

THE

LIGHTHOUSE

BOND | BUILD | BRING CHEER



WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS | ISSUE 25 | December 22, 2024



**20th Anniversary of the
Tsunami & RCM's Rehabilitation Project
at Suleri Kattukuppam**



Dear RCMers,

The tsunami exposed the vulnerabilities of the fishing community on the Tamil Nadu coast.

20 years on, The Lighthouse reflects on the yeoman service rendered by RCM.



Rtn.Shivkumar Eashwaran
Editor

Rtn.A.R.Raghuandan
Chairperson

Mr.Madhu Mathen
Co-Chairperson

Building Bonds with Inclusive Spirit

Two events over the past week, coordinated by the members of RCM, beautifully showcased the inclusive spirit that defines our club and our country. It is truly inspiring to witness how we came together to celebrate traditions and occasions that resonate across different faiths, reflecting our shared heritage of unity and mutual respect.

The X'Mas Carols event highlighted the joy and festivity of the Christmas season, with members enthusiastically participating in the carols, spreading cheer and fostering a sense of togetherness.

The other – Jaya, brought to life the timeless wisdom of one of India's greatest epics, celebrated for its cultural and spiritual significance.

What stood out was not just the scale of these occasions but how effortlessly members from across RCM united to make them special. In a world often divided by differences, these celebrations served as a reminder of how much stronger we are when we focus on what connects us.

Such moments reaffirm the core values of inclusion, harmony and fellowship that we hold dear as Rotarians. They inspire us to continue building bonds that transcend boundaries.

Truly Bond, Build Bridges and Bring Cheer!

- *Rtn. Sanjay Rao Chaganti*

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Rotary Club of Madras (RCM)
Minutes of the 24th Weekly Meeting held on 17th December 2024
 at Hyatt Regency, Teynampet, Chennai

Call to Order:

The President called the 24th Weekly Meeting of the Rotary Club of Madras to order at 1:30 PM.

All members were requested to rise for a silent invocation. Members were reminded to sign both registers for attendance purposes.

Confirmation of Minutes:

The minutes of the 23rd Weekly Meeting were confirmed without any amendments.

Announcements:

- **Past President Rtn. Indra Subramanyam:** Shared her experience of visiting the Rotary Club of San Jose and highlighted their large membership and significant contributions. She extended an invitation for their participation in the club's centennial celebrations.
- **Rtn. Suresh Amirapu:** Announced the auction of a painting during the International Day of Peace celebration and recognized Rtn. R. Ashok Thakkar for purchasing the painting and donating it back to the club. The proceeds of ₹75,000 will support the HPV Vax campaign.
- **Rtn. Dr. Sharon Krishna Rau:** Announced the availability of wine bags for members who pre-ordered, with proceeds contributing to club projects.

Video Presentation:

A clip featuring Rtn. Mahinder Jain's speech at the RI Institute in Cochin was projected.

Reports and Updates:

Rtn. Asha Mathen provided an update on the successful fundraising effort through the musical "Jaya." While the sponsorship amount alone covered the cost of the project, ticket sales brought in a substantial surplus of Rs.20 to 25 lakhs towards our projects. She proposed utilizing the funds for building a classroom at Ramakrishna Mission School and supporting the HPV Vax flagship project.

Rtn. Asha Mathen thanked the sponsors - Access Healthcare, Brigade Group, Mithun Sacheti, Templeton AMC, Mahindra Manulife AMC and DRA.

She acknowledged the support of all Board Members, particularly President Chella Krishna, Rtn. Prasanna Rajagopalan and Rtn. Gooch Kumar.

She specially thanked all the Rotarians who bought Rs.25,000/- donor tickets and other Rotarians who bought tickets online. She acknowledged the contribution of Rtn. Siddharth



Chandrasekhar (Social Media and Printing), Rtn. Archana Parikh and Rtn. Fharzana Siraj (Posters and Publicity), Rtn. Sunita Suresh (PR and Print Media Publicity) and Rtn. M.M. Philip (corporate sales).

