

# BIG SKY NEWS

Sandy Carlson, Governor | District 5390 | Montana, USA

## Townsend proudly waves the Rotary brand

Travelers headed through Townsend now know which service clubs are most prominent in the small Montana community. New outdoor signage bearing the adopted Rotary brand in its horizontal format with the name and the Rotary wheel appearing side by side now greets visitors, thanks to the local Rotary and Interact clubs.



Above: Townsend Rotary and Interact members proudly show off their new signage.

For less than \$350, the Rotary and Interact Clubs of Townsend erected the Rotary brand signs on three entrances into their community. Townsend has now earned the right to claim title to “first club in Montana” to make the official switch for area signs to the new Rotary brand.

Club representatives negotiated with the local Lions Club to get approval to change from the traditional round signs to the new rectangular

brand signs. The signs are metal and reflective at night. The members all agreed that the older signs were difficult to read while driving past them going 30-45 mph. Now Rotary and Interact clubs names are the largest of any welcome signs!

Which Montana Rotary club will be the second to make the official switch?

--Patrick Plantenburg, Rotary Club of Townsend,  
District 5390 Public Image Chair

## Tribute to DG Sandy: thanks for the memories

The first time I ever spoke to Sandy Carlson was at the PETS conference in February 2020 in Denver. She was presenting some information for presidents-elect as we prepared for what we all thought was going to be an exciting year as club presidents. The year was exciting all right, but for another reason. We were lucky to even attend PETS. Within days after the conference, the country closed down. Literally shut down. The word COVID-19 soon became the daily lexicon for everyone.

What I remember most about PETS was that Sandy Carlson, about to begin her year as governor of District 5390, asked me if she could visit our club on July 1. She was setting up her annual club visits, as is customary for a district governor. Of course, I was gracious and said yes.

Then I began to panic.

My affirmative response meant that on the very first day of my presidency, our club would be hosting the district governor. It was nerve wrecking enough to think about leading the meetings from the podium on stage. Though I had been a Rotary club president many years earlier, the thought of 52 weeks of meetings still created anxiety. And now I was to host the district governor on day one in a year marred by the challenges of a pandemic. Full speed ahead.

After four months of Rotary online meetings, I decided that our club would resume live meetings July 1. We retained the Zoom option to create a hybrid type meeting, but at least DG Sandy would be able to launch her annual club visits in person, mask and all.

Over dinner the night before her visit to our club, I got to know more about Sandy. I began to see the warm, friendly and sincere person that all

Montana Rotarians have learned to love. Whatever fear I experienced about being the first club to host the district governor was completely dispelled when Sandy laughed and smiled as if we had been friends for years.

Our district governor's year continued in that same vein. From Big Sky to Billings, Red Lodge to Butte and all parts in between, Sandy trucked around Montana to share her joy and inspirational message with Rotary members. She found ways to conquer COVID-19 and still stay safe, attending club fundraisers, ribbon-cutting ceremonies, Paul Harris Fellow presentations, assemblies, district conference, PETS, Peace Park Assembly, Zone and DG training, and an international conference held online in lieu of basking on the beaches in Honolulu.

When fellowship activities seemed doomed due to the pandemic's facial mask and social distancing requirements, Sandy made her own online parties, each themed for the time of year. Rotarians from around the state joined together on Zoom wearing Leprechaun green, ugly Christmas sweaters, or patriotic red, white and blue. All in good fun, Sandy was never shy about dressing in the theme of the fellowship and carrying the baton as master of ceremonies for online partying.

Behind the scenes, Sandy made sure the district's operations continued to hum and its budget was sound. Her team of district leaders pulled off a thousand miracles in a year that has been like none other in our lifetime.

DG Sandy, thanks for the memories.

—Victoria Emmons, Editor, Big Sky News; President, Rotary Club of Missoula

## Interact Club Auction raises funds to support young Nepalese girl's education

Thanks to Interact club members at Lone Peak High School in Big Sky, Montana, young Pasang Lhamu Sherpa will receive another year of education.

