

BIG SKY NEWS

Rick Moore, Governor | District 5390 | Montana, USA

Missoula Rotary Clubs brew up a fundraiser

Coffee connoisseurs and chocolate lovers alike, listen up. The Doubletree Hilton Hotel Missoula - Edgewater is the place to be on Saturday, June 1, 10 am-4 pm for the first annual Choffee Con, sponsored by Missoula Rotary Foundation and First Montana Bank. The Rotary Clubs in Missoula have come together to offer a delightful array of coffee blends from vendors like Hunter Bay, Burnt Fork Bend, Folklore, Clean Coffee Co., Fieldheads Coffee Roasting, Montana Coffee Traders, and Camp Creek Coffee Roasters. Clear Water Systems is sponsor of the Rotary Peace Café, while



artisan chocolatiers will offer an array of chocolates to accompany coffee tasting. Visit www.choffeecon.com

Kalispell Rotary honors Service Above Self

The Rotary Club of Kalispell honored our own at our last meeting of 2018. Custom made caricatures were given to Mark Rohweder (left) and Scott Williams (right) for their "above and beyond Service Above Self."

Scott has led the highly visible and impactful Youth Rotary Basketball program for our club for 21 years. The program serves up to 1,000 kids annually and is the principal entry-level basketball program in the Flathead Valley.



Mark is the visionary and chair for the Great Bear Festival. 2018 was the 2nd annual festival and netted local clubs \$50,000 for Rotary projects. Well done, Rotarians!

—Pat Hulla, Secretary, Rotary Club of Kalispell

Dear Rotary Club

Missoula 3rd graders send thanks letters for Rotary dictionaries

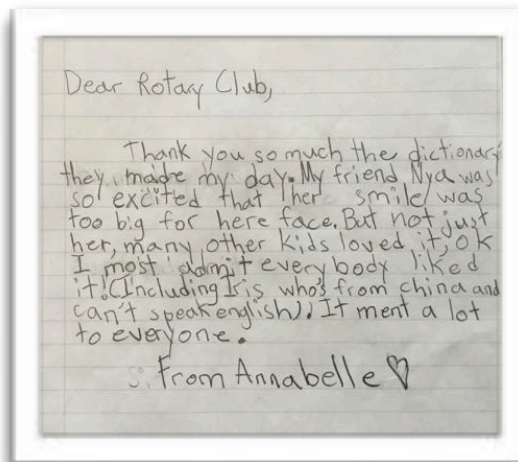
“Thank you so much for the dictionaries!” wrote Cooper, a student in Mrs. Griffin’s third grade class at Lewis & Clark Elementary School in Missoula. “My brother had a outdated one. I’ve already used my dictionary thirteen times! And now I know the longest word Methionylglutaminyl so on and so on. And it will make me spell better.”

Cooper’s letter was among 18 handprinted letters that arrived late last year in a large manila envelope for the Rotary Club of Missoula. Each letter began with “Dear Rotary Club.” The classroom exercise not only taught the children the importance of writing a thank-you note, but also gave them practice in how to structure a letter. And it taught them how to look up words in their new dictionaries.

For many years, Rotary Clubs statewide have donated dictionaries to third-grade students as part of Rotary’s Literacy Project. For some children, it is the first time they have ever owned their own dictionary. .

“Dear Rotar Club,” wrote Caden. “That you so much for the dictionarie you brought us. I will yous it for wrihting and all uther things. I am going to lern dewret werds.”

Braedyn included a hand-colored, smiling heart along with a thanks letter that read: “Thank you for the dictionary. You guys are going to make me smarter just so you know.”



Another student named Korbin drew a picture of himself reading his new dictionary. “Thank you so much, now I will be the smartest kid alive!” he wrote.

One student believed in brevity, writing simply: “Thank you this is making me smarter. By Ahmed.”

Joslyn expressed her thanks to Rotary members with a drawing of the globe. She wrote: “It is so cool that evry child in Massoola gets a Dictionary again you made my day!”

Henry wrote: “Thank you for that asome dictionnary. I love the States. Now I now about the 50 states and the math table. The words of the Alfubet ABC! I’ll read and read forever no matter what!”

