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# Rotary

CANADA 





VIEW FROM THE NORTH

## Vive le multilinguisme du Rotary!

In January, we announced that, commencing with its July issue, *Rotary Canada* would be doubling in size so as to include more content “pour nos lecteurs québécois.”

Well, we heard from one of those “lecteurs,” though this particular reader was not from Quebec. New Brunswicker Jesse Kerpan, a member of the Rotary Club of Moncton West & Riverview, let us know that he “was thrilled to see the announcement of an expansion of French-language articles in *Rotary Canada*. Merci beaucoup!”

But Jesse had a quibble good-naturedly presented as a question. “I wonder,” he asked, “why the Quebecois are named, but not the Acadians, or the Brayon, or the Franco-Ontarians, or Franco-Manitobans, or all the Francophones across the country in general?”

An excellent query, Jesse, and going forward we promise to embrace your suggestion that the magazine “address Canadian Francophones, rather than just Quebecers.” In fact, we intend to address, and present content from, all parts of the French-speaking Rotary world — which means that, in the future, *Rotary Canada*’s “lecteurs” might just as likely read a story from Calais as Quebec. It’s our way of connecting all French-speaking Rotary members and celebrating Canada’s — and Rotary’s — *multilinguisme*.

Our only regret is that we didn’t more clearly understand our mission but had to be nudged by “a French-speaking anglophone living in a bilingual province (NB) and bilingual city (Moncton).” Merci beaucoup, Jesse!

### GEOFFREY JOHNSON

Executive editor, *Rotary Canada*

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Rotary



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### PHOTO OF THE MONTH

A polar bear greets visitors to the Wild Canada exhibit at the Calgary Zoo, one of the many must-see attractions that await Rotary members and their families who will be attending the Rotary International Convention, 21-25 June in Calgary.

**On the cover:** Water cascades towards Western Brook Pond in Gros Morne National Park on the west coast of the island of Newfoundland.

FIELD NOTES

# A boy in the bomb factory

*This Rotarian's story helps resurrect faded details from a slice of Canadian history*



In the last years of World War II, a teenage boy got a job at a factory in a rural area outside Toronto. There, a crew made up mostly of women built weapons in secret.

Gene Burns, who turned 97 on 1 January, doesn't remember working directly among the women who became known as the Bomb Girls. But even then he understood their contribution to the war. They filled fuses for weapons and made other equipment at the General Engineering Company plant in Scarborough, a town eventually absorbed by Toronto. As a member of the Canadian Air Cadets youth program when he was 16 and 17, Burns did his work at night alongside another young man in one of the brightly lit underground tunnels that connected buildings of the sprawling complex known by its shorthand moniker GECO (JEE'-koh). His job was to paint practice bombs white.

Last June, on the 80th anniversary of D-Day, an event in Toronto's Scarborough neighbourhood honoured surviving Bomb Girls and the one male worker in attendance: Gene Burns. "They had a grand celebration with a music group and members of Council," says Burns, a member of the Rotary Club of Scarborough. "It was a great day."

Burns and several other club members who attended the commemoration say that they were excited to support the effort after Bomb Girls historian Barbara Dickson gave a talk at one of their meetings about Canada's largest WWII munitions factory. Many locals who live near the complex's remaining buildings had forgotten this slice of history. When Burns

heard the club presentation, he said, "Wow, I was there!"

The morning of the ceremony, club member Gerard Baribeau drove to Burns' house in the nearby town of Ajax and nudged him to attend. The crowd at the event got a first look at commemorative banners with photos of the Bomb Girls that would be displayed along Scarborough streets. Baribeau documented his friend's day in photos, which included Burns checking out the classic cars that people had parked outside the ceremony venue.

One Rotarian at the unveiling was Susan Roper, a member of the Rotary Club of Scarborough Twilight. She serves on the Bomb Girls Legacy Foundation committee, which supports Dickson's work to document and promote the "girls behind the guns," as a GECO security guard called them in the title of a poem he wrote.

At club meetings, Burns regularly treats members to a time-tested saying, aphorisms that the club calls Gene's Gems. (For example: "A smart person knows what to say. A wise person knows whether to say it.") He kicks off meetings by saying "welcome" in a language that varies from meeting to meeting, and he even recruited RI President Stephanie Urchick to deliver the welcome in her ancestral language of Polish over a video call.

