



# THE BULLETIN



## Rotary Club of Etobicoke

District Governor: **Valarie Wafer**

RI President: **Ron D. Burton**

Week March 19, 2014

Board 2013-2014

*President: Michael Bell, Secretary: Ron Miller, Treasurer: Don Edwards*

**March 26, 2014 - Speaker: Banesha Shah – Families for Children (FFC) A charity that looks after destitute children in India and Bangladesh**

*Reporting: Ron Miller/Ingrid Bjel-McGaughey*

*Pictures: Ron Miller & Peter Dusek*

### **Big Ideas Forum - Empowering Women**



This month's Big Ideas Forum featured a panel discussion amongst the following leaders in our community:

- **Lisa Medeiros – Director of Programs at Ernestine's Women's' Shelter**
- **Elizabeth Correia – mentor, entrepreneur, and author of the book If You Played In My Playground**
- **Naglaa Raouf - Executive Director, Arab Community Centre of Toronto**

In honour of International Women's Day which took place earlier this month, we asked our speakers to

focus on what they do to empower the women in our community. In other words, "what's the big idea?"

Elizabeth kicked the discussion off with her perspective in working with young women in her talks and workshops, as well as from her own experience. She is a strong proponent of empowering the "whole being". That is, focusing on not just mental and emotional health, but physical health as well. She pointed out that a poorly nourished, out-of-balance physical state can trigger mental and emotional unease and even symptoms of mental illness.

Naglaa noted that this concept of empowering the whole translates well into her work with immigrant women in our community. Many of her clients are arriving from war-torn, strife-ridden, traumatic circumstances. As if these weren't challenging enough, these women now have to learn to feed their families with unfamiliar foods, parent their children in whole new ways, and try to find employment and settle into the country. To be effective, Naglaa can't just focus on one factor; support has to be provided on as many different levels as possible.

Lisa said that this theme of education and empowerment is crucial to her work also. She called it "creating social justice through leveraging our personal, professional, and political privilege". Simply put, we can support and empower marginalized women by going out and talking to people about gender-based violence. In addition to educating and getting educated about the issues ourselves, we can help is by modelling good relationships and respectful romantic partnerships. She emphasized that men are not the problem.

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Rather, men who model healthy, respectful behaviour in a relationship for those close to them, are the solution.

So, we asked our speakers to focus on the biggest challenges faced by women in their community.

Elizabeth talked about the difficulties in creating a strong bond with young women in her workshops. She explained that a single interaction could frequently be very wrenching for both herself and her charges. Creating these relationships is the first step, but a big piece that's needed is a way to provide long-term support and counsel.

Naglaa described the challenges faced by immigrant women simply because of the colour of their skin and their country of origin. She asked us to imagine going to a hospital and always being treated as "less than", going to a job interview and encountering barriers rather than assistance, and sending kids to school and having them encounter racism and bullying. What these women and members of their families need desperately is to be appreciated and valued for their individuality.

Similarly, Lisa noted that women from shelters face this kind of discrimination – they get treated differently as soon as it becomes evident that they reside in a shelter. Again, they need to be appreciated and valued as unique individuals.

Finally, we asked what we as members of the community – and Rotarians – can do to make a difference.

Elizabeth recommended that we come together as a community to continue to brainstorm ideas for education and community messaging to enable women to be healthier. Again, the focus should be on not just mental and emotional health, but also physical health. Advocating for nutrition programs and food quality in our community is something she believes we should all do.

Lisa, somewhat tongue-in-cheek commented that of course money is always welcome, and donations of our time are always welcome. But she also pushed

us to get more knowledgeable about the issue of gender-based violence and how to help women deal with it and rise above it. She asked us not to assume we know what these women need, but to ask. And she again exhorted us to use our privilege to create opportunities for women from challenging circumstances – sustainable jobs, reasonable family income, and affordable, high quality child care are at the top of the list.

And finally, Naglaa simply asked us to give these women recognition. Get to know who they are as individuals. Help support young immigrant families in integrating into the community. Don't keep them separate – remove barriers, provide education, and help them plan their lives in their new country.

They all agreed that we - both as individuals and as members of Rotary - need to use our privilege and resources to make a difference.



It was a truly inspiring and moving event, leaving us with a lot to think about. Many thanks to Jack Fleming, Kirsty Duncan and Donna Cansfield for their suggestions on our speakers this evening.

Weiting Xu President of the Rotaract Club of York University thanked our Panellist.

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## Cheque Presentations



A Cheque presentation to Barbara Hayworth and Lynn Parker from St. James Food Basket.



Cheque presentation to Laura Latham from Franklin Horner Community..



Cheque presentation to B. Jennings from Lakeshore Arts

## Secretary's Announcements



**International Services Committee Meeting. March 31, 2014. 7.00 PM. Andree & Gill Residence, 7 Crestridge Heights Road, Etobicoke.**

**Saturday April 19, 2014. Rotary Leadership Institute (RLI) – Levels 1, 2, & 3 – Seneca College, 1750 Finch Ave E, Toronto. Contact Ron for details and Registration.**

**Saturday May 03, 2014 – BMO Institute for Learning, 3550 Pharmacy Ave, Toronto. 7.30 AM – 2.00 PM. Contact Ron for details and Registration.**



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## Visitors & Guests

### Visiting Rotarians

- **Dr. Syed Haider** – Rotary Club of Belleville
- **Weiting Xu** – Rotaract Club of York University
- **Annie Luong** – Rotaract Club of York University
- **James Chang** – Rotaract Club of York University

### Visitors and Guests:

- **Liya Medeiros** – Director of Programs, Ernestine's Women's Shelter - speaker
- **Elizabeth Correia** – mentor, entrepreneur, and author -speaker
- **Naglaa Raouf** – Executive Director, Arab Community Centre of Toronto - speaker
- **Laura Latham** – Franklin Horner Community Centre
- **Barbara Hayworth** – St. James Food Basket
- **Lynn Parker** - St. James Food Basket
- **Bebhinn Jennings** – Lakeshore Arts
- **Tracy Cairns** – Womanaide
- **Zena Alhamdan** – Arab Community Centre of Toronto
- **Ismail Elnour** - Arab Community Centre of Toronto
- **Robert Zaver**
- **Dr. DilKhush Panjwani** – Trillium Hospital Mental Health Unit
- **Martin Tiernay**
- **Marjorie Friesen** – Guest of Barry Friesen
- **Rhena Fleming** – Guest of Jack Fleming
- **Alex Cooper** – Potential new member
- **Nikku Sharma** – Potential new member
- **Cathy Pettigrew** – Potential new memb

### Attendance:

Members –25  
Visitors & Guests - 22  
Total – 47

## Introduction of New Members Linda Schneider and Toyin Dada