Lyell wrote that he would use his dictionary for “a lot of things.” Jane promised to “keep it when I grow up.” Josh wrote that seeing the “periotic table of elaments” made his day, while Annabelle drew a big heart after her signature. She wrote that her friend Naya “was so excited that her smile was too big for her face.” She then admitted, “but not just her, many other kids loved it, ok I must admit everybody liked it! (Including Iris who’s from China and can’t speak English). It ment a lot to everyone.” Gavin said that he loved his new dictionary so much that he would “keep it fore ever!”

—Victoria Emmons, Rotary Club of Missoula

**From District Governor
Rick Moore**



Drink up: Clean water for all

March is Water and Sanitation Month for Rotary. As an Environmental Engineer, water and sanitation is certainly one of my passions. Clean water is a basic need for life. Clean water depends not only upon sources of uncontaminated water, but also sanitary facilities to make sure water stays clean and safe to drink. Waterborne diseases threaten millions of people every day. World Water Day is celebrated on March 22 every year and addresses the water crisis that leaves so many people behind. The Water and Sanitation Rotarian Action Group (WASRAG) is sponsoring a contest for the most innovative or impactful Rotary Club Project to clean up our water. Find out how to enter the competition [here](#).

I am very proud of the accomplishments of our Rotary Clubs in Montana. Many of our clubs are working hard to provide clean water and sanitation facilities on international projects and here at home. It was my honor to participate in the ceremonial groundbreaking for a new restroom facility at Fireman's Park in Libby. The Rotary Club of Kootenai Valley contributed \$15,000 to make this project a reality. The Rotary Club of Billings recently completed a

well and latrine project in Negaribo, Liberia. Our Rotary Sustainable Global Coalition represents ten of our Rotary Clubs working together to plan, fund and develop water projects in Guatemala, with current projects in El Progreso, Pasac, and La Vega. These are just a few examples of what our Rotary Clubs accomplish through the dedication of their members.

It takes active, engaged members to accomplish projects such as these. Recognizing that

membership is a key issue for the future of Rotary in Montana, I agreed to pilot a Membership Summit in our District via videoconference. I am pleased to say that 32 of our clubs were represented at the Summit where participants were trained on setting reasonable, measurable goals for membership attraction and retention. Each participating club was given tools to develop plans along with a draft membership plan. Rotary Clubs will next discuss draft plans, adopt and implement their plans.

An exciting program awaits Rotarians at our District Conference May 3-5 at the Colonial Inn in Helena. I appointed a Conference Planning Committee consisting of young Rotarians to plan the Conference. They

—See DG on page 4



Groundbreaking Ceremony for the new restroom facility at Fireman's Park, Libby, Montana. Pictured (l. to r.): District Governor Rick Moore; Malcolm Edward, President, Rotary Club of Kootenai Valley; Ted Werner, Project Planner.

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have organized a program that focuses on what we Montana Rotarians have accomplished. One of the Conference highlights will be our “Montana Rotary Showcase,” featuring the Sustainable Global Coalition, Rotary Club of Great Falls Harvest Howl to benefit Camp Rotary, and Rotary Club of Philipsburg’s Summer Concert and Ice Rink. Other invited speakers include the Mayor of Helena Rotarian Wilmott Collins and a Rotary Peace Fellow from the UNC-Duke Rotary Peace Center. We will also offer opportunities to participate in service projects in Helena. Interactors are planning their own Assembly to coincide with the Conference. Register at www.montanarotary.org.

2019 District Conference
Planning Committee Members

Sydney Ricks, Rotary Club of Bozeman Sunrise

Sarah Skofield, Rotary Club of Livingston

Kami Stevenson, Rotary Club of Helena Sunrise

Jessie Weiss, Rotary Club of Big Sky

Whitehall Rotary & Interact members clean up highway



The Whitehall Rotary Club and the Whitehall Interact Club bridged the generation gap last fall when they organized a joint highway cleanup. Rotary members greatly appreciated the students’ youth and enthusiasm. Be the Inspiration.

–Camilla “Millie” Baycroft, Rotary Club of Whitehall

Photo above: Rotary member Millie Baycroft with Interact members.

Photo right: Rotary members Ed Handl and Arlene Weber.





How does your club support peace building and conflict resolution?

The District 5390 Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee invites Rotary Clubs to help our District celebrate what we contribute to making the world a better place. We want to know what each club is doing to support peace-building and to reduce conflict so we can build a picture of the important work of our District. We also want to make sure our committee is supporting that work and helping to spread its message and impact.

