

**April 2, 2021**  
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**Editor:**  
**E. Stirbunnie**

**Big Wheel Editors**  
**NEEDED**  
**for the Months of**  
**June & July**

**Contact Bill Vespa**  
**Support the most interesting Rotary Club ever!**  
**Help share the meeting with family, friends and**  
**members unable to attend.**

## Sri Lanka Rotary uses ingenuity and invention to protect communities against COVID-19

*Rotarians, Rotaractors, and Interactors worked together in a nationwide project that promoted behavior change and initiated safety standards for businesses*

*R.I. International Magazine / by Ryan Hyland*

Rohantha Athukorala felt helpless. It was April 2020 when Sri Lanka was on lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic, and he wanted to do something immediately to help the country slow the spread of virus.

“The lockdown was so sudden and absolute. It was hard not being in control of what you can and can’t do,” says Athukorala, a member of the Rotary Club of Colombo Reconnections, Sri Lanka. “Especially for us Rotarians who pride ourselves on helping our communities in desperate times.”

But sheltering in place had its advantages, he says, providing the time and opportunity to connect with fellow members online. Their discussions sparked ideas about what they could do to help people understand how to stay safe from the coronavirus.

### **Promoting safety though social media**

Athukorala started by contacting club and district leaders, talking with government officials,

and listening to business leaders. In late April, he launched Stop the Spread, a comprehensive effort to reduce new infections through behavior changes.

He asked the more than 5,000 Sri Lankan Interactors to lead the campaign and be community advocates for specific behaviors such as wearing masks, washing hands, and social distancing. Interactors used their social media networks to blast daily messages about staying safe from the virus, and posted relevant communications from the Ministry of Health.

To complement the Interactors’ communication, Athukorala worked with the country’s Ministry of Sports and the National Olympic Committee to get top athletes to become ambassadors for Stop the Spread. More than 280 athletes — including stars

in cricket and rugby, as well as Olympians — participated in videos and graphics that were posted on social media.

Stop the Spread also promoted safety protocols through a certification process for businesses. Athukorala and fellow Rotary members created the certification with the Sri Lanka Standards Institution that enabled companies that are compliant with certain safety guidelines to be certified as a COVID-19-controlled environment. Protocols such as mandatory

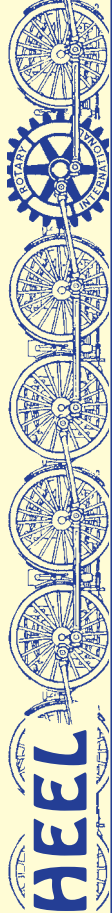
mask wearing, temperature checks, and social distancing had to be in place in order to receive the certification. Nearly 300 businesses, educational institutions, supermarkets, and other retailers have passed the program’s rigorous audits and received certification, allowing customers and students feel safe while supporting these businesses.

When the lockdown order was lifted in early May, Interactors fanned out across their communities to visit businesses, homes, and public transport to give people educational materials and safety guidance. They became leaders in helping schools implement COVID-19 safety protocols, which allowed schools to open in early July.

*Continued on page 3*

**“Our Interactors have been fantastic and made a real difference in getting crucial information out to the public.”**

Rohantha Athukorala  
Rotary Club of Colombo Reconnections



P.O. Box 657  
Novato, CA 94948

"Rotary Opens Opportunities"


## The Four-Way Test

"Of the things we think, say or do:

1. Is it the **TRUTH**?
2. Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
3. Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
4. Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?"

**Where to Make Up**  
Contact the Club you wish to attend for dates, time and virtual meeting code. The District website lists the Clubs and websites for contact info at:  
[Rotary5150.org/clubs/rotary-club-directory/](http://Rotary5150.org/clubs/rotary-club-directory/)

**UPCOMING ZOOM MEETING**  
**April 9**



**Bob Kuchem**  
District 5150 Chairperson for  
The Rotary Peace Center Program

**Bob Kuchem** is the District 5150 Rotary Peace Center Chairperson, and he will explain how the Rotary Foundation in 2002 began a program to build a global cadre of Peace Center Fellows who were given post-graduate training at various universities around the world in building peace and resolution of problems. The due date for the next Peace Center classes is May 15. You may know someone who should apply either this year or next year. **Bob** will cover the basics for you. He lives in Novato, and he is willing to meet with you at your favorite Novato coffee shop if you need further information.

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## Upcoming Programs

April	
April 9	<p><b>Bob Kuchem:</b> District 5150 Chairperson for the Rotary Peace Center Program. He will explain how the Rotary Foundation in 2002 began a program to build a global cadre of Peace Center Fellows who were given post-graduate training at various universities around the world in building peace and resolution of problems. (See Zoom Meeting panel to left for more info.</p>
April 16	<p>"Investing after the Pandemic"<b>Neil Leahey, CIMA, AIF,</b> Regional Vice President at Pioneer Investments. Neil helps senior financial advisors with market knowledge and economic investment decisions. He will talk about considerations you should have as you invest. Whether you use a financial advisor or invest on your own. There should be time after the meeting for additional questions.</p>

[www.novatorotary.org](http://www.novatorotary.org)

**ROTARY CLUB OF NOVATO**  
**2020/2021 OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS**

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“Our Interactors have been fantastic and made a real difference in getting crucial information out to the public,” Athukorala says, who was chair of the Sri Lanka Tourism Bureau and served as the chief business development officer for Sri Lanka at the United Nations.

### **Tools and technology**

To encourage hand washing, local Rotary clubs worked with S-lon, a plastic water pipe company, and PickMe, a transportation organization, to build nearly 2,000 mobile hand washing units that attach to three-wheel bikes. Riders are encouraged to wash their hands before and after using the bikes. The aim is to promote hand washing hygiene in public spaces and increase hand washing rates, which is one of the best protections against COVID-19 infection.

The Rotaract Club of Kelaniya created a mo-

bile app, Track the Spread, that allows Sri Lankans to log symptoms and register positive tests. The app is integrated with local hospitals and health centers so medical professionals can identify hotspots and communicate with people about their symptoms. It also allows people to purchase goods online from grocery stores, pharmacies, retail shops, and even pay utilities with the app, while allowing people to stay home and thus contain the spread. “This is helping commerce continue,” Athukorala says.

The government of Sri Lanka is now testing the app for widespread adoption across its health departments.

### **The next phase**

As vaccinations are increasing in the country, more than 800,000 doses have been administered so far, Rotary clubs have also worked with local health officials to support vaccine sites including logging data.

Clubs worked with the World Health Organization and Ministry of Health to develop a booklet for parliament representatives and religious and community leaders to facilitate a successful vaccination program. The printable booklet has information on different vaccines, safe practices, and key messages that leaders can use to better inform people about the COVID-19 vaccines.

More than 88,000 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed as of mid-March, with over 530 deaths.

“We have done a great job at keeping COVID-19 at bay, but our next focus is making sure Sri Lanka can adequately provide vaccinations to its people,” Athukorala says.



## **Support the Novato Rotary Endowment**

Many more of us are shopping online these days. If you use Amazon for your shopping, try using [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com). Select the Novato Rotary Endowment as your charity and 0.5% of your purchases will go to the NRE.

## Community Service

Low-income residents may apply for North Marin Community Service Food Pantry every Tuesday. Rotary Club of Novato Community Service Committee donated \$5,000 for the pre-Easter distribution of food for drive-in pickup and delivery.



*President Chris DeGabriele lifts bags of rice .*