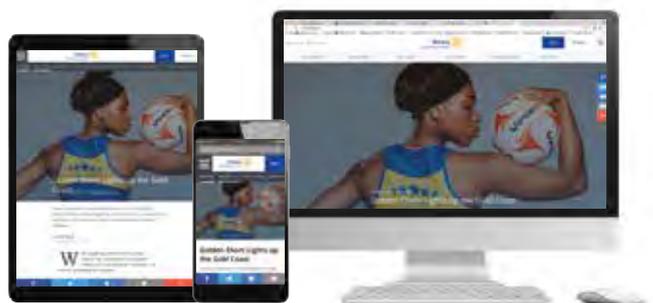
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EVEN MORE ONLINE



GROOMED AND KILLED BY A PREDATOR

Video game lover Breck Bednar was groomed online by a sadistic teenager who lured the 14-year-old to his flat and killed him. According to Breck's mother, Lorin LaFave, her son's murder was preventable. As a result, she has launched a charitable trust to protect other children.



DAVE KING

BRECK Bednar was an intelligent and handsome teenager who grew up in leafy, middle class Surrey suburbia. When he was a child, Breck's hero was the TV character Bob the Builder, which was apt because he loved fixing things, and was a dab hand at putting together flat-pack furniture.

Breck loved science and technology, so it was inevitable that, by the age of 10, this chilled and likeable young boy found his escape in computing, building Minecraft worlds on his computer.

However, four years later, Breck was dead. He had been brutally murdered, after being lured to his death by someone he met online.

The tale is truly horrific.

And yet, as Breck's mother, Lorin LaFave, tells the story, you can feel the raw emotion in her voice. There is even the occasional watery eye as she reflects: what more could I have done to have prevented my son's death?

Some mothers would have become hermits by detaching themselves from the world following such an horrendous, life-changing moment. Not Lorin.

Originally from Pontiac in Michigan, on the outskirts of Detroit, this 51-year-old, who is also the mother of triplets, is made of stronger stuff.

Following the murder of Breck in 2014, Lorin, who is a member of Rotary Deal in Kent, set up the Breck Foundation whose aim is to educate children, parents, teachers, the police and others about online grooming.

And this March, schoolchildren across England will be watching a film called 'Breck's Last Game' in planned classes which tells the shocking story.

This short film will be rolled out in schools in Surrey, Essex, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, whose police forces are supporting the initiative.

Essex Police's Assistant Chief Constable, Andy Prophet, said: "This is not an issue we can shy away from.

"Breck's death shows us that that

“*I went to see Breck's tutor to express my concern about my son spending too much time being online with someone I didn't know. She said Breck was getting good grades and don't worry.*”



Breck Bednar

the consequences of grooming can be absolutely horrific.”

Breck's killer was an 18-year-old called Lewis Daynes.

He ran the online games room which Breck and his friends visited for hours on end. Daynes posed as the mysterious owner of a multi-million dollar software business based in New York.

In reality, he was an unemployed teenager from Grays in Essex who, in

2015, was sentenced to a minimum of 25 years in prison for killing Breck.

Lorin never once refers to Daynes by name during the interview.

She refers to him as The Predator throughout the narrative, describing the moment her first born ran home from school to tell his mum about the online gaming room his friends had invited him to, to receiving the awful, final phone call which no parent ever wishes to hear.

"I was pleased that Breck's friends had invited him into their gaming room," recalled Lorin, who worked as a teaching assistant.

"I knew the boys because I had taught them at primary school. I knew where they lived, I knew their parents, so I thought it would be a safe environment for him to spend time online.

"The friends would make plans during the day about what teams and squads they were going to join. Breck would come home, rush through his chores, eat his dinner and meet the guys online. He would go to his room, the door was open, he was laughing and joking, and nothing sounded dangerous.

"Then, I remember one day overhearing what sounded like a man's voice. I stopped in my tracks, went to Breck's room and asked: 'Why are you speaking to a man, who is this?'

"Breck said: 'It's not a man, mum, it's the guy who runs the server. The guys at school have been gaming with him for years. He is super clever, really great with technology, he's teaching us to code and encrypt, and we are learning more from him than we are learning at school.'"

Lorin admitted that straight away she was concerned. Her antennae told her something was wrong. She checked The Predator for his online footprint, and although there was information on Facebook, LinkedIn and some games' forums, there were no photographs.

She asked her son why this was so, but Breck laughed it off reasoning it was because of The Predator's undercover work in America. ►



Breck Bednar loved working on his laptop at home, spending hours online playing games and also chatting with friends

“Every time I questioned Breck, he had what seemed like a sensible answer,” explained Lorin. “I would eavesdrop and go into Breck’s room to try to engage with the boys, but they didn’t want to talk to their old teacher.

“But The Predator would chat with me. He would say ‘Hey, what’s going on mum, what are you doing?’ and we would have proper conversations.

“I couldn’t see him, but I could hear him and I would ask things like ‘what are you doing in New York City?’, trying to get information. But he would never talk about New York.

“Funny things would pop up on the screen which we would all laugh at – comedy or music.

“If I had just come back from a dance class, dancing ladies would pop up. It was very engaging, this virtual club house, so I could understand why Breck would want to hang out there with his friends.”

But, in time, Lorin noticed how Breck’s personality was slowly changing.

He was getting stropky, refusing to do chores around the house, and reluctant to go to church or take part in family activities.

Breck would tell his mother that The Predator had told him he was past all



“Sadly coming from America I felt safer living in England because I am against guns and ironically my son gets stabbed.”

that. This was the summer of 2013, when the controlling started.

Lorin explained: “All of a sudden, I felt that everything that Breck was saying to me was coming from the mouth of a stranger online.

“It almost felt like there was another parent trying to parent Breck, telling me what to do with my child, in my own home, and it just didn’t feel right.”

What ensued was a nightmare situation as Lorin found herself sliding down a vortex of despair, seemingly unable to help her son who was being drawn away from her by The Predator.

She feared Breck was being groomed for sex. Then she wondered if her son and the boys were being groomed for

radicalisation or to hack into Government computers.

The problem was, wherever Lorin turned – to the school, to the other boys’ parents, friends and even the police – they were all initially dismissive, telling her not to worry, since it was normal for teenagers to spend hours online.

“The truth is, no matter what the grooming is for, the characteristics are all the same, no matter what the intended outcome is.

“There was the befriending, the gaining of trust, the building of that relationship through shared interest – their particular shared interest was computing and gaming.

“I felt that The Predator was isolating Breck from me, almost trying to take charge of him. He trying to parent Breck and telling Breck what I should be doing. It just didn’t feel safe.”

Lorin tried to limit her son’s screen time, unaware that The Predator had supplied three internet routers to Breck’s bedroom, so they could communicate anytime they wanted. He even secretly couriered a £600 iPhone to Breck.

She called an intervention meeting with Breck’s friends and their parents to put a brake on the online activity. ►

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“You never believe something like this is going to happen to anyone in your family. Breck was a clever and a good boy, yet he fell for the gradual tricks of the trade of a groomer.”

After some persuasion, the other boys agreed to leave the gaming room, unaware that The Predator had asked Breck to record the meeting so he knew exactly what was happening.

The Predator was running rings round Lorin, who was feeling helpless.

What hurts now is that if the red flags had been raised earlier, and interventions put in place, she believes Breck Bednar could have been saved.

It was later revealed during the police investigation that The Predator had a number of indecent images stored on his computer.

“I went to see Breck’s tutor to express my concern about my son spending too much time being online with someone I didn’t know. She said Breck was getting good grades and don’t worry.

“Someone could have recommended the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command. They are part of the National Crime Agency, but no-one in the whole year that Breck was being groomed recommended them.

“They could have helped.”

And it is that ignorance which lies at the heart of the work of The Breck Foundation, which seeks to educate children from as young as four-years old about healthy relationships and digital resilience – being aware of the dangers of the internet, learning more about grooming and exploitation.

According to the National Crime Agency (NCA), there are up to 80,000 people in the UK who “present some kind of sexual threat” to children online.

Referrals of child abuse images to the NCA have increased by 700% over the last five years.

The story ends tragically on February 17th, 2014, poignantly the date of Lorin’s birthday. Breck was staying with his father in Caterham having just returned from a school trip to Spain.

Ironically, Lorin was spending her



Breck’s mother Lorin LaFave

birthday in Spain teaching.

Breck asked his father if he could spend the day, and later the night, at the nearby home of one of his school friends.

The Predator had pre-booked a taxi which turned up at the family home in Surrey and made the hour-long drive to The Predator’s modest flat in Grays.

It was there that Breck was brutally murdered, and pictures of Breck’s bloodied body were sent to his online friends. The first the family learnt of his murder was when Lorin’s 12-year-old triplets received texts saying: ‘Sorry to hear about your brother RIP. Poor Breck, we’re going to miss him’.

“The next call I got was the worst call a parent can ever receive,” recalled Lorin.

“It was from my ex-husband who said: ‘I don’t know how to tell you this, but The Predator has murdered Breck’.

“At that point I couldn’t stop screaming. I damaged my ears. I was at a hotel where they had to get a doctor to

sedate me. I just wanted to get home.”

Time has passed, but the pain never disappears. At times, Lorin admits she feels angry. How could an educated person like herself have been so easily duped and manipulated? She was aware Breck was being groomed, but she did not know how to fix the problem.

“Sadly, coming from America, I felt safer living in England because I am against guns, and ironically my son gets stabbed,” she added.

“You never believe something like this is going to happen to anyone in your family. Breck was a clever and a good boy, yet he fell for the gradual tricks of the trade of a groomer.”

Lorin and members of The Breck Foundation are now spreading the message of online resilience in talks across the country.

Rotary clubs in Deal and Caterham have got involved by helping to fund these talks and Lorin is hoping other clubs will join forces.

The students are presented with blue wrist bands carrying the Foundation’s web address and with the Rotary logo.

Lorin added: “Sometimes I tell myself that I am going to run into a cave and never come back out because I don’t want to do this forever, but I just know that if I had heard me speak when Breck was being groomed, he would be here now.

“If I had been in a training session in school, if I had seen me on the news or sat in a conference, my son would have been alive because I would have known what to do.” ●



For more information visit:

The Breck Foundation:
www.breckfoundation.org

You can hear Lorin speak at the Rotary Showcase in Nottingham from May 10th to 12th.

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Game, set and match Abbie is a real tennis ace

It's time for nominations for the Rotary Young Citizen WheelPower Sports Award, which is one of the most celebrated of honours. Since winning the award last year, teenager Abbie Breakwell has been going from strength to strength.

FIFTEEN-year-old Paralympic hopeful Abbie Breakwell is celebrating a fabulous year of achievements, winning eight national wheelchair tennis titles, many medals and trophies and, best of all, Abbie is still absolutely loving it all.

After receiving her award at the Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland Conference last April, where Abbie was presented to HRH the Princess Royal with other winners, it was announced that she had been selected to represent Great Britain in the junior wheelchair tennis squad at the World Team Cup in the Netherlands. This was a big achievement since the competition is the wheelchair tennis equivalent of the Davis Cup and Federation Cup.

Then, in July, Abbie was crowned British Open Wheelchair Tennis Girl Junior Champion. The British Open is the UK flagship wheelchair tennis tournament. She had ball-crewed all week for the professionals, before her own tournament started.

Abbie was so thrilled to win the Rotary Young Citizen Sports Award. She said: "I was shocked to receive the award but was so proud and honoured to be nominated and then to win.

"It was such a wonderful experience going to the BBC studios and speaking to presenter Simon McCoy about wheelchair tennis, it was definitely a huge highlight of the year and something I will remember for life."

