

# Potomac-Bethesda Rotary Club News

## Rotary Club Calendar

February 9 – 6:30pm – Meeting - Normandie Farm

**Bob Hester – Metro**



Bob Hester works for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) as a Special Projects Officer in the Office of External Relations. The Office of External Relations is responsible for promoting public understanding of and support for WMATA activities, policies and initiatives. The office ensures regional stakeholders are aware of the Authority's efforts to provide quality, reliable service including our efforts to return the system to a state of good repair. Bob proactively works with external stakeholders on all regional special events and acts as the official liaison to event coordinators for the General Manager and other key WMATA officials. As the main liaison, Bob coordinates logistics with regional stakeholders and organizers to determine the potential impact that special events have in relation to all three modes of Authority transportation (Metrorail, Metrobus and MetroAccess) and to ensure an appropriate level of service to support these events. He also represents WMATA on the DC Mayor's Special Events Task Force and the Arlington Special Events Group. Before taking over this position, he was the Customer Service Manager for the Red Line, where he piloted an initiative to create a rail team of "experts" to handle inquiries and suggestions from customers. A lifelong resident of Virginia, he resides with his wife in Fairfax County.



February 14 – 7pm – Manna Food Center Packing

February 16 – 6:30pm – Meeting - Normandie Farm

**Bob Pelletier, Jay Davies**

**Rotary World Curling Fellowship;**

**Alex Honjiyo, Hilltop Microfinance**

February 16 – 8pm – Board of Directors Meeting

February 18 – 7pm - North Bethesda Rotary Club's

**Second Annual Wine Tasting and Silent Auction at**

**Kenwood Country Club**

February 20 – GROW Membership Seminar,

**Holiday Inn, Laurel**

February 23 – 5pm to 7:30pm Joint Rotary Social

**with Bethesda-Chevy Rotary Club at Jaleo Spanish**

**Restaurant, 7271 Woodmont Avenue, Bethesda**

**107<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Rotary Founding**

February 25 – 8pm – Wheaton Kensington Rotary

**Club's Classical Music at Chevy Chase Women's Club**

March 1 - 6:30pm – Service Project at Manna Food

March 8 – 6:30pm – Meeting - Normandie Farm

**Bruce Trock – Johns Hopkins University**

March 13 - 7pm – Manna Food Center Packing

## January 26 Meeting Report

Guests included speaker Eric Reid and his wife and head Spagnvola chocolatier

Crisoire Reid. They own a chocolate factory in the Kentlands and a farm in the

Dominican

Republic where the cacao beans are grown. Eric's team handcrafts

chocolates in small batches bringing

out the savor of the most exquisite

chocolate.

Rotarians and

guests were treated to samples of premium bars,

bonbons, and

truffles. For more information about their business, go

to [spagnvola.com](http://spagnvola.com). Other guests included Gladys

Howard,

Irene Grant

and Eric and

Crisoire

Reid's

daughter.



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## Potomac-Bethesda Rotary Treats Homeless to Valentine's Day Gifts at Sophia House



The Wheaton Kensington Rotary Club Presents:

**Francesco Attesti & Pietro Tagliaferri**

*An Evening of Classical Music*

**February 25, 2012 at 8:00pm**



www.attedi.com



www.pietrotagliaferri.it

at Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francesco\\_Attesti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francesco_Attesti)

*"Exceptional..."*

*"...Grand Artists!"*

at the Women's Club of Chevy Chase  
7931 Connecticut Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD 20815

*A Champagne Reception follows*

This stellar event benefits the charities of  
the Wheaton-Kensington Rotary Club ([learn more at: Rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org))  
& the Salvadoran Association for the Rural Health ([learn more at: asaprosar.org](http://www.asaprosar.org))



**For tickets, please contact**  
**John Taylor**  
**taylorjohnw@comcast.net**  
**240-671-7798**

**Tickets:**  
**\$45.00**



## Rotary Receives About 2.5 Million United Airline Miles for Humanitarian Projects

Rotary International News – 27 January 2012

Thank you to all those at United – including President and CEO Jeff Smisek – for their generosity and the opportunity to participate in United's 10 Million Charity Miles Giveaway. And thank you to everyone who voted for us. We couldn't have done it without your participation and persistence.

For the miles giveaway, we officially came in second place and will receive 2,488,070 charity miles from United. Rotarians will use the miles for humanitarian missions, such as transporting sick children to hospitals.

Although the giveaway wasn't announced in advance, Rotarians and friends of Rotary quickly and enthusiastically got the word out through social media, and we went from 18<sup>th</sup> place to second place. This enabled us to receive a larger portion of the 10 million airline miles that United was donating. In addition, we congratulate the Shriners, who took first place.

## Swim Marathon, Landmark Lightings To Mark Rotary's Anniversary

By Arnold R. Grahl , RI News, 3 February 2012

Thousands of participants around the world plan to swim 100 meters or more on 25 February in an effort to set a new Guinness World Record and to raise money for Rotary's polio eradication campaign.

It's just one of many events being planned by Rotarians the week of 23 February to celebrate Rotary's 107th anniversary.

The [global event](#) is being organized by the Rotary Club of Grantham, Lincolnshire, England, which has held an annual swim fundraiser since 1990 to support local charities. Participants swim laps in a pool to raise pledges during the "swimarathons."

This year, in addition to their local event, the Grantham Rotarians decided to

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spearhead a worldwide swim the week of Rotary's anniversary. In order to set a new one-hour swimming record, they need 2,355 swimmers to complete more than 100 meters between 12:00 and 13:00 GMT.

So far, 78 clubs have registered to participate by holding their own swimming fundraisers for polio.