Please send us your activities that support the Rotary focus of peace to our committee chair, Betsy Mulligan-Dague at bmdague@gmail.com by March 29. And let us know if you would like to join our committee!

—Betsy Mulligan-Dague,
District 5390 Peace and
Conflict Resolution
Committee

Past District 5390 Governor Ken Sandon dies at 94

Past District 5390 Governor Kenneth Merle Sandon died February 8 at his home in Altamonte Springs, Florida. He was 94. Ken was a 60+ year Rotarian, joining the Rotary Club of Polson after his retirement from the U.S. Navy. He served as District Governor in 1995-1996 and, with his wife Lawanda, set the standard for dignified service. While in Polson, he proposed the first female member of the club. For decades, Ken had perfect attendance, which he zealously maintained by visiting other clubs to stockpile make-ups. He was made an Honorary member after his health made it difficult to attend meetings. Ken also had multiple Paul Harris fellowships in family members' names.

From his birthday talks at Rotary, we learned that Ken was born March 11, 1924, and grew up in Polson. As an early indicator of his high achiever-type personality, he was an Eagle Scout. While attending the University of Montana, he joined the U.S. Navy along with several of his football teammates after the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. Late in the war, he was the captain of minesweeper, a small wooden ship. A few weeks after Japan surrendered in September 1945, during a typhoon near Okinawa, seven of the 19 minesweepers in his armada sank after being trapped in a bay with over 200 other ships grounded. After the war, the Navy sent Ken to Montana State University for an electrical engineering degree. He later became a pilot, landing jet fighters on carriers. Continuing his career, he ending up commanding an aircraft carrier group.

Ken's many achievements in life serve as an inspiration to all.

—James Oates, Rotary Club of Polson



District Calendar

March 1-3: PETS, Denver CO

March 7: A Taste of Rotary -
Bozeman Sunrise

March 11-17: World Rotaract
Week

March 31: RI Conference pre-
registration discount ends.

May 3-5: 2019 District Conference,
Delta Hotels by Marriott Colonial
Inn, Helena.

June 1-5: Rotary International
Convention, Hamburg, Germany

June 10: Montana Rotary Golf
Championship, Ranch Club

July 9-13: RYLA Camp 2019

September 5-8: Rotary Zone
Institute 2019

Special Month

March is Water and Sanitation
Month. Support clean water.

Big Sky News

Big Sky News is a monthly publication
of Rotary District 5390, Montana, USA.

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Rotary Club of Helena Sunrise

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Rotary E-Club E-4, Montana's 1st E-Club

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Profile: Michael McKay

Michael McKay learned the importance of “Service Above Self” as a member of the Corvallis High School Interact Club. “It is one of the most poignant three-word combinations in the English language,” the 18-year-old high school senior says.



I caught up with Michael, a busy senior student, to discuss what his Interact experience has been like. An active member of the Interact club since his freshman year, Michael has served as an officer each year throughout high school, and as president of the club of 80 members his senior year.

“The Corvallis Interact Club is the largest school club on campus, a testament to the continuing relevancy of not only

community service, but also the Rotary platform as a whole,” says Michael. “My view of Rotary has evolved from one of casual disinterest to one of engaged participation, with a future goal of joining Rotary as an adult!”

Michael attended RYLA for two years, the first year as a camper and then returned as a junior counselor in 2017. RYLA has been an important experience for him.

“RYLA actually has had a tremendous impact on my life, not only when it comes to Interact, but also in other life pursuits as well,” says Michael. “First, RYLA encouraged me to seek out leadership positions in the Corvallis Interact. My junior counselor in 2016, Matt Knuffke, was in the process of starting a community Interact in the Kalispell area, and his struggle to organize the club galvanized me to take advantage of the already existing Interact organization that was established through the tremendous work of the Hamilton Rotary Club and the Corvallis School District.

—See MICHAEL MCKAY on page 7

 MICHAEL MCKAY, continued from page 6

“RYLA has also affected my approach as a leader within our club. This next month, we're in the process of establishing a leadership workshop entitled CITI, or the Corvallis Interact Team Integration Conference. The only way that I have been able to take that project on is by utilizing the already existing skills and activities that I learned as a camper and counselor at the state RYLA camp. Finally, RYLA has encouraged me to be a more passionate and honest communicator, mainly through the inspiring and real keynote addresses that we heard at the camp, delivered by the now-late Jerry Trailor.”