For the fourth year in a row, Interact club members have raised funds to pay for Pasang's schooling in her native Nepal through a scholarship with the Tsering's Fund, established by Rotarian Peter Schmeiding to support the needs of children in Nepal.

Club members said they were thrilled at raising \$1,835 from their online auction held May 22 and to help Pasang continue her education. In Nepal, it is quite rare for a young girl to obtain schooling. Pasang is very appreciative of the students' gift of learning.

"Educating a boy educates an individual, educate a girl and you educate their whole family, village and all of Nepal." -- Tsering's Fund

The successful online auction netted \$1,235 for five items, including two \$50 gift cards from The Rocks Tasting Room and Liquor Store; a two-

night stay in a charming cabin nestled in Teton Valley, which sold for \$400; Big Sky Natural Health offered an initial consult and acupuncture session which sold for \$115; and an OZssage gift bag sold for \$100. An

additional \$600 was raised

from sponsorships. Most items were donated by parents and close friends of the Interact club members.

—Laura Seyfang, Rotary Club of Big Sky

"Educating a boy educates an individual, educate a girl and you educate their whole family, village and all of Nepal." --

*Tsering's Fund*

## Some things take time

Sandy Wong was patient. The past district governor served Montana's District 5390 in 2019-2020. She'd been honored by her club when she left office, but the world was a little dicey then as a pandemic began to cloud the globe. Meetings at the Rotary Club of Billings, her home club, had gone to a Zoom format, so her award was only to be seen on a computer screen. This month, PDG Sandy finally received the real thing when Tyler Bush, president of the Billings downtown club, presented the award. *Photo courtesy of Shawna Secker.*





## Missoula Rotarians build homes for Habitat for Humanity



Rotarians in Missoula were busy in June helping to build two new homes for families in need. The program is operated by Habitat for Humanity to provide low-income home owners with subsidized mortgages. Those who will live in the homes also volunteer a minimum of 500 hours toward building it.

Pictured left: Donna Upson transports leftover wood. Below right: Rick Oncken, Missoula, and AG Dick King, Missoula Sunrise, saw wood. Below 2nd right: Dick King with Pakistani student. Lower left: Levi Thane sizes up lumber. Lower right: Volunteer Bill Schwanke, honorary member of the Missoula Rotary, brought pizza and bottled water from the Kalispell Daybreak club to serve lunch for all the volunteers.



From District Governor Sandy Carlson

## Kina'ole and the Four-Way Test



**A**s I write my final newsletter column as your District Governor, I do so with a sad but happy heart. This year has flown by so very quickly. When I first began my governor training in July of 2018, I thought my term as governor would never get here. Initially, all of our training was done in person beginning with a PETS planning meeting, followed by GNATS (governor-nominee training) and my first Zone Institute in September 2018.

Training in 2019 included SCRYE, a second PETS, followed by Governor-Elect Training, as well as a second Zone Institute where we actually completed our training and received our official "Governor Certificate." In January 2020, I had the privilege of attending the Rotary International Assembly in San Diego along with over 500 Governors-Elect from across the globe. It resembled an International Convention minus the 25,000 attendees! It truly was an amazing experience and learning opportunity.

By now, you are probably wondering why I am telling you all this. I want to leave you with the assurance that Rotary International cares about



**"DOING THE RIGHT THING, IN THE RIGHT WAY, AT THE RIGHT TIME, IN THE RIGHT PLACE, TO THE RIGHT PERSON, FOR THE RIGHT REASON, WITH THE RIGHT FEELING... THE FIRST TIME."**

the well-being of our district, our clubs and our members. If not, why would they put so much effort into training a district governor for a one-year gig? My biggest take away from two years of training is that the clubs are the heart of the district. Show me 41 active and successful clubs, and I will show you roughly 1,400 Rotarians in Montana who are the epitome of *Service Above Self*. The accomplishments of our clubs this year are too vast to mention all of them. To name a

few – 20 clubs completed fabulous projects using the RI COVID Relief grants. Individually, several clubs continued to fund raise for their special projects despite the challenges of the pandemic. Club contributions to Polio Plus were off the charts!! Rotary Electric of Great

Falls is a newly chartered club. Imagine, a new club in the midst of COVID! And the list goes on... Words can't express the pride and gratitude I feel for being a tiny part of District 5390!

