



NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2021

An Exciting Partnership For Rotaplast



Since Rotaplast has been unable to send out our usual missions due to the pandemic, we began exploring an exciting opportunity for partnership with a high quality cleft care nonprofit in Monterrey, Mexico. Casa Azul (www.casaazulac.org) has been providing multidisciplinary care for patients with cleft lip and palate and other facial deformities for 18 years. Its founder and Director, Dr. Ricardo Elizondo, invited representatives from Rotaplast to participate in Casa Azul's cleft care missions.

So, this past month, plastic surgeon and Board member Dr. Anne DeLaney and Board member and Mission Director Randy Floyd from District 7430 packed their bags for the first time in more than 15 months and flew to Monterrey. They were accompanied by Casa Azul patron and former Rotarian Joe Larragione from Philadelphia. They arrived just in time to help Casa Azul celebrate its 18th anniversary at a lovely recognition dinner for its many volunteers, staff, and supporters.

Surgeries began bright and early the next morning at a small private hospital. The main surgeon, Dr. Silverio Tovar, was there to teach his two plastic surgery residents who came with him from Mexico City. Days were generally long and grueling, as Dr. Tovar demonstrated exquisite, meticulous surgery to his assistants. In addition to cleft lip and palate repair, surgeries included upper and lower jaw surgery, speech correction surgery, bone grafting to the jaw, and ear tube placement. Visiting maxillofacial surgery and ear-nose-throat surgeons completed the team. In 3 ½ intense days, 25 procedures were performed on 20 patients, mostly babies and children.

(Continued below...)

Updating Our Volunteers



We interviewed the recently appointed member to the Rotaplast Board of Directors, Randy Floyd. He was able to give fellow Rotaplast volunteers a picture of our current situation. Randy hosted an open interview on Zoom and invited the volunteers from districts 7450 and 7430. The hour long conversation touched on several questions of concern and left no one in the dark.

As expected, the first question on everyone's mind was, "When will we be able to restart our missions?" There is no simple answer, but it was clear that the Board of Directors was focused on planning ahead while working to keep its assets and relationships secure and viable. Tom Fox and Brian Walker continue taking care of the building on a day to day basis. Ann Delaney is handling financial matters and communications. Her duties include staying in touch with past host Rotary Clubs and receiving and processing donations.

Restarting this very complex international program would be daunting under normal conditions. Now it is Herculean because of the pandemic's ever shifting conditions. At the moment, the BoD foresees missions beginning in mid-2022. The sites are likely to be to our traditional areas where

the hosts are experienced and reliable partners. As with any restart, careful attention will be paid to every detail.

(Continued below ...)

Wrap-A-Smile - Quilters of Action



We've all seen those wonderful quilts that are given to children as they arrive in the children's wards. To the children and their parents, they are highly valued gifts to be enjoyed and appreciated. The quilts give both warmth and emotional comfort to apprehensive youngsters who find themselves in very unfamiliar surroundings. Since most of us don't know who the quilters are and what they have been doing since the pandemic closed our missions, here's an update

Wrap-A-Smile was started 20 years ago by Terry Hodskins Fullam of District 7780 in Maine. It quickly became national in scope in that volunteer quilters from across the United States and several foreign countries have contributed to the colorful bounty of quilts that are supplied to every Rotaplast mission.

Wrap-A-Smile is currently under the direction of Dr. Ann Demeranville, newly headquartered in Asheville, NC, District 7670. Regional coordinators in CA and NH help with the collection and shipping of quilts. There is a plan to engage more coordinators in other regions of the country which will help control the costs of shipping.

(Continued below...)

Virtual and Hybrid Rotary Meetings



No one knows how long Rotary Clubs will conduct Hybrid or virtual meetings. The administration in Evanston says hybrid meetings hold promise and may well be a permanent part of Rotary Club life in many places.

As fundraisers, we see that hybrid meetings provide opportunities to reach out to Rotary clubs that are beyond normal driving distance. Two districts have sent emails to Rotary presidents elect requesting opportunities to address their clubs. A copy is below. The results have been favorable.