When I get the chance, I like to ask our Interact members if they knew what Rotary was before joining Interact and what they think about Rotary after being involved?

“Statistically, our generation is trending away from joining community service activities and groups,” says Michael. “For many millennials and Gen Z students, service clubs like Rotary are seen as a homage to the past, instead of the future. Thanks to the Interact Club, I have learned that the statistics are not at all equivalent to the truth: Rotary has fostered, and continues to foster tremendous change in communities and all across the globe. “

While Michael is a very active member of the Corvallis High School Interact club, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Hamilton, he also practices speech and debate. Michael recently qualified to compete in the National Speech Tournament in Dallas, Texas, June 15-20. The Montana speech tournament, held in Billings on February 8-9 required 391 judges volunteering over 1,000 hours. In addition, Michael was selected Montana District Student of the Year.



Michael is proud to represent Montana and the Bitterroot Valley. I asked him if he would like to thank the people who have helped him.

“Thank you so much to the incredible individuals at the Hamilton Rotary Club and Corvallis School District for your continuing support of what continues to be an amazing outlet for community service in the Bitterroot Valley,” says Michael. “Special thanks to our amazing advisor, Alyce Leonardi, who does a fantastic job managing the largest student club on campus, and immense gratitude to all of the community members and groups who have supported us in our food drives, paper drives, and other outreach projects. Your support is so very much appreciated. Personally, a shout out to my parents, who have continuously supported me on a roller-coaster journey of a high school experience filled with activities, and my mentor and role-model (and grandmother), Michele McKay, who has demonstrated ‘Service Above Self’ every day since my birth in 2000 through selfless love and constant gratitude in all things.”

Read about Michael in The Ravalli Republic: https://ravallirepublic.com/news/local/article_772448c8-cb3d-5fco-are5-db2od8fb70e8.html. —Marilyn A. Morris, Interact Chair, Rotary Club of Hamilton

Conversation with a Rotarian

Diane, an acquaintance: “So what’s new with the Rotary Club of Missoula Sunrise?”

Lisa, a Rotarian: “Well, we adopted a club Mission Statement the first of the year and it’s very good. Want to hear it?”

Diane: “Sure.”

Lisa: “Missoula Sunrise Rotary actively supports youth at risk while embracing the Rotary International six areas of focus: promoting peace; fighting disease; providing clean water, sanitation and hygiene; saving mothers and children; supporting education; and growing local economies. Like I said, pretty good, huh?”

Diane: “Tell me what that means.”

Lisa: “Okay. Let’s take youth at risk, for example. Our club has adopted two youth home houses. The Gallaher and the Sunrise house. We’re pretty proud that the Sunrise house was renamed to honor our club and it’s 20-plus years of partnering with them. The children call us their Rotary aunts and uncles. What we do is organize activities for them almost monthly. These outings give them similar experiences to other kids in their class rooms.”

Diane: “Like what?”



Lisa: “Super fun things! We went rafting down the Alberton Gorge with Zootown Surfers in August. We did the Hiawatha bike trail. In October, we had a Halloween party in a barn and carved pumpkins and roasted hot dogs and marshmallows over open fires. Here are a couple of pictures.”

Diane: “That is pretty cool.”

Lisa: “We have a great group of Rotarians and their families are also involved with ‘our kids.’ We also have a project day in April at the homes. We have created fences for security, made above ground planter boxes, erected playground equipment, and last year we built a building for their bikes and outdoor equipment. This mission statement lets people know how we differ from other clubs. It also reminds us why we come together each week —besides the bacon and breakfast buffet.”

Diane: “Sounds like you like this Rotary Club. Maybe I should check it out.”

Lisa: “Come visit our club!”
[Grin!]



Full Steam Ahead for Townsend Interact Club

As RYLA Camp 2017 came to a close that summer, a group of enthusiastic RYLA campers returned home to Townsend, Montana, with a mission in mind. They wanted to share with their fellow classmates the lessons in leadership that they had learned while at RYLA. They wanted to start an Interact Club at Broadwater High School (BHS).

Together with a handful of other students who also wanted to make a difference in their community, the campers founded the Townsend Interact Club in January 2018.



