

Reflections and Remembrances – A year of Firsts

It will take awhile to measure the success of our year. As the dust settles, let us review accomplishments of our time together creating a Bigger Better Bolder Rotary.

District Assembly April 2010 had the greatest attendance ever with a lineup of activities that included the first of many collections of crutches and the introduction of Club Visioning with guest PDG Steve Wilcox. Club Visioning will prove to be one of the greatest programs ever introduced to support and strengthen our clubs. Creating a vision and a dream of what your club can be in the future will lead to valuable strategic planning to build healthier clubs. Fifteen clubs completed the Visioning exercise this year and are progressing to the next step. More are scheduled in the near future.

Our lineup of Rotary notables began at Changeover with PRIP Cliff Dochterman who filled our hearts with laughter while sending us the message of Rotary service. RI Director Phil Silvers inducted Club Presidents, Assistant Governors and myself as DG. International guests came from England and PDG Saliu Ahmed from Nigeria led us in inspiration.

Official club visits kept us all busy through early October as we shared Rotary, fellowship and fun. The introduction of a District Protection Policy was strenuous but worthwhile and has created greater awareness. Many thanks to Carolyn Johnson and Joel Merry for their tireless efforts.

Our first ever, combined Membership/PR Seminar was a huge success with a focus on attracting younger members. October brought our first Foundation Retreat held at beautiful Migis Lodge on Sebago Lake. RI Director John Smarge provided stimulating fireside chat and a motivational keynote address. While RI Annual Giving Officer Stephanie Kuta encouraged us to do more.

November brought the first official D7780 NID Team with 11 District members traveling to Nigeria to immunize children against polio. They returned with messages of inspiration and love and a greater appreciation of what Rotary can do.

February we celebrated the first Polio Awareness Week and our first PR Grant Award, highlighted by an extra special guest, RI President Ray Klinginsmith who addressed a record 300+ audience at our World Understanding & Peace Dinner. The illumination of the Portland Museum (for 7 nights) with the End Polio Now logo remains the first and only of its kind in the New England states. The cryptic "*Two Drop*" flashing on the Time & Temperature sign increased PR. Newspaper inserts sent club messages across our region while city buses carried the *This Close* message. Clubs focused and proudly achieved greater PR from local media this year.

Clubs embraced polio eradication through dedicated fundraisers, projects and media. The Purple Pinkie Project resonated with our youth.

Group Study Exchange brought the first single focused vocational exchange of medical teams. D7780 traveled to Hong Kong, Macau and Mongolia, the first GSE team to hit all 3 areas of D3450 and China as well. One new Rotarian so far! D3450 sent out the first team member from Mongolia. Stay tuned for matching grant projects being developed to assist Mongolia and our own communities.

Celebration, passion, and inspiration highlighted our District Conference in Portland. Rotarians loaded a 40' container with 5500 mobility devices destined for Nigeria as the result of a successful year of collections for Crutches4Africa led by Chair Dennis Robillard. President Rep, RIBI President Jim Moulson from Scotland, carried President Ray's message. Headliners included 10 year old Alicia Fournier singing the National Anthem, Patty Hagge delivered love and hope for polio survivors and Rotary's efforts; Dave Talbot, Colorado, demonstrated the power of one; Khassen Baiev, Chechnya, offered personal insight into war, survival and compassion; PDG Candy Pierce, California, introduced the LN4 Prosthetic Hand project which the Portland Club will carry forward in the district in the coming year; Roger Cram, Ohio, motivated with world and Rotary heroes; and clubs celebrated projects that Built Communities and Bridged Continents. Awards were plentiful all around.

May also saw many of us travel to New Orleans for an inspirational International Convention filled with music, youth and laughter. June 6-9 sees the visit of RI Major Gifts Officer, Jenna Steiner. The RC of Bridgton-Lake Region proudly takes first in completing the Map Project on a local school playground and more will follow in the coming months. And our own RI Director, Ken Grabeau joins us at Changeover to assist with special recognition for the Rotary Club of Westbrook-Gorham.

And interspersed throughout all these activities were the many, many successes your clubs achieved. And covering all the news and more, was without question the most informative newsletter yet, edited by DGN Marty Peak Helman.

Michael and I send our sincere thanks for all that you do and all I know you will continue to do *Building Communities, Bridging Continents* together.