

Meetings: Tuesday 12 Noon

President: Alex Pope	Phone: 604-465-1535	<a href="#">E-mail the President</a>
Secretary: Debbie MacRae	Phone: 604-649-8962	<a href="#">E-mail the Secretary</a>
Editor: Peter Boekhorst	Phone: 604-476-0010	<a href="#">E-mail the Editor</a>



**FEBRUARY IS PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION MONTH**

**Happy Birthday**

**Happy Anniversary**

**Upcoming Speakers:**

Feb. 3 Rachel Tan Big Brothers and Sisters of the Fraser Valley	Feb. 10	Feb. 17
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**RI PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**



At last month's International Assembly, President-elect Olayinka "Yinka" Hakeem Babalola called on members of the Rotary world to live out our presidential message for the 2026-27 Rotary year:

*Create Lasting Impact.*

This February, as we observe Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Month, we have an opportunity to channel Yinka's call to action into real change.

Peace is not simply the absence of war. A life free from conflict but marked by hunger, instability, or the inability to care for one's family is not true peace. Peace requires liberty, opportunity, and respect for human dignity. Yet fear often blocks that path — fear of change, of cultural loss, of people we don't understand.

Fear isn't defeated through avoidance or aggression. Knowledge is the first step toward peace. Rotary embraces this idea. Our Rotary Peace Centers and their peace fellows, along with other peace education initiatives, demonstrate how knowledge builds trust and helps communities find solutions to conflict.

In Colombia, decades of conflict have left deep wounds. The 2025 Rotary Foundation Programs of Scale awardee, Pathways to Peace and Prosperity, partners with the United Nations World Food Programme to expand opportunity, improve conflict resolution, and connect people with social services. Its goal is to break cycles of violence, poverty, and food insecurity so peace can take root.

In Maharashtra, India, People of Action honoree Swati Herkal built peace through prosperity. Her project confronted farmers' declining soil health, rising debt, and illness caused by chemical fertilizers. She and her Rotary partners launched a regenerative agriculture program that revitalized the land, lowered costs, and restored stability. More than 1,100 farmers now participate and over 50 villages have adopted the model.

Rotary also advances peace by restoring dignity. In Chad, Rotary Peace Fellow Domino Frank discovered that more than 1,500 women who fought in a rebellion had been erased from reintegration programs. His advocacy led to Chad's first Rotary Foundation global grant and the creation of Corridors of Peace. More than 100 women — triple the goal — completed literacy and vocational training and formed a cooperative to support their families.

From Colombia to India to Chad, the lesson is clear: Peace is not a dream. It is the result of sustained action with a focus on true, lasting impact. To replicate these successes, Rotary clubs can take three steps: Learn from peace fellows and other peace experts in our organization, apply a peacebuilding lens to community assessments, and prioritize impact over ceremony.

In a world filled with fear, Rotary cannot be satisfied with half-measures and empty words. If we are truly people of action, then action must define us. Together, we can *Create Lasting Impact* — across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.

Francesco Arezzo  
RI President 2025-26

President **Alex Pope** presided.

### Guests

#### **Kris Harrison**

From **Fraser Valley Addictions & Recovery Hub ("FVARH")**: **Aida Tajbakhesh** (the founder and Executive Director), **Anna Sanzhak** (a clinical counsellor and psychologist), and **Thomas** (a practicum student).



**Aida**

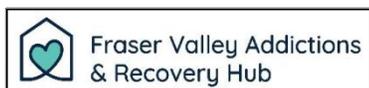


**Anna**

### Program

Alex introduced FVARH as "a grassroots non-profit organization based in Maple Ridge serving individuals and families affected by addiction, mental health challenges, housing instability, and social isolation. The organization was founded during the dual crisis of COVID-19 and the escalating opioid overdose emergency. At a time when many valuable individuals were unable to access food, warmth, medical care or safe spaces, Aida recognized a significant gap in community response – particularly for those who are on housed or struggling with substance use and were frequently turned away from services, and created the Hub in direct response to those needs. The organization was grounded on the simple principle that every person deserves dignity, access to care, and the opportunity to stabilize and rebuild their life."

