



NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2021

New Members on the Board of Directors

Rotaplast International welcomed three new members to the Board of Directors. All are Rotarians and seasoned Rotaplast volunteers who have been on numerous missions. Their contribution to provide support services is particularly important during this time of postponed missions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Randy Floyd, Harleysville, PA

Randy has participated in twenty-two missions, sixteen as Mission Director. Several of the missions were first-time host sites and required singular attention to ensure a well-run and successful outcome. His personal affection for babies is well known and he is often seen cradling one in his arms.

Randy has been a member of the Rotary Club of Harleysville since 2004, serving both as club officers and on their board of directors. Randy is a successful fundraiser for his club and Rotaplast, is active in his church and in several service organizations. Randy holds a master's degree in Criminal Science and is the Chief of Police in Telford Borough, PA where he has served for thirty-three years.



Barbara Hernandez, Woodacre, CA

As a fulltime insurance producer, president of Valley Toys & Joys (www.facebook.com/ValleyToysandJoys/), member of Rotary Youth Protection Training, and director of District 5150 Youth Committee, Barbie keeps a very busy schedule. As an active member of the Rotary Club of Ignacio, CA since 2008, she has served as an officer and member of the board.

With all her commitments, Barbie has found time to raise donations for Rotaplast and has been on two missions. She brings a love of children and a wealth of experience in charitable organizations to the Rotaplast Board.



Sangita Seshadri, Saratoga, CA

Sangita has been a member of the Saratoga Rotary Club since 2015 and an active part of Rotaplast since 2014. As an independent pharmaceutical consultant, she is fully aware of the benefits of medical science. On her six Rotaplast missions, Sangita has seen life-changing surgeries for children with

deformities of cleft lip/palate and burn scarring. She remarked, "I always take away more than I have given."

Her role as Medical Records Keeper allowed her to observe patients from arrival to departure and know their needs beyond our missions. "Rotaplast is looking to provide greater services. I look forward to being a part of it," says Sangita.

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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.



Never Pet a Sleeping Lion

We stopped for dinner at a restaurant outside Agar, India and sat overlooking a larger room where a Hindu wedding ceremony took place; it was a charming thing to see. The conversation turned to past experiences, and Dr. Fred Mihm told of one that got everyone's attention.

Today, he is a professor of anesthesiology at Stanford University. But early in his career, he occasionally provided services at the San Francisco Zoo. The zoo's large variety of animals required special attention to their size and species. "For the larger and more aggressive animals we use tranquilizer darts. The dart is filled with the appropriate amount of anesthetic and is fired from an air rifle," he said. "We take great care to place it in the best spot to avoid discomfort or injury while still getting the best results. When you're close to the animal, it's the wise thing to do."



Dr. Mihm (right) with his arm and air tube in the lion's mouth.

"One day, I was called to help anesthetize a 400 pound male lion. He was brought into a cage and I was in an adjacent cage to be as close as possible. I was crouched down just a couple of feet from the lion and took aim. The safety was still on when I touched the trigger, and the gun made an audible click. Instantly, the lion turned his face to me at close range (3 feet) and let out a great roar that blew my hair back. Worse than the roar was the most awful breath in the world. Horrible."

Later, Dr. Mihm told about anesthetizing gorillas with tranquilizer darts. "Gorillas are smart and very powerful. They can catch the darts and hurl them back," he said. But that's another story for another time!

Mission News

Rotaplast Co-Founder Peter Lagarias participated in the last Rotaplast mission before the COVID-19 pandemic paused our missions. Below is his story of that mission.



