
Monthly Newsletter - January 2026

Your source for club events and news

“Love Letters” for Ottawa Hospital Patients



We received a thank you from the Ottawa Hospital volunteer manager for our “lover letters” we wrote during our Chilly Chili event. Their amazing volunteer, Una, distributed the holiday greeting cards to patients at both the Civic and General campuses. It was such a heartwarming and rewarding experience. The patients were truly delighted, and there were so many smiles!

Thank you to all the Rotarians, Rotaractors and others who made cards and to Sherri and Donald from the Fellowship Committee who organized this lovely gesture at a special time of year.

Visit to Interact Club

On January 9th, André Bourdon, Chair of the New Generations Committee visited the Interact Club at Colonel By High School. An Interact Club is a high school based community service club sponsored by a Rotary Club and we have sponsored the one at Colonel By High for many years. André handed out the t-shirts we have made for the club members each year.



Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of our Syrian-Canadian Family's Arrival in Ottawa



In February 2016, a group comprised of members of the Rotary Club of Ottawa and members of the Christ Church Cathedral community, waited anxiously at the bottom of the Arrivals escalator at Ottawa International Airport. This group represented many more members, all of whom had spent months working on documentation, fundraising, finding a townhouse and furnishing it from top to bottom for a young family of six refugees from Syria. Waving Canadian flags, holding signs of welcome and fighting back tears of emotion, we watched as the Othman-Sulaiman family came down the escalator.

We could only imagine what was going through their minds, eyes wide with the anxiety of having to adjust to yet another location after fleeing their home in Syria,

grappling to understand and be understood in another language and finding themselves in snowbound Ottawa. The refugee welcome services in Toronto had already equipped them with appropriate clothing, with much more waiting for them at their new home.

Mohamad, Shoq and their children Atiya, Amro, Hala and Jana arrived under the auspices of the Cathedral Refugee Sponsorship Group, a steering committee with members from both the cathedral and Rotary. While the International Services Committee took the Rotary lead, the buy-in and efforts of almost every member of the Rotary Club before and after the Othmans' arrival, made this project unlike all others. Rotary and the cathedral together raised \$70,000...something which most of us couldn't appreciate at the time. Volunteers helped with medical appointments, of which there were many, registering parents and children for ESL Adult classes and school and monitoring progress. Others helped orient our newcomers in their neighbourhood, explaining how banks, grocery stores, phone services, utilities and hospital emergency services functioned. The Co-Chairs of the organizing group, Bjorn Helby and Peter Houlston, spent the equivalent hours of a full-time job, co-ordinating the efforts and coaching our new arrivals through the bureaucratic hoops of governments at all levels. Time and again, the generous support of time, expertise and financial resources by the sponsors allowed for hurdles to be surmounted and for the family members to start feeling like part of the community.



Today, Mohamad and Shoq, along with their now five children, are independent Canadian citizens who have embraced life in Canada. Their work ethic and entrepreneurship have allowed them to cope with the financial hardships facing any immigrant family. Contractor, deck builder, seasonal tire installer, truck and heavy equipment driver, landscaper, homemaker, pastry maker/seller at a local market, grocery store cashier, cook at a large daycare are some of the jobs undertaken. The children are active in sports organizations, moving through elementary school into high school, all the while helping at home with family chores. The family also helped shepherd Mohamad's brother and his family through the

adjustment to a new life here a few years later, when the remainder of the funds raised was used to bring this second family into a safe environment.

They have enriched the lives of all those who embraced them during these past ten years. Together we have laughed, cried, argued, commiserated, celebrated and above all, learned from each other.



Club Participation in Coldest Night of the Year Walk

Our Club will be walking in the annual [Coldest Night of the Year event](#) on February 28th. The goal is to raise funds for the Ottawa Mission and to help those experiencing homelessness. Our team of 8 Rotarians so far, will walk 5 KM that day. If you'd like to join us, please contact Francois Marier at frmarier@rogers.com

If you and your friends and family would like to donate to help us reach our goal of raising \$1000 for the Ottawa Mission. We are already at \$540 in donations!

Donate here: <https://cnoy.w-ith.me/RotaryOttawa>

Visit of District Governor Graeme Fraser



On January 12th, we welcomed District 7040 Governor Graeme Fraser to our first club meeting of 2026. District Governor Fraser spoke to us about the family of Rotary, the connections people make in Rotary and reasons why the join and stay, and the important work of Rotary and that of our club. He also presented Club President Rady Osman with a special recognition for our club's contribution to the End Polio Now: Countdown to History Campaign in 2024-25. Thank you Graeme for your inspiring words, your camaraderie and your ongoing support.

All members can contribute to the Polio Plus campaign through [Donate | My Rotary](#)

Pairing Party



On January 22nd, the Fellowship Committee hosted a “pairing party” at Committee Chair Sherri Daly’s home. Rotarians paired together to bring food and beverages that paired well together. The conversations were lively and fun, the food and beverage plentiful and fellowship great. Our exchange student from Norway, Bente, also attended. Thank you Sherri for organizing and hosting.

Meet Your Fellow Club Members

In this feature to our newsletter, we will spotlight fellow Club members so you can get to know them. This month, we feature two more members.