The President acknowledged the efforts of all contributors and acknowledged the efforts of Rtn. Hemant Chordia and Rtn. Nimish Tolia in bringing the play to Chennai.

Special thanks was extended to Mr. Madhu C. Mathen for managing ticket sales and to the social media team for achieving significant outreach of 8 lakh views on social media, which translates to immense publicity for our Club.

Rtn. V.S. Narasimhan and Rtn. Ganesh Ananthkrishnan: Facilitated a donation of ₹30 lakhs from Reddington for the RSRM Maternity Hospital, dedicated to high-risk pregnancies. The funds will be used for an ultrasound machine.

Celebrations - Birthdays and Anniversaries:

Secretary Rtn. Rajesh Mani announced Birthdays and Anniversaries for the week.

Upcoming Meeting:

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 19th December, at 5:30 PM in the Manor Hall, Hyatt Regency. Dr. Ram Vaidya will deliver a talk on "RSS: A Century of Evolution."

High tea will be served from 5:00 to 5:30 PM.

AGM Updates:

Secretary Rtn. Rajesh Mani confirmed that quorum has been established for the AGMs of the following:

- a. Rotary Club of Madras
- b. Rotary Club of Madras Charitable Trust
- c. Rotary Club of Madras Boys Town Society.

The AGMs were then conducted. (Minutes of the AGMs will be sent separately via email)

Closing Remarks

The President thanked all members and guests for their participation and adjourned the meeting.







On the 20th anniversary of the devastating tsunami that struck the Tamil Nadu coast on December 26, 2004, we remember the immense destruction and loss of life but also the remarkable resilience and community spirit that emerged in the aftermath.

The tsunami was a stark reminder of the power of nature and the vulnerability of human life. Countless lives were lost, homes and livelihoods were destroyed, and the coastal communities were left reeling. However, in the midst of the devastation, the members of the Rotary Club of Madras emerged as beacons of hope, rallying together to rebuild and restore the affected villages.

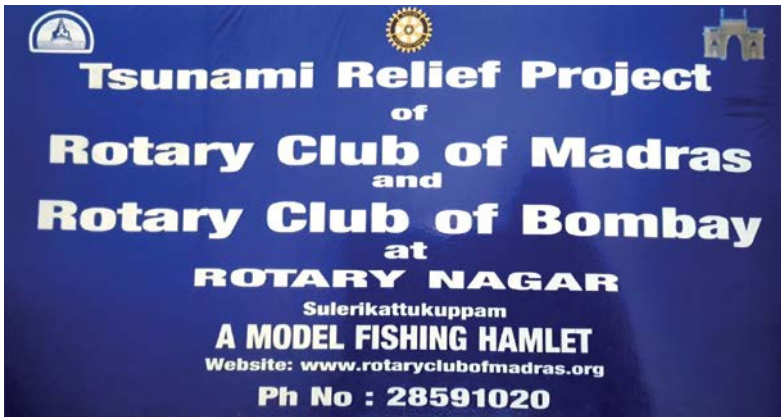
One such village, Suleri kattukuppam, was adopted by the



Rotary Club of Madras and the Rotary Club of Bombay, who worked tirelessly to transform the ruined hamlet into a model fishing village. Through a collaborative effort involving the government, corporate sponsors and philanthropists, we generated over Rs. 6.5 crore

(approximately \$1.5 million then) to rebuild the village.

Our Rotary Club's efforts went beyond just physical reconstruction. We provided immediate relief, administering first aid and immunizations to prevent the



outbreak of diseases. We then embarked on a comprehensive plan to rehabilitate the villagers, rebuilding their homes with modern amenities, providing state-of-the-art fishing equipment and constructing a school, community hall and refrigeration plant.

The resilience and gratitude of the villagers were truly inspiring. In a gesture of appreciation, they even proposed to change the name of their village to "Rotary Nagar," honouring the Rotary Club's transformative contributions.

As we reflect on the 20th anniversary of this devastating event, the story of Suleri kattukuppam stands as a testament to the



It has been 20 years since the devastating tsunami struck the Tamil Nadu coast, including Chennai.