Lastly, I would like to share with you a new word I learned this year from my DG classmate from Hawaii. The Hawaiian term Kina'ole refers to:

**"DOING THE RIGHT THING, IN THE RIGHT WAY, AT THE RIGHT TIME, IN THE RIGHT PLACE, TO THE RIGHT PERSON, FOR THE RIGHT REASON, WITH THE RIGHT FEELING... THE FIRST TIME."**

See DG SANDY, page 6



## *DG Sandy, continued from page 5 .....*

KINA'OLE and the FOUR WAY TEST have helped to guide me through my governor year. I know I've had missteps and hiccups along the way. I am so appreciative of the help I received to get me back on track. I thank you all for your patience and continued support and encouragement through this crazy year. It has truly been an honor and joy to serve as your Governor. I don't regret a second of it. I am so blessed to have had the opportunity to meet wonderful Rotarians from across the state.



I will always cherish the memories of this year and the new friends I have made. Montana Rotarians are truly amazing!!

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your governor. I welcome incoming DG Mike Mayott. His knowledge and dedication to Rotary will lead us into a post-pandemic year filled with new hopes and aspirations for District 5390.

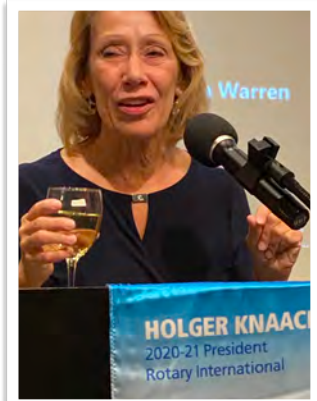
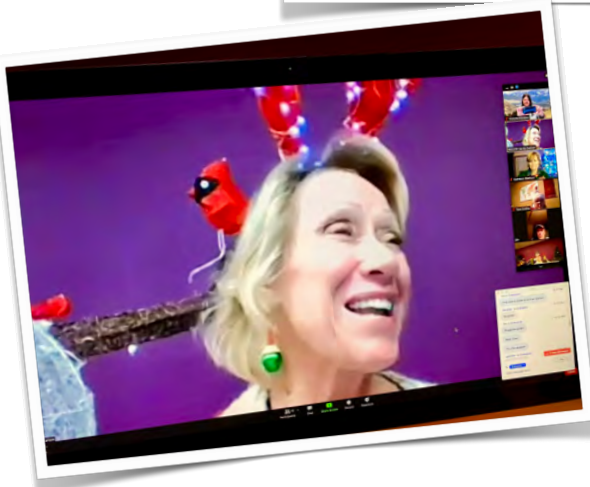
Wishing you all the very best.

Your new Past District Governor and Friend,

*DG Sandy C.*

P.S.: Don't forget to let me know if you're having a Rotary golf tournament this summer!!

—DG Sandy Carlson,  
Rotary Club of Kalispell  
Daybreak



## Welcome to DG Mike Mayott

# My Story: Two minutes of Rotary Storytelling

### District 5390 welcomes new DG

*On July 1, Montana Rotarians welcome a new district governor. Mike Mayott shares his story below.*

### Opening

The only constant in life is change; from the moment of our conception until our bodies are totally consumed by the Earth we are in a constant state of change. So why then do most people abhor change? A quick Google search will return about 4,430,000,000 articles regarding why change is hard.

