

Marking Peace Day

Eleanor attended the Rotary International Peace Summit that was held in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. At the first night's wine and cheese reception, she tells of her conversation with two enthusiastic Windsor Rotary Club members and of a memorable chance to meet Anna Jurak, one of the speakers that she would hear the next day. It came as no surprise to hear Anna say she was nervous (there would be 1000 Rotarians in the audience). And it also came as no surprise to hear her story—just a little bit about her club's project to recognize a message "May Peace Prevail on Earth". The next day's presentation on Rotary Peace Communities was the stimulus that had Eleanor saying, "I'm going to do what I can to make Kitimat a Rotary Peace Community too."

And so it was that on September 21st, 2009, the Rotary Club of Kitimat spearheaded the marking of the United Nations International Day of Peace by making a human peace sign in the community's mall parking lot at 7:00 p.m. that evening. Churches, cultural organizations, sports clubs, other service clubs were all contacted, The people in the neighboring Haisla community of Kitimaat Village were also contacted, Support came from the town council, other service clubs, churches, elementary schools (to make Pinwheels for Peace) and many students in the local high school. 327 people, all in high spirits in spite of stormy weather, showed up, each adding their own bulk toward the making of the peace sign. Eleanor comments, "It was a joy to see both young and old alike and particularly meaningful to me when, at the end, we passed the peace handshake and moved throughout the circle." This year the Kitimat Club will continue in their efforts for Peace. The vision of Jeremy Gilley and Peace One Day (the vision that resulted in the United Nations declaration to have a day set aside to mark Peace) was used to showcase this project.

The Rotary Club of Windsor Roseland's Peace Community Project started in 1999. After a presentation to City Council about the merits of recognition as Rotary International Peace City, Council made the declaration. Through a generous Ontario Trillium Grant and contributions by local sponsors, a Rotary Peace Monument was erected in 2003.

The Peace Committee recognized that the monument was not enough to further its goal of promoting peace and understanding in the community and approached the two county school boards to establish criteria for an annual prize. The goal is to recognize outstanding and innovative achievements and provide motivation to continue striving to be the best. The applications were designed to self-score based on certain criteria. Elementary schools were encouraged to participate by completing an application that reviews activities and projects their school is involved in by promoting peace and understanding in their school and community.

The Club received another Ontario Trillium Grant to ensure several years of continuity in providing schools with the opportunity to attend the annual Rotary Peace Skate, for plaques they can proudly display in their schools and a Peace Pole with the words, "May Peace Prevail on Earth" written in English, French and two other languages chosen by the

individual schools. Every student and all staff members are given a multi-coloured jelly bracelet with the same words written on them; to remind them to think of peace everyday.

Almost all the schools have held special peace ceremonies to unveil their peace pole and invited community members to attend. They are thrilled to be part of a world-wide movement of promoting peace and having a peace pole on their property. The Peace Pole is an international symbol of peace. "Peace Poles may be planted indoors or outdoors and usually stand six to eight feet tall. There are more than 200,000 Peace Poles planted in over 195 countries around the world (World Peace Prayer Society, 2010).

As one principle wrote in the application, "Completing this application form has enhanced our school community. We have purposely instituted many new initiatives as a result of the application. We're hoping to continue to grow as a school community with our new insight."

After the Rotary International Peace Summit in Windsor, Ontario in April 2008, a website to continue the registration of Rotary Peace Communities throughout the world was set up by 6380 PDG Judy Garver at www.rotarypeaceproject.org. More information about Peace Communities and templates for starting your own Rotary Peace School project are provided. Also see www.worldpeace.org.

A motion was put forward at the Summit to request Rotary International to have the Peace Communities program be a recognized program of RI. For further history of the Rotary Peace Communities and Peace Pole project visit the site at www.rghf.org

It is through the power of Rotary that a Rotarian from Kitimat, British Columbia and a Rotarian from Windsor, Ontario can work together to promote the ideals of Rotary through "Service above Self" in working with their communities to promote peace and understanding.