

BIG SKY NEWS

Sandy Carlson, Governor | District 5390 | Montana, USA

Interact members help seniors in Townsend

Living in a skilled nursing facility is a big adjustment for many older people who have been independent their entire lives. Add a pandemic that prevents seniors from visiting with family or friends and the resulting loneliness can be devastating.

Enter Interact members from Broadwater High School in Townsend, MT, to save the day.

During the 2020 holidays in a year that brought unprecedented lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, members of the Townsend Rotary Youth-Sponsored Interact Club helped ease the pain of loneliness for 145 area seniors by connecting with them through good, old-fashioned letters.

The students wrote personal cards to seniors affiliated with a variety of local organizations, including the Senior Dinner Club, Billings Clinic Broadwater Nursing Home and Hospital,



Above: Members of the Interact Club at Broadwater High School in Townsend write cards to deliver to local seniors during the holidays.

Silver Springs Assisted Living, Serenity Point Assisted Living, the two Rocky Mountain Development Council’s Senior Housing facilities, and to area seniors who had lost a spouse in the last year.

On December 23, students delivered their cards along with special gift bags for the seniors. The project was supported by a Montana Rotary District 5390 COVID-19 Staying Connected Grant, the Rotary Club of Townsend, local Rotary Club members, the new owner of Bob’s Supermarket, Townsend Drug and Spirits, and donations from friends and families of the Interact students.

Despite the challenges of a worldwide pandemic, Interact still represents Young People of Action!

— Patrick Plantenberg, Rotary Club of Townsend

Rotary COVID-19 grants help Montanans

Townsend Rotary completes Senior Center upgrades

Seniors in Broadwater County can now return to a much-improved, local senior center for their activities, thanks to members of the Rotary Club of Townsend and other partner organizations.

Townsend Rotarians, their spouses and Interact Club members completed upgrades to Broadwater County’s Senior Center on 2nd Street in Townsend. The interior walls, windows and door trim of the center were painted; new entry mats were purchased; new white boards replaced old chalkboards; and 40 new thickly-padded, vinyl-covered chairs were installed to replace the old, worn out fabric-covered chairs that no longer complied with new sanitary requirements for COVID-19.

The \$7,000+ project was completed with financial help from Montana’s Rotary District 5390, the Rotary Club of Townsend, the Broadwater Community Foundation, the Broadwater County Development Corporation, and donations from Rotary members. Special thanks to all the Rotarians, their spouses, and the Interact Club students who put in many volunteer hours to complete the work needed.

—Patrick Plantenberg, Rotary Club of Townsend

Missoula Rotary partners with The Salvation Army

A \$1,500 COVID-19 emergency grant from Rotary International and District 5390 helped Rotarians from the Rotary Club of Missoula provide 200 “Neighbor Bags” for homeless individuals in the Missoula area.

Thanks to a partnership with The Salvation Army, Rotarians were able to identify a community need related to the pandemic and purchase items that will help prevent spread of the virus among the homeless population.

Ryan Boyd, a member of the Rotary Club of Missoula and also an officer at The Salvation Army, helped club members purchase needed items and then organized the assembly line to create the Neighbor Bags. Each bag contained two pairs of new socks, a hat, hand sanitizer, and other items. Bags were distributed to homeless families.



Above: Missoula Rotarians Kathy Schulte, Jim Hutcheson, and Ryan Boyd assist Salvation Army officer Josh Boyd to assemble “Neighbor Bags.”

See COVID-19, page 3

--COVID-19, from page 2

The Neighbor Bags represent one of many projects the Rotary club has undertaken with The Salvation Army as its partner.



The Neighbor Bags represent one of many projects the Rotary club has undertaken with The Salvation Army as its partner. During the holidays,

Rotarians rang the bell at Rosauers Supermarkets in front of the The Salvation Army's traditional red kettle. Volunteers solicited donations for the nonprofit's community projects.



Above: Donna Upson and Mike Schauf ring the bell for The Salvation Army.

Members of the Rotary Club of Missoula Sunrise joined in and stood in front of Walmart to do the same, adding a little friendly competition between clubs. The Missoula Noon club beat the

Sunrise club, but not by much. All in all, both clubs

raised nearly \$2,000 in one day for The Salvation Army.

In addition to bell ringing, in mid-December members of the Rotary Club of Missoula sorted a mountain of toys at The Salvation Army, filling red, plastic Santa bags full of toys to customize for each family in need of holiday assistance. Kids asked for everything from chess sets to drawing tools to basketballs. The toys were donated as part of the U.S. Marines Toys for Tots program.



