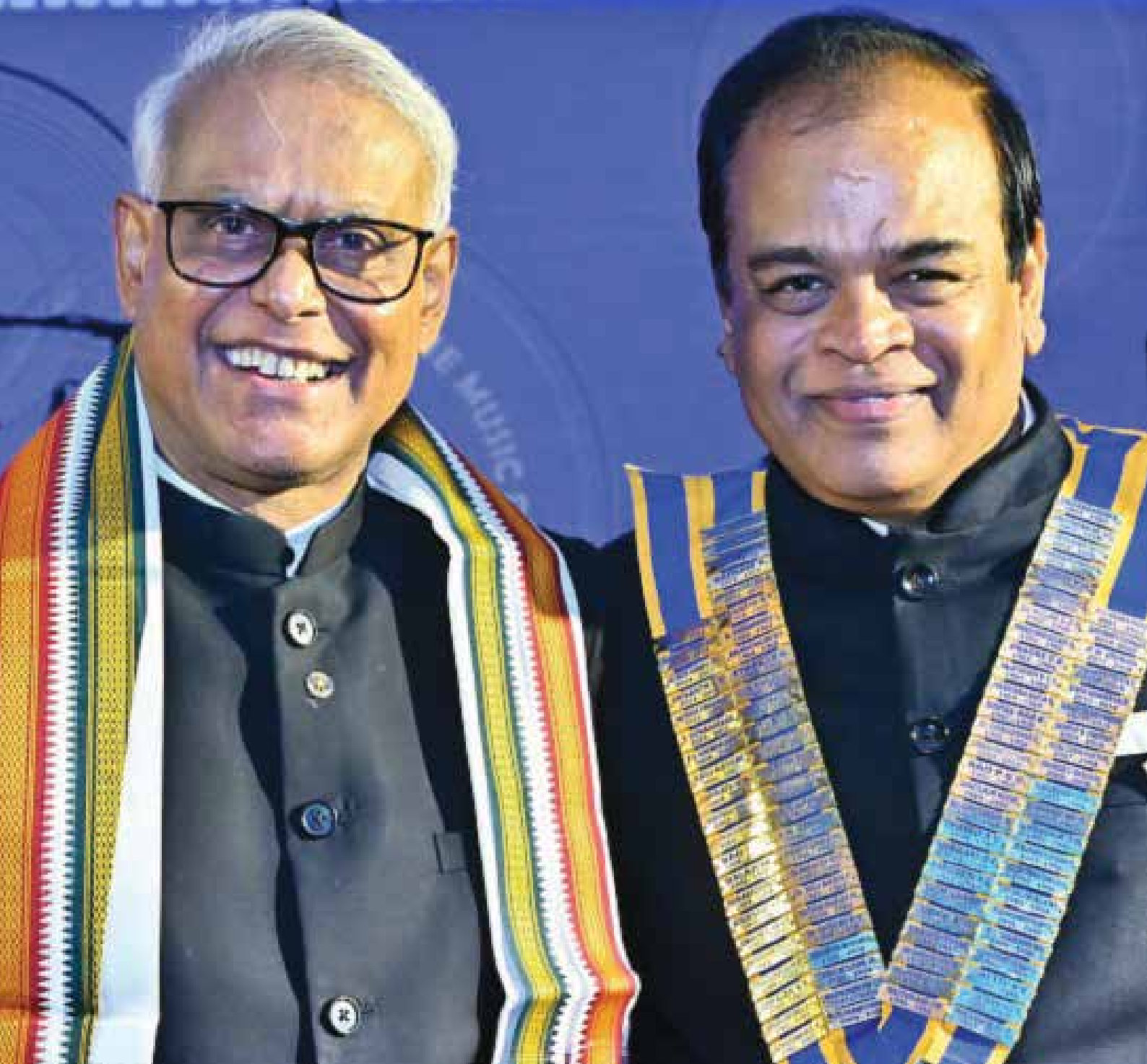


THE LIGHTHOUSE

WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS
ISSUE 03 | JULY 19, 2023

BUILDING RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITIES




Dear RCMers,

Presenting to you an exciting week of RCM activities. The Health Services committee has been on an overdrive with their outreach program. We have witnessed the Glitzy Musical Charter Night that took our fellowship to wonderful new highs.