In 2018, Abbie was selected for the Junior Futures Programme, an elite training programme which aims to help junior wheelchair tennis players to progress to the first level of the Tennis Foundation world class performance programme.

Abbie is also celebrating a second year as President of her Interact Club of Long Eaton in Nottinghamshire, where she has been a member for four years.

She said: "As part of my award I was granted £500, I decided to split the cheque and gave £250 to the Dan Maskell Tennis Trust, who are a charity who helped me pay for individual coaching sessions.

"The other £250 I have put towards a project I am organising as one of my pledges as a Rotary Interact President for Long Eaton.

"In the summer, I am organising a disability sports awareness day, where the



Abbie receiving her Young Citizen Award at the Rotary Conference in Torquay

British Open Wheelchair Tennis Championships

#WheelchairTennis



Tennis
Foundation

Nottingham



After a successful year on the court, wheelchair tennis star Abbie Breakwell is hoping to inspire more young people her age to get involved.

local primary school students are invited to try out many disability sports such as wheelchair tennis, visually-impaired tennis, wheelchair basketball, para-athletics and many more.

“The children will be able to understand that, no matter your disability, sport can be fun and adapted.”

Abbie sees sport as a way to channel her energy and frequently encourages others to join in, knowing the positive benefits. Long Eaton Rotary Club spotted her exceptional activities and put her forward for the award.

The talented teenager also played in her first National Tennis Series adult tournament at the same time as playing junior doubles.

She became Leeds National Tennis Series adult and junior doubles champion, meaning she won in all categories, which was outstanding for her first adult national tournament.

More success came Abbie's way at the National School Games at Loughborough,



“She became Leeds National Tennis Series adult and junior doubles champion, meaning she won in all categories, which was outstanding for her first adult national tournament.”

where Abbie represented England. She took home a silver medal in the singles and became the National School Games' girls doubles champion.

This made Abbie the only girl to win medals in both singles and doubles for the last three consecutive years at the National School Games for wheelchair tennis.

Abbie's summer of success was rounded off nicely in Grantham, Lincolnshire, once again in the national series, where she became the Grantham National Tennis Series junior doubles champion.

She has also won a local sports award for sporting achievements and for being the local 'This Girl Can' ambassador.

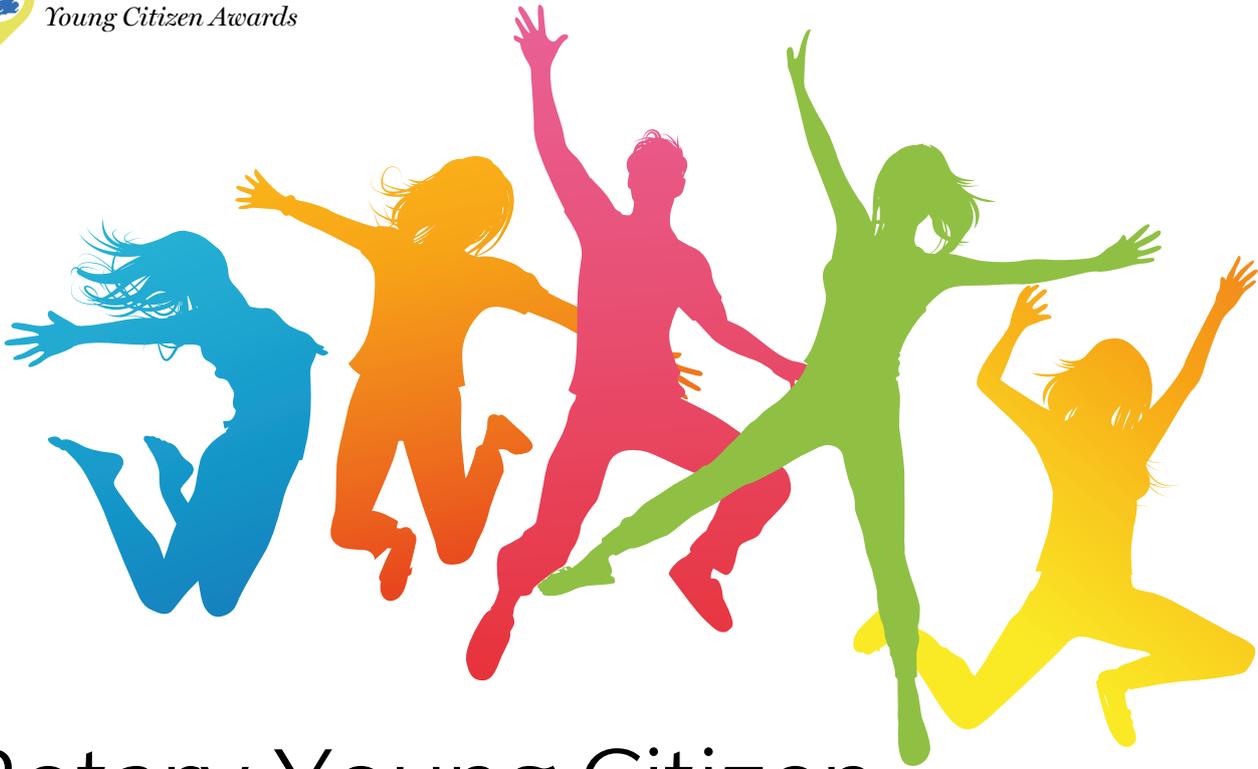
Abbie finished the year playing at the British National Tournament winning her women's pool, becoming Division 1 juniors singles runner-up and Division 1 doubles champion, earning her final national title for 2018.

All this and she has only been playing wheelchair tennis for two and a half years.

Her dream is to represent Team GB at the Paralympics and to play at Wimbledon. Knowing Abbie's determination and her love of the sport, that dream will no doubt become a wonderful reality. ●



To join Rotary visit: rotarygbi.org



Rotary Young Citizen Awards returns for 2019

REMARKABLE young people from across Britain and Ireland are being recognised by the Rotary Young Citizen Awards in 2019.

The accolades celebrate the positive citizenship and responsibilities which are shown by many young people through hard work, inspirational ideas and a determination to help others and make a difference, *writes Eve Conway*.

The Rotary Young Citizen Awards were launched in 2007 to overcome negative stereotypes of youngsters, and instead showcase and celebrate outstanding role-models under the age of 25.

I set up the awards with my then boss at BBC News and Rotary at a time when, as now, the headlines were so often dominated by bad news about youngsters and the aim was to show that the majority of young people are not like that but are out there doing good in the world.

Since then, hundreds of inspirational youngsters have been recognised and the awards have received extensive media coverage.

Every year, individuals or groups of young people are nominated by their local

Rotary club to receive an award.

They include RotaKids, Interactors and Rotaractors.

So from helping the homeless to clothing children who live in poverty to helping tackle gangs and anti-social behaviour to being a wheelchair whizz kid on the tennis court, last year's Young Citizen Award winners were truly amazing.

Nominees do not necessarily have to be working on a Rotary project to be eligible, they just have to be recognised by a local Rotary club as worthy of nomination.

Rotary Young Citizen WheelPower Sports Award

For the past three years, Rotary in Britain and Ireland has partnered with WheelPower, the UK wheelchair sports charity, to create the Rotary Young Citizen WheelPower Sports Award and we are looking for more nominations for 2019.

The purpose of the award is to recognise and highlight the achievements and contributions as a positive role model to others by a wheelchair sports participant or group.

Previous winners include 15-year-old Abbie Breakwell (*featured on pages 10*

and 11), Paralympians 17-year-old Kare Adenegan and 22-year-old Samantha (Sammi) Kinghorn, Scottish world champion wheelchair racer.

Rotary Young Citizen Peacemaker Award

A new award, the Rotary Young Citizen Peacemaker Award, reflecting Rotary's area of focus on peace and conflict prevention/resolution, is being introduced for 2019.

This award will recognise young people, aged under 25, who have made a significant contribution by building peace and understanding, whether in their school, through their local community, by for example helping tackle anti-social behaviour and youth crime, or with a peace project internationally.

Winners of the Rotary Young Citizen Awards will be presented with their award from BBC TV presenter, Ellie Crisell, at the Rotary in Britain and Ireland Showcase in Nottingham on May 12th, 2019.

They will receive a trophy, certificate and a cheque for £500 to go to their chosen charity or project.

The deadline for nominations is February 28th, 2019. ●



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An inspiring generation

MUSIC has played a key role in the life of Grace O'Malley and her fundraising for charity from the age of 12.

She won her Young Citizen Award in 2013 after being nominated by Rotary Padiham near Burnley for raising tens of thousands of pounds for The Royal British Legion, a local hospice and cancer charities – and she's got big ambitions for the future.



Grace, who turns 21 in February, plans to become a professional opera singer and is in her third year at the Royal College of Music studying for a Bachelor of Music, specialising in voice.

Her aim is to use her singing talent to raise one million pounds for charity.

She said: "Receiving a Rotary Young Citizen Award still remains my most precious and proudest achievement.

"Raising money for charity is a very big part of my life and ethos.

"I live with the mindset of, if I can't help someone, then who can?"

"Rotary inspired me to carry on this, having met the most inspiring people who have encouraged me to continue supporting many different charities.

"It's helped craft me into the person I am today. So, thank you Rotary."



Two Young Citizen Award winners have become Rotarians. Twenty-year-old Digital Youth Council founder Harry McCann, a 2017 Award winner, is now a member of the Rotary Naas in Ireland, who nominated him for the award.

Harry was also named as one of the ten Outstanding Young Persons of the World by Junior Chamber International.

Maciej Szukala, a 2010 winner, has become a member of the new-style Rotary Wrexham Glyndwr.



Maciej moved to Wrexham from Poland when he was ten years old.

He couldn't speak any English and found starting his new life in the UK challenging. But within five years, he had become an active member of his community, teaching English to new migrant pupils and helping young refugees settle in.

Rotary Wrexham Yale nominated him for a Young Citizen Award for his work and he has gone on to start his own business "Legal Base" helping migrants and refugees.

Now aged 24, Maciej said: "Winning the award has completely changed my life. The award is on my desk at work every day to remind me about what I have already achieved and also to motivate me for what I can achieve for myself and the rest of the community in the future.

"I have joined Rotary because I wanted to give back for what Rotary gave to me."

Bethany Hare was 12-years-old when Rotary Leeds nominated her for a Young Citizen Award in 2012 in recognition of the fundraising she'd been doing for a local children's hospice. Since then, she's continued to raise money to support young people with life-limiting illnesses, setting up her own charity, Bethany's Smile.

Bethany said: "Receiving a Rotary Young Citizen Award has given me loads of opportunities and inspired me to continue fundraising because of all the other young inspirational award winners I met.