Burns enjoys studying languages, an offshoot of a career with a law firm in Greater Toronto that works with clients who are



**From top:** Rotarian Gene Burns, who worked at a secret World War II weapons factory staffed by women, greets Bomb Girls historian Barbara Dickson; a Toronto event honouring the Bomb Girls displays photos of their wartime activities.

from China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan or who conduct business there. The firm offers services in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English.

During his decades with Rotary, Burns has participated in many projects. These days he enjoys working with a District 7070 scholarship committee, helping send people abroad for their studies.

Reflecting on the program that led to his covert bomb-painting work, Burns says that the Air Cadets was a formative part of his teen years. The group was preparing him to go to war, he says, though it didn't promote that purpose directly to him. Had the war lasted much longer, says Burns, he likely would have been more personally — and perilously — involved in the global fight that concluded 80 years ago this summer. ■







# Horses as healers

*B.C. clubs' call of duty bolsters  
equine therapy program*



**T**he gentle Norwegian Fjord horse cuts a striking figure in a hilly pasture in southern British Columbia. Get close and the cute, short animal with big eyes will nuzzle his head into your shoulder. His name, Gunnar, is a Nordic name associated with warriors and guardians, fitting for a ranch horse whose job is not to herd or to haul but to heal — specifically veterans with emotional wounds.

Gunnar and two other horses, Indie and Teddy, are part of an equine therapy program at Honour Ranch, a tranquil 120-acre parcel of land overlooking the South Thompson River 10 kilometres south of Ashcroft. The ranch is a place for military members, veterans, and first responders to receive treatment for anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Besides equine therapy, the range of programming includes music and movement therapy as well as meditation and other specialized care.

The setting is important. Wooden cabins with green roofs dot the property, which is filled with rolling hills, chirping birds, and evergreen trees. The landscape is perfect for “lots of walking, lots of trails to hike and riding bikes,” says Dave Hodgson, the ranch’s 82-year-old manager. “Nothing motorized. We don’t have anything that takes away the effect of quietness. Listen to the wind. You’re back to nature on this side of the mountain. Anybody in uniform that needs a place to find themselves and put their world together, this is it. This is a place even for me to find myself.”

Such havens are badly needed. Nearly one-fourth of Canadian Regular Force vet-





erans released from service between 1998 and 2018 are living with post-traumatic stress disorder, with similar numbers reporting depression and anxiety. When you consider that there are more than 460,000 Canadian Armed Forces veterans and hundreds of thousands of first responders, that leaves many of the nation's defenders and public safety personnel at risk for mental health issues.

The ranch, which opened in 2019, is the newest endeavour of the Honour House Society, which runs an 11-room "home away from home" for CAF members, veterans, and first responders undergoing medical treatment in the Vancouver area and their families. The house has provided 15,000 nights of accommodation since 2010.

From the start, Rotary clubs in Districts 5040 and 5050 and beyond have assisted the facility in New Westminster, modelled after Ronald McDonald Houses. Rotarians were among those who helped transform the former rest home into an accessible, hotel-like operation with free stays ranging from one night to several months; the Rotary Club of White Rock even hand-built furniture for a self-contained unit called the Laneway Suite. Last year the Rotary Club of New Westminster donated \$10,000 worth of new mattresses.

"When Rotary says they'll do it, they do it," says Executive Director Craig Longstaff. "It's been an absolute pleasure."

When they acquired the parcel of land that was to become the Honour Ranch, a nearly four-hour drive from the Honour House, Longstaff and the society's founder, Allan De Genova, knew they could rope in reliable partners to help

them manage it. Chief among them was the Rotary Club of New Westminster-Royal City, another longtime Honour House backer, which contributed about \$26,000, including a grant from District 5040, to construct a corral, tack shop, and horse shelter at the property.

"We saw that this would be a great fit for a club project," says Nick Jordan, a past president of the New Westminster-Royal City club. "It's a beautiful spot. Everything up there was donated," including painting, sewer work, and a power line connection provided by companies in the province. "It has a big main building which they use for meetings and dining with a big galley," accommodating about 50 people for events such as retreats or training sessions. "It's got a front room and a big fireplace and televisions." The 10 cabins are without TV and Wi-Fi to allow visitors to disconnect from daily commotion.