Our 'Capture the Moment' series features a pictorial vignette from Rtn. Sanjay Chaganti. We look forward to many of you sharing your photos.

Thank you!

Rtn. Sunita Suresh



Rotary Club of Madras
WEEKLY MEETING

Tuesday, 25th July 2023 | 1.30 pm
at Hyatt Regency, Chennai.

SPEAKER
Mr. Annamalai
President - Tamil Nadu
Bharatiya Janata Party

TOPIC
My Vision for Tamil Nadu

Rtn. S. Ravi
President

Rtn. M. Sessa Sai
Honorary Secretary

Rtn. Vikram Chesetty
Director Club Service

Rtn. Sandhya Sridhar
Chairperson - Programs Committee

THE LIGHTHOUSE WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS

BOARD 2023-24

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Rtn. Ravi Sundaresan

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Rtn. M. Sessa Sai

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Rtn Sumit Kalra
Rtn Rajesh Mani

Send in your articles, news and stories for consideration in the Lighthouse bulletin to:
rcmlighthouse2023@gmail.com
Stay updated with our very own RCM magazine!

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CHARIS MEDIA WORKS

Visit RCM's official website
www.rotarymadras.in

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Rtn. Deepak Chander recently had a remarkable experience of visiting the **Rotary Club of Sae-Hanyang in Seoul, South Korea.**

During the visit, he had the privilege of exchanging the Rotary Club of Madras' flag and presenting the Timeless Legacy to **President Pastor Lee Youngchul.**

BIRTHDAYS

- 26th July - Rtn. Anuradha Jhaver
- 28th July - Rtn. Antony Lobo
- 28th July - Rtn. Alankrit Arora
- 29th July - Rtn. Krishnamurthy Vijayan
- 29th July - Rtn. A Sankara Narayanan
- 29th July - Rtn. Sathiam Ram
- 29th July - Rtn. A Gooch Kumar
- 25th July - Ann. Suniti (Rtn. Tarun Seth)
- 27th July - Ann. Simran (Rtn. Madhav Sehgal)
- 25th July - Ann. Sandhya (Rtn. Govind Parikh)
- 27th July - Ann. Malathi Devi (Rtn. M Pratap Kumar)
- 30th July - Ann. Dimple (Rtn. Jayant Hemdev)
- 31st July - Ann. Sangeetha (Rtn. Rajendra Mudaliar)

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

- 29th July - Rtn. Ashok Banerjee & Ann. Sreejata

Rotary Club of Madras District 3232

Healthy Chutties

A program to monitor and improve the general health of children

WITH THE SUPPORT OF OUR MEDICAL PARTNERS

**CHILDS TRUST HOSPITAL
RAJAN EYE CARE
YASH DENTAL**

A children's health screening camp will be held at Rotary Nagar on Saturday, 29th July, from 9.30am to 1.30pm

Your gracious presence at the inauguration (9.30 a.m.) will motivate and support our efforts

Rtn. S Ravi President	Rtn. Sesha Sai Honorary Secretary
Rtn. Bharat Pujara Director - Community Service II	Rtn. Dr. Sangeetha Viswanathan Chairperson

RCM TEAM HEALTH

Meeting of Minutes – 95th Charter Night – 19th July 23

Sgt-at-arms Rtn. Rajendran collared President Rtn. Ravi Sundaresan, who called the Charter Night to order.

Rtn. Prabha Srinivasan as the MC, sequenced the proceedings ably with corresponding narration on the visuals/introduction shown on the screen periodically.

The meeting started in a glorious traditional way by our lady Rotarians by lighting the Kuthu Vilakku

The musical band entertained the gathering by playing peppy numbers from the yesteryears and made the evening a musical treat, drawing everyone back on memory lane.

President Rtn. Ravi Sundaresan welcomed everyone for this special occasion when RCM celebrated the 95th year of Charter Night. The President, wholeheartedly expressed a deep sense of gratitude for the continued support & good wishes that helps RCM to build responsible communities, to create hope in the world.

