

RotaryCanada

*A new leaf
Un nouveau feuillet*

*July 2019
Juillet 2019*



Good deeds in Guatemala

Rotarians from Canada provide educational mentoring and improved eyesight

Off to Oxford

New Brunswick Rotaract club produces back-to-back Rhodes scholars

La magie de Noël

Rotary 



IN HER CONVERSATION with *Rotary Canada* (“The Rotary of the Future,” April), Dean Rohrs, a past RI vice president, worried that our clubs don’t reflect our multicultural Canadian society. After 50 years in Rotary and seven years as a citizenship judge, I share her concern.

Eighty-five percent of immigrants to our country become citizens — more than 200,000 each year. As they begin their journey to citizenship, they are instructed that one of their responsibilities will be “helping others in the community.”

When they formally became citizens, I underscored that fact by reminding them that, as citizens, they would be “contributing as you are able to make your community, Canada, and the world a better place.” As Rotarians, we know that is how we demonstrate our motto Service Above Self.

Many organizations assist immigrants who are considering citizenship. That’s an excellent opportunity for Rotarians to speak with these “Canadians in waiting” about our country’s values. In that way, we can demonstrate that Canada is welcoming and inclusive — just like Rotary. As Dean Rohrs said, “When people immigrate, they should be able to walk into a Rotary club and find a home.”

GERALD PASH
President, Rotary Club of Victoria,
British Columbia

PHOTO *of the* MONTH

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COURTESY OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Above: Gerald Pash served seven years as a citizenship judge in British Columbia. Opposite: This fall, Katherine Reiss, a past president of the Rotaract Club of Mount Allison University, joins Colin Robertson, another former club president, at Oxford University in England.



Mount Allison's colossi of Rhodes

by GEOFFREY JOHNSON

When Katherine Reiss heads off this fall to study at Oxford University courtesy of a Rhodes scholarship, she will encounter a familiar face when she arrives in England. A 2019 graduate of Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, and a past president (2018-19) of the Rotaract Club of Mount Allison University, Reiss can expect to be greeted by Colin Robertson — a 2018 graduate of Mount Allison, a past president (2015-17) of the Mount Allison Rotaract club, and the recipient of a Rhodes scholarship.

"I can't express how excited I am for Katherine to join me at Oxford," says Robertson, who turns 24 this month. "She's got a life-changing

experience ahead of her, and I can't wait to watch her thrive here."

At Oxford, Robertson, who is originally from the Ottawa area, is pursuing a Master of Philosophy degree in medieval history, with an eye towards going on to earn his doctorate. "I work mostly in the Middle Ages tracing St. Augustine of Hippo's ideas in that period," he explains. "In effect I study how a bunch of dusty old monks thought about a bunch of dustier, older books."

A Vancouver native whose undergraduate studies focused on the study of nanoparticles, Reiss, 22, intends to earn a doctorate in physical and theoretical chemistry. A former Interactor and a veteran of

Adventure in Citizenship, an annual program hosted by the Rotary Club of Ottawa, Reiss plans to continue her Rotary journey once she arrives in England. "Rotary emphasizes the importance of community and a sense of responsibility for the world," she says.

Robertson, who attended his first Rotary meeting when he was three, is working with local Rotary clubs and undergraduates at Oxford Brookes University — "the other university in town," he explains — to revive a defunct Rotaract club. "We have a small but committed member group and a lot of energy, so things are looking up," he says.

Both Mount Allison grads have high praise for the town

of Sackville — "a tight-knit, supportive, and welcoming community," says Reiss — and its Rotary club, which sponsors the Mount Allison Rotaract club. "They've been willing to go along with our crazy ideas, throw us amazing opportunities, and constantly open their wallets, kitchens, and hearts to us," Robertson says. "Their relationship with our club is the perfect model of how Rotary and Rotaract can interact."

Partnering with the Rotary Club of Sackville, Robertson, Reiss, and other members of the Mount Allison club have volunteered at a weekly after-school program at an underserved rural school, participated in a middle school breakfast program, assisted at a winter coat drive, and hosted a forum for Rotaractors from the Maritime Provinces. Last fall, Reiss was a guest speaker at the annual conference of District 7810 (New Brunswick and parts of Quebec and Ontario).

As the Mount Allison grads acknowledge, those experiences helped them win their Rhodes scholarships. "The Rotary ideals of service and moral leadership are exactly what the Rhodes Trust looks for," Robertson says. In fact, the criteria for selecting Rhodes scholars include "sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindness, unselfishness, and fellowship ... [and] moral force of character and instincts to lead and to take an interest in one's fellow beings."