November Interact Meeting

The students recruited interested classmates and pitched the idea of an Interact Club to the Rotary Club of Townsend. According to Townsend Rotary President Jeff Langlinias, "Our Rotary Club had been trying for years to get an Interact Club started; so when the RYLA kids came back to town so motivated to start the club, everything just fell into place."

With the guidance of Rotary members Beth Ihle and Patrick Plantenberg, the Interact Club was chartered on January 10, 2018.

Under the leadership of club advisor Beth Ihle and the first club president Daniel Wyse, club members got to work right away. Their first mission was to bring RYLA trainer Karen Grosz of Canvas Creek Consulting to Townsend for a "Freshman Team Building and Leadership Training." Held just weeks after the club was formed, the training was a smashing success.

Feedback from BHS students and faculty was so positive that a follow-up training was scheduled for freshmen a few months later in April. After two successful training sessions, the club decided to make the training an annual event for incoming BHS freshmen. Karen returned in August for a half-day training with the Freshman Class of 2022 and the club is currently working on plans for a follow-up training in March.

In addition to the freshmen trainings, the club completed several local and international projects last summer. For international service, club members hosted Rotary International Exchange students over rodeo weekend. On the local level, they helped the Rotary Club of Townsend during its "Slice of Summer" events and, with assistance from Patrick, the club landscaped the local Head Start Preschool.

Last Fall, Beth accepted a job opportunity in New Mexico she couldn't pass up and had to say goodbye to the club. She passed the helm to long-time friend and fellow Rotary member Jen Lane.

—See TOWNSEND page 10

TOWNSEND from page 9

Jeanne Steele, a parent of four Interact members, says, “Jen has the energy to match the enthusiasm of these young adults and the club continues to grow.”

Since August, the club has inducted ten new members, bringing the total membership to 19. “This is an incredible group of kids and I’m lucky to be a part of it,” Jen says of the club. “Their commitment to service is simply contagious.”

The club has continued to thrive under Jen’s leadership.

“Since last summer, the kids have put in over 200 service hours with Rotary and other local organizations,” Jen says with pride. “They helped the Broadwater County Health Foundation with their annual Spooktacular at the last minute because another club backed out.”

For World Interact Day, the Interact members worked with the school to host a “Service Above Self” activity at the after-school program.

The Townsend Rotary relationship with the Interact members has been instrumental in the



Interact members Daniel Wyse, Ty Henry Steele and Ronnie Steele landscape at Head Start.

club’s success. The Rotary Club changed its bylaws to allow the Interact President to be a voting member on the Rotary Board.

“It’s pretty special to see these kids interacting in such a mature way with local Rotarians,” Jen says. “It will serve them well in the future.”

Aside from the great work they’re doing in the community, they are now shooting for the stars with their international project. Inspired by the Corvallis Interact Club, ten Interact members and five chaperones will travel in June to Guatemala to work with Maya Pedal, a nonprofit organization in San Andres Itzapa, and tour the Montana Rotary water projects.

“I’m really excited to share this experience with the kids,” Jen says. “The majority of them have never been outside the U.S., so it has the potential to be life-changing.”

The students are busy fundraising and learning as much as they can about the culture and history of Guatemala. Jen says she wanted to thank her fellow Rotarians for supporting and encouraging the kids in this endeavor, as well as Dave Renfrow of the Rotary Club of Columbia Falls for his help coordinating the trip.

In February, the club hosted a Prom Dress Sale organized by Interact member Scout Lynde and a “Trivia Game Night” for the BHS students. They promoted RYLA and sought new Interact recruits, as well.

What’s next for the club? In May, they plan to help Rotary District Governor Rick Moore and

–See TOWNSEND page 11

TOWNSEND from page 10

Interact Chair Marilyn Morris at the Rotary District 5390 Conference in Helena.

Jen says she's been asked if she thinks the kids will eventually burn out. "I don't see it happening any time soon," she says. "These kids are the

cream of the crop. I'm just doing my best to keep up and give them all the support they need."

To learn more about the Townsend Interact Club, find them on Facebook and Instagram or contact Jen Lane at canyonfairy@gmail.com.



Above: Rotary President Jeff Langlinias inducts new Interact officers. R. to L.: Secretary Hayden Stubbendeck; President Ty Henry Steele; Treasurer Zach Wickens; and Vice-President Sam Lane. Left: Interact member Will Lane helps at the Townsend Fall Fest.