Hakim Lubwama



My name is Lubwama Hakim Ssebagala, a civil engineer by profession, a member of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers and an entrepreneur by practice. I am the founder and director of Chisel General Maintenance Inc, a company focused on maintaining both residential and commercial properties here in Ottawa, an area where I identified a growing need for reliable and quality maintenance services.

My journey with Rotary, however, began long before my professional path took shape. I first heard about Rotary while I was still in high school, introduced to the organization by my late father through one of his close friends, a Past District Governor in Uganda. That early exposure planted a seed in me, a seed of service, leadership, and community responsibility.

Years later, I volunteered with the Rotary Club of Kampala–Nateete, where my passion for community work deepened. During this period, I founded a grassroots organization called Smart Youth Network Initiatives, focused on human rights advocacy and supporting women and children, often starting with the most basic but essential needs. This experience shaped my understanding of service beyond charity, it became about dignity, empowerment, and sustainable impact.

I was later inducted into the club and worked tirelessly alongside fellow Rotarians to support and execute both local and international programs. Among these was the Rotary Cancer Run, an initiative dedicated to raising awareness and mobilizing resources for accessible and affordable cancer care. Being part of such impactful programs reinforced my belief in Rotary's power to transform lives.

When I relocated to Ottawa, my commitment to service did not waver. Together with like-minded individuals, we established Smart Youth Network Canada, an organization dedicated to supporting stranded refugee women and children, a particularly vulnerable population in a country that proudly opens its doors to many seeking safety and opportunity. Through partnerships with key stakeholders such as The Ottawa Mission and the Ottawa Police Service, we continue to work toward meaningful, community-driven solutions.

It was through this ongoing service that I was introduced to the Rotary Club of Ottawa. From the very beginning, I felt a strong sense of alignment with the club's values. I eagerly completed the due diligence and met all requirements to become a member, and I can confidently say that joining this club has been one of the most rewarding decisions of my journey in Canada.

The warmth and Inclusivity of the Rotarians, the inspiring programs, particularly those championed by the Children's Foundation, and the fellowship opportunities such as Thirsty Thursdays have made Rotary not just a network, but a family. Programs like Adventure in Citizenship continue to inspire me and reaffirm why Rotary's work matters now more than ever.

Today, I am deeply honored and grateful to call the Rotary Club of Ottawa my second home. Being part of this club fuels my passion for service, strengthens my commitment to community, and reminds me that wherever we are in the world, Rotary connects us through purpose, compassion, and action. Service Above Self is not just a motto, it is a way of life I am proud to share with my fellow Rotarians.

David Devine



David Devine joined the Ottawa Rotary club in August 2024. He has been a cybersecurity professional since 2012. Before that, he worked at Infrastructure Canada doing desktop support. David sits on the board of Directors and functions as the IT administrator for the club, managing the Rotary Website and socials (facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn).

Though David was born in Israel, his family is originally from Ukraine. Moving to Ottawa 30 years ago, David has lived in Nepean, Ashton and now lives in Kanata with his dog, Misty.

Outside of Rotary, David serves as an assistant Pastor at the Ottawa Slavic Baptist church on Parkdale. He has also served as a youth leader, assisting in helping Ukrainian refugees resettle in Canada.

For hobbies, David is an avid scuba diver, he attained his Advanced Padi License last year in Tobermory and has been to other dive locations such as Mexico and Australia. David is also a hobby writer, he has written several novels and short stories in the contemporary and Sci-Fi genre.

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Rotarians and others are invited to attend the Rotaract Club of Ottawa meetings on every second Sunday at 6pm at Knox Presbyterian Church on Elgin Street. You can contact Elsie, the Club's Vice-President at elmerhyy@gmail.com



*District Conference 2026 Conférence de district
24-26 April/avril 2026
Kingston, Ontario*

See this link for information to register for the next District Conference:
[Welcome / Bienvenue | District 7040](#)

[Rotary Club of Ottawa Website](#)

February 28: Coldest Night of the Year Walk
4:00-7:00pm we will be walking starting and ending at the Rogers Conference Centre on Colonel By Drive for 5 KM.

News from around Rotary International



[Olayinka H. Babalola urges members of Rotary to Create Lasting Impact | Rotary International](#)

[The game changer | Rotary International](#)

Club Executive Board Retreat

The Club's Board held a retreat January 11 and discussed the following items:

- Creation of a membership committee
- Attracting and retention of members
- Membership engagement
- Club meetings
- Communications
- Bylaws and legal obligations

Club Events for February

February 12: In-Person Club Meeting
12:00-1:00pm at Jack Purcell Community Centre
Jesse-Lee Wallace of Volunteer Ottawa will come speak to us about their organization and volunteering opportunities.

February 23: Online Club Meeting
7:00-8:00pm we will hear from Carrie Hartwick of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association about acquired hearing loss later in life.

Ottawa 67's Game



Join your fellow club members for the Ottawa 67's last regular season game against the Kingston Frontenacs at TD Place. Come solo or bring the family. Tickets are a special discounted group rate.

When: Saturday, March 21 at 3:00pm
Cost: \$31 per ticket including taxes and fees
RSVP Tickets: Francois Marier
frmarier@rogers.com no later than February 3rd