"The support from Rotarians and acknowledgement by Rotary of what I am doing is so important and so motivational." ●



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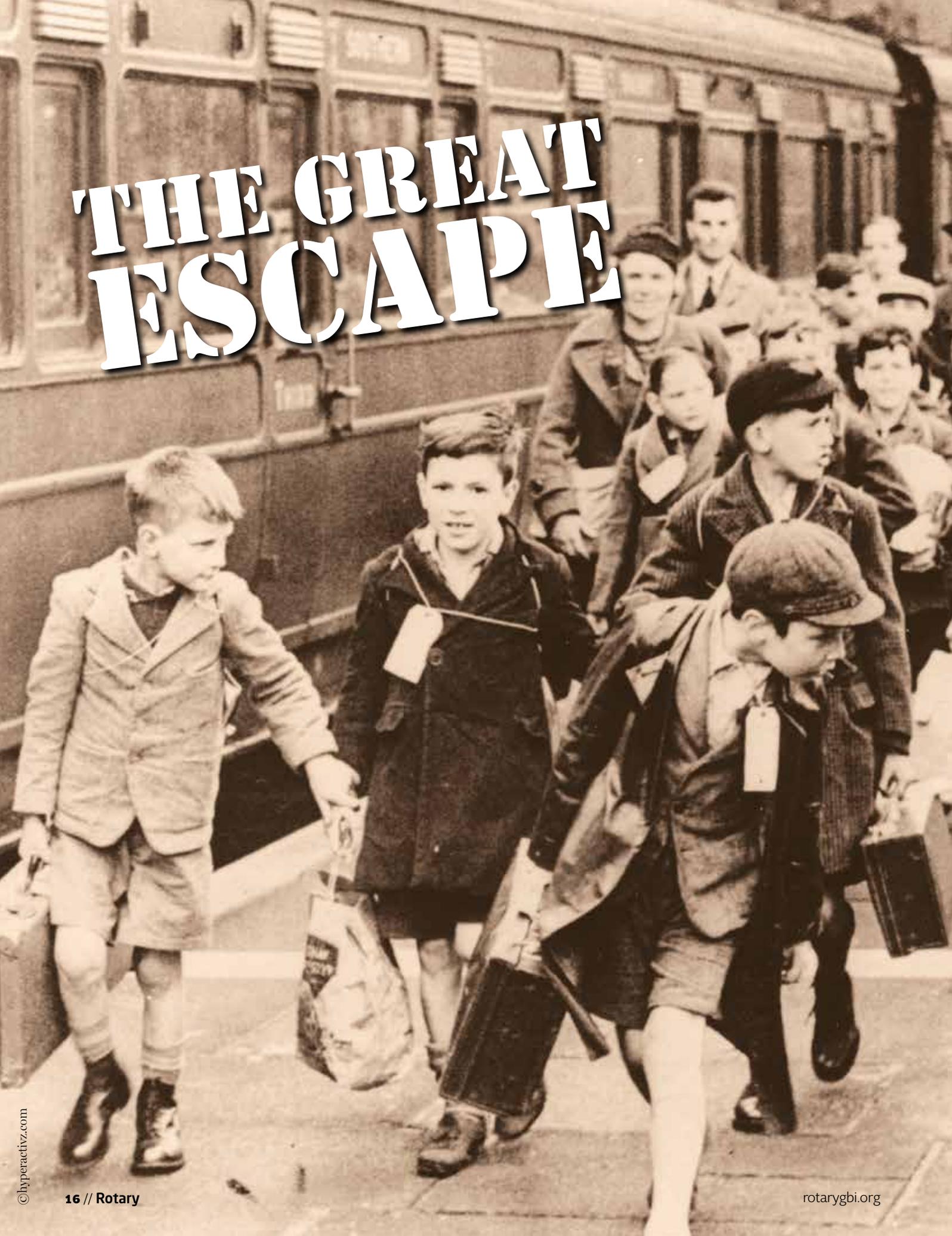
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THE GREAT ESCAPE





Sir Nicholas Winton was a former club president and, for more than 50 years, a member of Rotary Maidenhead. Eighty years ago, he helped save the lives of 669 children from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia by arranging 'Kindertransport' from Prague to England. Sir Nicholas died in 2015 aged 106. Here, his daughter Barbara tells the amazing story of a man affectionately known as the British Oskar Schindler.

MY father became known in the last quarter of his life for organising a Kindertransport from Czechoslovakia in 1939. Of course, there was a much larger Kindertransport which brought nearly 10,000 children to Britain from Germany and Austria organised by a consortium of Jewish, Quaker and community groups, but their remit didn't include Czechoslovakia.

In September 1938, Britain, Germany, Italy and France signed the Munich Agreement which gave the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia to Germany.

Hitler had claimed this region due to the high proportion of ethnic Germans living there. Chamberlain thought this would prevent war.

The day after the agreement, the Germans marched into the Sudetenland, terrorising all those who Hitler had threatened including politicians, teachers, intellectuals, communists and Jews, indeed anybody who had said anything nasty about Hitler, (and that included the Jews, of

which there were many thousands in that area).

So with a day's notice those people had to pick up their belongings and flee for their lives to the centre of Czechoslovakia.

In the autumn and winter of 1938, there were tens of thousands of refugees looking for sanctuary.

At the time, my father was a London-based 29-year-old stockbroker.

He came from a Jewish family background, his parents were Jewish, but he had been baptised in 1916 and brought up as a Christian.

The strange thing about coming from a middle class, Jewish, stockbroker/banking background was that he was politically left wing and joined the Labour party.

He had many friends who were luminaries of the time in the Labour party including Aneurin Bevan, Stafford Cripps, George Russell Strauss, and Jennie Lee. They spent a lot of their time talking politics, including what was going on in Europe.

He also had family who had direct ►



Sir Nicholas Winton with daughter Barbara



Nicholas Winton (centre) with colleagues in the Ambulance Service during the Second World War

“

“My father decided he was going to try to bring endangered children out of Czechoslovakia to Britain. He had a motto which said: “If something is not impossible, there must be a way of doing it”. He felt this was difficult, but not impossible.”

experience of the Nazis, including his aunt who had fled Germany in 1933. From pretty early on, my father was beginning to understand how violent the Nazis’ behaviour was towards the Jews.

At Christmas 1938, my father got a phone call from a friend Martin Blake.

Martin was a schoolmaster at Westminster School who took a group of pupils skiing every winter, which my father joined. My father got a phone call from Martin saying the trip was off, that he was in Prague and suggested Nicholas should join him to see what he was up to.

With no more information than that, my father changed his plans and a week later arrived in Prague. Martin was also very involved politically and they had spoken a lot about Hitler’s plans. He knew if Martin was engaged in something, it would be something worthwhile.

My father arrived in Prague where he was introduced by Martin to a woman called Doreen Warriner. Doreen was an academic and a fellow volunteer who had flown to Prague and, with the help of the Labour party, was trying to smuggle out of Czechoslovakia and to safety all of the Sudetenland Social Democrat politicians who were on Hitler’s wanted list.

Doreen was getting them and their families out on trains though Poland.

Doreen encouraged my father to visit the refugee camps where there was snow on the ground and families trying to keep warm, with not much to eat. Many had fled without winter clothes.

We look with hindsight at these events and decide how we might act, because we now know what happened in the next few years. We have to try to understand this today when we look at a refugee crisis.

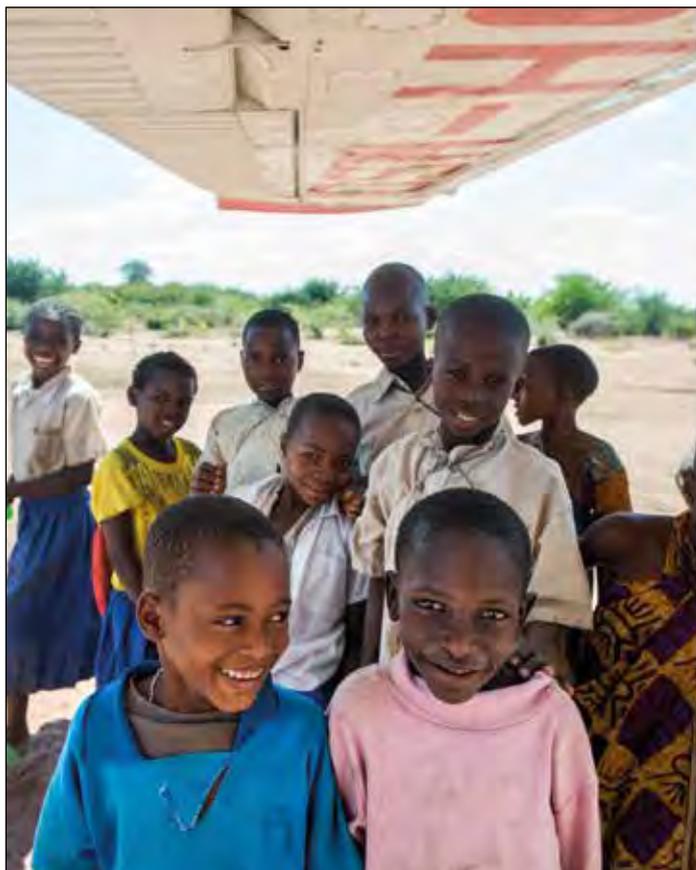
We don’t know what the outcome is going to be in future years, we have to act on the conditions we see at present.

My father had no foresight, as did nobody at that time, that Hitler would start a mass extermination programme.

So when he stood in the refugee camp and decided to do something, it was not because he had foresight, it was because the conditions he was witnessing at that moment were intolerable.

My father decided he was going to try to bring endangered children out of Czechoslovakia to Britain. He had a motto which said: “If something is not impossible, there must be a way of doing it”. He felt this was difficult, but not impossible.

He started meeting families who ►



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Some of those saved from Czechoslovakia were reunited with Sir Nicholas Winton

“

“Doreen encouraged my father to visit the refugee camps where there was snow on the ground and families trying to keep warm, with not much to eat. Many had fled without winter clothes.”

understood here was someone who was going to try to help them. While he was in Prague, my father met Trevor Chadwick, a schoolmaster from Dorset, who was sent by his school in January to sponsor two refugee boys and bring them back.

Trevor learnt from my father that he intended to bring a much larger number of children back to Britain, and Trevor agreed to run the Prague end of the operation if the Government agreed to his plan.

After three weeks in Prague, my father returned to London and went to the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia (BCRC), the organisation Doreen was working for.

He said he was going to visit the Home Office to ask for permission to bring children from Czechoslovakia.

But the BCRC urged him not to go as that would antagonise the Home Office, who were already dealing with another organisation bringing children from Germany and Austria. The Home Office felt eventually that the organisation would also agree to help Czechoslovak children.

On the way out of the office, my father took some BCRC headed notepaper and persuaded a local printer to make a stamp saying ‘Children’s Section’, which he duly

stamped under the BCRC heading.

Nicholas then had a meeting with himself, the kind of meeting he really loved where things really got done, and he nominated himself as honorary secretary of the Children’s Section of the BCRC, and off he went to the Home Office.

Without the difficulty others had predicted, they agreed to him bringing home children from Czechoslovakia but with two conditions. Firstly: he had to find a foster family to look after the children and secondly: a £50 guarantee was required for their eventual repatriation.

He set about getting this done. Trevor returned to Prague, collecting lists of children, meeting parents, taking photographs and sending them back to England. My father wrote letters to the newspapers and magazines.

He had the assistance of people like Independent MP, Eleanor Rathbone, and the Unitarian Minister, the Rev Rosalind Lee, who also wrote to newspapers asking people to open their homes and their hearts to these endangered children.

It was a very slow process. This was not the age of emails and mobile phones.

It was all done by letter writing and the occasional phone call, and he would get



a letter saying “we think we would like a child”, he would write back “would you like a boy or a girl, which age” and they would write back and so on.

He thought this was taking all too long, so he produced cards with photos of six to eight children on which he sent out for each family to ‘choose’ a child.

This sped up the work immensely. When asked about this later, my father agreed that it did look mercenary, but it was quick and he had to act quickly.

My father had learned to run projects independently from his work at the Stock Exchange and he had a method that worked. If he decided a project needed doing, he would assume everyone else would agree with him.

He would find volunteers by working out who would do a good job, walking up to them and pinning them against a wall so, by the end of the conversation, they would be volunteers. My grandmother was his first ‘volunteer’ and she helped him with the office work and later through the war with any support the children needed.