Before After

Corrective Surgery for children with Cleft Lip/Palate

Please invite us to speak at your Rotary club meeting.

We are fellow Rotarians who participate in medical missions requested by Rotary Clubs in 26 low-income countries.

We have an inspiring Rotary story to tell.

Our 20 minute PowerPoint presentation is available both in-person or virtual.

Thank you- (Contact Information)



Fundraising Auction



The Rotaplast Committee of District 7430 has been a major contributor to Rotaplast missions over the years. A unique and successful way of raising funds has been its annual telethon. It was a televised, live on-air auction over the course of one evening during which time viewers could view the items up for sale and make their bids by phone. For that to happen, a local TV station provided it studios at minimal cost.

The project was headed by PDG Roger Whitcomb who focused his year as District Governor on promoting awareness of Rotaplast and enlisting support from all clubs. To make the auction happen off, they put together a committee of over forty people. Their work was broken down into the following tasks, with a subcommittee assigned each of the following thumb nail description of the project.

1. Identify, solicit and collect the items to be auctioned off and store them for winners to pick-up. It entailed contacting outside individuals, businesses, etc. to obtain donations.
2. Seeking out sponsors to underwrite the overhead expenses entailed in the auction. Those

expenses included renting the studios, hiring an outside consultant to plan the event and two professionals to set up and operate the software.

3. A host for the evening was hired. Rotarians were trained as hosts.
4. Identify and train Rotarians to answer at the phone bank, take bids, and communicate them to the hosts. The professional consultants trained these Rotarians.

Editor's Note: Virtual auctions are now very popular and require professional assistance. Software drives the process. There are consultants available online. We know and suggest considering www.onecause.com.

Overheard at Dinner

At the beginning of a mission, most Rotaplast volunteers are strangers to one another. When they meet for dinner for the first time their conversations can be revealing and even fascinating. Below is an example.



From India with Love

Trick Question: *Can mission volunteers keep a secret?*

Answer: "Sure they can"

Michele Simmons was preparing for her first Rotaplast mission to Narnaul, India when she learned her boyfriend, Chris Bannan, had been recruited to join. His participation was a last minute request to fill a position left open by someone's cancellation.

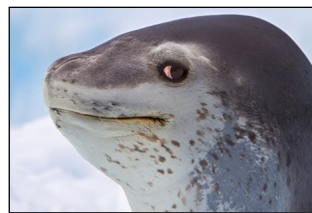
This is where the secret comes in..... Chris thought it would be an opportunity to ask Michele to marry him in a romantic setting. He hurriedly bought a ring the day before departure.

Ever the nervous suitor, Chris confided his intention to someone and said to keep it quiet. Sure. Soon, everyone on the mission knew, except Michele, and arrangements were made to congratulate them. He made his proposal on their day off and she accepted. The team celebrated the occasion at lunch and presented the couple with phool ka maala, a traditional flower necklace for special occasions.



The Seal of Approval

Seated at the group's dinner table one evening was Nan Madden, a soft spoken pediatric nurse practitioner who has participated in thirty missions. I mentioned having seen her jogging that morning and asked if she was a runner. Before she could reply, a friend commented, "Nan has run marathons on every continent." Sure enough, someone just had to ask, "Oh really? Even Antarctica?". Nan never looked up but quietly raised a hand extending an index finger. "Once." She said. "I understand that this was the first organized a sporting event on the continent of Antarctica."



Certainly, no one expected that, and we just had to hear her story. So, she talked about the journey, the intense cold and the people on the run. "We ran from one foreign military base to another. Those working at the bases manned aide stations for us. Those at the Russian station offered us vodka as well as Gatorade and requested kisses in return."

"Was there any danger?", someone asked. "Well", said Nan, "one of the leopard seals did chase us a bit. I think it just gave up, seeing that we didn't look very appetizing since we were clothed from head to toe."