Sound familiar?



La magie de Noël

par Pierre Lincourt, Club Rotary Chicoutimi, Quebec

Noël est, pour la majorité des gens, une période remplie de joie et d'abondance, mais pas pour tous. Les membres des Rotary clubs le savent et c'est la raison pour laquelle beaucoup de clubs préparent et distribuent des paniers de Noël pour apporter un peu de bonheur à des familles qui ont moins de chance. Notre club, le Rotary club de Chicoutimi, ne fait pas exception à la règle et nous participons à cette opération depuis plusieurs années. Toutefois, cette année, notre club a décidé d'aller plus loin et d'offrir une nourriture supplémentaire, mais pour la tête et l'esprit : des livres. Grâce à une subvention du district 7790, jumelée à l'apport du club, nous pouvions donc offrir des livres.

Notre comité, composé de Marie-Françoise Tremblay, Serge Lalancette, Sonia Dussault et Pierre Lincourt, s'est réuni tous les mardis matin, dès octobre 2018, juste avant le déjeuner du club afin de bien préparer cette belle activité. Lors d'une réunion de notre comité, une suggestion a rapidement fait consensus : offrir des abonnements à des magazines pour jeunes à tous les enfants des familles à qui nous allions offrir un panier de Noël. Quelle belle idée d'en-

courager ainsi la lecture en abonnant chaque jeune à un magazine qu'il ou elle va recevoir par la poste chaque mois. Nous avons contacté une maison d'édition et avons choisi pour chaque jeune un magazine correspondant à son âge. Nous avions auparavant obtenu les coordonnées postales de tous les enfants et avons inscrit nous-même les enfants.

Les livres n'étaient pas oubliés, loin de là, car il y a eu collecte de livres chez les membres du club. Quelques membres ont aussi préparé des cartes de Noël et des certificats d'abonnements offerts gratuitement par un Rotarien imprimeur. Que serait Noël sans jouets ? Une collecte de jouets a également eu lieu chez les membres et le responsable de la caserne de jouets, un Rotarien lui aussi qui a remis un jouet à chaque enfant. Nous voici donc quelques jours avant la distribution des paniers à emballer 70 jouets et 70 livres. Deux membres de notre club, deux bénéficiaires de témoignages de reconnaissance Paul Harris, ont fait don de 800 dollars pour les paniers de Noël.

Pour les paniers de Noël, quelques membres se sont cotisés pour offrir des tourtières (oui, des vraies !) du Lac Saint-

Jean à chaque famille, d'autres un gâteau aux fruits ; un ancien membre a également offert à chaque enfant un sac de confiseries et un autre membre des pots de beurre d'arachides. En outre, une boulangerie a offert des pains à chaque famille.

Nous voici donc à l'épicerie très tôt le samedi 22 décembre à ajouter aux paniers déjà préparés par l'épicier, cadeaux, livres, certificats d'abonnement, gâteaux, tourtières, beurre d'arachides et pain, tout en nous assurant que chaque famille reçoive le bon panier avec les cadeaux et livres déjà emballés et identifiés au nom de chaque enfant. Ensuite, c'est la distribution avec une vingtaine de membres, quelques conjoints, et même le Père Noël. Ensuite, les membres et conjoints, accompagnés du Père Noël, sont allés distribuer du bonheur à 23 familles. Il fallait voir la joie des enfants devant les cadeaux vite déballés.

Je pense que tous les membres qui ont participé ont tous vécu un moment privilégié en apportant un peu de joie et de bonheur à ces familles qui ont le droit d'avoir un vrai Noël. Pour les Rotariens et Rotariennes, c'est vraiment un plaisir de donner autant que de recevoir.

A HUB OF THE ROTARY WHEEL

Vicki Horsfield



After her second year of university, Vicki Horsfield decided to leave school and devote herself full time to volunteering — in East Africa. Because when you're young and unfettered, it's a perfect time to drop everything and begin a life of service in a new country.

History had a funny way of repeating itself for this Canadian Rotarian. "Several years ago, God put it into my head to learn Spanish," Horsfield explains. After studying the language in Montreal, where she was a math and science teacher in an adult education centre, she enrolled for the summer in a Spanish language school — in Guatemala. "I fell in love with the place," she says. "I knew this was home."

Horsfield returned to Montreal, put in for retirement, and told her grown children she was moving to Central America. Back in Guatemala, she volunteered at two nonprofit educational organizations, one in a mountain village that had been hit hard by the country's long civil war. "In Guatemala, kids are cut off from school if they fail, which happened often, because parents can't give their children the help and guidance they need," she says. "Clearly the kids needed help outside of school."