The idea of seeking permission and going through a committee was not his thing at all. He liked to be in charge and develop his own committee of those who would agree with him. I don’t know if that is the Rotary way, but it was effective.

The one thing my father knew about this mission is that there was not a lot of time. He and the political friends like him who had read ‘Mein Kampf’ believed that Hitler intended to occupy the whole of Europe. My father believed that war was imminent and he had very little time to achieve his goals.

He often had people saying you should not be doing this, but he would brush off those comments and get on with it.

The first transport arrived in Britain from Czechoslovakia on March 14th, 1939, the day after that the Germans broke their promise and invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia.

From then on, Doreen and Trevor were working under German occupation.

Trevor had to get the Gestapo to sign any exit permits for the children to leave Czechoslovakia.

By May, after four transports had already arrived in Britain, he was officially asked by the BCRC to become the head of the children’s section – four months after that first meeting! He had volunteers

working from his home in Hampstead, but now they moved into their office in Bloomsbury House in central London, benefitting from their extra resources.

Trevor had to negotiate with the Gestapo. He was a very gregarious, outgoing character, who knew how to behave to get the Germans to do what he wanted.

You would think the Germans would try to stop these children, but they didn’t.

The Germans wanted to rid Europe of Jews, and if these strange characters wanted to help them by taking these children to Britain that was fine.

The Home Office sent out permits for entry to the country and these had to be stamped by the Germans to get the children on the train.

The Home Office acted very slowly and sometimes the trains were ready in Prague and the Home Office permits hadn’t arrived. Trevor and Nicky’s solution was to use a printer in Prague who would make identical copies of the Home Office permits, which the Germans then stamped to allow the children to get on the train.

They crossed their fingers that when the children arrived in Harwich, the Home Office permits were there waiting for them, so they could swap the fakes for originals.

Whether you believe that is a correct way to do business, I don’t know. But they did what they felt they had to do.

Eight transports arrived through the Spring and Summer of 1939.

The ninth, which was the largest with 250 children was due to leave on September 1st, 1939, the day when the Germans invaded Poland, closed all the borders and two days later war was declared.

That train was cancelled, and most of the children on that train ended up in the Terezin Concentration Camp and then Auschwitz. That was heart-breaking for my father because there was no more he could do at that point.

The project was wound up, he went into the Red Cross because he was termed a conscientious objector.

It was not because he did not believe in war, it was because he was so furious with the Government and the way they behaved.

After two years he relented and joined the RAF. My father made his decision and looked for others to assist him carry it out.

He avoided those who disagreed or opposed him. He was not popular. In fact, he offended many people.

For instance a group of rabbis came to his house saying they understood he was bringing Jewish children from Prague to live in Christian homes in Britain and that must stop. My father said, “That’s not going to stop. If you prefer a dead Jewish child in Prague to one living in a Christian home in Britain, that is your problem, not mine’.

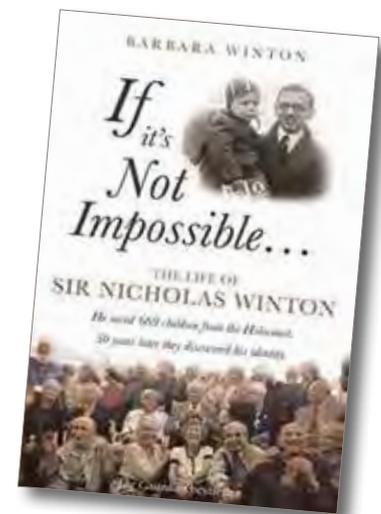
He had a thick skin to get his projects done and it worked.

In terms of this project, my father felt he had failed. They had 5,000 names on this list and only 669 were saved. But 50 years later when the story came out and he met some of his children, we discovered there were about 7,000 people alive because of what he had achieved.

Though we look back at the Kindertransport as a positive thing, there were dissenting voices as there are today about refugees. There were headlines at the time which read: “No open door to refugees”, “Every refugee is an enemy alien”.

So what does this story teach us for today’s problems? The scale was overwhelming, but doing something achieves something.

When my father met some of the children who he rescued for the first time as adults, they bought him a ring engraved with a saying from the Jewish Talmud ‘Save one live, save the world’.



i Barbara Winton has written a biography of her father “If it’s not impossible - the life of Sir Nicholas Winton”. The book & Ebook is available from www.amazon.co.uk

For more details visit:
www.barbarawinton.co.uk



Rotary GBI President
Debbie Hodge

Reading is the pathway to prosperity

IT was in the summer of 2013 when I met a young Maori woman whose mission in life was to give children the opportunity to learn to read. Her name was Toni and her mantra was 'literacy is the route out of poverty, reading is the pathway to prosperity'.

Sadly, Toni died while on a Rotary Group Study Exchange trip to District 1260 (Beds Bucks and Herts) that same summer, but her legacy lives on in the lives of countless children that were influenced by her work.

One of the key areas of focus for Rotary is literacy and in this country many members are active in reading projects in their local schools. Around the world The Rotary Foundation supports its members providing literacy and educational programmes in many countries – including New Zealand, Toni's home country.

Ask Roger Green from my own club in Ware what he gets out of helping little ones to read – his face lights up and he will regale you with wonderful examples of how the children are progressing!

It's all part of Rotary's contribution to the local community, a contribution that in this instance will help young people find

the 'pathway to prosperity', and give Roger a great 'feel good' feeling at the same time!

It is a sobering statistic that 50% of prisoners in the UK are functionally illiterate. This means half of the 85,000 people currently incarcerated have a reading age of 11 or lower – with 20% falling well short of that mark.

Many prisoners are completely illiterate. For some reason they missed out on educational opportunities and now Rotarians are working to make sure successive generations have the opportunity to learn to read.

In Birmingham, the ShelterBus project will support the homeless. Nationally the figures are hard to verify but it is estimated that there were almost 5,000 rough sleepers on the streets. The Birmingham ShelterBus is acting as a catalyst for similar projects in other major cities.

One of the key issues affecting both those in prison and those sleeping rough is mental health. There is a growing awareness that we need to treat mental health issues in the same way as we treat physical health, by raising awareness of the issues and sharing knowledge of some of the simple helping techniques that are

available.

Mental ill health often stems from loneliness and Rotary members are beginning to look at how they may be part of the solution when it comes to raising awareness and creating opportunities for people to get together.

The Worry Tree Cafe in Framlingham, Suffolk, is a great example of Rotarians working with their local community to provide a place where people can get together and where conversations about mental ill health happen.

Rotary is already known for its work with dementia – Rotarians easing the Problems of Dementia: www.repod.org.uk and in many areas they have set up, or are working with others on, memory cafes or dementia clubs.

The lessons learnt in this area of community service will be shared and built on as Rotary engages in the local community on the issues the community are concerned about. ●

 Rotarians are people of action who make a significant difference in the local community – to join us go to rotarygbi.org





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Thank you to the Rotary Foundation

OVER the past 25 years, Rotary Guildford has been directly involved in 90 Matching and Global Grants, both as a host and international partner, 78 of which have been in connection with the Guildford Rotary Eye Project.

We have also been actively involved with at least 26 others, 24 of which have been part-funded by the eye project. There are four more in the pipeline, with many others planned.

None of these eye project grants would have been possible without the generous support of countless Rotary clubs and individuals within Rotary GBI and overseas, each of whom have provided funds for our work in equipping eye hospitals and treating preventable blindness.

The bulk of such humanitarian work is the provision of free cataract operations to the poor. This we can achieve for a donation of just £5 here in the UK. That donation grows to the actual operation cost of £15 when deployed through a Rotary Foundation Grant.

All of our eye project grants require the active co-operation of the host Rotary club by contributing a third of the cost, running the hospitals and carrying out the eye testing and operations. The whole programme must be sustainable.

The support of many Rotary Districts, in particular their District Rotary Foundation committees in providing considerable amounts of funding, plus the vital financial contribution of The Rotary Foundation through their grants programme, has been equally important to this success. Recently, this has also included support from Rotary GBIs' 'Gift of Sight' initiative.

It is uncertain how many thousands of US dollars have been generated for these projects, but it is clear that the total value easily exceeds £3,750,000!

As a consequence of the eye projects, Indian clubs have sponsored three global grants supporting projects in Surrey, two

providing equipment for the Samson Centre in Guildford, which supports patients with multiple sclerosis, and one providing machinery at Skillway in Godalming, which teaches disadvantaged or disengaged young people practical workshop skills.

This dispels a common misconception that Rotary Foundation grants only provide assistance to the poorer parts of the world. Global grants are global.

It is our wish to continue this work with the help of all of our Rotary friends. While we now have a new working name of Global Sight Solutions, we are still registered with the charity commission as the Rotary Club of Guildford Eye Project and are still very much a Rotary project.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us over the years.

Andrew M Jackson
Chairman of trustees of
the Rotary Guildford Eye Project

Rotary is all about forging friendships

I WRITE to concur wholeheartedly with your correspondent John J. Elliott (Rotary, October) who opined that 'Rotary unquestionably made the correct decision to open its doors to women members'. He was also in no doubt that dual gender clubs can operate successfully.

He then qualified these opinions, however, by suspecting that, whenever women have joined, many clubs have lost some of the inherently male elements of 'fellowship' which helps to bind members together. Another correspondent listed banter, mickey-taking and common interests as enjoyable features of men-only gatherings.

But modern women are more than capable of joining in and holding their own when it comes to banter, verbal exchanges and humour. Men and women, moreover, have many interests in common.

Yet another correspondent writes that Rotary definitely has its own problems to resolve when it comes to membership. It does indeed. It would like more members;

it needs more women members.

My own club has some 35 members, only three of them are women. But those three ladies are among the most active contributors to the mission and workings of a successful club, which is no less bound together because of their presence.

As for encouraging more women members, it may be that 'fellowship' is not the most inclusive, inviting and welcoming of words. Friendship, on the other hand, can embrace everyone and is understood and appreciated by men and women both.

Jim Crate
Rotary Bewdley

Unhappy reading

I LOOKED at the cover of the October edition of Rotary magazine and was pretty certain that it wasn't going to be exactly 'happy' reading.

The cover doesn't look appealing in any way, in that it is a morbid picture and the text is ambiguous as it could be read as Rotary itself being behind bars and needing rehabilitation or punishment. Then looking at the content, we also have articles on domestic abuse and later homelessness.

Whilst I accept that all three subjects are important, I personally, do not think that it is Rotary's remit to tackle them as they are massive problems in themselves and whilst we can donate to homeless shelters, women's refuges and to charities who support ex-prisoners (as our club does) I do not think that it should take up most of our magazine, or at least having all three subjects in one issue.

There are many far more positive initiatives that clubs, Districts and Rotary GBI get involved in that should be publicised and which, if I was thinking of becoming a member, would sway my decision.

But I hardly think that any of these three subjects would attract many interested parties to join.

Tony Willson
President, Rotary Colchester Centurion

We welcome your letters on any subject to do with Rotary. Submissions should not be more than 250 words long. Please include your name and address. Email: editor@rotarygbi.org or post to: Rotary magazine, Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland, Kinwarton Road, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 6PB. The comments made on this page do not necessarily represent the views of Rotary in Great Britain & Ireland and Rotarians.

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While some families have an immediate need for their lift, others, like Mr. & Mrs. Simpson in the West Country, are busy future proofing their homes. Mr. Simpson explained

"We briefly considered a stairlift for our contemporary coastal home, but they take up lots of space and are a bit of an eyesore, so we chose a Stiltz Homelift. It's concealed behind a hallway door and travels up to the landing perfectly"

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"I liked the design because it is transparent on all sides and doesn't look like an unattractive, square box. It's very stylish and allows natural light from the garden to flood in through the glazed extension as well as allowing me to enjoy the view".