The President acknowledged/recognized RCM donors who had committed to donate to the TRF, and received cheques from them. The President honoured them with special mementos:

Rtn. Dr Anuradha Ganesan - \$ 30,000

Rtn. G Ravindran - \$ 33,000

Rtn. Rahul Saraogi for becoming an Arch Club member - \$500,000

Rtn. EMC Palaniappan for becoming an Arch Club member - \$500,000

Rtn. Mahinder Jain – \$ 1,70,602

Rtn. Hiren Shah - \$ 5000

Taking the TRF tally to \$6,20,000

The President presented a specially made plaque to PP Rtn. Indra Subramanyam for having completed 25 glorious years of Service in RCM and to our senior Rtn. M Balasubramanian for completing 50 glorious years of Service in RCM, amidst applause.

- MC Rtn. Prabha read out a note by Rtn M Balasubramanian wishing RCM a meaningful year ahead and thanked him for the donation to the Centenary Celebrations of RCM.

- The President thanked all donors for their generous contribution, which definitely motivates all to make a big difference and also impacts the community.

- Secretary Rtn. M Sesha Sai announced that the next weekly meeting of RCM is on the 25th July '23 and the speaker will be BJP Tamil Nadu President K. Annamalai and thanked Rtn. M Balasubramanian for his contribution of 5 lacs

- Also invited all for the Youth Service combined Interact Installation Ceremony, the first of its kind in Rotary, on the 22nd July '23 at Bharatya Vidya Bhavan from 10 am to 1pm. Requested members to grace the occasion in large numbers and motivate the committee /interactors and rotaractors.

- PDG Benjamin Cherian spoke on the 'present/future' of Rotary, citing the good practices followed in the past years, which can be continued today. He said that the history of the club is well documented in the Timeless Legacy book of RCM

- Rtn. PP Kapil Chitale spoke on the 'now' period of Rotary from 2019-23 with facts and the projects done by the various Presidents. He pointed out how RCM adapted itself to a challenging

situation like the pandemic and carried along with the Govt and showed resilience as a club. He also referred to great work done on women-centric projects. Her Place, Perumbakkam School, TTC, TRF contributions etc – the best way to serve society and RCM leading by example. He conveyed that by just being right, results will follow automatically.





The 'now' was prevalent in all the years in RCM and the TRF contributions of Pres Ravi Sundaresan and the flurry of projects planned will be very exciting & purposeful

- MC recognized the Chief Guest Rtn. Anirudha Roychowdhury, RID, Zone 5&6, Centenary President RC Calcutta, Rtn. Purnendu Roychowdhury & PP Rtn. Tanu Roy
- Rtn. Sabina Narayanan spoke on the 'Rotary of the Future' and gave a lot of insight on the rotary activities and ended by saying that Rotary in India is performing better globally by being curious, flexible and connecting the minds and hearts of the people.
- MC Rtn. Prabha introduced the Chief Guest RID Rtn Anirudha Roychowdhury by reading out his profile/rotary accomplishments.
- RID Rtn. Anirudha Roy complimented RCM for their great work and said that he is happy to be a part of the Charter Night celebrations. RID thanked our PP NK Gopinath/Pres Ravi Sundaresan for the invitation.



He said that "The commitment and conviction shown by RCM is extraordinary" and he

recounted his association with RCM by citing his interactions with PDG Benjamin Cherian, PDG S Krishnaswamy, PDG JB Kamdar and many others. "The incredible journey of RCM and the impact on humanity/community is noteworthy and it is a privileged to be a JWD Club."

RID mentioned that RCM was instrumental in contributing 49% in South India and lead by motivating other clubs and being a catalyst for them. RID urged members to remember the early days, which are commendable and also the legacy. RID referred to the RCM projects which have made an impact on society – renovating water bodies, lakes, water conservation, the Thaimai project for women/children, Tsunami Relief, Vaccination drive during Covid, Dialysis, making villages ODF, Rotary Nagar, Sanitation, Eye surgeries – and many more, all being a symbol of long-lasting change & inspiration.