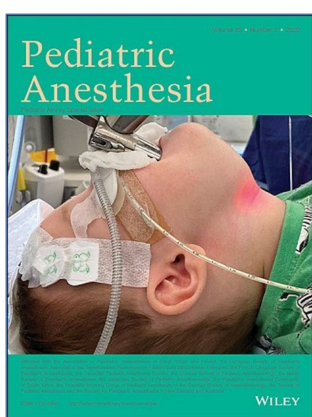
Mission to Agra, India on the Eve of COVID-19 Pandemic

Rotaplast's finale, before our current pause due to the Coronavirus pandemic, was a productive mission to Agra, India. The team successfully operated on 82 patients including many with severe contractures and scars due to untreated burn injuries. The medical leader was Dr. Alex McCulloch, surgeon, while the team leader was Tom Fox of the Rotary Club of Pleasanton, California.

"The best part [of the mission] is when the patients and their families come back on the last day and are so excited by the transformation," said Rotarian Janet Pancoast. Rotarian Mary Ann Avnet commented on the front end of the spectrum: "I always love pre-clinic-day. There is such a feeling of excitement and hope on everyone's face. It's chaotic but wonderful."

Continued below ...

In the News



Pediatric Anesthesia

The July 2020 issue of Pediatric Anesthesia published guidelines for reconstructive surgery in Low-to-Middle Income Countries. In doing so, it turned to Rotaplast International as a recognized leader in the field:

***"2020 guidelines for
conducting plastic reconstructive
short-term surgical projects
in low-middle income countries."***

Many low- or middle-income countries (LMICs) continue to suffer from a lack of safe and timely essential and emergency surgery despite growing attention to this problem. Short-term surgical projects (STSPs) continue to play an important role in addressing LMIC unmet surgical need and strengthening local healthcare systems. Guidelines here present recommendations for performing plastic reconstructive STSPs for pediatric patients in a safe, ethical, and effective manner.

Cool Fundraising Idea



Chocolate and Cheers

The Upper Main Line Rotary Club has been an ardent supporter of Rotaplast for many years. However, when it was forced to cancel its annual golf tournament and Oktoberfest, there was reason for concern. These fundraisers contributed greatly to the club's charitable support in the community and people were counting on them. The club needed something new and different that didn't require people getting together. And they needed it now.

The upshot was a virtual Beer and Chocolate Pairing. (Really, no kidding. You can Google it.) The people who sponsored their Golf Tournament and Oktoberfest loved the idea and fully sponsored it. U-M-L sold over one hundred packages at \$140 each and every one had a great time.

Here it is in bullet points:

- A 60 minute virtual beer and chocolate pairing event conducted by a professional chocolatier and brew master. (People had such a great time the event ran for 1 hour & 50 minutes.)
- Package includes:
 - Souvenir tote bag containing six different craft beers, twelve plastic sipping cups, box of twelve premium chocolates, Pilsner glass, instructions, beer cozy, custom long sleeve T-shirt reading, "Beer & Chocolate – Proof that God Loves You and Wants You to be Happy".
 - Beer and chocolate trivia contest with prizes during palate cleansing intermission. (How many chocolate chips are needed to supply the calories for a one mile walk?).

Volunteer Stories



Chelsa Green

Chelsa Green's participation in a Rotaplast mission to Agra, India in 2017 was not her first mission as a non-medical volunteer. She previously traveled with another organization to Honduras. "This mission", she said "was different."

She is native of Bloomington, IL and a recent graduate of Illinois State University. Chelsa found the Rotaplast team to be especially friendly, even family-like. It gave her a new and positive perspective of working with medical professionals.

"Since that trip I have gone back to school and just graduated as a Registered Nurse! The trip with Rotaplast had such an impact on me and is part of what inspired me to further my career and become a nurse! I look forward to working with Rotaplast again in the future as a medical professional."



Dr. Héctor Villegas

During a Rotaplast mission in Pereira, Colombia in 2009, twenty-one year old Héctor Villegas asked if he might apply to have surgery for his cleft lip. The surgery that day was performed by Dr Anne DeLaney. On a later mission Héctor underwent further surgical procedures by Dr. Angelo Capozzi. It was the beginning of an enduring friendship.

