

Rotary District 7780

Carolyn Johnson, District Governor December 17, 2013

District Brings Christmas Cheer to Lac Megantic

Yes, a nor'easter passed through, but a little weather doesn't stop Santa's reindeer, and it didn't stop Rotarians. An amazing 34 clubs across the District raised \$25,000, and 17 Rotarians and family members — led by Governor Carolyn and PDG Peter — made the road trip to Lac Megantic to bring a brighter Christmas to a community that has suffered dreadfully since the train derailment/fire last July.

We distributed teddy bears to each of the 600 kids in the town's two elementary schools (top). We provided \$6000 to restock the local food pantry (center), and Christmas baskets for 13 families wiped out by the fire. And we purchased gifts and toys and set up a "Christmas Bazaar" (bottom) so that parents of 400 children could select five per child to place under their family Christmas trees.

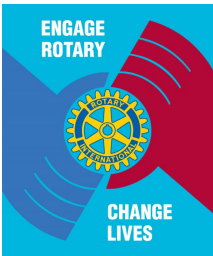
Just one anecdote will suffice: When Rotarians were purchasing gifts in one store, the manager not only gave us a 15% price break, he also got on the loudspeaker and told all the shoppers who we were and why we were buying. They immediately broke into applause.

They were not the only ones excited by the project: Our Lac Megantic adventure garnered a record amount of publicity (in both English and French) from Saco to Bangor and as far away as Montreal. Check out the news clips on the District Facebook page!

It couldn't have been done without the inspiration and leadership of **Biddeford-Saco** past president Paul & Carol Deschambault and president Roland & Paula Gagne. Paul has French Canadian roots, and Paula and Roland have a vacation home in Quebec. Their contacts, plus the involvement of the Salvation Army and Lac Megantic fire chief, were invaluable in putting the weekend together. Always ready for a party, **Hampton** turned the whole weekend into a club event and six of its members drove up for the festivities.

It was a Christmas that none of those involved will soon forget!





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Sanford-Springfield Builds the “Rotary Way”

Sanford-Springvale recently completed a community project funded in part via a Rotary Foundation District Grant. The project called for the club to construct an 110-foot-long all-weather boardwalk so that individuals of all abilities can enjoy a little outdoor stroll and recreation. Since its completion, the Rotary Way Boardwalk is already receiving plenty of use. Here, the building team poses for a picture, and the club’s signage says it all!



Clubs Brighten Christmas for Local Families

The District may have made headlines with the Lac Megantic road trip, but work to bring Christmas to our home communities continues with less fanfare and without pause.

The **Brunswick** club works with the local Tedford Housing and the public schools to identify and purchase age-appropriate gifts for local children who Santa might otherwise overlook (see photo at right). The Club is also active with the Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Project to help “stuff the bus” and provide backpacks of weekend treats for children who are food insecure.



Meanwhile, **Kittery** partnered with a local restaurant to provide hot chocolate and cookies and warm the hearts of the cold but merry attendees at the local Holiday Parade. They look cold in the photo at left, don’t they?

We’ve already reported on the number of clubs that sell Christmas trees and wreaths (be sure to purchase yours from **Bath Sunrise, South Portland-Cape Elizabeth, Scarborough, Westbrook-Gorham, or Portsmouth**). But there’s more: **York** delivers Christmas trees to needy families, and **Yarmouth** has found a way to fundraise around Christmas trees after Advent is over: The club publicizes a local “pickup” day in early January when club members pick up trees and take them to the dump — for a donation, of course.

Plans Continue Apace for Cultural Exchange with Uganda

Governor Carolyn and Barbara Sutcliffe of **Sanford-Springvale** returned last week from a fact-finding mission to Uganda, glowing with energy over the work of the local Kajjansi club and their meeting with Governor Emmanuel of that District. They came home with many plans for the exchange that will take place in the spring. The District 7780 team headed to Uganda will learn about local music and will interact with Rotarians with an eye to pinpoint future projects; in exchange, the Uganda district will send us a group of teen musicians from different tribes who will go through a Friends Forever “life raft” program while they are in Maine and New Hampshire.