### Body

In economic terms, change is opportunity cost, the loss of potential gain from other alternatives when one alternative is chosen. In spiritual terms, change is a death to something known for something unknown.

Rotary is an agent of change. At my very first visit to my Rotary Club, I saw change in process. I saw Rotarians digging water wells in Liberia, giving out mosquito nets in Namibia, acknowledging a state champion soccer team I coached, and honoring high school students of the month. From that moment, I knew I wanted to be a Rotarian.

My work within my club has changed me as well, expanding the service I can provide to others. I

have traveled to Liberia twice to host community building through soccer tournaments. I have been in Uganda and Benin teaching accounting and computerizing Savings and Loan

Cooperatives; I have been to Tanzania teaching QuickBooks.

As Rotary club president in 2020-21, my club and I had to adapt to meeting through a digital format as the COVID pandemic hit. We then changed again to simultaneously meet in person and digitally. Our District adapted to a hybrid District Assembly last fall. Lastly, I thought I was going to be the District

Governor in 2023-24; however, I had to adapt to being the DG in 2021-22.

### Conclusion

Through Rotary, we adapt to new surroundings and needs. We are flexible to changing times and circumstances to achieve our goals.

Above my desk, I keep a bronze plaque that reads: Ancora Imparo. Michelangelo coined the term in his seventies, which means “still I am learning.” Always learning is always changing. Through Rotary, we are agents of change.

*--Mike Mayott, District Governor, 2021-2022,  
Immediate Past President, Rotary Club of Billings*



## District Conference brings joy, tears and Rotary fellowship

Get a roomful of Montana Rotarians together and it's bound to be fun. That's the motto of District Governor Sandy Carlson who was honored at the annual district conference for her year as our District 5390 leader. DG Sandy has done a great job leading the district through a most challenging year of change. The pandemic brought with it a host of problems that Rotarians simply turned into opportunities. As this year's theme related, Rotary Opens Opportunities.

The conference May 14-15 at the Hilton Garden Inn in DG Sandy's home town of Kalispell was held both live and online so that members from throughout the state could easily attend.

Speakers included Zone Director-Elect Vicki Puliz, Terri Smiley and the international team, Ernie Ross, Rotary Club of Billings, who lead a team to the Congo, and Mary Hubbard, Rotary Club of Bozeman Sunrise, who has lead a project to enhance education in Nepal for several years.

Darryl Hansen reported on Youth Exchange, encouraging clubs to become involved.

Keynote speaker was Bryan Douglass who told the story of the aircraft "Miss Montana" and her flight to France. Bryan said a documentary on the flight will air this summer, likely on PBS. Two documentaries have been produced, one featuring all the airplanes that flew on the 75th anniversary of

D-Day and a second on the story of Miss Montana.

At the conference, Lucy Smith memorialized all the Rotarians we lost this past year.

On Friday afternoon, Rotarians met at Gateway Community Center to assist the Community Book Exchange with stocking books on shelves so that kids can access them when they visit.



If one attended online, it was a little tricky to join the off-site fellowship functions, of course. Those were especially exciting — a tour of local distilleries and breweries in Kalispell or a school bus ride to Glacier National Park with stunning views and a gorgeous afternoon, complete with a stop at a local distillery, thanks to Allan Ruby. Those on the Glacier adventure learned that the Blackfeet Tribe calls Glacier the “backbone of America” and gave Glacier

National Park Superintendent Jeff Mow, a 33-year veteran of the National Park Service, the nickname of “Holy Backbone.”



See CONFERENCE, page 9



## CONFERENCE, from page 8

DG Sandy presented a variety of thank-you awards Saturday night to her various district leaders. Sandy was honored herself as outgoing district governor. She also announced the winner of the Montana Rotary flag quilt raffle which was won by Bob Minto, Rotary Club of Missoula. The international Rotary flag quilt was auctioned for \$1,000 and winning bidder Scott Wheeler of



Kalispell Daybreak promptly awarded the quilt to DG Sandy, who by that time was in tears at the generous applause and admiration of the crowd. Sandy admitted that she'd do it all again — meaning, serve as DG another year. Now that's Service Above Self.