So, if you're facing an "Upstairs, Downstairs" dilemma and dread downsizing or cluttering up your stairs with a cumbersome stairlift, here's a neat and fast way-to-the-top solution.

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Creating a brighter future

The largest ever Rotary Foundation Global Grant to be awarded to a project based in Great Britain and Ireland will dramatically improve access to radiotherapy and cancer treatment in the south of England.

THERE is a brighter future ahead for medical care in Swindon, thanks to a record-breaking Rotary grant.

Rotary clubs in Swindon have been working together to support the Brighter Futures Radiotherapy Appeal based at the Great Western Hospital.

The appeal, which has now hit its £2.9 million target thanks to Rotary's support, was set up by Brighter Futures, the charity for the Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in May 2015.

Funds will be spent on developing a radiotherapy cancer treatment unit

in Swindon, a satellite unit of Oxford University Hospitals.

A Global Grant of £175,000 will be added to the £158,000 already raised by Rotary clubs in Swindon and the surrounding areas to take Rotary's contribution to the appeal to one third of a million pounds. This is the largest ever Global Grant in Great Britain and Ireland

The Rotary Foundation, Rotary's own and only charity, supports around 1,000 humanitarian service projects across the globe each year in a range of areas such as health, education, sanitation and peace.

This development of a local

radiotherapy service for the people of Swindon and Wiltshire will mean over 13,000 patient journeys for treatment will be significantly shorter every year as they no longer need to travel to Oxford.

Currently, the journey can take between one and two hours, depending on the time of day, which can be physically and emotionally draining for patients and their families at an extremely challenging time.

Some patients even opt not to receive radiotherapy treatment or palliative care because they cannot face the prospect of the journey on a daily basis for as many as six weeks.

Peter Wells, a member of Rotary Swindon who was closely involved with Global Grant bidding process commented: "This really is what Rotary is all about. Engaging in practical projects that provide potentially life-changing solutions to local problems.

"Rotary members and The Rotary Foundation are doing incredible things around the world, supporting around 1,000 projects like this one, every single year.

"What has been so special is that all of the fundraising has been done locally, not only by Rotary clubs in the area, but small businesses and individuals as well.

"Rotary fundraising activities have included a duck race, swimathon, spring fayres, fun runs and more. Not only have these events contributed funds towards the radiotherapy appeal, but they've also



An artist impression of the radiotherapy centre



The LinAc - Linear Accelerator - machine in Oxford

fostered great community spirit and involvement in our area – so it's a double win!"

Commenting on the appeal, Catherine Newman, Associate Director of Fundraising at Brighter Futures, said: "We're so thankful for all the hard work our local community and the Rotary clubs of Swindon and surrounding area put in to raising this money.

"The sad reality is that cancer affects one in three of the UK population and the number of incidents is predicted to rise by 16% over the next ten years.

"This money will fund critically important equipment for a new radiotherapy unit that will support the 284 people who receive a cancer diagnosis every month at the Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

"We hope the success of this appeal shows people how important their continued support is, no matter how big or small."

The development of a satellite treatment unit is going to support people



"The sad reality is that cancer affects one in three of the UK population and the number of incidents is predicted to rise by 16% over the next ten years."

who had experiences like Fred Bassett, who was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2006. Six months after his diagnosis, Fred began a course of radiotherapy at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford.

Initially, Fred thought he could drive himself to his appointments on the 76-mile round trip from Swindon, but after the first few days he realised that this was not going to be possible.

Radiotherapy for a prostate cancer patient has to be delivered on a full bladder. The delicate balance of managing this and dealing with the side effects of the treatment on the trek home, meant

that the journey itself became extremely stressful for Fred.

Thankfully, Fred's wife and family had flexible lifestyles and work commitments meaning they could support him with travel, but this isn't the case for all patients. Fred returned to full health two years later.

Upcoming fundraising events for the radiotherapy appeal will have their donations go towards supporting the wider cancer pathway at the Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

That additional funding will help to extend the Trust's programmes and research into the early diagnosis and detection of cancer. ●



To find out more visit:

Rotary Foundation:
www.rotary.org/en/about-rotary/rotary-foundation

Brighter Futures:
www.brighterfuturesgwh.nhs.uk



Barry Rassin
Rotary President 2018/19

In my travels over the past year, I've visited many strong, vibrant clubs and districts that are transforming their communities. When I attend their meetings, I can feel the energy. When I meet their members, I can see they are people of action.

I'd like to challenge every Rotary club to come up with at least one high-impact service project. Each club already has the potential, the resources, to make it happen.

It doesn't take millions of dollars. One of the most transformational projects I've been a part of involved providing a Jeep to a group of midwives in Haiti.

They told us they needed a way to reach expectant mothers in a remote part of the country. We supplied a Jeep, painted it pink, and put the Rotary logo on it.

Three years later, we went back to see how they were doing. They were excited by the outcomes: they told us that the mortality rate for mothers and infants in that region had dropped by 50 per cent. That's what I call transformational service.

But Jeeps don't last forever, and after eight years on the road, that vehicle was on its last legs. So we bought a pink Land Cruiser. It's still on the road, allowing the midwives to provide prenatal care to women in that remote region.

What makes a project transformational? It doesn't have to involve a lot of money, but it has to reach people and have a major impact in the community. That is the key, and that is where careful planning and thorough research come in. So do your research. Leverage your resources. Seek partnerships that can increase your impact. And then take action.

Of course, service is only part of what a strong club must offer. It must also have good speakers, provide leadership development, involve Rotaract and Interact, and bring value to its members and reasons to participate in Rotary events.

If your club is transformational and well-organised, everything else will follow. Members will be engaged, and new members will be eager to join you. Fundraising will be easier: people love to give when they see how their money is making a difference and when they know the organisation is accountable.

Your club will be vibrant, relevant, and alive — and it will Be the Inspiration to those within its ranks as well as to the community it serves. ●



Ron D. Burton
Trustee Chair 2018/19

Every second of every day, Rotarians are doing good in the world through The Rotary Foundation. They are planning, funding, implementing, and completing projects, both locally and globally. It is a source of great pride for us all.

To me, this is one of the unique features of Rotary membership. You can get as involved as you choose. You can participate in a project from beginning to end, or you can join in anywhere in the process. But it all starts with you and me making a gift to our Foundation so that funds are available.

For many of us, a district grant offers the quickest and most convenient way to participate in grant activity, because it usually involves a local project.

A district grant project is a good way to showcase Rotary, to get publicity, to involve prospective members as well as the beneficiaries, and to add value to your own community.

Global grants offer us a way to participate in international projects in one or more of our six areas of focus.

As we develop a project idea, we conduct a needs assessment to determine what is needed in the community, the resources required and how they can be accessed, and how to carry out the project collaboratively with Rotarians, partners, and others in the field.

We make sure that our project includes Rotarian involvement, benefits the greatest number of people, and can be maintained by the local residents once it is completed to ensure a long-term effect for the community. We all take comfort in knowing that these steps have been meticulously followed.

And, because of this proper stewardship and accountability, we all continue to contribute our time, talents, and treasure.

You see, it is our Foundation. We are proud of it, and it is truly making a difference in our world! ●



Brian Stoyel
RI Director 2017-19

One of the first discussions on election as Rotary International Director is the location of the Zone 'Institute'. As you will know - in October 2017 - some of us travelled to the beautiful city of Riga in Latvia, but for 2018, after much soul searching, the unique location of Stratford-upon-Avon was chosen. At the same time the name was changed to 'Be The Inspiration' weekend.

In some respects the location is the easy part because we have no idea of the numbers that will attend. However, I can now inform you the number of participants and the chosen venue the Crown Plaza Hotel exceeded our expectations. Thank you to all who attended.

It was a training event for incoming District Governors, the re-enforcement of Foundation ideas, the opportunity to listen to inspirational speakers - we certainly had it all.

Rotary International President Barry Rassin and wife Esther, Foundation Vice Chairman Brenda Cressey and husband Dick made conversation easy - the stories from Rotaract, young Rotarians, experienced Rotarians inspired - performances from local schoolchildren and the Alcester Drama Club stimulated the imagination!

Anyone in the vicinity of the Crown Plaza could not escape the publicity material of Rotary. Rotary GBI certainly put on a memorable few days, enhanced by a new member joining the Arch Klumph Society. It was an experience we shall remember for a long time.

My sincere thanks go to the committee and everyone involved led by Keith Barnard-Jones, and the Rotary GBI staff, under the watchful eye of General Secretary Amanda Watkin.

I have still many tasks to complete, evaluations of our procedures and committees plus areas to visit - Scotland, Ireland and Gibraltar - so with six months to go of my Director journey my upcoming involvement with the International Assembly, Council on Legislation, Rotary GBI Conference and Showcase, the International Convention, Board and committee meetings - so I fear this will swiftly go by.

I am here to be your spokesman on the Board so please keep me up to date with your concerns, ideas and aspirations of where we can take our wonderful organisation. ●



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Born different

Meet Joanne Lockwood, a successful businesswoman, who will become President of her Rotary club later this year. But it's not been easy for Joanne who tells the story of growing up as a male, but always wanting to make the transition to living life as a female.

JOANNE was born in 1965, the son of middle-class parents living in Portsmouth where her father served in the Royal Navy.

By the age of six, this bright and very self-aware youngster was living the life of a young boy, but sharing recurring dreams that one day she would grow older as a woman.

“At the time, I had no reference point that I was trans. I remember doing what any little girl does at that age; trying on mum’s shoes, clothes and make-up.

“For a girl, it is cute and funny. But I realised what I was doing was not the right thing to do. That was the beginning of me keeping things hidden.”

That was the voice of Joanne Lockwood, now 54, chatting in a crowded Portsmouth pub.

She definitely doesn’t stand out from the crowd, wearing a summer dress, sporting neatly manicured nails and a new brunette bob, having dispensed with the blonde look a few months earlier.

For more than 40 years, Joanne has kept this secret – even while serving as National President of Round Table between 2008 and 2009.

More dramatically, even Joanne’s wife and children were unaware, until a few years ago, that this person they loved harboured feelings of being a female born in a man’s body.

“There was no epiphany moment as such. I would describe it as an awakening, an understanding, a realisation, and a momentum,” explained Joanne.

“It was not about sex, or sharing a

fantasy, it was about my identity and what I wanted to do and how I fitted in.”

After leaving school, she joined the RAF as an apprentice technician, worked for the electronics company, Plessey, and the private banking company Coutts, before later setting up her own consultancy.

She married Marie in 1987 and the couple had two children. Yet the feelings would not subside.

“For 40 years, I led this imaginary life.

“I would have these lucid dreams, where I could control myself being a woman in those dreams just doing everyday things. I took comfort from having that subconscious world.”

Then, in the summer of 2012, came the tipping point. According to Joanne, this was the time to bury a lot of bad news in one go and tell her wife of 25 years. Remarkably, the couple stayed together.

Joanne added: “For all of our marriage, and for as long as I could remember, I was wearing women clothes in private. It was when I started showing Marie the other side of me that things changed. We had to keep it a secret from the children and everybody else.

“I was allowed my ‘hobby’. It was like playing golf or going fishing. It was boxed off. Marie would say if you want to go off and play with your friends, that is fine once in a while, but don’t let it interfere.”

