



The Clinton Rotary Club has received upgrades this summer, including the addition of rubber mats and a safer alternative to the merry-go-round. SCOTT LEVINE/CLINTON HERALD

Rotary Club makes mark on area

By Ben Jacobson
Herald Staff Writer

CLINTON — Attend a Clinton Rotary Club meeting, and you're likely to see someone from every conceivable walk of life. Ministers, government officials, bankers, teachers and even high school students attend the weekly lunch gatherings.

"It's a very broad representation of the community," said Rotary president-elect Norlan Hinke, "which is exactly what we're looking for."

The conglomeration of community leaders all across the socioeconomic spectrum has been a Clinton institution for the better part of a century. Through fellowship, friendship and community spirit, the Rotary Club raises money for local projects and scholarships and chari-

ties abroad.

Volunteerism and philanthropy are hallmarks of the club, which has worldwide influence. Paul Harris, an attorney from Chicago, started the Rotary organization in 1905. In a few years, Rotary had spread to the west coast, with a San Francisco charter. A few years past that, it had spread nationwide.

Now, thousands of local Rotary charters exist across the world, with over a million members. Each club is a non-secular, non-sectarian organization open to community and business leaders. The Rotary foundation assists in many charitable events and activities, and has an expressed purpose of eradicating Polio from the world.

The object of Rotary is four-tiered. They try to encourage the development of acquaintance as an

opportunity for service. They strive for high ethical standards in business and professions, and seek to recognize the worthiness of all occupations. Applying the ideal of service in each Rotarians personal and professional life is also important, as is the advancement of international understanding and good will.

The Clinton Rotary Club attempts to live up to these ideals through various charitable acts. Dictionaries are provided to area elementary school children in an effort to promote literacy. And the Rotary park has received a significant number of upgrades this summer, including the addition of rubber mats, and a safer alternative to the liability-ridden merry-go-round.

"That's been a very well received project in the community," said president Gary Foster.

While most of the Rotary's donations are spent in and around the community, the local charter dabbles in international giving. Through the help of Rotary district 6000, which is the home district of the Clinton Rotary, and Rotary International, the local charter was able to purchase two fire trucks for a town in Mexico.

Patzcuaro, a city of about 70,000, was in need of modern fire fighting equipment. So the Clinton Rotary obtained a fire truck from the Fulton Fire Department, as well as a water tanker truck and sent them to the town, which also has a Rotary charter. Clinton Fire Chief Mark Regenwether and Foster personally delivered the vehicles, along with a few fellow Rotarians.

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ROTARY

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Money for these endeavors is attained through a variety of means. A fundraiser is held annually that raises up to \$20,000. Money is also collected at the weekly meetings. Members are given good-natured fines on their birthdays and fellowship time allows Rotarians to have a little fun with their philanthropy.

"You've got to have a little fun in life," Foster said.

Programs accompany the weekly lunch meetings at Rastrelli's Restaurant Tuscan Event Center. These are usually educational in nature and often present Rotarians with another chance to contribute to charitable organizations. Internationally renowned opera singer Simon Estes recently visited and collected funds for his foundation, which raises money for malaria-preventing mosquito nets.

Each net, sold for \$5, is believed to save the life of at least one child. Through Estes' CD sales and out-of-pocket donations, \$1,200 was raised.

"That's about 250 kids we saved," Foster said.



The Rotary Club Park is just one of many projects that the Rotary Club in Clinton donates money and time.

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