"The idea of setting a world record started as a bit of a joke," says Roger Graves, event chair. "But now that the reality has set in, we hope to set a new world record, raise funds toward eliminating polio, increase awareness of Rotary, and encourage more people to swim and stay fit."

## Other events

Among other events being planned around the world to mark Rotary's anniversary, teams of Rotarians from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States will volunteer during National Immunization Days in India, 19-22 February, in advance of a polio summit 25-26 February in Delhi, India. In Pakistan, a new "This Close" print advertising campaign will be launched featuring Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, the president's daughter and the country's ambassador for polio eradication.

Also, throughout the week of 23 February, Rotary clubs and districts will be illuminating landmarks around the world with the End Polio Now message.

This year, the landmarks include the Water and Power Development Authority building in Lahore, Pakistan, and Frere Hall in Karachi; the Red Fort of Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India; the Roppongi Hills skyscraper in Tokyo; Federation Square in Melbourne, Australia; and City Hall in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

*Top Photo: The Rotary Club of Grantham, Lincolnshire, England, will be attempting to set a world record with a global swimming event 25 February. Photo courtesy Rotary Club of Grantham Bottom Photo: A new "This Close" print advertising campaign will feature Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, Pakistan's ambassador for polio eradication and the president's daughter, seen here administering the polio vaccine. Photo courtesy Aziz Memon*

## Major Donor's Gamble Benefits School Children In China

By Bill Benter (as told to Stephen Yafa) RI News - 1 February 2012

I was about to turn 40 when I joined Rotary. The timing was perfect. I'd wandered into a profession, computer software development, where I was disconnected from any community.

I was developing a somewhat complex database program for betting on horse races, based on 70 variables for each horse that enabled me and my colleagues to determine its true odds of winning in any race, once we entered all the data and did our modeling.



My interaction was entirely with a computer screen. We didn't have customers or clients, so I had little opportunity to connect with other humans. And I was living in Hong Kong, a long way from Pittsburgh, my home. Our goal was to handicap every Hong Kong racehorse based on past performance, track conditions, and so forth, and place strategic bets based on the results. It was a huge amount of work - but profitable and perfectly legal. Our business lawyer, Gilbert Collins, invited me twice to join the Rotary Club of Kowloon North before I accepted. I must have had some trepidation; I'm not a joiner by nature. But before I knew it, I was on my way to becoming a member. Rotarians respect the dignity and

usefulness of all professions. There was no service component to mine, so I felt immensely honored to have been asked. In the first year after I became a member, I learned more about the Hong Kong community than in all the time I'd been living there. Looking back, it's not surprising that I would become deeply involved in the club's service projects.

## Crumbling schools

I have a fondness and an aptitude for numbers, which helps - and, as I discovered through Rotary, a passion for putting my skills to work for causes I believe in. As the club's international service director, I was charged

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with reaching out to join forces with clubs in other countries.

Bruce Stinson, past president of the Kowloon North club, had already made friends with Sai-Hong Choi, past president of the Rotary Club of Macau, and had visited impoverished Du'an County in southeast China in 1999. He'd been moved to tears by the condition of many of the area's rural schools – the roofs and walls had collapsed, and there were no desks or seats, he reported. The Macau club lacked funding, and that's where we stepped in.

I knew that it would be something of a gamble to make our way through the Chinese regional bureaucracy and ensure that the money we raised went where it was intended, but I'd been gambling successfully for most of my adult life. As I got to know the Chinese government officials in Du'an, my level of trust increased. They turned out to be sincere and honest and grateful for our help.



*A young scholar studies in an old primary school in Du'an County, China. Photo courtesy Bill Benter*

The government agreed to put up half the money if we put up the other half – a total cost of about \$60,000 to rebuild each school. To me, this seemed like a slam-dunk, and thanks to the success of my business, I was able to donate a substantial amount of those costs on my own.

The Kowloon North club teamed up with the Macau club to build the first three schools in the region, and since then, our district's clubs have been able to fund many more. Putting the money into bricks and mortar

assured us we were creating something of lasting value, that the money wasn't being frittered away. It was my kind of gamble.

For me, one of the most rewarding results of these service projects is to watch my perceptions bump up against reality. I expected China to be a tyrannical place, even brutal.

## **Noticeable change**

But my Rotarian colleagues and I learned a few things as we watched the Long'an middle school in Du'an being transformed from a dilapidated building into a functional structure. I asked the headmaster about discipline. "Do you spank students?" I wondered. He looked at me incredulously. "Spank students?" He was shocked at the suggestion. Teachers and administrators are forbidden to employ physical punishment, he explained. "They do that in your country?" It was inconceivable to him that we could even think that was possible. So much for my concern about social protectors.

Now, about 11 years after the first schools were rebuilt, Du'an has become a thriving region. When we visited in 2008, schoolchildren no longer looked at our cameras in awe; they snapped digital photos of us with their smartphones. There had been an amazing upsurge in prosperity. Our first school project was dwarfed, in a good way, by high-rises all around.

Did I ever expect to become involved in so many projects, or to meet my wife, Vivian, in the Rotary Club of Kowloon North – she is a past president of the Rotary Club of Peninsula Sunrise, Hong Kong – and to marry for the first time at age 53? I wouldn't have laid odds on any of those things happening.

But computer programs, even mine, have serious limitations. They couldn't have predicted the adventures I've had or the personal rewards that have come my way through Rotary. I donate to The Rotary Foundation because I believe in its mission.

*Please send news articles and photos to  
[Bob.Nelson@NASA.gov](mailto:Bob.Nelson@NASA.gov)  
for inclusion in the newsletter*