Two and a half years ago in 2016, soon after their son had graduated, they told the children. They were stunned and there were tears. A few weeks later, after a bottle or two of Prosecco, Joanne decided to go



Joanne speaking at Social Recruiting Day

public and announce on Facebook who she really was.

“Before all this, I was working away a lot and became comfortable with who I was. I gave myself a name, I created a Facebook account, I met some friends and started to live and function as a woman at weekends or when I was away.

“That comfortableness became real.

“However, the more I allowed myself to be sucked forward by the momentum of this, the more uncomfortable I felt about going back.

“I was being coerced back into my box after a weekend away and I thought I can’t keep going back in the box.”

In February 2017, Joanne sold the business to concentrate on her new life.

That now involves running a business to provide support and awareness around transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. She works with businesses and organisations through running lectures, workshops, as well as conducting audits and consulting.

The statistics are imprecise, but it is believed that one per cent of the



“More dramatically, even Joanne’s wife and children were unaware, until a few years ago, that this person they loved harboured feelings of being a female born in a man’s body.”

population identify as transgender, with around 0.2% who are open or in transition.

“I provide trans-awareness and support to businesses to make other people’s journeys smoother, because I know how difficult it is.”

Joanne now has a fresh and positive outlook on life. This summer, she will become President of Rotary Social

Innovation SEH, based in Portsmouth, Hampshire.

“We’re a collection of local people, forming social enterprises and businesses, who are very supportive of each other,” added Joanne. “In terms of the gender mix, it has a bias towards female.

“More women are creating social enterprises, working in small businesses who want to collaborate, so that’s why Rotary and this organisation resonated.

“It has given us a way of pulling together, to share the whole concept of social enterprise which benefitted the community.

“I hope this article changes the life of a trans person who may be in Rotary already, but who thinks Rotary is not going to accept them because their club is unreceptive at that time.

“Rotary can be an open and inclusive place for other trans people and more inclusive to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community as a whole.” ●



To join Rotary visit: rotarygbi.org



It's a wet and wild world

The Mission Aviation Fellowship has served as a vital lifeline to some of the remotest parts of the world. Dave King talks to pilot Chad Tilley about his work flying to some of the most inaccessible parts of Bangladesh.



FLYING is what Chad Tilley does. Whether it is as piloting a supersonic F15 jet aircraft, or flying aid to remote parts of the world aboard a humble seaplane, they are both jobs which require high technical skills, and nerves of steel.

For seven years, between the two Gulf wars, the 47-year-old from Chicago served in the US Air Force.

But for the past 20 years, he has been working for the charity Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF), which provides a vital lifeline to some of the world's grimmest humanitarian disasters.

He said: "I really liked the military and I still follow my friends who are there.

"But I wanted to use my gifts and skills in aviation to help people in need, and when you fly into somewhere like South Sudan, to a remote community with

a load of medicines, blankets and supplies, you realise what a valuable job you are doing.

"I am a pilot, it is a very technical profession. So when you get up in the morning, bringing health care workers, doctors and volunteers to assist isolated people, some of the poorest people on the planet, you know that if it wasn't for you they would not be physically able to get there. So, for that reason, it is a very rewarding job."

MAF, which is based in Kent, is a charity with a strong Christian ethos which has been operating since 1947, initially flying to Sudan, but then reaching out across some of the remotest parts of Africa.

Today, MAF has grown from a one plane outfit, to a dynamic organisation which flies more than 140 light aircraft to 1,700 destinations.



They describe their mission is to fly spiritual care and physical help to people in need in remote places. “We cross boundaries and overcome barriers,” says MAF in its promotional literature.

Chad is currently based in Bangladesh, one of the wettest places on earth – a country which sits at sea level and endures around 2,000 millimetres of rainfall, caused by the weak tropical depressions which surge across the Bay of Bengal caused by the wet monsoon winds.

That’s why a seaplane – top speed 135 knots - is the best mode of transport to travel around in.

Based near the capital Dhaka, the seaplane chiefly serves four floating hospitals, flying in doctors from the UK and Europe to work with the rural communities. The surgeons can be performing up to 400 surgeries a week on these remote floating hospitals.

“Bangladesh has something like 8,000 kilometres of rivers so we can use the seaplane to go anywhere,” explained Chad.

“Unlike Canada or Alaska where you might find prepared seaplane facilities where you can drop the landing gear and taxi in, there is none of that in Bangladesh.

“It comes down to someone’s skill to get in or out of these rural communities. Flying a fighter plane is great, but once you have flown a seaplane, you don’t want to fly much else after that.

“It is fun, and in Bangladesh it is an amazing tool which can serve anywhere in the country.”

“

“Bangladesh has something like 8,000 kilometres of rivers so we can use the seaplane to go anywhere”

The seaplanes are a life link to these communities. Often, after a major cyclone has hit a region, Chad and his team will be among the first to reach a ravaged region, bringing supplies and working with the Bangladesh government and relief agencies to assess need.

It is a tough job. “Some of the stories you hear are heart-breaking,” reflected Chad. “You are floating on the riverbank and you can see the devastation in the community.

“You hear about the 12 foot high wall of water which washed through their village.

“People are coming up to the aircraft crying, telling you stories about which child they had to choose to save.

“They may have one child in their arms and another holding onto their leg in the water. They have to make a choice.

“I am a father of five children, so when I hear these stories my heart is breaking.” Flying is, of course, not without

its dangers. For the pilots, surveying the miles and miles of flooded land, it’s difficult to discern where the actual river is. And with the ever-changing weather in Bangladesh, modern computerised weather information is a god-send.

Chad also spent some time working from Kenya, and flying into South Sudan as part of the United Nations’ ‘Operation Lifeline’ when there was a war taking place. His plane, bringing in aid, was shot at, but Chad used his military experience to ensure they were safe.

Other mercy flights over war-torn countries have not been so lucky.

“I really enjoy my job,” said Chad.

“We work with 105 different organisations and wherever I go around the world I enjoy seeing different organisations helping people in need in different ways; health, education, water sanitation, disaster response, relief and development.

“What I did in the military and what I do now is very similar. It is about being on a mission. In the military you have an objective and a purpose, the same here in Bangladesh.

“I am using my skills here to assist people who would not have the help if they did not have the organisation.” ●

 To find out more visit: www.maf-uk.org



The Phantom returns

ROY BUDD was a renowned composer and a Rotarian who died of a brain haemorrhage just weeks before the premiere in London of one of his most ambitious musical projects.

In 1993, Roy had completed the score to Rupert Julian's classic 1920s film 'The Phantom of the Opera'. But the scheduled performance was cancelled when he suddenly died aged 47.

It wasn't until nearly a quarter of a century later when Roy's widow, Sylvia, fulfilled his dream and the moving masterpiece was performed at the London Coliseum in October 2017.

Now, for only the second ever performance, Roy Budd's 'Phantom' score will be heard once again at the Barbican on March 18th, where it should have received its premiere 25 years ago.

Roy, who provided the musical score to a host of films including 'Get Carter', 'Paper Tiger', 'The Sea Wolves' and 'Who Dares Wins' was a member of Rotary London, and so all proceeds from the performance will go towards the End Polio Now campaign.

It will be performed by the Docklands Sinfonia, conducted by Spencer Down.

Producer Nick Hocart said: "I am excited to work with Spencer Down and Docklands Sinfonia again.

"To be presenting Roy's work in the

Barbican, where it was due to premiere 25 years ago, is history in the making."

Sylvia Budd revealed that her husband had originally planned to perform 'Phantom of the Opera' 25 years ago at the Barbican in aid of UNICEF.

"Because it was supposed to be a charity event, there was no question that 'our' performance at the Barbican would be a charity event as well," admitted Sylvia.

"I have followed Rotary's fight against Polio for many years and have always been very touched by its work and the effect its work has had on the African community.



Composer Roy Budd

I feel proud to be able to support this cause."

She added: "When Roy passed away, I promised to finish his work for him. It took me many years to find the energy to actively start working on a concert of the 'Phantom,' since Roy's death left me in great shock.

"I then started restoring the print of the film which was a long and arduous process.

"I had such a great respect for what Roy had written that I felt the enormous responsibility on my shoulders.

"After the restoration was finished and the technical problems solved, I started looking for a producer since I couldn't finance a performance myself.

"Through sheer luck I met Nick Hocart who had just produced his first film. We became friends and when I told him of my dream to get the 'Phantom' performed, we decided to embark on this project together."

Eve Conway, Vice Chairman of Rotary International's End Polio Now: Countdown to History Campaign Committee, said: "We would like to thank Sylvia for this wonderful gesture to help Rotary in our Purple4Polio campaign to End Polio Now and forever.

"We have never been closer to making history by eradicating only the second human disease ever and achieving Rotary's goal of a polio-free world." ●

i Roy Budd's 'Phantom' score will be heard at the Barbican on March 18th

For tickets, visit: www.barbican.org.uk Special VIP £100 tickets are available which, as well as the best seats in the house, also provide an opportunity to meet Sylvia Budd, the conductor and production team after the performance. These tickets are only available from Rotarian Janine Birtwistle at: pauljannine@icloud.com

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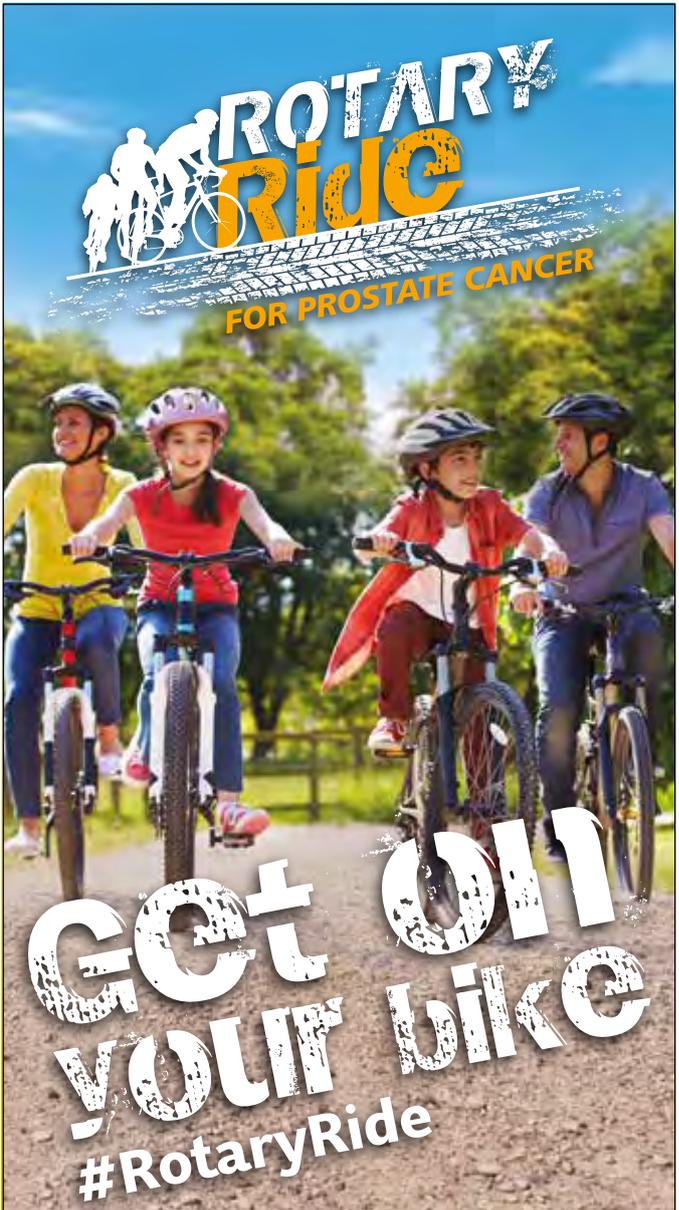
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For more information contact info@rotarygbi.org



Rotary Ride supports Prostate Cancer UK, Prostate Scotland, Prostate Cymru and The Irish Cancer Society along with local prostate cancer charities.