Many of you may recall that, in the aftermath, we adopted a fishing hamlet located about 50 km south of Chennai called Suleri kattukuppam. We built 146

houses, a school, a cold storage facility and a community hall, and provided 44 mechanized boats equipped with fishing nets and accessories to support their primary livelihood: fishing.

Two decades later, while the community has continued their fishing activities, they have faced several challenges. They are situated between two desalination plants, which hinder their fishing efforts, and have encountered land-related issues with the HR&CE Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

We are currently working to resolve these land issues through the Collector of Chengalpattu and the Revenue Department. However, the fishing nets we provided two decades ago have worn out and need replacement.

Regrettably, we have not assisted in replacing these nets until now. On this 20th anniversary, we are finally considering providing new nets for the 50 boats they currently operate as a goodwill gesture to help alleviate their financial struggles stemming from the challenges mentioned earlier.

This support will be invaluable for many community members who are not financially secure and rely heavily on the seasonal fish harvest, which is often impacted by the unpredictability of nature.

- Rtn. G. Chella Krishna
President RCM

power of community, compassion and the human spirit to overcome even the most daunting challenges.

Rotary Club's unwavering commitment to the restoration and empowerment of this fishing hamlet serves as an inspiring example of the difference that can be made when people come together with a shared purpose.

This association, which started 20 years ago, continues to this day. The fisher folk from that hamlet are still in touch with us and depend on our counsel and advice even now.

- Rtn. PP. N.K. Gopinath



Diabetes Awareness

The Key to a Healthier Tomorrow



On November 28, 2024, The Rotary Club of Madras and Rotary Club of Del Mar Solana Beach, in association with the Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW) – Tamil Nadu, organized a comprehensive Diabetes Awareness Program at Government C.M. Subbaraya Mudaliyar Higher Secondary School, Kanchipuram.

Over 150 students from 7th to 9th grade participated enthusiastically in the program, which aimed to educate them about the risks and consequences of diabetes, as well as promote healthy lifestyle choices to prevent the disease.

The awareness program featured interactive sessions, presentations and discussions led by Mr. Vasudevan, a seasoned expert with over 30 years of experience in the field. Students learned the importance of a balanced diet, regular physical activity, and stress management in preventing diabetes.

Empowering young minds with knowledge about diabetes prevention is crucial in creating a healthier future for our community. The program concluded with a Q&A session, where students showcased their understanding of diabetes awareness and prevention.

The principal and teachers expressed their gratitude to the Rotary Club of Madras and ICCW-TN for organizing the program, which created valuable awareness among the children. They wish to have more such sessions in the future, benefiting the children.

- Joseph. P
RCM Reporting & Compliance Specialist



HPV Vaccination Awareness



On December 5, 2024, the third round of the HPV Vaccination awareness program was conducted at Sivaswami Group of Schools. This initiative supported by the school management, targeted students and parents.

Rtn. Dr. Sangeetha Viswanathan delivered an insightful presentation, emphasizing the importance of HPV vaccination, its effects and the necessity of early administration. The interactive session allowed parents and students to clarify queries and address concerns regarding side effects, myths and misconceptions.

Rtn. PP P.V. Mohan Raman attended the event and significantly supported the initiative. His presence emphasized the program's importance and reinforced the school's commitment to student well-being.

The school management outlined the program flow and documentation requirements before vaccination, ensuring a seamless experience. Building on the success of these awareness programs, Sivaswami Group of Schools has embarked on the crucial phase of preparing students for HPV vaccinations.

