



### MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

The global pandemic has had a huge impact on daily life. Psychological distress in populations is widespread. The immediate health impacts of the pandemic and the consequences of physical isolation, fear, losing loved ones, unemployment and much more has led to mental health and wellbeing discussions as a public health priority to reduce the burden of other diseases.

It is no surprise our community is growing; Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiative (RAGMHI) has grown to over 150 active members which consist of professionals from 6 continents (North America, South America, Australia, Europe, Asia and Africa) from over Sixteen (16) countries.

There is an urgent need for greater investment in mental health policies and interventions that are evidence-based. Our members are working in their various countries to ensure that opportunities towards addressing mental health challenges and developing effective interventions are equally targeted and supported across low, medium and high income countries. Our platform offers opportunities for collaboration as well as learning and a support system, we encourage members to engage and reach out to each other.

Our next open meeting is slated for April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021. On behalf of our board, we look forward to connecting with you all.

*Hauwa*

### MENTAL HEALTH TALKS

Several members of our Action Group have been busy over the past few months giving talks either in person (where Covid allows) or via Zoom. Details of speakers are on our website should you wish to book one for your club.

### ROTARY ACTION GROUP BOARD

- Chair** – Bonnie Black (Plattsburgh RC, USA)
- Vice-Chair** – Geetha Jayaram (Howard West RC, USA)
- Secretary** – Andrea Tirone (Toronto RC, Canada)
- Treasurer** – Bob Anthony (Naples RC, USA)
- Membership Dir** – Hauwa Abbas (Abuja Federal, Nigeria)
- Programs Director** – Rita Aggarwal (Nagpur RC, India)
- Member-at-Large** – Larry Kubiak (Tallahassee RC, USA)
- Member-at-Large** – Darren Hands (Plympton RC, UK)

A silent pandemic has been existing in the field of mental health over the past decade with 800,000 suicides across the globe and with 135,000 in the Indian sub-continent annually. The WHO declared a decade ago that the year 2020 will be the age of DEPRESSION and it will be the second leading cause death. According to the GOI report of NCRB 2020, 10,000 youth (age group 15-29) committed suicide in the year 2018 which means 28 children committed suicide in 24 hours around the year in India.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the mental health concerns centre stage due to its own set of challenges that have been thrown up.

RID 3030 took up a project on ‘First Aid: Depression as well as Suicide Prevention and promoted it in all its Clubs in July 2020. The aims of the project were two- fold: a) To spread awareness about Depression and hence Prevention of Suicide. b) To train a group of Rotarians from different Clubs who volunteer to act as “First Aid Depression Warriors”.

The plan of action which followed included the formation of Mental Health Committees within clubs, clubs in turn taking on projects, the formation of support groups and a free cost mobile helpline.

Our Bi-monthly open meetings are proving to be very popular amongst members of our group.

At the next meeting in April, one of the things we will be discussing will be the 2021 Online Rotary Convention. We will be looking for members of our Action Group to “man” online booths at the Online Convention and discuss other ideas on how we can promote our work to the wider Rotary world.

Meeting details, including the Meeting ID and Password are shown below.

### Bi-monthly Open Meetings

Join members of our Rotary Action Group every other month on Zoom to discuss the latest developments of our group.

Meeting Dates:  
Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2021  
Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2021  
Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2021

All meetings held at 9.00am (New York Time);  
2pm (GMT); 6.30pm (India Time)

Meeting ID: 842 5546 9860  
Password: 391718





Members of our Rotary Action Group are doing many fantastic things either with their clubs' or as individuals. One of these is Mike Veny who has a great blog offering tips and advice in these difficult times.

There are some great tips and advice on his site ranging from "Home Working Productivity Tips", "Taking Meaningful Action in 2021" and "Self-care habits to take during your lunch break".

Check out his blog at: <https://www.mikeveny.com/blog>

## World Mental Health Day

To mark 'World Mental Health Day' back in October, an online competition 'Mind your Mind' was arranged by District 3030 which was headed by Rotary Club of Nasik Grapecity and co-hosted by three other Clubs, RC of Nagpur, RC of Shegaon, RC of Deolali & RC of Nagpur Vision.

Around 500 participants submitted entries which were judged by Rtn. Rita Aggarwal (District head, RAG mental health). The results were announced on 10th October 2020, on a Zoom platform by the chief guest RID 3030 District Governor Shabbir Shakir. DG Shabbir has asked the Team to display all the entries in a Showcase Hall at the District Conference at Nagpur.

The Taranaki community in New Zealand supports an organization called the Taranaki Retreat - [www.taranakiretreat.org.nz](http://www.taranakiretreat.org.nz). This charity provides non-clinical peer-to-peer support for those affected by a range of things such as depression, anxiety, panic disorders and those affected by suicide- whether that be by grief, ideation or supporting those with mental illness. The Retreat is a rare model and we are aware of only one other in the world that provides free and non-clinical support. They employ 6 staff but are supported by around 250 volunteers. They provide a range of services including residential stays, community workshops, care parcels, advocacy and community support. One of the services sees volunteers "buddy up" and meet people who require support in the community and effectively become their supporter and advocate. The strength of the model is that it is charity and totally community funded and led, and that volunteers with lived experience become the backbone of providing support.

Inglewood Rotary Club in conjunction with a 9940 Rotary District Grant installed 10 solar panels at The Retreat last year as part of an ongoing programme of support to enable them to subsidise their power bills and reduce ongoing operating expenses. This also fulfilled the criteria of an environmental project within the community. Inglewood ran two successful fundraising golf tournaments, with proceeds put towards this project. This is an excellent example of how Rotary can partner with a charitable organization to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the community as a whole

## Adverse Childhood Experiences

Thank you to RAGMHI member Allan Friesen who has brought this to our attention...