Because of his experience endured as a child with cleft lip, and the operation that changed the course of his life, the man who became Dr. Villegas has pursued a career aiding others. He studied dentistry in Colombia, and in UNAM Mexico City. There he did research in risk factors of orofacial clefts. He and his tutors, Dr Eileen Uribe Querol, Roberto Ruíz Díaz and Marie Tolarová, received the 2018 national "Golden Bracket Award", awarded by 3M. In the same year he returned to Colombia and began studies for a Master of Oral Sciences. Today, Dr. Héctor Villegas is an orthodontist, teacher of postgraduate dentistry and has a private practice in Medellín, Columbia.

Dr. Villegas participated as a volunteer in Rotaplast missions to Pereira, Colombia in 2010, 2013 and 2014. In 2019 he participated as the orthodontics member of the medical team. Dr. Villegas considers Dr. Angelo Capozzi, Co-Founder of Rotaplast, to be his mentor and inspiration.

Dr. Villegas is currently actively involved in founding the Colombian Association of Craniofacial Differences. The organization's goal is to assemble like-minded surgeons with an interdisciplinary approach to provide corrective surgery for low income individuals with all forms of facial deformities.

Mission to Agra, Continued

Prior to the mission, planning addressed the likelihood of many burn patients rather than a predominance of cleft lip and palate patients. Dr. Neal Fleming noted that local Rotarians and the local hospital advised of such a need. As a result, our standard supplies were modified and accommodations were made for post-mission patient support. For Rotarian Avnet, who had previously been on missions, the difference was substantial. "One of the things that stood out was the large number of burn cases that outnumbered the cleft lips and palates. It's a jarring realization that so many people have lived with disabling burn scars for much of their lives. And of course, the poverty level in India contributes to the burn cases."

One of the patients made a memorable impression on Rotarian Sandra McLaughlin. "A young woman who was very severely burned and disfigured came to our clinic to see if the surgeons could help her. She was very shy and came in completely covered up. When she took off her headscarf, we could see her scars had healed, disfigured her face and contracted her arms. She had received the burns 15 years ago when an oil lamp spilled on her face, neck, arms, and hands. As a result of her untreated burn wounds, her arms were contracted at the elbow. The surgeons were excited about the possibilities of helping her, but when she failed to appear on her scheduled surgery day everyone was disappointed. She eventually arrived only to disappear again. We later surmised that she was very nervous about the surgery. Days later she summoned up courage and she was ready. She had successful surgery. While in recovery she never complained. Instead she had a great smile on her face."

As with all Rotaplast missions, the local Rotarians and hospital personnel were essential partners allowing the mission work to proceed. The host hospital, Unity Hospital, closed its operating rooms for two weeks for the mission, and Superintendent Yadav and Manager Singh provided ongoing support. The Rotary Clubs of Agra Taj Mahal, Firozabad, North-Agra and Sheikhabad assisted with patients, translations, logistics, supplies and meals for the team.



Burn victim before and after first operation. Additional surgery is required on future missions.

During the mission, news reports of Coronavirus cases spreading worldwide began appearing. Each morning the team would share news gleaned from the local newspaper headlines or their evening internet searches. The outbreak had become especially widespread in Italy but was also being reported elsewhere. The connection was highlighted when a group of tourists from Italy visited the Taj Mahal and efforts were made to track and evaluate their contacts. Mission Director Tom Fox was concerned that members of the team might catch the Covid-19 virus, or, even if not ill, not be allowed to travel back to the United States. Prior to our departure only two cases had been reported in Agra, India according to local medical personnel.

Anesthesiologist Neal Fleming added, "Concerns and questions about the evolving coronavirus crisis dominated our thoughts as we prepared for our departure. Yet memories from the post-op clinic in Firozabad, along with other missions, now fill our thoughts as we cope with the changes wrought by this pandemic. Those memories are the ones that drive us to prepare Rotaplast for the days when we can resume the life-changing support we can offer to those in need of our help."

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