- Swetha K.C

RCM Reporting & Compliance Specialist

Birthdays		(23rd Dec. to 30th Dec 2024)
Rtn. Asha Mathen		23/12
Rtn. G. Ravindran		24/12
Rtn. Karthik Srinivasan		25/12
Rtn. Bikram Shivkumar		26/12
Rtn. Avali Srinivasan		29/12
Rtn. Archana Parikh		30/12
Spouses' Birthdays		
Ann. Dr. K. Sridhar Spouse of Rtn. IPP. Jayshree Sridhar		27/12
Ann. Priya Menon, Spouse of Rtn. P. Shankar Menon		28/12
Ann. Dr. Saswati, Spouse of Rtn. Bhaswar Mukherjee		29/12
Ann. Karina, Spouse of PP Rtn. PP. George B. Cherian		29/12
Wedding Anniversary		
Rtn. Jayant Hemdev & Dimple		25/12
Rtn. Fharzana Siraj & Siraj		25/12
Rtn. Ashish Gupta & Rucha		26/12
Rtn. Shibu Isaac & Susan Isaac		28/12
Rtn. PP. Vivek Harinarain & Sangeeta		28/12
Rtn. Suresh Amirapu & Rukmini		28/12
Rtn. Nimish C. Tolia & Sushma		29/12
Rtn. A.K. Tareen & Sanober		29/12
Rtn. Ravi Prakash Singhee & Manisha Singhee		29/12

'Tis the season to be Jolly



The Full Club fellowship at the Madras Club was indeed just the ingredient to get all members into a jolly and festive mood. The stage was set with everyone dressed in yuletide colours, sipping on mulled wine among other spirits to warm the throat.

The ambiance of the Madras Club was perfect, with an outstanding Christmas tree—the key symbol for Christmas, adorned with gorgeous ornaments, lights and a star representing the Star of Bethlehem. The decorative lights added to the festivities and the evergreen wreaths hanging over the doors symbolized eternal life.

The program began with Past President Rtn. S.N. Srikanth narrates a heartwarming story, capturing the power of giving love and kindness to others. This sets the theme for the evening and gives us a moment to reflect on what we had and cherished with love this year.



The choir then took over, singing all our favourite carols, Joy to the Word, Hark the Herald Angels, Jingle Bells and many more. A special solo of 'Oh Holy Night' by Rtn. Asha Mathen and Ann. Vinolia Lobo was a last-minute add-on that was beautifully sung.

Past President Rtn. Vivek Harinarain, adeptly tied all the carols together with 'The Story of Christmas'. The audience sang

Silent Night with the choir, with all the lights turned off, creating a beautiful and serene sight. Finally, the last carol, wishing each other a Merry Christmas, was sung with great gusto, blending together in joyful unison.

After catching up with one another and sharing stories about plans for the festive season and New Year, it was time to head to the dinner table. A delectable spread of



meats and vegetables, along with other favourites—including a live Chole Bhature counter—ensured that both vegetarians and non-vegetarians could eat to their heart's content. Christmas pudding and KulKuls (a favourite in most homes) were the cherry on top!

The evening was truly perfect, providing an opportunity to strengthen bonds within the Rotary community, reflect on the past year, and carry on the cherished tradition of carolling, spreading warmth and togetherness.

- Ann. Laura Raj



Suggest the most quirky, whacky or creative caption/blurb for this photo (Maximum 15 words). The best entries will be reproduced in the next week's edition of Lighthouse.

Mail your captions to editor@rcmlighthouse.com on or before 24th Dec.

Issue 25



Issue 24 : Best Captions

1. "Didn't I tell you we will laugh ourselves to the bank!" - Rtn. Rajib Kumar Hota
2. "When you realize the guy, you're competing against in sports is also your biggest fan." - Rtn. N.K Bhatia
3. "Sixers or Fixers... forget it. Rajesh you could model for Colgate." - Rtn. PP. Vivek Harinarain
4. "Finger spinner par excellence!" Rtn. PP. Ravi Katari



Chennai Welcomes 'Jaya'



The rock musical of the Mahabharata, "Jaya", presented by the Rotary Club of Madras as a fundraiser, proved to be a visual and auditory treat.

The play was staged on Sunday, December 15, 2024, at the Sir Mutha Venkatasubba Rao Concert Hall. Recognized across India, Jaya has been featured prominently in the media.

Lillete Dubey, celebrated actor, director and founder of Primetime Theatre Company, had long dreamed

of spotlighting original Indian writing in theatre. Having worked with stalwarts like Barry John in the 1970s, she established her own company in 1991. Her love for music set her on a quest to find a story that could be told through song.

