



# Spinofff

ROTARY CLUB OF WEST OTTAWA  
Caroline DeWitt, President

*February 16 2021 Editor: Rob Shaw-Wood  
Online meeting*

**Program:** Welcoming Refugee Claimants and providing furniture at Matthew House

## Meeting Video

[https://youtu.be/h\\_IzhbYPWJA](https://youtu.be/h_IzhbYPWJA)

## The Meeting Begins

**President Caroline DeWitt** opened the 31st meeting of this Rotary Year, and 42nd meeting on-line, at 12:35 PM. She reminded us that today in the Christian calendar was Shrove Tuesday- Mardi Gras in French- the day before Lent begins. She then played the O Canada video, featuring Michelle, Monique and Michael Greber, against a backdrop of changing Canadian landscape images.

**Invocation: Ken Murray** recited to us a take-off on Kipling's "If" : if one can master modern day challenges such as starting the day without caffeine, having the same food every day, and relaxing without alcohol they are probably the family dog.

Today's **Toastmaster Joshua Gray** proposed a toast to Rotary International (RI) President-elect 2021-2022 Shekhar Mehta who has had an outstanding record of service in his home country of India. Mehta has worked closely with the Indian Government to implement important infrastructure projects. His maxim is "service is the rent I pay." His objective will be to grow the Rotary membership and challenge members to aspire to greater things. (see Mehta's theme address <https://portal.clubrunner.ca/3465/Stories/shekhar-mehta-ri-president-elect-message-2021-2021>) Mehta is inviting all Rotarians to join him for coffee on March 13. (See how all things, even hosting coffee for millions, become possible in our time of plague.)

## Announcements:

**Guests:** our two presenters, Doreen Katto and Allan Ressor-McDowell; Keith Nixon and Copal Afie (guests of **DG Hadi Mortada**), Hung Chu (guest of **Ron Scott**),

**Birthday greetings Feb 18 to Marcia Armstrong**

**President Caroline**, as in last week's meeting, again named and welcomed members new this year and listed current members who joined in January and February in previous years

1. Again for February as Rotary Peace and Conflict Prevention month a video was played that featured Rotary Peace Fellows telling what they have been doing since their peace studies. Consult the District 7040 website for information on applying for Peace Fellow and Global Grant scholarships. The deadline for application is April 15.

2. District Governor **Hadi Mortada** reviewed elements of best governance practices in grant administration and then honoured the late **Bud McGinnis** for his legacy gift to The Rotary Foundation (TRF) which placed him in Level 1 of major donors.

3. Adventure in Citizenship is scheduled for May 2-5 this year and RYLA for May 28-30. **Ron Doll** is our contact for the first event, and **Jill Yarnell** for the second.

4. We are encouraged to donate meeting fees to the TRF or our Club foundation and/or local food banks and other charities.

7. The Rotary Club of Orleans will present a Wine and Cheese evening on February 26 from 7.00 to 9.00 pm, featuring Sommelier David Caird. The charge will be \$50 per person. Additional information will be forthcoming in an email message.

### **The Presentation**

The Matthew House (<https://www.matthewhouseottawa.org>) is a local charity organization with Christian roots based on Matthew 25:35 serving refugees and families needing furniture in the Ottawa area. With video clip of Mardi Gras in Malta as his backdrop **Larry Chop** introduced our speakers,

Allan Reesor-McDowell is Executive Director of Matthew House. He grew up in the Toronto area but studies and work have taken him to the U.S, Haiti, England, as well as to many shorter stints across the Middle East, Central America, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Prior to serving at Matthew House, he worked as a manager for Mennonite Central Committee in various fundraising, communications, and program roles. He holds an MSc in Development Studies from the University of London.

Doreen Katto worked with UNDP and the Office of the Prime Minister in Uganda as National Coordinator for Disaster Management. She holds an M.A in Development Studies from Erasmus University of Rotterdam, and a B.A in Sociology from Nkumba University in Uganda. Doreen arrived in Canada as a refugee in 2017 and is very passionate about social justice and human dignity. As a newcomer, she benefited from the good will of strangers and this inspired her to serve with Matthew House.

Allan began his talk by explaining that Matthew House has been in existence for eleven years, providing a range of services to vulnerable refugees, and running a furniture bank for people who need furniture. Furniture clients, normally 700 per year, visit the Matthew House showroom to select their new home furnishings.

Refugees who do not benefit from government or private sponsorship rely on Matthew House for more intensive 24 hour-a-day care for 3 to 4 months on average. This includes food and accommodation and individual support in terms of filing official documentation, obtaining legal and medical services, employment assistance and language training. Since 2010, some 280 individuals have benefitted from this care. Doreen spoke of the needs of this latter group. They tend to be very anxious and vulnerable at the outset of their time in Canada, and need the comfort of a family atmosphere. Normally, Matthew House relies on 50 volunteers as well as part time staff. COVID restrictions have caused a drop in volunteers, with the result that part -time hires have increased.