"These kids are the cream of the crop. I'm just doing my best to keep up and give them all the support they need." —Jen Lane

STRIVE: Helping at-risk youth in Butte

As some of you may remember, one of the programs I initiated during my year as Governor was the STRIVE program. STRIVE is short for Students Taking Renewed Interest in the Value of Education. It is a program for high school seniors who have faced some academic challenges, but want to make the most of their last year of high school.

In October, the Rotary Club of Butte started this program with a group of seniors from Butte High School. Eleven Rotary members and three spouses have volunteered to become mentors for fourteen students who have joined us in this endeavor. While there have been some small glitches overall,

the meetings and the program have been working extremely well.

Mrs. Rebecca Fisk manages a program for “at-risk” students from which the fourteen students were chosen. Both the mentors and the mentees have enjoyed the program and students continue to thrive. It has been a learning experience for all participants. Our program speaker last month was a carpentry teacher from our local school. We will continue to meet once a month until May.

Our plan for next year is to expand STRIVE. I will keep you advised of the final results next year. Thanks for all you do. *–PDG Joe McBride*

Global Coalition Update: District grant funding supports project fairs

An update on international projects in Guatemala:

El Progreso: We are in the wrap-up stage. Work has essentially been completed; but hygiene training continues. One of the grant requirements assured that the hygiene training is done over the course of at least one year. We expect closure in the next couple of months.

Pasac: The grant proposal has been submitted to TRF for review and we expect questions. This is a spring-based system with a complete re-build of the existing system and addition of a second reservoir. We have completed the required community assessment and are updating the hygiene training materials. The required governance training is being done by our partner club in Mazatenango. We are contracting with Clinica Maxeña in Santo Tomas to do the hygiene training. The required EIS, and a slew of new taxes, has driven the cost of this project to over \$90,000.

La Vega: Kudos to Terri Smiley and Mark Rohweder who, along with Gustavo Morales from the Mazatenango club, just returned from attending the Project Fair in Costa Rica where they made a number of important contacts. From Costa

Rica they travelled to Guatemala and met with our partner club in Mazatenango, as well as a cooperating organization called Fundazucar. They then attended a public meeting in La Vega.

The Rotary Foundation has assembled a group of experts called CADRE members in each of the areas of focus to assist clubs in grant development. Due to the size of the La Vega project (about \$300,000), we thought it would be wise to seek the assistance of a CADRE member in development and implementation of the project. With help of our TRF reviewer, we found a CADRE person willing to assist. One of my goals is to get more clubs involved in these projects and cost is the biggest obstacle. Good news: we can now use District Grants to send people to Project Fairs. The 2020 Central American Project Fair will be held in Antigua, Guatemala. Antigua is only a couple of hours from our project sites. This affords a great opportunity to learn about global grants, as well as see first hand what your coalition is doing. District grant applications for 2020 must be submitted by March 31, 2019. Approximate cost for the Project Fair is \$500 and an airline ticket about \$1,200.

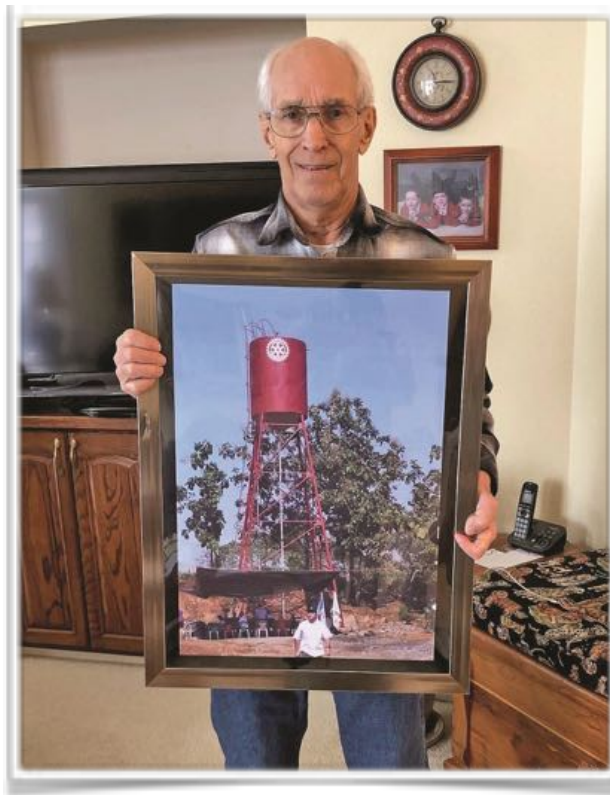
–George Gerard

Profile: George Gerard, Rotary Club of Libby

A Libby Rotarian's unrelenting efforts result in clean water for many in Guatemala