Between 2023 and 2024, the ranch gained its three star attractions: Teddy, Indie, and Gunnar, an equine trio with personalities perfect to salve nerves. "He'll put his head on your shoulder, but he's a little too big for a pet," Hodgson says of Gunnar.

In a study published in *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* in 2021, more than half of the 63 veterans with PTSD who had equine therapy at a facility near researchers' New York hospital showed a marked decrease in their symptoms, even three months later. By forming a connection with the horses, veterans improved on overcoming fear, regulating emotions, and reestablishing their confidence and trust.

Thus far the ranch is focused on gradually introducing patients to the animals,

**From left:** Scenes from Honour Ranch, where military members, veterans, and first responders receive treatment, including equine therapy. "If it were not for Rotary stepping up, we would not have this program," says founder Allan De Genova.

with riding envisioned for capable attendees once the programming is fully developed.

While camp guests can bring their own therapists with them, Honour Ranch has enlisted Carla Webb, who is a licensed equine-facilitated therapist and former Vancouver police officer, to tailor a program involving horses. Two such sessions for groups of 15 or 16 at a time have been conducted in the past year, says Julian Hockley, a volunteer from Squamish who works as safety and training coordinator for the Coastal Fire Centre of the BC Wild-fire Service.

"I witnessed people with varying levels of comfort in being approached by a thousand-pound animal who were finally able to be present with the animal itself," Hockley says. "I witnessed some incredible bonding with the people who have more comfort with the horses. They established very intimate and close connections in a very brief amount of time and were able to use that connection to regulate their own emotional state."

"If it were not for Rotary stepping up, we would not have this program today," says De Genova, a former Vancouver parks commissioner who was inspired to open Honour House after watching a television documentary about the arduous recovery of a Canadian serviceman wounded in Afghanistan. "They're helping the people who help us every day who ask for nothing in return."

— BRAD WEBBER



# Le bingo et le barbecue nourrissent un sentiment de communauté

par Simon Chouinard (alias Rotaboom), Club Rotary d'Amos

**Le Club Rotary d'Amos**, un des trois clubs de la région de l'Abitibi (District 7010), a encore une fois démontré son engagement envers la communauté avec deux événements réussis qui ont rassemblé petits et grands : le Bingo des enfants et un méchoui festif. Ces activités, organisées avec soin par les membres du club, illustrent parfaitement l'esprit de camaraderie et de générosité qui caractérise le Rotary.

Le Bingo des enfants, tenu à l'aréna d'Amos, est une activité gratuite pour les enfants et a attiré une foule enthousiaste de jeunes participants accompagnés de leurs familles. Cet événement, conçu spécialement pour les plus jeunes, a été marqué par des moments de joie et d'émerveillement. Les enfants ont eu l'occasion de remporter des prix variés, allant de jouets à des certificats-cadeaux offerts grâce aux dons de divers organismes et entreprises locales. Il a également permis de mettre en lumière l'engagement de nombreux bénévoles et partenaires locaux, sans qui le succès de la journée n'aurait été possible. De plus, plusieurs parents ont exprimé leur gratitude pour cette initiative qui offre une occasion

unique de partage en famille dans une ambiance bienveillante.

L'énergie communicative des bénévoles a contribué à créer une atmosphère ludique et festive. Avant et durant la pause, une mascotte nommée Rotaboom, mascotte officielle du Club Rotary d'Amos, a divertifié les enfants, ajoutant une touche de magie et d'amusement à la journée. « Voir les sourires sur les visages des enfants est la plus belle récompense pour nous, » a déclaré un membre du club.

Dans la soirée, c'était au tour des adultes de se réunir pour un méchoui délicieux, préparé par un traiteur expérimenté. L'événement a réuni des membres de la communauté venus profiter d'un repas copieux tout en soutenant une bonne cause.

