



Meetings: Tuesday 12 Noon

President: Alex Pope	Phone: 604-465-1535	E-mail the President
Secretary: Debbie MacRae	Phone: 604-649-8962	E-mail the Secretary
Editor: Peter Boekhorst	Phone: 604-476-0010	E-mail the Editor



APRIL IS ENVIRONMENTAL MONTH

Happy Birthday	Happy Anniversary
May 9 Walter Volpatti	

Upcoming Speakers:

May 5 Kim Boekhorst Friends in Need Food Bank	May 12	May 19
--	--------	--------

LAST WEEK'S MEETING

President **Alex Pope** presided.

Guest

Ken Holland

Program: International Service Project in Ecuador: January 30 – February 7, 2026 – attended by Ineke Boekhorst, Claire Viktora, and Yvonne Berrisford from our club. (Ineke's daughter Marjolein – of the Kelowna club - also attended)

The presentation was delivered by Ineke.

“When we finally arrived—at midnight local time in Ecuador on January 30—it felt like a long journey just to get there. By the time we cleared the airport and reached our hotel, it was close to 2:00 a.m. January 31, 2026. But even at that hour, there was a sense of anticipation. We knew we weren't just there for a trip—we were there for a purpose. This was a Global Grant project, with a total value of about \$70,000 U.S. That's not a small undertaking. That funding came together through a true Rotary collaboration—multiple clubs, multiple districts, all contributing. The Rotary Club of Coquitlam Sunrise helped initiate it. We finally arrived in Banos.



[This is a picture of Banos looking east]

For those of you who may not be familiar with Ecuador, it's located on the northwest coast of South America, bordered by Colombia, Peru, and the Pacific Ocean. It's a relatively small country—about 40 times smaller than Canada—but with a population of around 18 million people, so it's much more densely populated. Its economy is based largely on oil and agriculture. One thing I found fascinating is that Ecuador is one of the largest exporters of roses in the world. Those beautiful arrangements you see in hotels and events? There's a good chance they came from Ecuador. And many of the bananas we buy here in Canada come from there as well.

The country itself is absolutely stunning. From the mountains around Quito—at nearly 10,000 feet above sea level—to the lush, tropical landscapes around Baños, where we spent most of our time. The altitude in Quito took some getting used to. Even simple things like walking could leave you short of breath. But it was all part of the experience.

The focus of the project was clean water—something we often take for granted. The goal was to install water filtration systems in six schools, ultimately benefiting around 2,500 students. These schools had access to water, but it wasn't safe. The natural well water contained high levels of sulphur and other contaminants, which meant the children were getting sick. So this wasn't just about convenience—it was about health, safety, and giving these kids a better chance to learn and thrive. We also made a conscious decision to purchase materials locally wherever possible. That way, the project didn't just help the schools—it also supported the local economy.

Now, when it came to our hands-on contribution, we quickly discovered what we were best suited for... and that was painting. A lot of painting. Walls, buildings, playground areas—you name it. And I'll be honest, most of us were not experienced painters. There were some creative techniques along the way, and not all of them were intentional. But what we lacked in skill, we made up

for in effort and enthusiasm. One of the most meaningful parts of the work was seeing how the community got involved. Teachers stayed after school, parents came to help, and even the students joined in. At one school, the kids helped paint murals. We would sketch out the outlines, and they would fill them in with color. It gave them a sense of ownership—and you could see the pride on their faces as the spaces transformed.

But the project wasn't just about painting buildings—it was about understanding the people and the environment we were working in. One visit, in particular, was very difficult and heartbreaking, but also very important. We spent time at a residential school for teenage girls—many between 13 and 15 years old—who had been rejected by their families. Some of them had babies in their arms. These were young girls facing incredibly challenging circumstances, yet they were still showing up, learning skills, and trying to build a future for themselves. The school was doing everything it could to support them—teaching practical skills like cooking, jewelry-making, and hairdressing—anything that might help them become independent once they turned 18. Because at 18, they have to leave. And in many cases, they leave with nowhere to go. The principal of the school told me that a girl, who had been there for 3 years, had turned 18. She had a little girl that was 4.5 years old who lived with her at the school. So she had that child when she was 13. In the residential school they can keep their children with them. The moment they turn 18, the government comes in, takes the child, and they will likely never see each other together. That's a heartbreaking situation, and it really puts things into perspective. Moments like that stay with you. They remind you why these projects matter—not just the infrastructure, but the human impact.