In April 2014, Horsfield launched Creating Opportunities for Guatemalans in San Antonio Aguas Calientes, a village outside Antigua. Initially the organization provided after-school tutoring and school supplies to children of families living below the poverty line. Today its programs have expanded to include vocational training and literacy classes for adults; it also offers English classes

for the 40-plus children the organization serves. "Knowing English gives kids an edge, especially in a country with a lively tourist industry," Horsfield says.

Several locals help Horsfield run Creating Opportunities for Guatemalans, including William Garcia, whom she identifies as the organization's "co-founder and co-director. He acts as a father to a lot of these kids." A member of the Rotary E-Club of Canada One, Horsfield also gets support from Rotary clubs across North America. "My brother, Brian Horsfield, a member of the Rotary Club of Davis, California, encouraged me to join Rotary," she explains. "He said, 'You're already serving, and this way you will have help and camaraderie.' The next time I visited my kids in Montreal, I popped in to a meeting of the Montreal-Lakeshore club. Once I told them what I was doing, they insisted I come back and give them a talk."

"Vicki is just fantastic," says Knud Petersen, a member of the Rotary Club of Montreal-Lakeshore. "She's very positive and full of energy and goodwill. She's also a great speaker. Inevitably you are taken in by her presentation."

Inspired by Horsfield's speeches — she also addressed the International Service Committee of District 7040, which encompasses parts of Ontario, Nunavut, Quebec, and New York state — Petersen's club partnered with the Rotary clubs of Hawkesbury, Ontario, and Montreal West-DNG. "Vicki suggested three things that could make a life difference for the families she worked with," says Petersen. With help from a district matching grant and an assist from the Rotary Club of La Antigua, the three Canadian clubs provided water containers with ceramic filters for the Guatemalan villagers; that reduced the ill effects of drinking impure water that sickened the children and made them miss school. The clubs also provided propane stoves for two dozen families and arranged for toilets to be installed in some homes.

"Rotary is amazing," exclaims Horsfield. "Open your mouth and say you're a Rotarian, and another Rotarian will come out of nowhere and offer to help." In a quick survey, she mentions a network of clubs in British Columbia (Nanaimo Daybreak on Vancouver Island), Ontario (St. Catharines-Lakeshore), California (Valley of the Moon in Santa Rosa), and Oregon (Rogue Gateway in Grants Pass) that have helped Creating Opportunities for Guatemalans. There was also the unidentified Floridian who, with his daughter, has taken one of Horsfield's Guatemalan families under his wing "because he's a Rotarian with a heart to serve."

The same is true for Horsfield. "I'm very involved in these kids' lives," she says. "The children who are in first and second grade now? I want to see them graduate high school."

— G.J. 

Edmonton West vision quest

by GEOFFREY JOHNSON

In 1997, Benjamin Doz, an optometrist with a new practice in Edmonton, was planning his honeymoon to Egypt, Greece, and Turkey. That's when he learned about an eye care mission to Central America. Sponsored in part by the Canadian Rotary Collaboration for International Development (CRCID), the program had been started by Carlos Solórzano, an ophthalmologist and a member of the Rotary Club of Huehuetenango, a city in the highlands of western Guatemala.

"I heard that Carlos was looking for help," Doz recalls. "I told Marley, my wife, that we could either take our honeymoon or travel to Guatemala and lend a hand." Marley's immediate response: "We can take our honeymoon anytime. Let's go do this!"

More than two decades later, Ben and Marley have yet to go on a traditional honeymoon. But in January, they made their 22nd annual visit to Guatemala, accompanied by members of the Rotary Club of Edmonton West, where Doz has been a member since 1992.

When the Dozes made their first visit, in January 1998, Guatemala was recovering from a 36-year civil war. They were met at the airport in Guatemala City by Solórzano. It was the beginning of an enduring professional collaboration and friendship. "Carlos is one of the finest doctors, and one of the finest men, I've ever met," Doz says.

With Marley, a social worker, performing administrative duties, the two doctors saw several hundred patients, treating them for a variety of eye ailments and, where nec-

essary, prescribing eyeglasses. Doz's practice in Edmonton, the Optometrists' Clinic, filled those prescriptions and sent the glasses back to Guatemala; it also, with help from pharmaceutical companies, provided eye medicine.

