

TWO COUNTRIES, MANY NEEDS AND A VISION TO SHARE

Totem Report May 3, 2017
By Mike Colbrese

President Cathy Gibson opened the meeting by ringing the bell and introducing **Roberta Nestaas**, whose invocation entwined the themes of gratitude and value with a quote from St. Francis of Assisi about the value of actions to help others. **Jimmy Collins** and accompanist **Ken Grant** lead the group in “Let there be Peace on Earth.”

President Cathy provided several announcements reminding everyone of the goal of Music4Life to collect used instruments and to volunteer for the Folk Life Festival. She then welcomed all visiting Rotarians and all non-Rotarian visitors with a special welcome to prospective members at Rob’s table. She also recognized attendees from World Vision and Spruce Street. She provided a special thanks for all of the club’s sponsors—Gold Sponsors **Ken Hamm** and **Bob Alexander** and video sponsors **Fedva Dikmen**, **Joel Ferrell**, **Dennis Fleck**, **Rob LoBosco**, **Lisa Mayfield**, **Connie Miller**, **Dominik Musafia**, **Julleen Snyder**, and **Erin Welch**.

The three delegates from Taiwan were introduced, including Ambassador Stanley Kao, his wife Sherry Sung Kao, and Sophia Chi, Vice Consul, and member **Vincent Yao** of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office of Seattle.

Ambassador Kao, who has served in several countries, spoke to the similarities of Taiwan and the United States referring to the shared core values that include human and animal rights as well as freedom of the press and freedom to assemble. He remarked on his country’s 23 million people and their appreciation of these freedoms and their love of peace. While remarking that his country’s most important relationship is that with the United States, he outlined Taiwan’s commitment to ridding the world of ISIS, having to date provided over \$30 million dollars in aid and services. Ambassador Kao spoke briefly to the tension in his region of the world but assured the attendees that Taiwan has a strong commitment to continue to forge friendships.

Seattle City Rotaract member Devon Hay and World Vision council and club member **Jean Thompson** invited the attendees to the work party tables that had been assembled. Each member was divided into one of three groups to pack hygienic and other items for refugees in Lebanon and school



children in Senegal. They spoke about the work of Spruce Street, which is a local agency that houses 18 youth who are at risk of being sexually exploited. There followed a frenzy as all of the attendees worked to fill the “kits” that will be shipped to refugees in the two countries and hand delivered to youth at Spruce Street.

The enthusiasm was contagious and Jean had a difficult time calling the attendees back to their tables; however, eventually President Cathy was able to introduce Khalil Sleiman, a 14 year veteran of the World Vision staff. A native of Lebanon, Mr. Sleiman spoke to the refugee crisis in his region of the world, stating that the 15 million refugees need everything because they have lost their homes and their businesses. The impact on the region’s economy and social network has been devastating to its people, particularly to the children, “with no light at the end of the tunnel.” The constant dilemma with the instability of the situation is the decision of leaving or staying. “We need your advocacy and your financial assistance,” he stated. He showed pictures of a Syrian refugee camp as well as a video about one family’s situation. He thanked World Vision for providing protection for the children, with child-friendly spaces such as schools and shelter—places to be safe and happy. “Building a child is building a future.” There followed a rousing standing ovation.

Seattle Fire Chief **Harold Scoggins** invited all club members to attend the May 10 meeting to celebrate the Second Annual Seattle Fire Department Awards Luncheon. President Cathy thanked all of those who were a part of the program. She gave a special thanks to the club for helping her meet one of her goals of each member being involved in a hands-on project.

