The final month of every Rotary year is Fellowship Month. This is a fitting designation since fellowship is particularly to the forefront with changeovers being very much the priority in June. Rotary also has Fellowships in many areas, which are based on a friendly association of people who share a common interest, or more broadly as a group of people meeting to pursue a shared interest or aim.

**Rotary Fellowships** are designated as autonomous, international groups of Rotarians, Rotarian spouses, and Rotaractors who join together to:

- Share a common interest in worthwhile recreational activities (sports, hobbies, etc.)
- Further their vocational development through acquaintance with others of the same profession
- Make new friends around the world
- Explore new opportunities for service
- Have fun and enhance their Rotary experience

There are nearly 70 formal Rotary Fellowships catering for interests from Chess to Cricket and Stamps to Skiing. I note there is even a Fellowship for Past District Governors (and friends)! Alphabetically it sits next to the Fellowship for Old and Rare Books and maybe that is not a random or unintended connection.

**Comments from the DG**

Like many DGs before me I am amazed that my term as District Governor is rapidly coming to a close. Our year has been one of mixed achievements, fantastic highlights, unforeseen difficulties that has challenged myself, and more broadly our organisation and communities. At the beginning of this year my number one challenge was to avoid redistricting and with your support and commitment to District 9640 this was achieved.

As this month is fellowship month, we take the opportunity to reflect on the disruption that we have felt during the COVID 19 pandemic crisis and how we have reacted as an organisation. I have been encouraged and am grateful to all of our members for their acceptance of the restrictions that prevented us from our regular meetings and gatherings; however, your enthusiasm to remain connected (Rotary Connects the World – Rotary Connects Communities) through use of technology has been inspirational.

Receiving newsletters highlighting clubs abilities to continue their programs, build membership by inducting new members on-line and future planning has shown the tenacity of our organisation and its members.

Throughout the year Shauna and I have enjoyed your hospitality and fellowship as we travelled around our wonderful district experiencing the enthusiasm and dedication to Rotary, your clubs and your communities. This translated to an overwhelming response when the district was confronted with ongoing drought, bushfires and finally COVID 19. Although these events have been disruptive, they have highlighted our ability to respond to our communities’ needs quickly and effectively, providing support to those in most need.
Membership
It has been exciting to see the continued growth of our district membership numbers even with the challenges we have faced this year. To burst through the one hundred new member’s barrier last month is a significant achievement. Unfortunately, we still struggle with retention of members and the loss of clubs. I am disappointed to report that after a long battle to remain as a viable club, Ballina Club has now advised that they will hand in their charter. However I am pleased to say that many of their remaining members are relocating to other clubs within the district. This highlights the need for incoming presidents and their leadership teams to ensure that membership is the highest priority in their list of goals for the coming year. As previously mentioned in reports, Rotary currently enjoys a high level of recognition across our district and it is a great time to engage with community to encourage new members.

End of year
As COVID 19 restrictions are being lifted clubs are looking at ways to conduct their change-over events. Many of you have indicated that you will perform on-line inductions while others are looking at more innovative ideas including outdoor activities or meeting in small groups within your clubs. While it is important we celebrate the achievements of our outgoing leadership teams and welcome the incoming president and their team, it is essential that COVID 19 regulations and restrictions are followed and that our actions are above reproach.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of you for the wonderful year that we have had together and look forward to an exciting future for District 9640 with District Governor Elect Andy Rajapakse. A great deal of effort goes into the running of our district by people too numerous to mention here, however I extend my sincere gratitude to all members of my leadership team for their commitment and patience throughout the year.

I would like to reinforce the importance of remaining supportive to the Rotary Foundation, End Polio Now, Every Rotarian Every Year and The Malaria Vaccine Project.

Finally, I am excited to present to you and welcome District 9640 DGND Karen Thomas.

Karen was born and educated in the Murwillumbah area. Karen completed her training as a Registered Nurse at Lismore Base Hospital in 1982 and following this a Degree in Health Science at Southern Cross University. In subsequent years, Karen obtained post graduate qualifications from Griffith, Western Sydney and Deakin Universities in critical care, emergency, and cardiac care and subsequently in the speciality area of diabetes management and education. During Karen’s nursing years she predominantly worked in intensive care and has been practising as a Credentialed Diabetes Educator since 2002, founding and managing her own private practice and qualifying for a provider number under Medicare. Karen also did some remote diabetes work in Mt Isa and Cloncurry.

Karen has four adult children - Benjamin, Thomas and twins Charlotte and Rachelle, also two beautiful toddler granddaughters Olivia and Holly. Ben and Shannon live in Cudgen, Tom and Zoe and also Rachelle on the Gold Coast and Charlotte and Luke in Melbourne. Charlotte was a charter member of Burleigh Rotaract Club.