Above: Rick Oncken sorts toys for homeless kids.

From July to December 2020, Missoula Rotarians also helped support programs at The Salvation Army by donating "Happy Bucks" each week at club meetings. As money is tossed into the Happy Bucks basket passed around by the club's persuasive Sargent-at-Arms Mike Schauf, members share something that makes them feel happy, even during a pandemic. Missoula restarted live weekly meetings on July 1 with a visit from DG Sandy Carlson; but the club retained a Zoom option for members. Even those attending via Zoom share Happy Bucks donations, which can be paid to an online "basket" at the club's ClubRunner webpage. During the first six months of the year, members raised \$1,000 in Happy Bucks donations for The Salvation Army.

—Victoria Emmons, Rotary Club of Missoula

Ugly Sweaters? We had lots of them!

The holiday clothing came in all shapes and sizes as healthy laughter was the order of the day.

District Governor Sandy Carlson invited Rotarians from around the state to don their finest “ugly” holiday wear and be brave enough to display it at a Zoom gathering December 17. The resulting frivolity was eye-catching.

Rotarians both young and old joined the fun, parading their sweaters for all to see. Rotarians wore sweaters bearing tree ornaments, with reindeer in interesting poses, merry bows and stitching,

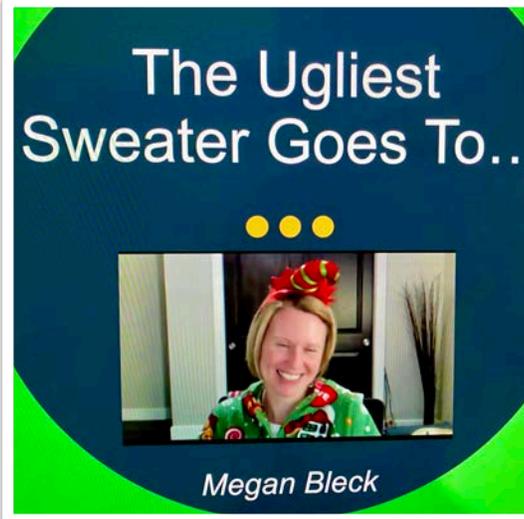
knitted Christmas trees and Peanuts® characters.

Although the competition was tough, in the end, the winner was an elf named Megan Bleck,

president of E-4 E-Club, past president of Rotary Club of Bozeman Sunrise, and Area Governor. Megan’s holiday pajamas and red elfin hat stole the show.

“So I told my husband that we won the ugly sweater contest and he is a little offended because he loves our jammies,” said Megan.

Thanks to all who shared their ugly sweaters.



From District Governor Sandy Carlson



Six months and 31 club visits



I cannot believe that I am already midway through the seventh month of my governorship. It seems as though I've only just begun with my very first governor visit to the Missoula Noon

Club on July 1. I remember being a nervous wreck. I am so grateful to President Victoria and to all of the members who were very welcoming and understanding of my case of the jitters.

Here we are, six months and 31 club visits later, and I must confess, I still get nervous.

However, overpowering the nerves is a sense of excitement to meet new Rotarians, to listen to club success stories and to share in the fellowship we as Rotarians cherish to have with one another. It's a feeling that is difficult to describe, but one that comes from the heart.

For me, this has been an exciting year. Many of my fellow governor classmates can only visit their clubs via Zoom. I feel fortunate that the majority of my visits have been in person. However, I am amazed at the technical skills club members have developed using a laptop and

microphone. As they say in the commercial, "It's almost like being there!" I hope that during the next six months, I will be able to visit the remaining ten clubs in the district and to make a second visit to the others. I am optimistic that in-person events will be possible this spring and summer. I would love to attend even as a past district governor!

Lastly, I would like to thank Past District Governor Sandy Wong for her hard work and efforts in securing the Rotary International COVID Relief Grant totaling \$25,000 for our district. We were able to fund several \$1,500 grants to clubs that were then able to help with relief efforts in their communities. We

saw everything from holiday food baskets, clothing and personal items to homeless shelters, energy assistance, a trio of clubs in a partnership to conduct twelve days of giving to a variety of organizations, and the list goes on... The Rotarians in District 5390 epitomize the meaning of Service Above Self!

I wish you all a Hopeful and Happy New Year — one that is full of joy, good health and peace through these challenging times.