Additional help came from several Rotary clubs in Alberta and Florida that had been assisting Solórzano and the Hue-



huetenango club with their eye care clinics. And the CRCID, a multidistrict Rotary program that solicited funds from the Canadian government through what was then the Canadian International Development Agency, provided a grant.

Though not initially involved in the project, the Edmonton West club lent a helping hand. "Before we left for Guatemala, I told the president of my club about

our plans," Doz says. "He sent me a cheque for \$500 from the club."

Despite that, Doz estimates that he spent about \$20,000 of his own money on medical supplies and other necessities — and that doesn't include airfare. "It was the best money I ever spent in my life," he says, his enthusiasm undiminished after two decades.

In the ensuing years, the project grew, and other doctors, including two Edmonton ophthalmologists, joined Doz for the annual trip south. "As our medical team became larger, we needed more volunteers to help out," he says. "My club jumped up and offered their services." Club members made their first visit in 2006 and have been accompanying Doz and his team ever since.

Members of the Edmonton West club who travelled to Guatemala in January were Duane Evans (with his wife, Cathie), Fred Kraft, Lorne Proctor, Al Sanderson (with his wife, Karen), and the club's 2018-19 president, Annie Mueller, who wrote a vivid account of the 10-day trip. The Guatemalan contingent included optometrists, ophthalmology residents, a dentist, a pediatrician, and several more Rotary volunteers.

As always, the Huehuetenango club took the lead, even though Solórzano was on crutches because of a foot injury. "That club runs a great project," Doz says. "They're extremely well-organized, efficient, and they have a great sense of humour. Whatever obstacles they encounter, that club overcomes them. I have seen them ford rivers, lose a truck — they keep moving forward.

They do all the advertising for our visits, pick the destinations for our clinics, and get us to the job site. It's a great model for how Rotary events should be organized: Let the local club pick the project and run it, and then let the visiting or donating clubs provide what services they can."

Each year's trip provides a heady mixture of mountain adventure, Guatemalan hospitality, humanitarian aid, and unexpected challenges. The team departed Edmonton on 4 January and, after stops in Toronto and Mexico City, arrived in Guatemala City. Unfortunately, their medical equipment, stuck in Mexico, took another day to catch up with them. While Doz and Proctor waited behind, the rest of the team proceeded to Antigua with Solórzano, where they set up a clinic at an orphanage and, in half a day, treated nearly 70 children and adults.

With the team, and the medical equipment, reunited, club members journeyed on to Huehuetenango and were welcomed by their host families. "They take us all in, give us some good meals — and if you get sick, they take care of you," Doz says.

With Huehuetenango as a base, the Edmonton team travelled by van to La Libertad and Casa Grande, spending several days in each town and meeting nearly 800 patients. The trip to Casa Grande required a harrowing drive in a van with unreliable brakes on narrow, muddy roads across the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes, the highest nonvolcanic mountain range in Central America. At one point, with Doz at the wheel, the van had to slowly back up until it found a place where it could pull over and allow an oncoming truck to pass. "It definitely keeps you awake," says Doz, recalling the perils of that trip.

At the clinic, the doctors, assisted by the volunteers, dispensed medicine, gave out more than 500 pairs of reading glasses, scheduled 40-plus cataract surgeries for a later date, and wrote prescriptions for "hundreds" of pairs of glasses. (Doz didn't have a precise count from the recent trip, but in 2018, his Optometrists' Clinic pro-



Counterclockwise from top: Edmonton West club members and other volunteers in Guatemala (Benjamin Doz at far right; his wife, Marley, fourth from right; Carlos Solórzano, fifth from right); one of the 800-plus patients the team saw on its January visit; Annie Mueller assists with an eye exam. Opposite: Fred Kraft lets his leaf flag fly.

vided 370 pairs of prescription glasses.) The team treated a variety of ailments, including pinkeye — which, if untreated, can cause serious damage to the eye — and Doz encountered "significant" instances of diabetic retinopathy.

He also diagnosed an aggressive malignant lesion in a child, which necessitated removal of the cancerous eye. "We found a surgeon in another city who could perform the surgery," Doz says. "Luckily we caught it in time. A key thing over the years has been the different specialists that have

stepped in to help. That's all thanks to the efforts of the Huehuetenango club."

Back home in Edmonton, as he marvels at the accomplishments of the Guatemalan club, Doz recites a litany of thanks to others who have helped over the years. He singles out his partners at Optometrists' Clinic, who each year without complaint bear the cost of providing hundreds of pairs of prescription eyeglasses. And he gives special thanks and praise to his wife, Marley — who one day might finally get her honeymoon. 🍁



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