In 1983 Karen began her Rotary experience as a charter member of the Rotaract Club of Murwillumbah, sponsored by Murwillumbah Central RC. Following her children being older she joined the RC of Burleigh Heads in 2010. Karen is a past president of the RC of Burleigh Heads, during which time they chartered a Rotaract Club and a second Interact club. She is also a past president of RC of Mudgeeraba where she transferred during her time of residing on the western GC. Karen has held various board positions including Vice President, Treasurer and various director positions. Karen has been Assistant Governor of Cluster 8 for the past two and a half years.

In 2013 she participated in a RAWCS project in Fiji with Stanthorpe RC, whilst also attending remote villages and screening and educating the Fijian people on type 2 diabetes, which included a referral agreement to a doctor at the closest hospital if required. She has always felt a passion and commitment to the organisation of Rotary and owes a degree of learning to her late partner PDG Max. Karen looks forward to further serving and supporting our rotary district.

Harry J. Bolton | District Governor 2019-20
So why is there a Rotary LGBT Fellowship??

“Isn’t Rotary supposed to be non-political?!” The discussion among the group of young Rotarians started to become, even for young Rotarians, uncommonly heated. “Why is there a LGBT Fellowship?”

“Why not?” retorted a former Peace Fellow, “Rotary means business; it is totally non-political, non-denominational and, since about 1987, certainly non-sexist!”

So how come there is a fellowship for Singles but not for Marrieds? Or for that matter Doll Lovers, or Birdwatchers?”

“Maaate!” his colleagues yelled out, “we are not talking about that kind of dolls and birds!” [Yes, quite right, Henrietta, there is no need say anything!]

One of the stouter members joined in: “Ah, I’m more into the epicurean stuff, like Wine, Whiskey, Rum, Beer, Gourmet Cooking, even Bathhouses. I like antique cars, and I like hitching up the caravan to my 4 x 4 truck, then travel into the blue yonder and in the evenings study my rare books. I listen to Jazz, actually any music. And I’m probably the only male in hundreds of miles who makes quilts. My wife is much more into Italian and Latin Culture. And in this context she joined the Magna Graecia fellowship.

“The Magna what?” several shouted out. “Well, it is based in Southern Italy, but you can join. Just look it up.”

“Ah, ever since I swapped my caravan for a big fat Recreational Vehicle, I’ve given up the caravan. The total quality of my Winnebago is just superb” said a Doctor. I can hook our bicycles on the back, tie my canoe and surf board on the top and I even can play Table Tennis on a fold out table. When I’m out in the sticks, I can join the meeting of my e-Club and thus maintain my Social Network. Evenings we study European Philosophy, Ethics and Cultural Heritage. We have close contact with an Honorary Consul whom we met on a Cruise and with whom we recently did a Home Exchange. Naturally, being Swiss, he is far more into Railways, Hiking, Curling and Shooting sports. He is a Past District Governor, intimate with Rotary heritage and global history, and he has a massive collection of Rotary Stamps and Rotary Pins. Of course, he goes to all the conventions. I joined him at one of his club meetings. Did you know that former Swiss Tennis great Martina Hingis is a Paul Harris Fellow and is closely involved with Polio Plus?

“Well, I’m more into the fitness stuff” said a Military Veteran, who now is in Law Enforcement. I like Scuba Diving, Fishing, Rowing, blue water Yachting, Skiing, riding my Motorcycle. I’m a Scout Leader, I run Marathons and Triathlons and I play Cricket. I listen to Heavy Metal and if ever I have a quiet moment, I study Russian culture.”

“Too hard for me!” retorted a Lawyer, and his fellow professionals, a prominent Editor and Publisher and an Educator, joined in. “As principals of our firms, we are constantly looking for better Corporate Social Responsibility, Strategic Planning, Social Networks, the Environment, Public Health and… Golf. And if I need solitude, I fly my Cessna…”

“Geez… isn’t there any group I can join where it doesn’t cost an arm and a leg?” I whimpered. “Most definitely!” came the answer. “There is Amateur Radio, Chess, Draughts, Photography, Esperanto or Genealogy. Even very general subjects as the Internet. But don’t be fooled: the group is very active in around 100 countries! And if you are into Eastern board games: Go. Or you might want to become a Magician and if you need calming down, play Bowls or do some Yoga.” So, with almost 90 different Rotary Fellowships worldwide, there truly is something for everyone! Just click on the links!