Stay well, my friends, DG Sandy C.

—DG Sandy Carlson, Rotary Club of Kalispell



Above: DG Sandy Carlson (r.) with John Patterson, president, Rotary Club of Bozeman.

Bozeman Sunrise club enhances quality education in Nepal through Global Grant

For more than 20 years, Dr. Mary Hubbard, a member of the Rotary Club of Bozeman Sunrise, has been studying mountain belt formation in Nepal. An earth scientist by profession, Mary's research and her warm and curious personality have led to countless relationships with Nepali scientists, grad students, and Rotarians. The Nepali culture has entered her heart—with a special fondness for the country's children—and through her Rotary connections she began to explore how she could help meet the vast needs of Nepal's rural schools.

Mary developed a partnership with the Rotary Club of Tripureswor in Kathmandu to sponsor a three-year Global Grant that will promote student learning and literacy through a sustainable program of leadership development and teacher training. This project will support six rural schools in alignment with Rotary Nepal's Literacy Mission (RNLM) T-E-A-C-H Program initiatives (Teacher training, E-learning, Adult Literacy, Child development, and "Happy School").



Above: A classroom in Nepal. The Rotary project addresses training, infrastructure, and educational resources in ways that will have a sustainable, cultural impact.

The selected schools are English medium, public schools whose teachers have varying degrees of English proficiency. Most school facilities were impacted by the 2015 earthquake and have focused on rebuilding infrastructure at

the expense of teacher support and training. Still recovering from earthquake damage, these schools are challenged by high drop-out rates, poverty and displacement, low attendance by girls, lack of technology and inadequate teacher support.

The Tripureswor club members met with Girirajmani Pokharel, Education Minister of Nepal, whose priority is to foster a more sustainable economy driven by innovation and entrepreneurship, achieved through teaching methods that develop critical thinking, problem-solving and self-advocacy. The Global Grant project is part of the RNLM initiative to support the government in reaching its goals.

—See NEPAL, page 7

NEPAL, from page 6



Above: In November 2019, Dr. Mary Hubbard brought a team of six members of the Rotary Club of Bozeman Sunrise to visit five of the six Nepali schools in the project.

In partnership with visiting Rotarians from the Bozeman Sunrise club, the Tripureswor club developed a needs assessment for the Global Grant project. The assessment team drew on perspectives of school and community leaders, teachers, school management committees and parents and identified a broad range of needs for each of the six schools. One common, foundational need emerged across all the schools: the need for leadership, pedagogical, English language and subject-matter training for teachers and administrators. That is the primary focus of this project.

The Rotarian participants will develop a series of training workshops led by partner organization Nepal Teacher Training Innovations (NTTI), which is part of the Nepal-based PHASE NGO. NTTI's trainers have had extensive success in rural parts of the country in the areas of school leadership and pedagogical development. Content training in English, science, and mathematics will be provided by four Kathmandu University faculty members.

—See NEPAL, page 8

NEPAL, from page 7

In response to other issues uncovered in the needs assessment, the project will also initiate an “Each One Teach One” adult literacy program; start an after-school club for child development; and provide educational materials, classroom furniture, and paint to support the Happy School learning environment.

The Nepal Global Grant Committee established a goal to raise \$50,000 of the project’s \$109,000 budget. The committee invites Rotary clubs in Montana and other districts to contribute to this project. By participating, clubs will help ensure a better future for some of Nepal’s neediest children and can potentially travel to the project schools as travel restrictions allow. For more information contact Dr. Hubbard at mhub@alum.mit.edu or Nikki Naiser at nikkinaiser@msn.com.

--Nikki Naiser, Rotary Club of Bozeman Sunrise



Top right: Six schools were selected in advance by the Tripureswor Rotary Club based on local information regarding relative needs. Below: Nepali children read in their classroom. Left: Bozeman Sunrise Rotarians receive a warm Nepali welcome.

DG Life: Racing around Montana

District Governor Sandy Carlson has discovered all the backroads of Montana. She drives them routinely to visit Rotary clubs all around District 5390, one of the larger Rotary districts geographically in the Western United States.

Sandy has already visited 31 clubs in the district with ten more club visits to go. She says she is already planning to try for a second visit to the clubs, even if as a past district governor.

Wherever she goes, from Red Lodge to Billings, Sandy is welcomed. She is hosted for breakfasts, lunches and dinners. Rotarians invite her to golf at their favorite courses. She gives speeches, praises club progress and listens a lot. She energizes club leaders with her own innate enthusiasm. Some Rotary clubs send her off with gifts, from bottles of wine to coffee mug souvenirs.