RID suggested that RCM scale up grants to do more projects, as TRF contributions are more than \$3 million. Now, the need of the hour is to make mental health a priority and Chennai a friendly city. RID expressed a wish that a Rotarian from RCM represents as a trustee of TRF. RID applauded the resounding success of RCM and congratulated RCM on its birthday. RID ended by saying that the legacy that RCM has created & the spirit of service should continue and shine bright in the years to come and that RCM should continue to inspire all to be the change that the world would like to see.

- MC requested all Past Presidents present to come onto the stage and be recognized & honoured by the President

The meeting was then adjourned. ■



The President presented a specially made plaque to **PP Rtn. Indra Subramanyam** for having completed 25 glorious years of Service in RCM.



The President presented a specially made plaque to our senior **Rtn. M Balasubramanian** for completing 50 glorious years of Service in RCM.

THE ROTARY FOUNDATION IS DEEPLY GRATEFUL FOR THEIR GENEROUS DONATION



Rtn. Anuradha Ganesan

Vinayaka Mission Research Foundation

\$30,000



Rtn. G. Ravindran

Century Flour Mills

\$33,000 towards CSR



Rtn. EMC Palaniappan

Member of the Arch C. Klumph Society

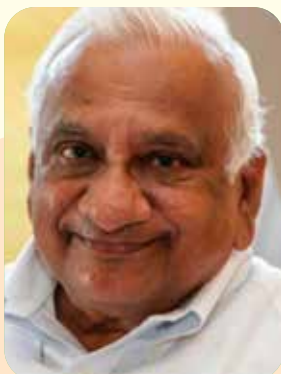
\$60,000



Rtn. Rahul Saraogi

Member of the Arch C. Klumph Society

\$1,00,000



Rtn. Mahinder Jain

Member of the Arch C. Klumph Society

\$1,77,000

When Music did the Talking!

A 'Timeless Lounge' awaited us as we entered the hall to celebrate our 95th CHARTER. Everything was different - lighting was to point, space - lounge like ,music was mesmerising, speeches were as brief as they could be, photo ops were many and people were casual, and this was all by design!

The 202 strong crowd was seated for most of the time (until the musics and spirits couldn't keep us still), with food and drink served at our seats. Service was impeccable and the food delicious. The Fellowship team led by Rtn. Vikram Chesetty and ably assisted by Rtn. Paul Jacob put its best foot forward and pulled off one of the most unforgettable and memorable Charter Nights.

While our Past Presidents spoke on the past, present and future of RCM. The band matched them era for era and transported us to each of them with fantastic music from the times.

The band played what they called the 7even medley to kick off the meeting. It transcended the various eras and it was indeed an apt way to portray the passage of time.

The band stepped in and out as Past presidents Rtn PDG Benjamin Cherian, Rtn. PP Kapil Chitale, and then Rtn. Sabina Narayan spoke on the RCM of yore, present and future. They belted out popular numbers like Voulez vous, Another brick in the wall, Billie Jean, Summer of '69, Get Lucky, Cheap

Thrills, Money for Nothing , to name a few and they did that with aplomb. They matched each of the speakers words with songs to match and it was timed to perfection. Rtn Hemu Ramiah and Jai who organised the band had the music planned down to pat, and with them there are no half measures. Needless to say the band had the crowd singing along at times, deeply enjoying the music at times and wildly shaking their leg in the end, the mood was just electric.

This musical Charter Night was very different, entertaining, filled with great music-and drew quite a crowd, who had a fun time. It was an incredible success!

RCmers and guests celebrated music, opened their hearts and wallets, made huge contributions, enjoyed the impeccable service and yummy food and above all made lasting memories.

I just can't wait for what we have in store for the rest of the year if this is the benchmark to go by. Let's look forward to many more memorable, fun fellowships and cheers to RCM.

It would be apt to end by saying indeed music did the talking !

- Rtn Rajesh Mani ■









Felicitations on the happy occasion of the 95th Charter Day of Rotary Club of Madras

President and members of the Rotary club of Walnut Creek, California.

*Congratulations and Best wishes for the function.
Wish you all a wonderful Rotary year 23-24
PDG. Dr. Saga Erode.*

Greetings and best wishes for this milestone year in your club and wishing you all the very best and a super successful event!

