



Meetings: Tuesday 12 Noon

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APRIL IS MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH MONTH

Happy Birthday

Apr 5: Ken Holland

Happy Anniversary

UPCOMING SPEAKERS:

Apr 4: Kristi Maier Chamber of Commerce Update	Apr 11: Al Stjernegaard Port Moody Education and literacy Global grant wrap up Belize	Apr 18:
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RI PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Introducing the Rotary Youth Network



How do you take the best from the worst? None of us will forget how the pandemic altered our world and our lives. Each of us had to traverse this period of uncertainty, and no one had a free pass from the effects.

I personally believe this has created space for a different kind of global leadership — one that is courageous, empathetic, and vulnerable. I met my good friend Anniela Carracedo online in early 2020. She is one such leader, and I'm thrilled to turn this month's column over to her.

— Jennifer Jones

In March 2020, I had a panic attack. I couldn't breathe, and I felt a terrible pain in my chest.

It had been a few days since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, and I was in the middle of my year as a Rotary Youth Exchange student in the United States. Think about it: an 18-year-old girl stuck in a different country, with a foreign language, with people she had only met six months before. It was scary.

But I am familiar with uncertainty. I was born and raised in Venezuela, which is going through one of the worst humanitarian and political crises in the Western Hemisphere. But my mom always said, "Challenges are nothing more than needs that require a solution."

I called up my Interact and Youth Exchange friends. Together, we organized an online meeting to share projects and get inspired by what everyone else was doing during the quarantine. In that first meeting, we had 70 people, mainly students, from 17 countries.

From that beginning, we built an online platform for Rotary youths worldwide to share their experiences and inspire others with project ideas during isolation. We looked for mentors and supporters who would help our group connect young people, share cultures, and open new collaborative opportunities for international service projects. We called it Rotary Interactive Quarantine, or RIQ.

After only a year, we engaged with more than 5,000 students from 80 countries. Several of our team members became district Interact representatives and district committee members, and some of us even serve on Rotary International councils.

Eventually, quarantine restrictions were being lifted, and the needs of our participants were changing. At our last official meeting as RIQ, Past RI President Barry Rassin inspired us to create even bigger change, so we transformed RIQ into the Rotary Youth Network, or RYN.

A few of our members, including me, were selected to serve on the inaugural Interact Advisory Council, where we presented our vision for youth in Rotary to the RI Board of Directors.

Our presentation to the Board inspired President Jennifer and her team to create a Youth Advisory Council in Rotary International, which I am honored to serve on as a co-chair.

The Rotary Youth Network officially launched during a breakout session at the 2022 Rotary International Convention in Houston. Five of us, who had participated in Interact, Youth Exchange, and Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, traveled across continents to launch an organization we had kicked off online two years before. The convention was also the first time we had met in person.

When my friends and I finished our talk, we realized more than 500 people were giving us a standing ovation. Tears filled our eyes, and the feeling of excitement and accomplishment took over.

Who would have thought that a panic attack would lead to this?

LAST WEEK'S MEETING

President-elect Brenda Jenkins presided.

Guests:

Ron Goyette - Port Coquitlam Centennial Club, Treasurer, and director of their Starfish Pack Program

Leslie Michael – currently a member of the Golden Ears morning club who has now attended our club for three consecutive meetings, and is proposed as a new member of our club by Ken Holland.

Madison - young granddaughter of Debbie MacRae.

Eng Tan – former member of our Rotary Club.

Program - Starfish Pack Program –

Ineke Boekhorst, MR/PM Starfish Pack Coordinator



Pastor Paul Olson of Burnett Fellowship Church hands over \$15,000 for Starfish

History of the Program in Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows

According to First Call BC Child Poverty Report Card, in 2019 18% of BC children and youth were living in poor households, with many living in deep poverty. According to information from School District #42, there are approximately 16,000 students currently in this School District. That 18% figure computes to about 2,800 SD #42 students living in various degrees of poverty.

Ineke was the president of our Meadow Ridge Rotary Club in 2001/2002 and again in 2016/2017. She saw the Starfish Pack Program presented by the Abbotsford Rotary Club at a Rotary District Conference and introduced it to our club in her second term as our Club President. After a needs assessment (involving several school principals in School District #42) determined a huge need locally, the program was approved unanimously by our Club for introduction to our community. While schools provided certain school food security programs during the school days, many kids still struggled with being poorly nourished, especially over the weekend, and had difficulty to focus when getting back to school on Monday morning hungry. The committee was formed, which included our local newspaper, Friends in Need Food bank, the principal of the Golden Ears Elementary School, the local Save-On-Foods manager and five very enthusiastic Club members.