It's showcase Nottingham

THE city of Nottingham will be hosting this year's Rotary GBI conference – but with a twist.

In a bid to bring together a number of Rotary competitions which have traditionally sat outside of the conference, as well as making the event appealing to non-Rotarians, the three-day gathering has been re-titled: the Rotary Conference and Showcase.

Running from Friday 10th to Sunday, 12th May, this 94th annual gathering of Rotarians from across Great Britain and Ireland will be centred on the Royal Concert Hall which lies in the heart of Nottingham city centre.

Saturday morning will have a focus on Rotary's work at home and abroad, featuring Lorin LaFave from The Breck Foundation, a charity which raises awareness of internet safety, particularly for children.

Also sharing the stage at the Royal Concert Hall will be Lea Milligan from the international development organisation Mercy Ships UK, as well a representative from the Rotary-backed international aid charity, ShelterBox.

Running alongside that session on the Saturday, there will be a slavery symposium entitled 'Ending Slavery In Our Communities' taking place at the nearby Albert Hall.

Organised by the University of Nottingham Rights Lab, this all-day event will focus on tackling modern slavery with some of the world's leading experts in human trafficking. There will be a specific afternoon session for Rotary members to attend.

As an alternative option on Saturday afternoon, the Royal Concert Hall will host a session called 'Polio – Nearly There!' which will see Polio through the eyes of a Polio survivor.

Speakers will include Rotary Purple4Polio Ambassadors Julia Roberts and Colin Powell. This inspirational afternoon will feature clips from the acclaimed Hollywood film 'Breathe', which brought polio to a new global audience.

And then on the Sunday, the final session of the conference entitled 'Let Youth Be Heard' culminates with the national Youth Speaks final and the annual Rotary Young Citizen Awards.

Other key features of the weekend will be:

- Showcase exhibition – highlighting some of Rotary's amazing projects at home and abroad across all three days.
- Meet the Presidents – an informal Friday afternoon of tea and cake with the Rotary International President, Barry Rassin, and Rotary GBI President, Debbie Hodge.
- Foundation lunch – a Saturday 'grab and go' lunch with proceeds going to The Rotary Foundation.
- Rotary at the Races dinner – a three-course Saturday night dinner with keynote speaker, RI President, Barry Rassin, plus music and dancing at Colwick Hall next to Nottingham Racecourse. ●

For more information visit: rotarygbi.org

Rotary
Great Britain & Ireland



NOTTINGHAM
2019



Do you know your blood pressure?

FOR every 10 people diagnosed with high blood pressure, seven remain undiagnosed and untreated - that is more than 5.5 million people in England alone.

With Rotary's support via Know Your Blood Pressure events, the Stroke Association is able to reach those at the highest risk.

The Know Your Blood Pressure (KYBP) campaign helps people to understand the link between high blood pressure and stroke, as well as other risk factors and, crucially, what they can do to reduce their risk of having a stroke.

KYBP events are held in community settings across the UK offering free blood pressure testing, stroke prevention information and friendly advice.

In 2018, Rotary clubs ran 318 KYBP events across the UK, and in past years this has contributed to the Stroke Association's yearly totals of approximately

2,000 events and 50,000 blood pressure tests, where 23% of all attendees have been signposted to their GPs following a high blood pressure reading.

The 2019 KYBP Day is on Saturday, April 13th, but you can register to hold an event in the surrounding weeks, as well as throughout the rest of the year.

If you would like to organise your own KYBP event, you can visit the website below, which will tell you everything you need to know and do to successfully hold a KYBP event: www.stroke.org.uk/kybp

Once you're registered, you'll receive an updated welcome pack, with our event guidelines and a materials order form enclosed.

The Rotary Promotional Toolkit and Rotary Social Media Guide include some handy tips for promoting your event both online and offline.

Make sure you register you event and order updated materials at least 4 weeks in advance. This will help the Stroke

Association to ensure you have everything you need.

Get in touch if you have any queries about the campaign. Contact the Stroke Association's prevention team by emailing kybp@stroke.org.uk or call 01527 908918.

Stroke Prevention is one of several health and wellbeing campaigns that Rotary clubs across Great Britain and Ireland are involved in.

Why not consider joining forces with other groups in your community to host a Rotary-sponsored health fair and use the opportunity to run your KYBP sessions alongside promoting blood and organ donation, abdominal aortic aneurysm screening, defibrillators, prostate cancer, dementia research and raising awareness of mental health issues. ●

 For more information on the Rotary Health and Wellbeing projects visit: www.rotarygbi.org

LATEST NEWS FROM AROUND GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND

PEDAL POWER

ROTARY Ireland has expanded its commitment to collecting, refurbishing and delivering unwanted bikes to school children in Africa giving them the chance of a better life.

The School Bikes Africa project now includes bicycles to benefit younger students from the age of four.

This major project is now into its sixth year and has to date provided around 3,000 young people in The Gambia with the ability to get to school.

Monica Robertson, District Governor for Rotary Ireland is excited to be driving the project forward. She said: "Our School Bikes Africa project is one which we are incredibly proud of.

"Not only are we helping thousands of students get an education, we are also supporting the Irish Prison Service in the rehabilitation of prisoners and helping to eliminate the need for the disposal of bikes into landfill sites.

"Until now, we have only provided older children in secondary education with bikes, but we are now delighted to open this up to younger children."

"Children in Africa, especially those in rural areas, often have a very long way to travel to get to school, perhaps even walking up to 20km in a day.

"Having a bike will allow a child to get a better education, meaning they can better provide for their families and lead a more fulfilled life.

"We believe that the long-term effects of this project will have a huge and positive impact on the children and their families, but we have a long way to go and we can't do this without the public's help."

Partnering with Loughan House Open Centre, an open low security prison in County Cavan, Rotary Ireland is also helping to make a difference locally by playing an important role in the rehabilitation of prisoners who are proud to give something back to society.

Cian is one of the prisoners involved in the project. He said he gets a thrill by being involved in a project which helps others.

He said: "I love working on the School Bikes Africa project.

"We are a real team and work together like a close family. It gives us a purpose, as five days a week we get to work from 8am to 4pm and we have even gained City and Guilds qualifications.

"It's nice knowing that the work we do here puts a big smile on the face of a kid in Africa and that we are doing something really good for someone else."

Loughan House Open Centre Assistant Governor, Jimmy Keely, says the project has given the prisoners a real sense of community and something to be proud of as they help to make a positive impact on the lives of the young people in Africa.

Rotary Ireland is looking for decent sturdy bikes with a wheel span no smaller than 12 inches. Ideally, the tyres will be thick to deal with the terrain in Africa.

Donations are also welcome as each bike requires £15 / €15 to cover the cost of refurbishment and transport to Africa. ●

"It's nice knowing that the work we do here puts a big smile on the face of a kid in Africa and that we are doing something really good for someone else."



 To donate visit: www.rotary.ie

DICTIONARY CORNER

FOR the 11th year running, Rotary Wylde Green has been supporting the national literacy programme with its Dictionaries For Life project.

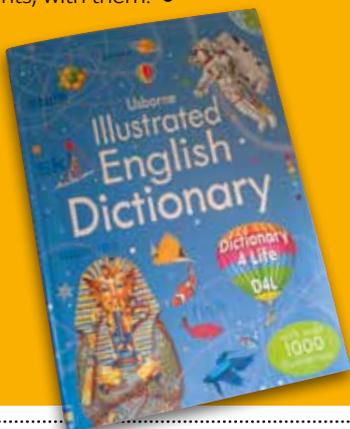
This year the club, which is based in Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, has funded the project in partnership with the Aviva Community Fund, donating 318 dictionaries to schools in the area.

The project reflects the priorities of the Rotary International movement nationally by gifting dictionaries to pupils in local schools.

Amy Coshan, a teacher at Wylde Green Primary School, said: "Year 6 were extremely grateful for the Rotary club to come in and donate the dictionaries to them.

"It is something that we look forward to each year. The Rotary club has carried out this tradition for a number of years and we hope that it will continue for the foreseeable future.

"No doubt we will be involved in more activities, including sporting events, with them." ●



A HELPING HAND FROM HOSPITAL



A SCHEME called 'Home from Hospital Packs' has been launched to provide support to predominately older people, being discharged from the Caterham Dene Hospital in Surrey.

The initiative has been developed by a joint working group involving Rotary Caterham, Surrey County Council's Adult Social Care Team in Tandridge and Waitrose Caterham.

The need was identified by the Adult Social Care Team based at Caterham Dene Hospital who had observed that a number of patients often living alone were arriving home without having the bare essentials of items such as milk, tea, bread, breakfast cereal and toothpaste.

A process has now been set up where the hospital will advise both Rotary Caterham and Waitrose of a patient being discharged.

The aim will be to fill a special shopping bag straightaway and for the goods to be given to the person on discharge from the hospital.

Marnie Cotterill, Social Care Development Co-ordinator with Tandridge Social Care Team, said: "We are really grateful to the Caterham Rotary Club and Waitrose & Partners for supporting this idea.

"It will really benefit those in need at a time when they may feel at their most vulnerable and ensure a more comfortable first 24 hours following their discharge from hospital." ●

SKILLS FOR LIFE

ROTARY Paddington has become involved in a new project which is providing women with the skills to create a better future for themselves.

The first group of participants graduated from the 'MyLifeMix' course at the Portobello Business Centre, which is a corporate member of Rotary Paddington.

The club is working in an arc of deprivation which extends from North Westminster to North Kensington which includes local council wards which are among the top five most deprived in

the UK. Mac Purcell from Rotary Paddington, pointed out that the MyLifeMix project is the first incoming Global Grant into the London Rotary District. Their international partner is Rotary Carpi in Italy.

He said: "The idea of the course is to help and assist women who have caring responsibilities to create a better future for themselves, be it a business, or provide them with the skills and confidence to improve their circumstances.

"The first session has just finished. The candidates are enthusiastic and keen to make the most of the course and I have received many thank you messages for Rotary providing the opportunity for change." ●

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A defibrillator is a medical device. It needs **Governance** to make sure you meet all liabilities, and appropriate storage to ensure the safe keeping, with regular maintenance and checks to keep it in working order. It is not a TV you just buy from the internet, and then forget, or something where you buy the cheapest available, just to tick the box. This is about saving lives.

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SOCIAL MEDIA CREATES SOLUTIONS

NETWORKING and social media has helped Rotary to support two valuable projects in various parts of the world.

Jane Walker MBE from the Southampton-based charity, Purple Community Fund, spoke at the District 1060 (Heart of England) conference in Southport about the need for school uniforms in the Philippines, after major fires had destroyed everything.

Coincidentally, David Hartley from Rotary Maghull and Aughton in Merseyside heard Jane's speech which he shared on Facebook.

This post was picked up by another Rotarian, Liz Tonge, who is a trustee of the Ugandan-based charity, Pearl of Africa Child Care.

Her husband, Dave, had just been given four boxes of brand new uniforms from a supplier, which could not be sold because of the school changing its emblem.

"Unfortunately, the colours weren't suitable for us to take, so the uniforms were sitting in a garage," explained Liz, who is a member of Rotary Ormskirk Clocktower in West Lancashire.

"To cut a long story short, I saw the Facebook post, contacted David Hartley, who spoke to Jane and it was decided the uniforms could be used.