Sujata Pyne
PP Rotary Club of Calcutta- The Old Number One !

*This is certainly a Grand occasion for your club. Many best wishes for even greater success for the next 95 years... Sam Hancock
Rotary club of Washington DC*

*That is fantastic! Congratulations to your club and a wonderful club it is!
PDG. Tom Gump
Aide to RIPE. Stephanie Urchick*

*Heartiest congratulations on the 95th Charter Day celebrations of your esteemed club!
Please convey our very Best Wishes to your club President Ravi & his team on this auspicious day !
PDG. Ranjan Dhingra,
New Delhi.*

*Many congratulations to RCM upon celebrating the 95th charter night on 19th July. That is truly a special day.
Please do convey our best regards to the 95th President and Board of RCM on behalf of Rotary club of Nairobi, President
Susan Murabana Owen and Board .*

*Happy Birthday wishes to RCM from the RC of Forest. Have a wonderful meeting and celebration!!!
From Virginia with Love !!*

Rtn. Case Pieterman
RCM of Forest, Virginia USA

*Our wishes to RCM, as they celebrate their charter day, with decades of purposeful and dedicated service to humanity
PDG. Suresh Hari, Bangalore*

*95 years of serving the community ! What an amazing journey congratulations to the entire family of RC of Madras !
Rtn. Lubna Punjwani
Rotary club of Karachi Capital Hills*

GREETINGS FROM INDIA AND ABROAD

Courtesy: Rtn PP Gopinath

இன்று உங்கள் சங்கத்தின் 95-வது கட்டைத் தொண்டின் நூற்றாண்டு. 19-Jul-1929

உங்கள் சங்கம் Rotary club of Madras கட்டைத் தொண்டின் நூற்றாண்டு. 19-Jul-1929. உங்கள் சங்கம் உருவாகிய நூற்றாண்டு. 19-Jul-1929. உங்கள் சங்கம் உருவாகிய நூற்றாண்டு. 19-Jul-1929.

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My very best wishes for greater success in service, satisfaction and glory to Madras Club in the decades ahead!

PDG. Venugopal C. Govind
Rotary club of Cochin.

*Heartiest congratulation. My best wishes to all the members of family of Rotary Madras as you to create hope in the world !
PDG. Pranesh Jahagirdar, Dharwad*

That is fantastic! Congratulations to your club and a wonderful club it is!

PDG. Tom Gump
Aide to RIPE.
Stephanie Urchick

Congratulations. RC Madras is the mother of my club RC Bangalore. Feel very happy for this celebrations. Very best wishes to everyone in RCM.

Rgds. Rtn.PP. Ravishankar Dakoju,
RC Bangalore



RCM Paarvai, a collaborative initiative between Rotary Club of Madras and Voluntary Health Services, Adyar was inaugurated on 13th July 2023. The project aims to restore vision to 100 deserving beneficiaries through cataract surgeries.

The inaugural function was attended by President Rtn. Ravi Sundaresan, IPP Rtn. Jayshree Sridhar, Hon Sec Rtn. Sesha Sai, Director Community Services Rtn. Bharat Pujara, Rtn. 'Bobby' Balakrishna, Rtn. Jagdish Bhatia, Rtn. Srilatha, Rtn. Dr Supriya Dabir Gautam and Rtn. Dr Sangeetha Viswanathan.

Rotary Club of Madras handed over a cheque for 5.0 lacs to VHS for 100 Free Cataract Surgeries through the RCM Paarvai project. This contribution aims to address a common vision problem affecting millions worldwide which can cause significant visual impairment and hinder individuals' ability to lead fulfilling lives. The 100 recipients of these free cataract surgeries will not only regain their vision but also gain the ability to engage in daily activities, pursue employment opportunities, and reconnect with their loved ones.

Speaking on behalf of VHS, Dr Suresh Seshadri, Honorary Secretary, expressed their enthusiasm for the initiative, saying, "We firmly believe that everyone deserves access to quality healthcare, regardless of their financial circumstances. Through this donation of funds for 100 cataract surgeries, RCM and VHS hope to make a significant impact on the lives of those affected by vision impairment and empower them to live with independence and dignity."