During the question period, **Nigel Lever** was told Covid has doubled the time live-in refugees need intensive assistance to 7-8 months. **Bob Harrison** was told that the information on donating furniture is posted on their website. Drop off at their Kanata facility is currently by appointment only. Furniture donations can also be picked up by their truck for a nominal fee. Income tax receipts are provided for all donations.

Answering **Don Butler** Allan said that Matthew House has a 6000 sq ft for furniture storage but pressures on this space are acute particularly in the Spring and Summer, and now as well because other charities are no longer accepting furniture because of COVID. They could easily double their existing business activity with increased storage and hauling capacity. **Tom Belton** congratulated our speakers for the work they do. From his experience in related work, he knew that supplying furniture and refugee support were important services. **Sue Dalati** inquired how our Rotary club could assist Matthew House. Allan answered that help in making their services better known would be welcome. Also welcome were donations of cash (and food after checking first for specific needs as they do not want to compete with food banks). Allan said their expenses last year were only \$425000. He promised that the money they receive will go a long way. They also welcome volunteers (see <https://www.matthewhouseottawa.org/volunteer>) To **Joshua Gray** on employment support measures, and with which organizations they work closely Doreen replied that the YMCA and Employment Ontario were their primary counterparts.

### **Happy Dollars**

was entrusted yet again to our rusty, trusty Sergeant-at-arms **Rob Shaw-Wood** (also today's Spinoff editor).

**Ron Doll** pleased that his granddaughter at the University of Ottawa had made the Dean's list.

**DG Hadi Mortada** 1) the District Conference likely to be moved from this Fall (October 21) to the Spring of 2022.

2) In honour of Rotary's 116<sup>th</sup> birthday on February 23, District 3232 of South India is leading an initiative called "The Sun Never Sets on Rotary." It will comprise a 24 hour marathon on Zoom that will feature 90 minute segments by different clubs/districts around the globe. District 7040 will conduct a segment between 4.30 and 6.00 pm on Tuesday. Participate by registering at [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEumrrDoiGNFRk8Xv5VnGT\\_X3mq-Uy-WJ](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEumrrDoiGNFRk8Xv5VnGT_X3mq-Uy-WJ)

**Larry Chop** 1) had furniture to donate to Matthew House.

2) He very much enjoyed his Valentine's Day dinner from **Victor Mazzola's** restaurant, and wanted to thank **David Morton, Marcia Armstrong** and **Graeme Fraser** for arranging that

event. Photos of Rotarians picking up their dinners at the Bushtukah head office have been posted to the RCWO website 3) hjs Malta Mardi Gras backdrop video probably includes him, since he had attended it two years ago.(the person in back wearing feathers? The nut up front trying to juggle a couple of tumblers?)

**Marcia Armstrong** pleased that, for the first time, a member had made a substantial contribution to the RCWO Foundation that would be repeated monthly.

**Sucha Mann** 1) happy that his environment committee was contacting other Rotary clubs in the region to participate in a waterfront clean-up project scheduled for April 24. All participants will be provided with “pick-up” sticks but need to bring gloves to comply with COVID considerations. 2) noted that the farmer protests in India about reforms which could also negatively affect the environment show increased Indian awareness of environmental challenges.

**Denzil Feinberg** added his appreciation for 1) the Valentine’s Day dinner provided by Victor Mazzola, and 2) that heavy snowfalls were not a problem for his AWD Subaru. (Actually, your scribe would have better bragging rights with his Escape SUV except for the horrible flaky paint).

### **Conclusion**

Finally **President Caroline** treated us to a Ziegfield Folies-type spectacle with a video of Mardi Gras from Port of Spain, Trinidad. Lots of music, lots of wiggly plumage and lots of wiggly the rest of it as well. Then she told us about next week’s speaker, Jim Corsi, who will talk about his experiences in the NHL and leadership through coaching and brought the meeting to an end.

**Tuesday, 23 February 2021 12:30pm**

Jim Corsi, Goaltending Coach, Columbus Blue Jackets,.

“Leadership - Coaches are Leaders - Sports is a Microcosm of Life!”

Intro: **Caroline DeWitt**. Thanks **Rocco Disipio**

Editor: **Don Butler**

Invocation: **Henry Akanko** Toastmaster: **Pardeep Ahluwalia**

Meeting at Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82444180906>

See **President Caroline** message Feb 21 for log-in details

**Tuesday, March 2**

**Pardeep Ahluwalia** “Antarctica Voyage” Introduced and Thanked: **Girija Dube** ( tbc)

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