"The problem was how to get them to Southampton. Again, Facebook came to the rescue. I put out an appeal, and a friend of a friend got in touch to say he was moving house from Southport to Southampton and could squeeze the boxes on to the van."

The uniforms are now on a container ship bound for the Philippines. They will be given to the children living in the shanty towns there who have nothing as a result of the fires which destroyed their homes." ●

MINDFUL ROTARY



SIX Rotary clubs in Dorset have joined forces to support a child mental health project in the county.

Following a rise in child mental health, Dorset Mind approached Rotary to seek its support.

Rotary member, Mike Dwyer, explained the charity had recently launched a new programme, 'Dorset Mind Your Head'.

It reaches young people aged 11 to 25 in the local area with mental health problems.

Keen to support, Mike brought up the matter at a quarterly meeting to members across Bournemouth, Poole and the heritage town of Christchurch.

Six clubs opted in to help the local charity to extend its service.

Volunteering alongside Dorset Mind, the team has nearly raised £20,000 towards the plans and strategy of the organisation. This involved successfully acquiring a Rotary Foundation grant.

All donations raised are benefitting schools with an experienced Project Leader.

Dorset Mind's Chief Executive, Marianne Storey commented, "We're so grateful to the six local Rotary clubs that have helped fund our Project Manager.

"National evidence states that one in ten children and young people aged five to 16-years-old are known to live with a diagnosable mental health condition." ●

X MARKS THE SPOT

YOU'VE heard of treasure hunts, but now a Rotary e-Club is planning one with a difference to raise funds for charity.

The Rotary e-Club of Innovation was chartered in 2014 and meets online weekly.

One of its major challenges has been to identify sustainable projects to raise funds for The Rotary Foundation and/or other charities.

So now the club have come up with an original fundraiser - a treasure hunt which can be carried out from your own home using internet search engines and Google Earth.

Their initial game will include several puzzles with cryptic clues that lead

to answers which may be related to anywhere or anything in the world.

But they are looking to develop the project. The Rotary e-Club of Innovation is looking for volunteers to help trial the treasure hunt in February/March before it is launched worldwide.

The hunt will run for three weeks, giving plenty of time for clue solving.

An optional donation of £5 is suggested for each participant.

With the project carrying little by way of overheads, virtually all donations raised will be passed to The Rotary Foundation." ●

i To register your interest please email: adme@virtual-treasure-hunt.com

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LENDING A FRIENDLY EAR

THE friendship between a doctor and his patient has helped develop a Rotary-inspired project in Uganda.

Luton North Rotary member, Paul Denton, was a patient for nearly 30 years with Dr Paul Choudhury, who a few years ago retired from full-time practice in Bedfordshire.

Dr Choudhury, who is also an Honorary Member of the Luton club, chose the moment to set up a project called the Ian Hutcheon Clinic for Children based at the Kisugu Health Centre in Kampala, Uganda.

They have trained nurses in Kisugu to provide free ear care services for children and running outreach clinics in the slum areas of Kampala.

With the help of Paul and Rotary Luton North, they have now obtained a Global Grant to fund an ambulance which will provide a mobile clinic which has been the focal point of the hearing screening programme.

And the partnership has paved the way for a Vocational Training Team of two UK audiologists flying out to Uganda to provide a training programme for screeners, audiologists and nurses.

It also allowed them to buy equipment, including the installation of Visual Reinforcement Audiometry. This is a behavioural test of hearing for small children.

Dr Choudhury said: "The purchase of this equipment now means that we are the only clinic in Uganda offering the full pathway of hearing tests for children aged 0-16 years.

"We have started a two-year pilot newborn hearing screening programme, and we are screening about 350 babies per month in two health centres."

As a result of the Rotary VTT programme, they have employed three more staff, and the hearing project will help 700 children each year. ●

MILES OF SMILES



THESE are the happy, smiling faces of children in Ukraine who were given an extra, special Christmas thanks to Rotarians from Great Britain and Ireland.

Since the Rotary Shoebox Scheme first began, one million boxes have been sent to underprivileged children in Eastern Europe.

Just before Christmas, the charity delivered 14,362 boxes packed with festive gifts to the Ukrainian capital, Kiev. Last year alone, 49,000 Rotary shoeboxes were dispatched to Eastern Europe.

Rotarian Clive Gardiner reported that in the run-up to Christmas, they had received so many shoeboxes, that they sent out a further 7,000 boxes each to Chisinau in Moldova and to Iasi in Romania in January.

He said: "We also are extremely

grateful to the Rotary clubs that organise teams of members to sort the boxes into types, and pack them ready for shipment at the warehouse.

"They come from Rotary Districts 1180, 1190 and 1285, but more volunteers are always welcomed."

The Rotary Shoebox Scheme originally started in 1994, when Rotary clubs in the north-west started collecting shoeboxes full of gifts for the people in the Romanian town of Iasi, situated in the north-east of the country.

Since then, the scheme has become a national project supported not only by Rotary clubs, but also by individuals, schools, companies, churches, Inner Wheel, Rotaract and Interact. ●

i For more information: www.rotaryshoebox.org

TEE-RIFFIC!

GOLF'S next Open champion could very well be the product of a Rotary-backed coaching scheme in Scotland.

Rotary Kilmarnock has been supporting a series of introductory golf sessions which has been run by the Fields in Trust, formerly the National Playing Fields Association, and also supported by East Ayrshire Education Authority.

The coaching is aimed at young secondary school pupils from the

Kilmarnock area and the final event session of the season featured students from the Grange and Loudoun Academies.

The series has been run successfully for several years. The PGA professional for this event was Billie Lockie, formerly a professional with the Kilmarnock Barassie Golf Club, who provided an interesting mix of fun and challenging tasks for the pupils, hopefully leading to a long term interest in the game. ●

SAFER ROADS



THE Garda Commissioner in Ireland has launched a campaign, in conjunction with Rotary, to reduce the number of deaths on the roads this winter.

Drew Harris visited Kilbeggan in County Westmeath where the Rotary Club of Tullamore & District is working with emergency services to distribute 40,000 high-visibility vests and stickers to primary school children in Laois, Offaly and Westmeath.

The police chief has lent his support to the initiative following reports that 35% of all childhood deaths in Ireland are because of road traffic accidents. Half of these juvenile deaths are pedestrians. And over 60% of injured children are injured on the road, either walking or cycling.

Trauma and orthopaedic surgeons from the Midland Regional Hospital in

Tullamore are supporting the 'Be Safe, Be Seen' initiative.

Speaking at the launch, Mr Harris described the campaign as a very welcome initiative.

He said: "We all have a role to play in road safety. This is a collective responsibility and we must continue to work together to reduce road deaths and serious injury.

"We will play our role through enforcement, education and supporting road safety projects such as 'Be Safe, Be Seen'.

"Individuals and communities can also make a major difference to road safety, and that's why today's initiative is so important.

"This community-led initiative will enhance road safety in the midlands, particularly among children, and I want to congratulate everyone involved." ●

DANCING DIZZY

WHO would have thought it possible to Bollywood dance to a country music band playing 'Coming Round the Mountain'?

However, in pursuit of funds for its school project in India, that is exactly how Milton Keynes Rotary Satellite ended its East Meets West evening fundraiser.

The fundraising is refurbishing and equipping a school in Patna in north-east India. Jill Moss, chair of the club, explained that the project was initially suggested by two members who had returned from a visit to their homeland.

That was the spark to set up a project,

with Chanakya Rotary, Patna, acting as the host club for a Foundation Global Grant application.

With fundraising taking place in earnest, a letter has been written to the educational authorities asking their permission to refurbish the school, improve sanitation and install classroom furniture.

Fifteen computers will be securely housed at a nearby private school for the sole use of Jinpura students, along with an IT teacher employed to run a basic computer literacy course, who will also train staff from Jinpura. ●

SOARING ACHIEVEMENT

ROTARY Elland has been honoured at the Yorkshire Air Ambulance Recognition Awards 2018 where they received the award for West Yorkshire Community Group of the Year 2018.

Accepting the award in behalf of the club members, President Chris Blakey said the club was humbled and honoured to receive it.

Over the last three years the club has raised an estimated £16,000 towards keeping the air ambulance flying.

This has come through a range of events from Santa's Sleigh collections at the supermarkets to the air ambulance landing at the Elland Community Fair.

The Yorkshire Air Ambulance Charity relies on the generosity of individuals and organisations to help save lives across the vast county.

As a charity, it only receives help through the secondment of paramedics from the NHS, through the Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

To keep both of Yorkshire's air ambulances in the air it needs to raise £12,000 per day. This is equivalent to £4.4 million per year.

As a rapid response air emergency service, the charity serves a population of approximately five million people across four million acres.

Their two air ambulances operate from The Nostell Priory Estate near Wakefield and RAF Topcliffe near Thirsk, and together both aircraft cover the whole of the region. ●

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Pushing the boundaries

CRITICISM is something few take kindly to. As an editor, I've always welcomed feedback – positive or negative – because, quite frankly, it shows someone has read your publication by taking the trouble to write.

And if you really want to engage with your audience, shouldn't you be listening?

So the letter published in this issue (page 24) from Colchester Rotarian, Tony Willson, throws up thought-provoking issues about where Rotary's priorities lie.

Tony describes October's issue of *Rotary* as "not happy reading".

This was the issue where I reported on a Rotary project working with offenders at HM Prison Parc in Bridgend, addressed domestic violence from the perspective of a Swindon Rotarian, who is also the High Sheriff of Wiltshire, and looked at the Rotary-based Shelter Bus project for the homeless in Birmingham.

"While I accept all three subjects are important," writes Tony, "I personally do not think that it is Rotary's remit to tackle them as they are massive problems in themselves."

It is an interesting point, I would be interested in your take on this too. Please write in. The obvious question is: what issues should be within Rotary's remit?

Should we be ignoring the thorny subjects of law and order and homelessness, and instead focus on traditional areas of Rotary work – polio, responding to humanitarian disasters and engaging with community projects, both at home and abroad?

To my mind the answer is definitely no. We should be doing both. Rotary has to reach out to those uncomfortable corners of our communities if we are to remain relevant. Moreso than ever.

In a speech given at the Rotary Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon just before Christmas, Rotary International President, Barry Rassin, highlighted the loss of 300,000 members worldwide over the last two years – though, in fairness, Rotary has balanced that with an equal gain in members in that time.

Barry lamented the lack of women in the organisation, and focussed on a need to recruit younger professionals by bridging the gap between Rotaract and Rotary.

Wise words, indeed, but what is Rotary offering to attract these young professionals?

Yes, there is the End Polio Now campaign but, while it has been extremely successful, it has not exactly been a fruitful membership driver over the past 30 years.

The polio campaign has given Rotary an identity, but it is not our *raison d'être*.

Yes, Rotary International has to finish the job, now and in the years following, since polio will always be on our watch.

So we have to look beyond polio.

We should not be frightened to tackle other equally important, trickier and non-traditional issues which lie closer to home.

That's what will drive membership. If you don't believe me, ask someone under 40 what issues matter to them. Seriously!

In this month's *Rotary* we examine cyber bullying. In April we will deal with modern slavery, June's issue of the magazine looks at cleaning our beaches of plastics, then in August we assess the moral maze of organ donation through the eyes of a 10-year-old.

They're not fluffy, they're not sexy, but these are all gritty issues which should sit high on our modern agenda.

If Rotary is to remain relevant, if Rotary is to rally to Barry Rassin's call to attract more people to our organisation, dynamic individuals who want to get involved with projects, and who care about their communities, then we should not be afraid to re-sharpen our focus. ●



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