—Victoria Emmons, Editor, Big Sky News

Photos: Above right: Libby McBride; Middle right: Past DGs Roy Beekman and Daryl Hansen; Left: DG Sandy dances to the tune of the local band; Lower right: Lori Cummings and Terri Smiley at Glacier National Park.







## Rotary flag quilts find a home and raise funds



The two handmade quilts with Rotary flags from clubs around Montana and the world brought a pretty penny for the Rotary Club of Kalispell Daybreak. A fundraiser for the club's projects, one quilt was raffled and the other was auctioned at the District Conference in Kalispell in May. Bob Minto of the Rotary Club of Missoula won the raffle. Scott Wheeler of Kalispell Daybreak won the auction and gave his newly-acquired quilt to DG Sandy. Congratulations to both winners and to a lucky DG Sandy!



## No masks, no social distancing, just good Rotarian fun

**T**he year was a challenging one with required masks for months on end and social distancing for safety reasons as



the world tried to fight back against Covid-19. Rotarians learned to “elbow bump” instead of shaking hands and the phrase of the year was “you’re on mute.” Zoom meetings replaced in-person ones in many clubs, while some clubs managed to hold both live and Zoom meetings simultaneously.

District Governor-Elect Mike Mayott said his club went “hybrid” early on. The Rotary Club of Billings lead the way while teaching other clubs how to do the same.

The Rotary Club of Missoula also held hybrid meetings under the leadership of ZAVIT (Zoom-IT-AV) Chair Bob Minto, Program Chair Royce Engstrom, Sargeant-at-Arms Mike Schauf and Treasurer Kathy Schulte who all learned how to be a Zoom Meister.

In the fall, DG Sandy Carlson hosted a hybrid District Assembly at Fairmont Hot Springs, with many still sporting masks, including Rotary masks. Oddly enough, masks became fashionable as members were seen wearing all sorts of colored masks on their faces.

DG Sandy hosted several “unmasked” Zoom parties while Rotarians from around the state came together online to share and get to know one another.

The District gave out generous Covid-19 grants to clubs so they could help their own communities deal with the pandemic.

By the time District Conference started in May in Kalispell, masks seemed a thing of the past. Rotarians socialized — not six feet apart, but just like normal. A refreshing and welcome change!

—Victoria Emmons, Editor, Big Sky News



## Western Montana Coalition continues to enhance water systems in Guatemala

Maria is twelve years old, but can't read or write. She went to school two years and loved the little she could learn. The school had few textbooks,



most of which were old and well used. Her father took her out of school because she was needed at home.

One of her most important jobs is bringing water from the river to her house. The river is at the bottom of a ravine and is badly contaminated because it passes through a large city on its way down to the village. Maria must walk down to the bottom, fill her container, and walk back up carrying the water on her head.

Bringing enough water for her and three younger siblings takes a lot of her day. It would be impossible for her to carry enough for everyone to bathe. She knows that the dirty water must be boiled after she watched a friend go through severe health problems from drinking the water.

The problems Maria has with water are the impetus behind the work that the local Rotary Club is doing in Guatemala. On a recent trip, George and Linda Gerard and Eileen Carney visited several projects where they are trying to change conditions so that life for Maria can be made considerably better.

The first day in Guatemala, they visited a project that the Rotary Club of Columbia Falls has undertaken: providing water purification systems and hand-washing stations for schools where clean water is not available. They work with a



Guatemalan group called Buenos Vecinos (Good Neighbors) and they build hand-washing stations and teach the students the importance of cleanliness. The water is saved after washing and used to flush toilets. Contaminated well water goes through a purifying filtration system. This is an inexpensive way to cleanse dirty water and make it useful.