The program at our Club began early October 2016 (with the first school being Golden Ears Elementary with 4 Starfish Packs) modelled after the Abbotsford program. On a weekly basis, food would be packed into a backpack for kids/parents to take home on Friday, providing 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners, nutritious snacks and 2 fruits for the weekend, ensuring the students would come back to class on Monday morning, nourished and more eager to learn. Each school would decide who would receive the packs, and our Club would have (and still has) no knowledge of the identity of those students.

Before COVID, volunteers at the Burnett Fellowship Church packed and delivered the food packs to the schools, but because of COVID, that was no longer an option, and a dedicated group of Club members took over this weekly “hands-on” task of filling the packs at the Friends-in-Need Food Bank in downtown Maple Ridge.



Since 2016, Ineke has herself gone to the food stores every week to purchase the necessary food, and our club now fills and delivers to the schools approximately 250 packs per week.

Club Commitment and Funding Required to Operate the Program during the School Year

When the Rotary Club of Meadow Ridge adopted the challenge of managing the Starfish Pack Program, the intention was that funds would be raised through the Community, Grant applications and Rotary fundraising events. The Club's commitment has been that if the program runs short of funding, the Club will be responsible for any shortfall. The Club also commits to cover any “admin costs” to ensure 100% of donations will be allocated entirely to food. 2022 was the first year the Club needed to make a club contribution of \$35,000 from the Community Service Committee funding to ensure that we could cover the 2021/2022 starfish Pack Actual costs. The club has received funding online from ‘CanadaHelps’ (a charity, connecting charities and donors for various causes), from donations from local residents and corporations, from our Club's annual garage sale, and funds from our Club's WineFest. Thanks to a GoFundMe set up by **Aimee Robson**, we have also received about \$4,000-\$5,000 from that resource. In January 2023, after seeing reports in the media regarding temporary funding available through the federal and provincial government, Ineke connected with SD #42 which resulted in the local school district committing, for the balance of this school-year only, to a contribution of \$60,000.

Sustaining Continuation of the Program for 2023/2024

The sharp increase in the number of food packs needed and the rising cost of food has now made it very difficult to achieve sufficient funding. The food packs cost about \$575 per child per year. The Club will have a ‘carryover’ as at June 2023 of approximately \$28,000. It is estimated that the cost of sustaining the Food Pack program for the 2023/2024 school year will be about \$140,000. Therefore, to continue our commitment to sustain the program means that we would require up to approximately \$120,000 from grants, donations, fundraisers and contributions for the 2023/2024 school year.

A discussion then ensued at our March 28 meeting about whether or not our Club should commit to continue the Starfish Program, and Ineke and various club members suggested some ideas how we might raise the required funding (in the event that the decision was made to continue).

Guest **Ron Goyette**, Director of the Starfish Pack Program for the Port Coquitlam Centennial Club, complimented Ineke on the great and efficient way she has run the program for our Club, noting that their costs per child per year is \$700 + (compared to our cost of approximately \$575 per child). The Port Coquitlam Club works with Walmart which packs all the food, leaving that Rotary Club with only the responsibility for delivering the packs to the schools and providing the funding for the 150 schoolchildren that they support (compared with the 250 children who now receives the food packs in SD #42). Ron expressed the view that it is an essential program, for which the parents who receive the assistance are very grateful, and that clubs that participate in this program are making a difference in people's lives.

Ineke's closing thoughts:

"We have been able to show a significant, positive impact within our community through the Starfish Pack Program. One of the strategies and the key to its success is the ability to leverage our resources, and create awareness and participation by developing a multitude of partnerships. As we review what this program has meant to our Rotary Club, you will recognize community collaborations and partnerships as the common thread throughout, providing strength and sustainability. The positive social fallout within our Rotary Membership has also been significant!"

Thank you



Happy Sad dollars included those for:

Matt being back, our guests, and the invitation extended to all of our club members by **Shashanka and Chili** to attend the **UGADI CELEBRATIONS** on Sunday, March 26, 2023 at the Punjab Banquet Hall in Surrey (see picture below) where a great time was had by all those who attended.



From left to right – Ron, Laurie, Matt, Peter, Ineke, Mark, Pauline, and Sharon, with Chili in the middle/front.

Pub Hub Social

Adrienne, Club Service Director, advised that on the last Thursday of every month (commencing March 30, 2023) those of our Club members wishing to do so will again be getting together to socialize at various pubs in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows. The first Public Hub was held at the Jolly Coachman in Pitt Meadows (starting at 5:30 PM).



L to R - Alex, Barbara, Deborah, Libby, Lynda, Matt, and Laurie.

Submitted by Laurie Anderson