**Burlington Rotary 100th Anniversary Celebration**

Good Evening Everyone – Nice to see many of you again, and to meet new folks. I am Elisa Mayes – a past president and a rotary fellowship participant. And now I am working on launching our signature project on food security. I will start with some more insight into the Rotary Fellowships.

Rotary Fellowships:

* I was a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar in Groningen, Netherlands in 2008
	+ 1-year scholarship that I used for a Master’s in Environmental and Infrastructure Planning
	+ Tremendous year of learning - I learned as much from the program as I did from everyday life and interactions with my classmates and Rotarians, and from riding my bike through their amazing well-planned infrastructure,
* Then I was part of a Rotary Group Study Exchange team that went to Southern Italy - the Calabria and Campania regions for the month of May in 2010. What a gorgeous, somewhat lesser-known part of Italy.
	+ My specific focus was to learn from their agritourismos to apply to my community development work in Southwest Pennsylvania
	+ Once again – I learned as much at the meals with the Rotarians and Rotaract members as I did in the actual project work.
* My lessons from both experiences:
	+ Rotary is local and global. I spoke with at least 20 different Rotary clubs at home and abroad before, during, and after both experiences. It is amazing to be able to go anywhere in the world and be welcomed into a club. Rotary is a global organization that does not know boundaries, and when you meet with a club you feel a part of that local community.
	+ All of this expanded my own horizons more than I could have dreamed of. Traveling will expand your horizons, but when you do it while meeting new people and learning about the world from their perspective – it truly expands your horizons.
	+ Cultural exchange is priceless. Being immersed in another culture – seeing how other people eat, shelter, work really opens your eyes to respect and appreciate differences.

* In short - the Rotary Fellowship programs are powerful tools for education and to create international understanding.

So, this led me to the Burlington Rotary Club. Once I settled into my job in Burlington, I looked up the Rotary clubs in this area, and emailed the then president of the Burlington Rotary to see about meeting with them. It was a good fit.

This led me to be the co-president in 2015 – and to really appreciate all the time and energy that goes into each of the clubs around the world to make them function and to be present in their community.

So, after starting my family, I am glad to again be with Burlington Rotary working on the signature project – Food Security.

* As you can see and have heard tonight the Burlington Rotary club has had and continues to have a substantial impact in the community. In discussing our next signature project, we wanted to be engaged in a significant community need.
* Generally, we think of food insecurity as a third world problem, but the pandemic has opened our eyes to how much food insecurity is in our own communities. In a country and a community with vast resources and knowledge, it seems we can do better to ensure that food is grown and distributed to everyone. Everyone deserves sound nourishment every day.
* We have partnered with organizations already in the field - Feeding Chittenden, Hunger Free Vermont, the Intervale, and the United Way – so that the projects we work are part of a broader plan to increase food security.
* We are launching a 3-year initiative that includes volunteering for produce gleaning, grocery packing, translations and distribution of food assistance fliers, and fundraising for the building of a wash station in the Intervale.
* We are excited to get our hands in the field and to raise money for projects that enable everyone in our community to have access to nourishing food.
* You will see the poster at our table just near the entry, come talk to us to learn more about getting involved! We are grateful to have members from our partner organizations – Hunger Free Vermont and the Intervale – here too, so come over and meet them.
* Our next event is gleaning in the Intervale on Friday Oct. 28th. Sign-up at the food security table or welcome table.
* For those in the room new to Rotary – we welcome you to get involved in the way that feels best to you. Rotary transcends borders and gets engaged in the local community – truly an amazing organization!