Sandy always leaves something behind, as well. Not only giving her advice and praise, our district governor supports club projects and

activities. She has purchased items at club auctions and served as official starter of a duck race.

“When our holiday party had to be canceled due to COVID-19 concerns,” says Victoria Emmons, president of the Rotary Club of Missoula, “DG Sandy told us to keep the \$45 she had paid for dinner that night, even though we offered a refund. She said she would attend some other future event at our club. Sandy is always a welcome attendee at any of our festivities.”

In addition to her Rotary duties, Sandy is busy promoting blood drives throughout Montana for the American Red Cross. As if that job isn't enough, she also governs as an elected official on the Kalispell City Council.

For Sandy, relaxation comes on the golf course. The avid golfer can't refuse an offer of 18 holes on a great course somewhere in Montana.

Thank you, DG Sandy, for all your Service Above Self to District 5390.

— Victoria Emmons, Rotary Club of Missoula



Above: DG Sandy C. tries out her new driver won in the Rotary Club of Bozeman Holiday Auction.

District 5390 Calendar

Feb. 3: District/Club Leadership meeting @ 6 pm via Zoom

March 2: Past RI President Ian Riseley online re: new area of focus

March 19-20: PETS for Zones 26/27 @ 5 pm via Zoom

April 23-24: District 5390 PETS

May 14-16: Rotary District 5390 Conference in Kalispell

Special Theme Months

January – Vocational Service

February – Peace and Conflict Prevention/Resolution

March – Water and Sanitation

April – Maternal and Child Health

May – Youth Service

June – Rotary Fellowships

Big Sky News

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

District Governor
Sandy Carlson
Rotary Club of Kalispell Daybreak

District Secretary
Shawna Secker
E4 Montana's First E-Club

District Treasurer
James Oates
Rotary Club of Polson

Big Sky News Editor
Victoria Emmons
Rotary Club of Missoula

Address correspondence to:
Editor, Big Sky News
Rotary District 5390
PO Box 1091
Billings, MT 59103
District5390.newsletter@gmail.com

Montana Rotarian leads freshwater project in Malawi

The East African country of Malawi ranks among the world's least developed and poorest nations, where 90 percent of the people live in rural areas. Enter HeidiH

new Whitefish, Montana transplant Heidi Rickels, co-founder and CEO of Freshwater International, a nonprofit that provides clean water, safe sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools, health centers and villages in Malawi.

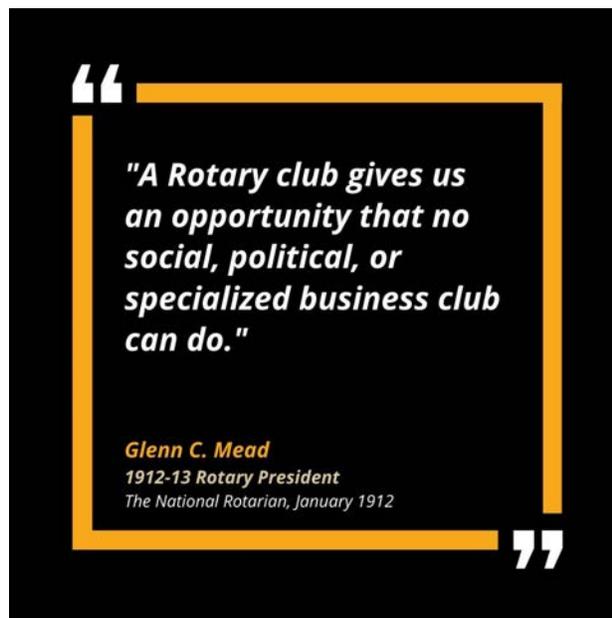


Above: Malawi woman carries fresh water from a well. Photo by Kelly Hart

Heidi is also the president of the Rotary e-Club of WASH, where Rotarians from countries across

the globe meet online to focus on water, sanitation and hygiene. Welcome, Heidi, to the Montana Rotary family!

—Terri Smiley, Rotary Club of Kalispell Daybreak & chair, District 5390 International Service



To ROTARY CLUB NEWS EDITORS: The next DEADLINE for stories in BIG SKY NEWS is **February 20, 2021**, for the Spring issue. Send photos in .jpg format and stories in Word to: Big Sky Editor at district5390.newsletter@gmail.com. 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.