

District 5040's own PDG Dave Ker was featured in The Rotary Foundation Alumni journal, Connections 2008.

Endowed scholarship's bottom line pleases former Rotary Volunteer

To Canadian David Ker, something just didn't add up when he taught accounting at Russia's Novosibirsk State University in 1994.

"There was a great difference between the old Soviet accounting system and that in the West," says Ker, a member of the Rotary Club of Vancouver South. He then began thinking about practical ways students could bring their business skills up to date.

The thought turned into action two years later, when he served as host counselor for Anton Sitnikov, a 1996-97 Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholar from Siberia.

"It was a rewarding experience, and I decided to establish an endowed fund with The Rotary Foundation . . .to provide three-month Cultural Scholarships at BCIT [British Columbia Institute of Technology] for students from Barnaul and Novosibirsk, Russia," says Ker, a past governor of RI District 5040 (British Columbia).

The scholarships give students the opportunity to learn business skills they can't acquire in Russia. The first Rotary Scholar funded by the David and Lis Ker Scholarship Endowment Fund, Roman Romanenko, came from Novosibirsk in 1999.

"Roman was an excellent student," Ker says. "He was interested in forestry, and I arranged visits for him to local sawmills and export lumber offices. I also talked to Roman about the accounting profession. He must have been interested, as he joined an international accounting firm which had just established an office in Novosibirsk. He then completed his CPA course and is now a manager with Ernst & Young in Moscow."

Other students are also reaping success in their fields with Ker's help. Olga Yakovleva, a 2004 scholar, earned her CPA with Ernst & Young and is now managing the establishment of a new store in Novosibirsk for an Italian fashion house.

"I cannot even realize today how big the impact of this trip will be on my life, how many advantages it gave me," wrote 2006 scholar Roman Feldgandler in a letter to Ker. "I will never forget what you have done for me, and I hope sometime in the future I will be able to pay you back for everything."

Ker also played an instrumental role in forming Rotary clubs in Barnaul and Novosibirsk in the 1990s. In addition, he served as a Rotary Volunteer in Russia, funded by a Discovery Grant, where he developed a proposal for encouraging education and enterprise in farm villages.

In 2004, the Ker's were inducted as members of The Rotary Foundation's Arch C. Klumph Society. The society is named after the founder of the Foundation and honours Major Donors who contribute US\$250,000 or more.

Recently, the Ker's delegated management of their endowed scholarship to Bill Johnston and Jane Le Porte of the Rotary Club of Burnaby-Deer Lake. DGN Penny Offer of the Rotary Club of Vancouver Chinatown will be the District 5040 representative.

"I am sure that they will enjoy the rewarding experience of working with these wonderful young people, who are now part of our family," David Ker says. "Thanks to Rotary for giving me the opportunity to establish this successful program."