Franz Huber
Rotary Club of Surfers Sunrise Inc.
Our Districts 14 day return Rotary Friendship Exchange to District 4640 in Parana, Southern Brazil was completed on the 17th March, just as the coronavirus closed in on the world. This exchange followed District 4640 exchange to Australia last October when hosted by Murwillumbah Central, Grafton Midday, Lismore and Coomera Valley and Coomera River clubs.

This exchange group was reduced to only four members as four intending members withdrew in the last few weeks due to medical reasons. The four host cities were Foz do Iguacu, Guarapuava, Pato Branco and Cascavel. All these cities were well spread out with a five-hour drive from Foz do Iguacu to Guarapuava.

The entire area was rich agricultural farming land with a 2,000mm annual rainfall allowing the growing of two crops a year in the same soil. Chicken and Pork production is also an export industry. Their basic wage for low skilled workers is only AU$330 per month, so labour intense industries such as manufacturing is part of their economy.

Even though we were a small group the hospitality that the Rotarians showed to us was amazing. They were enthusiastic, engaging and fun. Although at times there were translation difficulties, Google Translate did not disappoint.

The schedule for the exchange was extremely busy with many planned events. The Brazilian culture being slightly different to ours in Australia. Daily schedules aligned differently with early starts to complete the planned program. This ensured that we saw all they had to offer in each host city. Late mealtimes posed challenges especially the great meats on offer, sometimes a little late for our digestive systems.

Our agenda in each host city gave us a taste of their individual cultural aspects and history, their food styles and way of life as a functioning part of how they make up each area of southern Brazil. It also highlighted the way the Rotary organisations support their local area, the businesses, the whole community, involvements with the churches and engaging the young adults and children.

We had many Rotary Club visits as well as seeing a lot of fabulous highlights including the Iguacu Falls and Bird Park, Itaipu Binacional Hydroelectric Dam and Biological Refuge, Military Headquarters, brewery’s, a winery, schools, television station, museums, factories and farming production venues.

Our two-week Rotary Friendship Exchange will remain a long-lasting experience with new global friendships which I am sure our group will remember for years to come. We met all ten members of the exchange that came to Australia and they all send their kind regards to their Australian host families and to the Rotarians they met.

Ron Borland, RFE Team Leader, Rotary Club of Mermaid Beach
CONSIDER A ROTARY FRIENDSHIP EXCHANGE

Rotary’s International Friendship Exchange is open to all Rotarians and partners. Explore new cultures and discover diverse perspectives by participating. Not only will you help advance peace and international understanding, but your friendship can lead to future service projects.

The District Friendship Exchange committee invites members of all clubs in our District to consider applying to be a team member on a future exchange.

The Team Exchange has a maximum of 12 members who spend 14 days in another Rotary District where you will be hosted by Rotary families in their homes, usually in four different locations within that District. That District will send a maximum team of 12 to our District where four clubs in different locations will host those Rotarians in their homes. It is not necessary that you have or intend to host to be a member of the outgoing team.

It is a totally different experience than visiting as a tourist. You get to know the local people, their culture and customs as well as creating lifelong friendships.

The coronavirus has put a temporary stop to all exchanges, but as international travel restrictions are lifted hopefully the exchange programme will get back to normal. Our District 9640 has planning in place for exchanges with Scotland, Arizona District 5495 and possibly Pennsylvania District 7430.

ROTARY LESSONS FROM DISTRICT 4640 BRAZIL

The recent Rotary Friendship Exchange Team to Brazil reported back on how Rotary was expending differently in District 4640 to our District.

Brazil has three club connections under the Rotary umbrella. RotaKids aged 6 to 12 years old together with Interact and Rotaract. All Rotary Clubs are very family orientated with children as young as three attending Rotary meetings and functions with their parents. A lot of clubs hold a monthly meeting away from their regular venue at a different member home each month. This again gives interaction between the member’s children and club members. Several husband and wives are members of the same Rotary Club.

The exchange team presented to two Interact Clubs with their 30 odd members meeting weekly and forming close knit friendships with each other as well as supporting community projects. These Interactors were keen to be involved in all the functions the exchange team attended and acted as interrupters in some cases.

It appears the formula of building from the incredibly young age up is working as there are many Rotary Clubs in each city who all work in together. In fact, in many cities up to ten clubs all meet at the one club house venue which was built on donated land by the combined Rotary Club members.

Ron Borland, RFE committee. Rotary Club of Mermaid Beach.

RC of Ballina-on-Richmond - Meals for the Needy

The Rotary Club of Ballina-on-Richmond and The Cove Restaurant provided free meals to those experiencing hardship during COVID 19. Ballina, like many towns and cities throughout Australia, has seen an increase in domestic violence and homelessness during this crisis. Further, many of the agencies that provide support for those in need were unable to operate during the COV19 restrictions. To this end, the Meals for the Needy program that our club has partnered with The Cove, has obtained a target that underpins and confirms the critical need for this service. Over the last three months 1500 meals were supplied.