#### **Aida's Presentation**



The organization's work is grounded in structure, accountability, and collaboration with other community services.

Addiction is approached as a mental health issue, and recovery is viewed as a long-term process that requires more than a single intervention.

The Hub provides an integrated continuum of care designed to meet people where they are in their recovery journey. Services include doctor-led opioid agonist therapy, counselling and mental health supports, transitional housing in both low-barrier and sober environments, food security programming, peer support, and community reintegration opportunities.

These services are intentionally connected so that individuals are not receiving isolated supports, but rather a coordinated system that improves stability and outcomes.

Aida addressed common questions and misconceptions about addiction treatment, particularly the use of medication. She emphasized that medication is not the goal in itself, but a tool to help individuals stabilize so that they can engage meaningfully in counselling, rebuild healthy routines, and address underlying issues.

The organization's focus is on stabilizing clients first and, when appropriate and desired by the individual, gradually tapering medication under medical supervision. Abrupt withdrawal was described as dangerous and often traumatic, whereas medically supported approaches reduce harm and improve the likelihood of long-term success.

Recovery, Aida explained, requires lifestyle changes that include healthier environments, improved nutrition, physical activity, accountability, and rebuilding relationships with family and community. Letting go of shame and guilt is also critical, as these often prevent individuals from moving forward. Each client retains the right to choose their own path, and the Hub's role is to support that path safely and responsibly. A success story was shared to illustrate the Hub's approach in practice. An individual referred to anonymously as George entered the program struggling but highly motivated to change his circumstances. Through transitional housing and structured support, he stabilized, reconnected with his family, and became a positive influence within his housing environment. He took on an informal leadership role, supporting other residents and helping foster a sense of accountability and care. Over time, he re-established relationships with his children and extended family and achieved milestones that reflected renewed stability and purpose.

The presentation then shifted to the Hub's community cleanup and reintegration program. This initiative was created to address two needs simultaneously: improving cleanliness and safety in public spaces, and providing structured, meaningful work for clients as part of their reintegration into the community. Participants attend consistently, wear safety equipment, follow clear expectations, and conduct themselves professionally. Each day, the program removes significant amounts of waste from the downtown core and, where possible, attempts graffiti removal. Participants receive a modest honorarium in recognition of their contribution. Aida explained that this is intentional, as dignity, responsibility, and accountability are essential elements of recovery. The honorarium reinforces the idea that participants are contributing members of the community whose efforts have value.

Aida outlined funding needs related to the cleanup program, including supplies, safety equipment, and the ability to expand participant hours and coverage. She noted that while treatment funding supports clinical operations, it cannot be used for community programs, making partnerships and community support essential for sustainability.

### Club Business

**Ineke Boekhorst, Claire Viktora and Yvonne Berrisford** with other Rotarians in our District 5050 (along with Ineke's daughter and past-DG Marjolein from District 5060) are flying off to Ecuador on January 29<sup>th</sup> on a Rotary Project, and will be back in about 10 days.

January 29 at 5:30 – **Pub night** at Me-n-Eds Pizza

February 14 (Saturday) – a **Valentine's fellowship** at the home of Mark and Pauline Forster.

President's Closing Quote:

I'm sure everyone has heard about the cold weather in the rest of Canada.



10 More Bad Puns

So what if I don't know what apocalypse means! It's not the end of the world!

Waking up this morning was an eye-opening experience.

The Middle Ages were called the Dark Ages because there were too many knights.

It's hard to explain puns to kleptomaniacs because they always take things literally.

England doesn't have a kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.

What do you call the wife of a hippie? A Mississippi.

There was a kidnapping at school yesterday.  
Don't worry, though-he woke up!

What washes up on tiny beaches? Microwaves.

I hate how funerals are always at 9 a.m. I'm not really a mourning person.

Sure, I drink brake fluid. But I can stop anytime!

**Submitted by Laurie Anderson**