Editors: Paul Quinatavalla, Christina Sacco

Have a story or idea to share? Have a memory to share?

Send them to: Newsletter@rotaplast.org

(Casa Azul Partnership, Continued)

All of the patients had been prepared for surgery starting months in advance, under the case

management of Casa Azul. Cleft lip patients received treatment with orthodontic devices that reduced the deformity of lip, maxilla, and nose, creating an ideal situation for the surgery. Jaw surgery was planned using dental models and splints, and speech surgery was planned with x-ray techniques which allowed the surgeon to precisely tailor the surgery to each patient. A truly wonderful bonus for this mission was the participation of a visiting, world renowned speech specialist from William Beaumont Hospital in Michigan, Dr. Antonio Ysunza. He demonstrated and taught his technique of videofluoroscopic planning for speech surgery, and 15 lucky patients benefitted from his special expertise.

Dr. Anne and Randy were able to take a break from the surgery days to visit the outpatient clinic where Casa Azul sees patients before and after surgeries. A small staff manages the patients, making sure they receive all the pre- and post-operative care they need, and that patients are followed year after year as they progress through all the services that patients with clefts need. The clinic is small but bright and cheery, and Dr. Anne and Randy were enthusiastically greeted by Mia, an adorable three year old who had received surgery for a complicated facial cleft just six weeks earlier, supported by Rotaplast funds.

In this very first visit of what is hoped will be a long mutually beneficial partnership, Dr. Anne, Randy, Dr. Elizondo, Dr. Ricardo Perez of Club Rotario de Playa del Carmen, and the rest of the team learned about each other, formed friendships, and excitedly explored ideas for how Casa Azul and Rotaplast can work together to help bring life-altering reconstructive surgery to more children in need in Mexico.



(Updating Our Volunteers, Continued)

Among the subjects discussed was the concern of a backlog of children needing surgery. It is particularly challenging to make accommodations for those who were bypassed as well as new cases. Accompanying that issue is the concern about the possibility of creating a Covid-19 super spreader event. Once again, this is a new level of concern, and we must be fully prepared with arrangements to prevent it. So, a great deal of what we can do depends on conditions in the twenty-six nations we serve.

In summation, there are no absolute answers to what and when things will happen. Only our utmost confidence of our return to Rotaplast's core mission is definite. There are many people who are committed and working to maintaining its structure and lines of communication.

(Wrap-A-Smile, Continued)

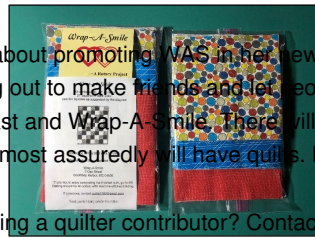
Even during the pandemic when there were no missions, these quilters geared up for production. The WAS group in New England recently shipped 614 quilts to the home of Dr. Angelo Capozzi as the Rotaplast warehouse remains closed. Another 200 quilts have been gathered in California, waiting to be driven to San Francisco.

As if that wasn't enough, WAS began a new project to get more people involved in making quilts. "Thanks to financial support from the Rotary Club of Winchester, MA, we created quilting kits", says Ann. "Each kit contains precut fabrics with sample patterns, for new quilters to learn the process of creating a pieced top. The tops are then returned to us for other volunteers to complete by adding the batting (filler) and backing, with final quilting stitches." Ann adds, "Quilting combines craftsmanship and artistic taste that satisfies one's creative need. In addition, quilters know their hands-on workmanship will go to a child in need. Few things are more gratifying than that."

The kits are provided free and have been distributed to senior centers, church groups, community centers and similar organizations. Interestingly, the kits became therapeutic to people marooned at home during the pandemic. It gave them a lifeline of worthwhile purpose.

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Ann is excited about promoting WAS in her new location. "We're reaching out to make friends and let people know about Rotary, Rotaplast and Wyo-A-Smile. There will be missions again and they most assuredly will have quilts. Promise!"



Interested in being a quilter contributor? Contact quilts7780@gmail.com for further information.

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