Une musique d'ambiance soigneusement choisie et des échanges chaleureux ont créé une atmosphère conviviale et agréable. Les fonds recueillis lors de cette soirée serviront à financer divers projets communautaires, notamment des initiatives éducatives et des programmes d'aide pour les gens dans le besoin.

Pour beaucoup, ce méchoui représentait bien plus qu'un simple repas : il était

une opportunité de renforcer les liens communautaires tout en contribuant à des projets caritatifs. Les échanges ont permis de renforcer les liens d'amitié au sein de la communauté, créant une ambiance positive.

Ces deux événements témoignent de la capacité du Club Rotary d'Amos à mobiliser la communauté autour de causes importantes. À travers leurs actions, les membres du club illustrent les valeurs fondamentales du Rotary : la camaraderie, l'intégrité, la diversité, le service et le leadership.

Grâce à l'enthousiasme des participants et au dévouement des organisateurs, le Bingo des enfants et le méchoui ont été bien plus que de simples événements. Ils ont été des moments de partage et de renforcement des liens communautaires, laissant derrière eux des souvenirs inoubliables et un impact positif durable.

Le Club Rotary d'Amos est fier de cette belle réussite et donne rendez-vous à toute la communauté aux prochains événements qui, sans aucun doute, continueront d'émerveiller et d'inspirer la communauté. ■



Avec l'aide de Rotaboom (le double du membre du club Simon Chouinard), les membres du Club Rotary d'Amos ont organisé un rassemblement communautaire comprenant barbecue et bingo.





## PROFILE

# A worldwide family

*A Rotary couple in Calgary went from hosting exchange students to fostering — and funding — peace programs*

**Shortly after they joined Rotary** in 1999 and 2001, respectively, Christine Rendell and Brian Carnahan developed a special fondness for Rotary Youth Exchange. From 2005 to 2018 they hosted nine international students, one of them for six months when a second host family fell through (students typically stay with each family for three months).

“We had students from Switzerland, Turkey, Denmark, France, two from Venezuela, two from Taiwan, and one from Holland,” Carnahan says, and the couple’s

two sons revelled in the experience alongside their parents.

“They loved it,” Carnahan says. “We had tried to talk them into going on an exchange but they [demurred]. They said, ‘We have all the brothers and sisters around the world.’ And we’ve visited them, so it’s been beneficial all around. When you spend time with another culture it becomes like part of your family.”

That early start made focusing on peace for their charitable giving a natural fit. The couple, longtime members of the

Rotary Club of Calgary East, made a donation to establish a named endowed fund directed towards supporting the Rotary Peace Centers program.

The annual spendable earnings from their endowment will provide general support for the program, which has trained more than 1,800 graduates around the world and offers fully funded scholarships for study in the pursuit of master’s degrees and professional development certificates. In addition to their current endowment, the couple has also included a gift to further support this program as part of their estate plans.

Peace is of utmost importance for Rendell and Carnahan, and the art of dialogue holds a special place in their lives. Rendell, a commercial banker, and Carnahan, an engineer, met during a weekend course on negotiation skills for business where they happened to be in the same breakout group practicing their new knowledge. Rendell called Carnahan a few weeks later to invite him out for coffee. “He thought it was for business but quickly found out it wasn’t,” Rendell says. “Twenty-five years later, we still chuckle about that first ‘date.’”

Around that time, they joined the Calgary East club. Carnahan, now semi-retired from engineering and consulting in the oil and gas industry, has served as club president multiple times; Rendell has also served as club president and, in 2019-20, as governor of District 5360. “The idea for our endowment came during my year as district governor,” Rendell says. “Brian and I had been talking about it with the major gifts adviser for our zone.” As Rendell’s stewardship of the district concluded, the pair, who have since joined the Arch Klumph Society Trustees Circle and the Legacy Society, wanted to make a big impact — and encourage others to do the same.

“If you look at all the challenges we have in the world today, we could solve them in a peaceful world,” Rendell says. Adds Carnahan: “If peace isn’t present, all the other areas of Rotary’s focus will be a challenge to achieve or could be reversed if there’s conflict. There’s so much good work. It’s very important.”

While not everyone can donate large sums, a steady approach to giving is key, says Carnahan. “There are ways to get to that level that you may not be aware of. It’s easier than you think.” — BRAD WEBBER





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