Water is everywhere and absolutely necessary for life. In fact, water is something that most of us take for granted. If our pipes freeze, it's a major problem; but imagine not having access to clean water at all, or having to haul it from a community spring twice daily using buckets balanced on your head. For Libby's George Gerard, he doesn't need to imagine this. He has seen it up close and personal during his more than a dozen trips to Guatemala while visiting at least five different neighborhoods over the past 12 years.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimate that worldwide 780 million people don't have access to an improved water source for adequate hygiene and sanitation, and that providing this could prevent at least nine percent of global diseases and six percent of deaths. Given that statistic, George is likely responsible, at least in part, for saving lives. He has certainly improved them, helping bring water to around 4,000 people in Guatemala since his adventure began.



In 2007, George was president of the Rotary Club of Libby. At the time, Rotary International was focusing on eradicating Polio and on water projects, so he and the club's board decided to pursue a water project. Little did he know that

the decision would begin a 15-year commitment.

Fellow Rotarian Eileen Carney had connections in Guatemala and she reached out. They traveled to the area, connected with a local Rotary club, and soon the club's first water project was born. According to George, "That project ended in failure."

He and others quickly learned that international relationships, business priorities, language barriers, politics, grant requirements, and all manner of stumbling blocks would need to be

overcome. They weren't able to complete their first water project for many of these reasons, but they carried on and in 2010 they completed three small water projects with grant money that repaired existing water systems that were damaged by a tropical storm.

—See GERARD page 14

GERARD, from page 13

With experience under his belt, George then took on a bigger project. He wrote the grant himself. To raise the money needed to match grant funds, he made a personal donation, solicited gifts from friends and family, and added donations of a few others who heard about the water project and wanted to support it.

The project, after much work, provided not only clean water, but a distribution network throughout the town of San Juan Maza. The clean water positively affected about 1,200 people, and when it was completed, the community held a big celebration in honor of George and others who helped.

“It brought tears to my eyes,” George said when telling the story. “The chairman of the community council broke down while he was thanking us. He had promised his father before he died that he’d get water to the village, and his promise had become a reality.”

Another woman at the same event grabbed Carney in a great big bear hug and just wouldn’t let go. “They were just so thankful,” George said.

During his second go-around as club president in 2015, George attended a training and, knowing his club couldn’t afford to do big service projects like the water project alone, he began talking to others about it. He formed relationships, told people about the projects and their impact, drove over 5,000 miles visiting clubs across the state, and eventually asked for and got more support.

A second club joined in his efforts, and soon a third, fourth, and fifth club joined, too. With George’s leadership, a Global Coalition was formed that now includes ten clubs, each giving \$30 per member per year so that matching funds

are available for the grants needed to continue the work.

Most recently, the coalition has been working on projects in the communities of El Progreso, Pasac, and La Vega, Guatemala. (*See story on page 12.*) They have partnered with Engineers Without Borders for design, in-country logistical support and financial assistance; and FundAzucar, an organization funded by sugarcane producers in Guatemala, is contributing, too.

“This is probably the most gratifying work I’ve ever been involved in.”
 – George Gerard

A sustainable system has been set in place, both for water supplies and for ongoing work to keep helping other communities access clean water. Kalispell clubs are now working to write the next grant while other Rotary members have taken responsibility for communications, financial obligations and the like; but George plans to stay involved.

“This is probably the most gratifying work I’ve ever been involved in,” he said. “At the same time, it can be the most frustrating, too; but there are people in the club in Guatemala that truly love me. And two of them even call me dad.”

George said that if there is a take away message from his experience, it’s that the work isn’t easy or fast, but one person can really make a big difference with perseverance and the support of others who care. Friendships, he said, have been the most important and the most gratifying part of what he has accomplished.

—Tracy McNew, Rotary Club of Kootenai Valley