

March and April have always traditionally been busy Rotary months and this year has been no exception. Wonderful community projects have been run by many Rotary Clubs across the District. Rotarians doing what they do, very well – “Doing Good in the Community”. One project which needs mentioning is the Southland Clubs Presidents Bike Ride from Te Anau to Invercargill which raised over \$30,000 for the Southland Community Hospice. A great effort by all concerned.

March saw New Zealand encounter a horrific day of tragedy with the shootings in Christchurch. Rotarians have been very generous, with significant funds being donated to the victims and their families through the appeal set up by the three Christchurch Clubs and administered by the Riccarton Club. The District donated \$2,000 towards this appeal.

In April the Oamaru Club held a very successful Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, (RYLA), and a report is included in the Newsletter. I had the privilege to visit RYLA, and while talking to the attendees you get to fully appreciate what a fantastic programme this is. For some, this experience will be life changing. As individual Rotarians we need to ensure we promote RYLA in our communities and within our personal networks, to ensure as many youth as possible have the opportunity to attend and experience this great programme.

On the 15th of April, our Professional Development Exchange (PDE) team arrived back from four weeks in Tasmania. For those fortunate to hear their presentation at the District Conference, you will know the team had a very successful time in Tasmania, with a lot of learning and networking. Congratulations to Team Leader, Juliana Baxter, and the team for the way you represented both Rotary and New Zealand while you were in Tasmania.

On the same flight into Queenstown on April 15th was the inbound PDE team from Tasmania. The team have been travelling around the District over the past three weeks, and many of you will have met them and heard their presentation. Like our outbound team, it is a delight to meet a lovely group of very engaged young professionals. A big thank you to all the Clubs who have gone out of their way to organise vocational visits and billet the team members. I suspect you many of you will have made some great contacts for when you visit Tasmania!

The District Conference, with the theme “Better Together”, was held in Oamaru on the 26th to the 28th April. With a high attendance, wonderful venue and fantastic range of speakers, it was a very enjoyable weekend. A big thank you to the Rotary Club of Dunedin Central, and all those who attended, who helped make the weekend such a great success. The Saturday night party had a wonderful range of costumes, and the dancing did not finish until the band stopped at the very end of the night!

Many people took the opportunity to go on specially organised local tours before the start of the conference, including the tour of the new local “castle” at Riverstone. Over the weekend attendees donated food items and it was wonderful to see three completely full supermarket trolleys of food being delivered to the Oamaru Combined Church’s Foodbank. The District AGM was held at the conclusion of the conference with a good turnout. It was a privilege to award Bruce Cowan with a sapphire to his Paul Harris Fellow and a second sapphire to Murray Kennedy. Congratulations to you both.

Other District Awards presented at the conference were as follows:

- The Rotary Club of Balclutha Membership Development Trophy – Rotary Club of Dunedin Central
- The Charles Taylor Club Bulletin Award – The Rotary Club of Dunedin South
- The Fred Hall-Jones Conference Attendance trophy – The Rotary Club of Dunedin
- District 9980 Website Award – The Rotary Club of Timaru
- L & L Wilson Rotary Club Collaborative Award- combined South Invercargill Clubs – for the Environmental Clean Up Day
- Best Dressed Club Award - Fiordland Club
- The Cliff Broad Trophy - The Rotary Club of Waimate
- Hallam L Smith Memorial Photography Award – Sue McMurtrie (Fiordland Club)

Another highlight of the conference was the final of the District Speech Contest. With four finalists everyone was entertained by some very high quality speeches. Our congratulations go to Alice Houston-Page from Logan Park High School who took away the trophy and \$1,000 first prize. Second place went to Liam Barnes from James Hargest College, third place to Gracie Hansby from Wakatipu High School and forth place to Rogan-Joe Sloan from St Kevins College. A big thanks to Wilkinson Rodgers lawyers for their kind donation of \$2,000 prize money.

In April Assistant Governor Nick Wood from the Rotary Club of Cromwell was nominated for the role of District Governor for the 2021/22 Rotary year. Nick has been involved with Rotary for many years since his time as a Rotary Youth Exchange Student. Congratulations Nick, and all the best as you begin an exciting three year journey!

As many of you know, there are plans for the South Island to become one Rotary District from the start of the 2022 Rotary year. For those not aware, the South Island is currently divided up into two Rotary Districts; District 9980 and 9970. The establishment of a new South Island District is a fantastic opportunity for all Rotarians in the South Island to work together as one. With our combined energy imagine what we can achieve for the communities!

Congratulations to you all on everything you have all achieved so far this year- we are very lucky to have so many wonderful Rotarians giving up their time, skills and energy to connect both locally and globally, working towards making the world a better place.

Keep warm and well as we enter the winter months, and enjoy the last month and half of the Rotary year.

Kind Regards

Andrew