Our group included Rotarians from five different districts and 13 clubs. Some people had done international projects before, but for many, this was their first time. A few even brought their children along, which added another dimension to the trip. Watching those kids connect with local students—playing soccer, laughing, communicating without a shared language—it was a powerful reminder that connection doesn't always need words. The trip was very well organized by our local Rotary hosts. They took care of everything—from transportation to meals to coordinating the work sites. And the hospitality was incredible. We were welcomed with open arms everywhere we went. At one point, when we arrived at our hotel in Baños, some of the children and their families were there waiting for us. They greeted us with music and dancing, and they gave each of us a handmade card. It was such a simple gesture, but incredibly meaningful. You immediately felt that what we were doing mattered to them.

We worked in the afternoons, typically from about 12:30 to 4:30, once the school day had ended. Mornings were sometimes used to travel between sites or, occasionally, to explore the area. And what an area it is. Baños is known for its waterfalls, its natural beauty, and its adventure activities. Some of our group went zip-lining, others went rafting or hiking. We visited the famous "Devil's Cauldron" waterfall, which involved climbing a lot of stairs—some of them quite steep and slippery—but the view at the end was absolutely worth it. There were also opportunities to experience the local culture—markets filled with fruits and vegetables many of us had never seen before, traditional foods, and local festivals. One of my personal highlights was the fresh fruit. You could get a massive, freshly made juice or smoothie for just a couple of dollars—pineapple, mango, papaya—whatever you wanted, blended right in front of you.

It doesn't get much better than that. Evenings were often spent together as a group, sometimes hosted by local Rotarians. The meals were incredible, and the generosity was something we all noticed. We were treated far better than we expected, and it really spoke to the spirit of Rotary and community.

By the end of the trip, although we were physically tired, there was a strong sense of accomplishment. We had contributed to something tangible—schools that were brighter, cleaner, and more functional. And while we didn't get to see the water filtration systems fully installed before we left, we knew that the process was underway. In fact, I recently heard that installation has begun, starting with one of the schools we visited. That's exciting, because it means the real impact—the long-term health benefits for those students—is now becoming a reality.

For me, this experience reinforced something important. These international projects are not just about the work you do while you're there. They're about building relationships, gaining perspective, and understanding how interconnected we all are. And the cost? Approximately \$2,500 Canadian per person, including flights and accommodations. When you think about what you gain from an experience like this, it's incredibly reasonable. Personally, I would absolutely go back—and I likely will. In fact, many of the people who were on this trip are already planning to return. Not just to continue the work, but to see the results of what we started. So if you ever have the opportunity to take part in something like this—even once—I would strongly encourage you to consider it. Because yes, you go there to help. But in many ways, you come back with even more.

Club Business

April 30 – **Pub Hub** at Spurs at 5:30 PM

May 1-3 – **District Conference** at Harrison Hot Springs



May 13 – **Wine Festival**



**27th Annual
Rotary WineFest**
Wednesday, May 13, 2026
6:30 PM to 9:30 PM
SKY Hangar, Pitt Meadows Airport,
#170 - 18799 Airport Way

May 20 – **Hometown Heroes Dinner**
at Samuel Robertson Technical School



President's Closing Quote

I took a couple of law courses in university. One day my law professor called me into his office and said, "you're currently failing in your ethics class".

I place a \$20 bill on his desk and replied, "How about now?"



Happy and Sad Dollars

Michelle had a fun time with Adrienne in Arizona.

Lynda + Debbie - so happy the WineFest tickets are sold out!!!

Brenda - sad, after 30 years in Maple Ridge, her MacDonald Realty Office is closing down.

Susan - happy to see Matt yesterday and deliver a sourdough loaf to him + sad that it turns out to be so hard for her to retire! Although her retirement party at work was sooo fun!

Mark Vosper - happy to attend the Citizen of the Year event on Saturday, which was a great night out! Supporting Adrienne's nomination. Happy to play chess with Matt yesterday...Matt won!!

Adrienne - happy about the planning meeting at Eric's home, which was such a great meeting; and a thank you to everyone supporting her nomination for Citizen of the year.

Ineke - happy the Ecuador presentation is done [even though we all know she did such a great job and spoke from the heart!]. Happy to have coffee with my friends Laurie and Matt this morning.

Eric - Happy about the planning session...and YES, we discussed raising funds in the future for International hands-on Service Project participants. FYI: Installation Dinner in June is \$100 per person, so if you paid \$50 with your dues, you still owe \$50 for your ticket. Spouses and guests also pay \$100 each for their ticket.

Submitted by Laurie Anderson