Dave Harmon | President RC of Ballina-on-Richmond
Meet The Compassion Crew: With schools all but closed in an attempt to flatten the #COVID19 curve, the Hills International College Interact Club, Rotary District 9640, saw an opportunity to assist in caring for the younger children of essential workers who can’t be home to provide home schooling.

The Hills International College students set about devising an initiative called ‘The Compassion Crew’, aimed at spreading compassion, not panic.

“The Compassion Crew was founded in March during a Year 12 social and community class, with discussions centred around what we could do to help out within the school and wider community during the COVID-19 crisis,” Hills College Interact President Maya Parer said. “We came up with the idea of The Compassion Crew, whose mission is to help out where we can and perform small, random acts of kindness.

“This has taken shape in many ways,” Maya said. “During the second last week of term, as students were having their temperatures taken by staff, we went around and gave every student a Mentos and a smile. That same week, we made up little gift bags of Easter eggs and lollies and handed them to every member of staff.

“Our biggest task was undertaken during the last week of term, when students had student free days. Some of the children of essential workers (mostly from Prep to Year 6) still needed to come to school so we had four to five members of The Compassion Crew coming in everyday to help support these students. We helped them complete schoolwork, played games, and in the afternoon watched a movie and relaxed with them. “With the support of teachers, we were able to run and support these activities while being mindful of social distancing.”

“This has not been the senior year we thought it would be, but we are so proud of what The Compassion Crew has already accomplished, and we aren’t finished yet.

“We look forward to continuing our random acts of kindness, and hope The Compassion Crew will continue for many years to come. It would be a real accomplishment to think that The Compassion Crew becomes the legacy of the class of 2020.”

Source: RDU Facebook Post: www.facebook.com/rotarydownunder
In recent months, I am sure we have all felt real anxiety and concern that we might be afflicted with coronavirus at any moment. It is an intimidating feeling and generally foreign to us because of the wonderful medical facilities and expertise that exist in Australia. By way of contrast, people in malaria-endemic countries like Uganda, Kenya and PNG feel like this every day and see no end in sight to the malady.

Thanks to your wonderful donations through the Malaria Vaccine Project, we have been able to move one step further in taking the promising vaccine, being developed by Professor Michael Good, Dr Danielle Stanisic and their team at the Institute for Glycomics (Griffith University), to these endemic countries where malaria is so pervasive and so life-threatening.

Michael and Danielle feel overwhelmed by your ongoing support. They write, “Your generosity for the progression of this vital malaria vaccine continues to motivate our team as we plan for the remaining Phase 1 trials with a larger sample in Melbourne. These trials will test the efficacy of the vaccine when it is housed in an artificial membrane called a liposome. The liposome will enable the vaccine to be freeze-dried and transported anywhere in the world.”

On behalf of the Malaria Vaccine Project, I say thank you and I seek your continued help as we try to find another $500,000 to support the remaining Phase 1 trials in Melbourne. We will be so relieved to see the end of the coronavirus; you can help nearly half-a-million children see the end of life-threatening malaria.

Chairman: PDG Graham Jones | Malaria Vaccine Project

Sadly Sir Clem Renouf, has passed away, aged 99. He was a member of Nambour Rotary Club and PRIP 1978-79.

He was the instigator of the 3-H program - Health, Hunger and Humanity that led to the polio eradication effort. “A lot of people say I spearheaded the eradication of polio campaign, but that’s not right. I just happened to know the right person to talk to,” Sir Clem said.

Watch the video that shows how Sir Clem Renouf turned the cogs that would change the world. Click HERE

One person can make a difference. His legacy is a world without polio. RIP Sir Clem 1921 – 2020

Register to attend the 2020 Rotary Virtual Convention – It’s FREE

Now More Than Ever, Rotary Connects the World Register HERE

You’ll find breakout sessions on new ways to engage members and be inspired by internationally known speakers during the general sessions.

- Using Virtual Tools to Engage Members, on 22 June
- Grow Rotary Through New Club Types, on 23 June
- Digital Trends of 2021: Using Tech to Engage Millennials, on 25 June
- Engage Young Families With Service and Alternative Meetings, on 26 June

See the full list of breakout sessions. See you online!

Thank you

For your newsletter contributions during the 2019-20 Rotary Year

Email the Editor – Jodie Shelley orungalj@bigpond.net.au
Website: www.rotary9640.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/RotaryDistrict9640