Rotary Club of Camrose Daybreak

EyeOpener January 12, 2021 Namaste Direct

January is Vocational Service Month

Odell opened the meeting with a video of *O Canada* for 14 members and guest Desiree Lyons

Harry offered Michael Moore’s new YouTube podcast – *The Terrorist Attack is NOT Over* - as worth watching. Odell will offer **Food for Thought** next week.

**Announcements**

* Spring Learning session Monday, January 19, 5 to 7 pm for Club and Rotaract President-Elects is open to any member. Leadership resources will be the focus. Register through the District website
* Fall learning session recordings are available on the District website under the For Rotarians menu in the Virtual Learning Library tab
* There are only a few Rotary Cares tickets available. First $1,000 draw is January 25th. Proceeds are used to fund Air and Army cadets as well as other youth initiatives in Camrose. Let me, 587.322.2555, know if you or a friend wants a ticket

**Happy (and some sad) Bucks**

* Camrose, Alberta and Canada are great places to live
* 2-year anniversary at library and milestone birthday
* Ski trails have exceptional groomers, skiing is fantastic
* Loss of Calgary police officer was tragic. All you hear about his character and impact is true
* Healthcare system provided compassionate, thoughtful care at a difficult time
* In aftermath of brutal snowstorm in Britain, picture emerged of a smartly dressed lady in a full-length red fox coat, brought back memories
* Enjoyable six weeks in Brampton coming to an end

**Presentation** – *Namaste Direct*, Desiree Lyons

Namaste Direct economically empowers women in Guatemala, who despite facing immense odds, have managed to start small businesses to support themselves and their families. Desiree Lyons is their Director of Development. Based in San Francisco, she is the only staff member not based in Guatemala.

Civil war and dictatorships that ended in the 90s has shaped the need for a program like Namaste Direct. 60% of the population lives in poverty, 50% of children are malnourished, only 19% of the labour force are women, women earn only 51% of what men earn and indigenous women earn only 54% of what non-indigenous women earn. Namaste Direct focuses their microloans and business education program on non-indigenous women with small businesses. The 160 women they are currently serving have an average age of 42, have an education level of 4 years, have an illiteracy rate of 26%, 21% are single mothers and the women have been in business an average of 7 years.

Namaste Direct has 13 staff that work with the women in 9-month cycles to provide business training and coaching leading to microloans up to $5,000 to invest in their business. Progress is monitored and measured so decisions can be data driven. In 2019, women in their first cycle increased profits in their businesses by 40 to 45 percent, those in a second cycle increased 100 percent and those in a third cycle 150 to 200 percent.

The March imposition of border closings and travel restriction devasted all of the businesses. Many offer goods and services to tourists who come for the major holidays in March and April. Travel restrictions limited in-person visits and changes were made to maintain the program. Emergency cash grants for medicine, food and rent were available, loan repayment grace period, interest reductions and other measures were implemented. Through restructuring and pivoting, businesses by July 15% were earning a profit and by October 93% were increasing their profit month to month. Many now provide goods and services to the local market.

Namaste Direct’s Value Chain demonstrates how contributions from donors make an impact in the community. Contributions are used to provide business training and coaching, the women apply the skills they learn to increase profits in their businesses, more money is spent on the family. The family and community benefit through better education for the children, better family nutrition, ability to pay for health care, better housing and community leadership.

Namatste Direct is currently rolling out a program funded through a $150,000 Rotary Global Grant (their 8th Rotary grant). A Global Grant proposal to pilot an online program to 275 women in a new region is underway.

For more information about Namaste Direct, you can contact Desiree at [desiree@namastedirect.org](mailto:desiree@namastedirect.org).

**Reminders**

* January 19 – Club Zoom meeting, 7:00 am – Joshua Hagel, Hockey School/Personal Training
* January 26 – Club Zoom meeting, 7:00 am – Robyn Gray, My Year in Germany

Alan closed the meeting leading us in the *Four Way Test*

Morris

587.322.2555

**Rotary Joins Leaders | Rotarians Share Ideas | Rotarians Take Action**