

## WEEK 10 FOUNDATION MINUTE – LITERACY MONTH

Perhaps it is a coincidence, but Rotary’s theme for the month of September is Literacy. This year, our community leaders are grappling with the difficult choice of whether to open our schools as usual this year, facing the possibility of infecting our children, teachers and families with the CoVid virus. The alternatives of home schooling or hybrid alternatives have their own challenges, related to the critical need for children to interact, play and learn acceptable social behavior skills. But in the words of a former Peace Corps worker I know, this is actually a “First World” problem!

In many parts of the world, the annual ritual of children returning to school is anything but routine. Some communities are too dangerous to send young children to school; in others, young girls miss days of education each month - lacking hygiene supplies and knowledge about themselves - rather than attend class. Many parents cannot afford to send all their children to school – with only the males in the families able to attend school. In many communities, educational materials, books and other equipment are in short supply – and not enough schools exist to educate everyone.

And then there is the issue of safety...

In 2012, a 14-year-old student named Malala was shot by the Pakistan Taliban for her advocacy for student education. Malala Yousafzai received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 “for her struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education.” Malala’s message was:

“Let’s pick up our books and our pens; They are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world.” Let’s not take our access to education for granted.