Covid is everywhere.... but there is another epidemic that few know of; ACES. ACES are adverse childhood experiences. We all experienced trauma as a child - scoring a goal against your own team, being rejected when asking for a date, etc. Some trauma is far more serious and can alter the trajectory of a young person's. Children experiencing trauma have challenges in learning, developing relationships and trusting people. Children who have experienced trauma that goes unchecked have a greater likelihood for every health failure, cancer, COPD, dementia, heart attack. Further, children who have experienced trauma that goes unchecked have a greater likelihood of early death...especially with a 1221 % greater chance of suicide (child with 6 ACES scores).

Adult survivors of ACES who re-visit, resolve or manage their trauma can fully recover and actually thrive from addressing their trauma. Children who have suffered the worst abuse, in one case a boy who was raised as a dog, recover and lead good lives. But unaddressed ACES are toxic and act as a barrier to a good life. Intervention changes those stumbling blocks into stepping stones. What would happen if we could markedly reduce ACES? We would give youth a way better chance at a meaningful, happy, productive life. Collectively, we would see chronic health conditions plummet, addiction reduce, crime reduce and more capable, competent adults who volunteer.... and become Rotarians.

More details can be found here -

<https://www.starlings.ca/adverse-childhood-experiences>

## Rotary Showcase

Like most Rotarians, we in this RAG are probably not the best at showcasing our endeavours. The Rotary Showcase is a great platform for projects but is still underused. To help highlight our mental health projects it has been suggested we have a degree of standardisation for projects we promote on this platform. The current thought is that for all projects we put on the Rotary Showcase we use the following for the project title: '*Mental Health Initiatives - the rest of the title*'. This may help highlight the great work we do.



## A Safe Haven for Those in Crisis

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of all when dealing with mental health crises is that there are few places that an individual or family can turn to and feel safe. Historically for many individuals in these situations, the only place they can go has been the hospitals, police detainment, or the coroner's office. (In Louisiana the coroner handles psychiatric commitments.). Safe Haven, an ongoing regional project to expand recovery options for those with mental illness, recently added a 24-bed crisis receiving facility that helps reduce the feeling of crisis in an individual or family struggling to cope.

Under the leadership of Dr. Leanne Truehart, the Northlake-Mandeville Rotary Club mental health committee have actively supported this groundbreaking initiative. District 6840 has sponsored a playground on Safe Haven's campus and contributes to this space's maintenance.

This facility includes a Percent for Art program featuring local artists. The art selected helps to provide a peaceful milieu for the guests who come to this facility. The common areas are not only clean and modern but also inviting and spacious. Rotarian Bob Mathews, shared his overall impression. *"Safe Haven tells me that St. Tammany and the entire Northshore community understand that a successful future is at hand for all of us who are lucky enough to live here."* A safe place, with safe people who care for the people they serve aides in the holistic healing for individuals and families struggling to cope. We are very fortunate to have this facility in Southeastern Louisiana. The mission statement of Safe Haven says it all:

*"Safe Haven — a place where all people living with mental illness or substance use disorders, can come to be assessed, locate services, and ultimately receive the care they need based where they are within their behavioral health journey through a 'single point of entry' into the behavioral health continuum. Safe Haven will heal."*

Lithuanian Rotarians have been working on a "Suicide Prevention Model and it's application in the municipalities of the country. The project has developed a local community-based suicide prevention model based on the algorithm of communication and cooperation of the local institutions at the front line of suicide acts, attempts and intentions.

This was then Implemented by a series of training addressed to the front-line institutions (police, healthcare, social care, education, emergency, etc.) and local communities enabling them to act in an effective and coordinated way in suicide related emergency situations as well as have effective prevention tools.

Furthermore, cooperation with municipalities enhanced accessibility of psychological help and elaboration of the model, and information about suicide prevention was made available through the project website [www.supremeaim.rotary.lt](http://www.supremeaim.rotary.lt)

Significant changes have been identified following the training and project implementation with individuals knowledge increasing almost threefold. It was also found that almost 6six time the number of participants on the programme felt they knew how to deal with the threat of suicide after their training.



Keep an eye out in "The Rotarian" magazine as RAGMHI Member Darren Hands has been interviewed recently about the "Don't Bottle It Up" Awareness Campaign.

**Interact With Mental Health** is an art competition for best mental health messaging based on a subject from one of the 12 chapters in [The Teen Guide To Health](#), by RAGMHI member Leslie Glass. The art competition runs from March 15- July 15, 2021. Twenty-five students in the Interact Club at Riverview High School will host the competition, which will be managed through [Reach Out Recovery](#). The purpose and goal of Interact With Mental Health is to engage students in learning about mental health through a competition of creative expression. Students in schools with Interact Clubs in our Florida Rotary district 6960 will read the book, then work in groups of two, three or four, or individually, and submit projects in any format from art, cartoons, video, writing, to music. Entries will be judged by a panel of art, writing and media professors at local colleges. The winner for the best mental health messaging entry will receive an unrestricted cash prize of \$5000. Two runners up will receive \$1000 each. The Interact Club with the winning entry will receive \$500. This will be the first student-driven Rotary project that promotes access and engagement to mental health information not currently available in any school or college curriculum in the U.S. If successful, this competition could become a model for providing mental health information and engagement and promoting creativity and self expression to Rotary teens everywhere.