Directing a masterpiece like Jaya and telling a story through songs and music is no easy feat, but Lillete succeeded in keeping the audience engaged throughout.

Sandeep Kanjilal, an MTech graduate from IIT and a self-taught

music composer, is passionate about music. His work, Jaya, a satirical and musical take on the Mahabharata, caught Lillete's attention. Derived from the original title of the Mahabharata, Jaya explores the profound question: victory at what cost?

In 1998, Jaya premiered in Mumbai to a packed audience and went on to perform 40 shows. However, an unexpected tragedy forced the production to shut down in 2000. Reflecting on this period,



Lillete said, "This play is my passion project—my blood, sweat, tears, money and love for music are invested in it. I always knew it had to return."

Fast forward to 24 years, Jaya is back with a new score, contemporary choreography, and a spectacular visual presentation. Lillete describes the musical as "Jesus Christ Superstar meets the Mahabharata meets Greek tragedy," with its narrative beginning at the end of the epic when the Pandavas ascend Mount Meru.

This reimagined production is a grand spectacle, blending rock music with traditional Indian elements like mantras, Krishna's flute and Kalaripayattu rhythms.

Unlike traditional musicals, Jaya is entirely operatic, narrated through rap, rhyme and full-length songs. It explores timeless themes—love, ambition, duty and spirituality—through the inner turmoil of its characters, particularly Yudhishtira. As the eldest Pandava ascends to heaven, the audience witnesses his profound reflections on leadership, morality and loss.

Megan Murray, who played Draupadi, is a musical theatre actress who has lent her vocals to the Grammy-nominated Blues

queen Shemekia Copeland's album *Done Come Too Far* among many other projects. A standout moment was Draupadi's poignant song, *A Woman is the Man in So Many Ways*, which delves into the complex dynamics between the Pandavas and beautifully captures the spirit of the Mahabharata.

Lighting played a pivotal role in Jaya, symbolizing inner struggles, victories and the forces of fate. From

dynamic shifts in colour to dramatic shadows, the lighting enhanced the narrative's emotional depth. Whether through fiery reds signalling impending danger or soft hues highlighting personal moments, it shaped the audience's perception of the story. The effort and dedication of everyone involved was evident in the stunning final output.

After its resounding success in Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru, Jaya arrived in Chennai. Reflecting on the journey, Dubey shared, "Thank you all for coming today. I will keep it short. I personally thank the Rotary Club of Madras—not Chennai, as everyone prefers the vintage name Madras. As you can see, these artists are multi-talented; they're singers, dancers and actors."

Jaya was a testament to timeless storytelling, blending ancient epics with contemporary artistry. Time, as Lillete aptly puts it, is the only true witness to both the original Mahabharata and its vibrant re-creation.

- Divya Priya Rajalingam



Rotary Nostalgia

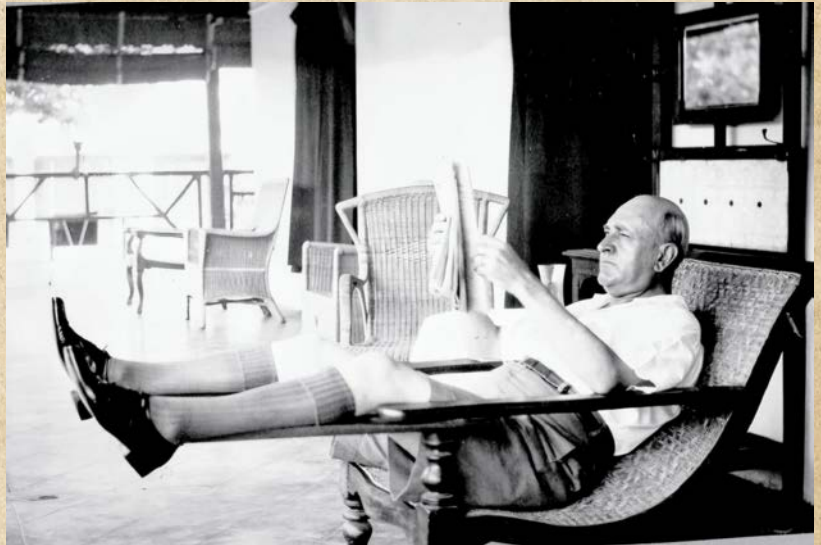
In Memory of Jim Davidson

Who was born under the Stars and Stripes and died under the Union Jack, a true world citizen.