See GUATEMALA, page 13



## And what a year it was!



Rotarians from Libby, MT, visited a project where the local inhabitants are rebuilding an older system. The water comes from a mountain spring and is piped down to a storage tank. The original system used pipes that were too small and couldn't carry the volume of water the people needed. Besides providing more water for the

inhabitants, the water will be used to clean the coffee grown in the area. If the beans are processed with

clean water, they can be sold as "organic" and farmers will fetch a better price, which will greatly benefit the community.

The third site visited was the town of La Vega. The government resettled people in the country's southern area following a war between the Guatemalan army and guerillas. They were given

no help and have been living there for 25 years without any water system. The Rotary Coalition of Western Montana, led by the Rotary Club of Kalispell, will install a well and a tank. It has taken four years to gather the money and make the plans; but we're hoping that building will begin by the end of May.

The Rotary clubs of Western Montana have done much to bring clean water to the people of Guatemala. Water is vital for good health. Perhaps with a good water system in place, Maria can return to school to learn what she so desperately wants to know.

---Eileen Carney, Rotary Club of Kootenai Valley;  
Photos by George Gerard.





## And what a year it was!





## District 5390 Calendar

July 1: New Rotary year begins

August 6-8: District Training Assembly, Fairmont Hot Springs

June 4-8: RI 2022 Convention, Houston, TX

Special Theme Months

July – Transition

August – Membership & Extension

September – Basic Education & Literacy

## Big Sky News

*Big Sky News* is published quarterly by Rotary District 5390, Montana.

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District Governor-Elect

Mike Mayott

Rotary Club of Billings

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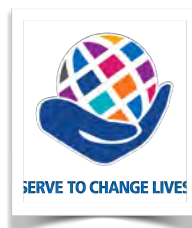
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**PLEASE NOTE NEW EMAIL FOR  
BIG SKY NEWS EDITOR!**

## Thanks to District Leadership

A District can't run by itself. It takes a team of Rotarians. Thanks to all the club presidents, president-elects and president-elect nominees along with their clubs' boards of directors who gave Service Above Self to their clubs, communities, district and the world. You are the heart of Rotary in Montana.

Thanks to those who served at the District level this past year, including: District Governor Sandy Carlson; District Governor-Elect Mike Mayott; District-Governor Nominee Barrie Matthews; District Foundation Chair and Grants Chair Dick King; District Chief Operating Officer Shawna Secker, who also chaired the District Conference; District Treasurer James Oates; Immediate Past District Governor Sandy Wong, who also chaired the DG Nominating Committee and PETS; District Trainer Lori Cummings; District Council on



Legislation Representative Daryl Hansen, who also served as District Youth Exchange Director; District Membership Chair Steve Fredericksen; District Membership Co-Chair Bob Wiersma; District Protection Officer Dick Holper; District Public Image Chair Patrick Plantenberg; RYLA Chair Levi Merkel; Literacy Project Coordinator Roy Beekman; District Newsletter Editor Victoria Emmons; Rotaract Chair Megan Bittinger; Interact Chair Marilyn Morris; Grant Stewardship Chair Robbie Mathiason; District Website Chair Arlene Weber; International Service Chair and Global Grants Chair Terri Smiley; Polio Plus Chair Bill Spath; Assistant/Area Governors Jeff Wilson, Area 1; Lucy Smith, Area 2; Dick King, Area 3; Rick Powers, Area 4; Megan Bleck, Area 6; Steve Fredericksen, Area 7; Connie Gilger, Area 9.

To ROTARY CLUB NEWS EDITORS: The next DEADLINE for stories in BIG SKY NEWS is **August 15, 2021** for the Summer issue. Send photos in .jpg format and stories in Word to: Big Sky Editor at [newsletter@montanarotary.org](mailto:newsletter@montanarotary.org). Please rename each photo submitted to indicate club name and subject, for example: Kalispell-100. If possible, include names of those in the photo. Please also include the name and Rotary Club of your story's author.