

COG

The Rotary Club of Calgary

The Rotary Club of Calgary is an organization of professional and community leaders who come together through commitment and fellowship to create opportunities and a better future for generations to follow.



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Thomas Jieldit – Lost Boys of Sudan

Ralph Lundberg introduced our speaker, Thomas Jieldit, who told us about his incredible life journey. He spoke of being separated from his family as a child during the Second Sudanese Civil War, of his years as a child soldier, and of coming to Canada and completing a BA in Political Science at the University of Calgary.

Thomas was separated from his family at age 12 when troops from the north invaded the south. He found his way to Ethiopia along with thousands of other refugees, many of whom were children displaced from their families or were orphaned; their only sustenance on this long journey being foraged wild berries. Roads were littered with the dead and dying, covered with masses of green flies. The children, not having had previous experience with death, would often try to wake these bodies and shoo away the flies. Rather than finding sanctuary in Ethiopia, Thomas was forced to fight as a child soldier for a Sudanese rebel group. He escaped from the rebels after six years, and made his way to a Kenyan refugee camp. His first schooling was in this camp gathered with other children under a tree with a teacher and small chalkboard.

Twenty-three years later Thomas finally reunited with his family. He showed us a video of this emotional reunion in his home village. Thomas' father gave him a gift and words of advice. He said, "This pen is your weapon".

Thomas still can't believe what he has achieved since arriving in Calgary. He is so thankful for his freedom, and is dedicated to peace so that other children will not have to suffer as he had. He earned a degree in Political Science, specializing in African studies, and co-founded the Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan. He and his wife are now raising three children, and is making a difference by promoting peace and reconciliation. In referring to this, left us with the sage adage, "Where two bulls fight the grass suffers".

Thomas was given one of our rare standing ovations, and Madeleine King presented him with a CAWST certificate acknowledging our donation made in his honour. She also urged Thomas to apply for a Rotary Peace Scholarship.

COG Staff
Editor
Reporting
Photography
Sponsorships
Office Support

January 31 Issue
Craig Henderson
John Lindenbach
Ralph Lundberg
Lorne Larson
Jo-Ann Clarke

Calgary, Alberta Chartered April 1914 Club #949
Suite 300, 105 – 12th Avenue SE, Calgary Alberta T2G 1A1
Tel: (403) 398-9969 Fax: (403) 264-2393
www.rotaryclubofcalgary.org admin@rotaryclubofcalgary.ca
President: Eva Friesen Vice-President: Paul Bates
RI President: Ron D. Burton District Governor: Patrick Killoran

The Meeting

Our meeting took place in the Crystal Ballroom. Michael Pierson played in the head table with an eclectic composition designed to further our appreciation of fine music. This was followed by Barbara Burggraf's invocation that enjoined us to be as **big** as we can be, and not as *small* as is sometimes convenient. George Brookman feigned innocence at this.

Our inimitable Wing-Kee Chan introduced this week's guests and visiting Rotarians. He told a terrific story about the fun and value of hosting RYE students. Apparently, ginger beef has made the menus of restaurants in Hungary.

President Eva thanked our veteran ticket takers (Gord Cumming and Tony Howard), plus their assistants, as they continue to establish that electronic payment is actually "really quick". Thanks also to Keith Visser, who continues to be the welcoming face of our club as we enter the room.

A big thank-you goes out to Randy Topolnitsky of Tervita Corporation for being this week's COG sponsor.

The district conference is being held in Lethbridge on the weekend of April 11–13. Please register at <http://discon.rotary5360.ca/registration>.

Melanie Gaston introduced our newest member Carrie Aiken, who was once a RYE student in France.

Bruce Fenwick called several club members to the podium to receive recognition for their continuing donations to the Rotary foundations. Walter Chayka, Garth Toombs, Bruce Williams and John Ridge received recognition items.

Anne Toombs reminded us that an update on the Curly Galbraith Global Memorial Fund will be provided next week. Ron Esch asked for our participation in the club's long range planning meeting on the morning of Saturday, February 8th at Bucars RV Centre in Balzac from 9:30 am to noon. For those who cannot make it, but have any suggestions on our club's direction, please email Ron with your thoughts.

Bill Avery led a toast to "Tommy" Harold Thomasson, long time member of our club who passed away in Toronto on January 26. Bill announced that Ron D. Burton, the President of Rotary International, will be attending our 100th anniversary celebration. He also said that ignorance as well as courage are required to be successful in life. It was a compelling address!

Maxine Morrison and James Costello announced that our annual Jack Carter Stay in School golf tournament will be held on June 25th at Silvertip Resort in Canmore (\$300/player). Brochures will be on our tables next week. Sponsors welcome! Sadly, this will be our last year with Jack Carter as our major sponsor. We sincerely thank the Jack Carter group for their many years of leadership and sponsorship.

Eric Bennett reminded us that tickets for Mayor Nenshi's annual "State of the City" luncheon on February 18th will be pre-sold at the next two regular meetings. Please call the office if you wish to purchase a table of eight. Remember that this event is always sold out.



Wing-Kee Chan on the joys of hosting RYE students



Melanie Gaston welcomes new member Carrie Aiken

Thank-you Randy Topolnitsky and Tervita Corp.
for sponsoring this week's COG Newsletter

Rotary Club of Calgary Centennial Gala Tickets

Tickets are \$100 each. Please see Don Cameron to get yours!

[Editor: Thank-you **John Lindenbach** for this week's meeting report.]



James Costello on the objectives of the Stay in School program



Our speaker Thomas Jieldit



Madeleine King thanks our speaker

Upcoming Club Meetings

- Feb-4 **Sheldon Smithens & Scott Cozens**, Canadian Pickers TV Show
Fairmont Palliser Hotel
- Feb-11 **Pamela Fonseca**, Silvera Seniors
Fairmont Palliser Hotel
- Feb-18 **Mayor Naheed Nenshi**, State of the City Address
Fairmont Palliser Hotel



Maxine Morrison announces the SIS Golf Tournament



THE ROTARY CLUB OF CALGARY NEW MEMBERSHIP PROCESS - WHITE SLIP

NAME:	Tessa Thomson-Major
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CLASSIFICATION:	Oil and Gas
PROPOSED BY:	Lou MacEachern Jim Sinclair
DATE:	January 24, 2014