The words "Come over into Macedonia and help us" did not fall on deaf ears. One, only one heard them, but one was enough. By his response, he made those words immortal.

Centuries later, a similar cry rang out. "Come over into Greece, Egypt, Palestine, India, Ceylon, Burma, Malay, Batavia, Java, Siam and China and help us." Jim heard it. To him, it was the sound of a reveille. Others may have heard it but not distinctly. It is given to many to hear, few to hear distinctly.

Jim knew whose job it was, the moment he heard the call. By every right and title, it was his. Not being in the best of health and having already won his spurs when he and Layton Ralston introduced Rotary in Australia and New Zealand, he might have considered his pioneering work done, but that would not have been Jim.



An ODE to our Founder from Paul Harris Himself.

In company with his wife, Lillian Dow Davidson and their daughter Marjory, he spent three years forging the round-the-world chain of clubs. When he returned home, it was manifest that he had given more than three years - he had given his life as well.

Was it by the interposition of Divine Providence that Jim became one of us? In any event, he has come and gone and his memory will be revered by legions, his work is more admired as the passage of time lends a broader perspective.

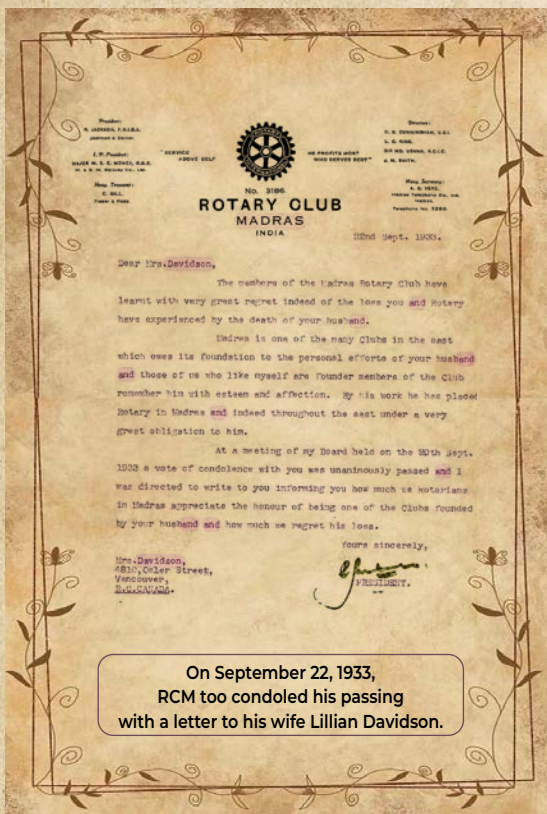
In memory of Jim, one beautiful October morning, we planted a shapely blue spruce tree in our garden of friendship at our home in Morgan Park. Lillian and Marjory honoured us on the occasion with their presence, and Marjory, at our request, fastened on a limb of the tree a metal tag that we had provided. It bears the brief inscription "In memory of James W. Davidson, world citizen."

In the Christmas period, Rotary may well pause in contemplation of Jim's great gift and his unswerving self-sacrificing devotion to the cause. No man could have given more.

Jim Davidson, Associate of Admiral Peary on his Polar expedition of 1894, war correspondent in the Far East, United States Consul General at Shanghai, Ambassador at large of Rotary International, and friend of all men, may you rest in peace.

James Wheeler Davidson passed away on July 18, 1933. This obituary was penned by both Paul and Jean Harris, founders of Rotary International.

Sourced by: Rtn.PP.N.K.Gopinath





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