The collaboration between VHS and RCM highlights the benefits of the collective efforts of organizations committed to addressing critical healthcare challenges and promoting a healthier society. This partnership allows for the seamless

provision of state-of-the-art surgical procedures by highly skilled medical professionals, ensuring that each recipient receives the utmost care and attention.

The President Rtn. Ravi Sundaresan spoke of the club's commitment to all humanitarian projects and pledged to continue this collaboration with VHS to benefit society. Dr Parthasarthy, Chief Ophthalmic Surgeon talked about the various conditions affecting the community, including progressive diseases like diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma, which also contribute to the burden of vision disorders.



Beneficiaries of the programme were also present at the inauguration and expressed their profound gratitude and appreciation of the efforts of both VHS and the Rotary Club of Madras. There was a general feeling of warmth and happiness in the room as we marked the beginning of this impactful journey together. ■

ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

Over the years, Rotary Club of Madras has always focused on encouraging and supporting the youth in living a life of inspired dreams, that we can help them achieve. While we have many relevant interventions, one that actually helps them complete their education, mostly whilst in college, is by way of sponsoring their education. This year, the Scholarship committee is taking this further by planning a year-long plan of interventions with the students being sponsored by our club, to help invigorate and energize them.

but will also help them get ready and confident to face the world with support in conversational English, grooming, confidence building, resume making and job interview training over the coming year.

The inaugural session was an interactive gathering where very senior Rotarians from our club spent time with all the students, sharing their experience and assured them of their support, while asking them to pursue their dreams and consistently work



Rotary Club of Madras held the inaugural event of its scholarship programme on July 13, 2023 with senior members and a room full of student beneficiaries. It was an inspiring and motivating afternoon as the students were handed over their scholarship amount for the academic term and a promise to support them till they get a respectable job and start their professional career. All the students that RCM supports through its scholarship programme are from very deserving background, most of them being first generation graduates. The programme will not only support them financially

hard. It was an afternoon of positivity and hope as we heard all them share their challenges and dreams with us.

RCM Scholarship committee is also planning to partner with 25 other Rotary clubs in our district to reach out to students who have shone in their recent board exams in Class X and XII, across 50 corporation schools and felicitate them.

The Scholarship Committee thanks all the Rotarians who participated in our event and motivated the students with their presence. ■



Installation

The Rotary Club of Madras Central was established 41 years ago and **President Rtn. Prakash Vaidhyathan** took over this 42nd year. President Rtn. Prakash Vaidhyathan is an architect and the youngest President of the Rotary Club of Madras Central till date.

The Rotary Club of Madras Central is known for several signature projects, like the Blood bank, Margaret Sidney Hospital, Sivanvoil school, Bone bank etc, which have been sustained by the team for many years. The latest is the Kuilkuppam project providing 63 houses, with all amenities for the Irula tribe, to be inaugurated in the last week of July. Apart from the above, many stalwarts from the club have contributed to generating new initiatives on a yearly basis, benefitting the community as a whole. Many CSR projects have been done by the team and many are still in the pipeline.

This year's installation was planned by the incumbent President and his versatile club service team innovatively in ITC Grand Chola on July 12th, where more than 150 Rotarians participated, including District officials and members of other clubs. The highlight of the presentation was the introduction of the President and the board of directors with a video which incorporated actor Rajinikanth's dialogues in several movies, aptly describing the nature of the directors.

The whole evening kept all the participants engrossed and finally culminated with fellowship and dinner, with several varieties of food served. ■




Rotary Club of Madras
YOUTH SERVICE TEAM
Cordially invites you to

Unify
EMPOWERING RCM INTERACTORS

First of its kind
combined installation of 27 RCM Interact Clubs
driven by RCM Rotaractors

GUESTS
Rtn. AKS Ravi Raman
District Governor
RID 3232
Rtn. N S Saravanan
District Governor Elect
RID 3234
Rtn. Vinod Saraogi
District Governor Nominee
RID 3234

July 22, 2023
SATURDAY
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan
MYLAPORE, CHENNAI
10 AM to 1 PM

Rtn. Ravi Sundaresan President	Rtn. Balaji Chinni Youth Service Director	Rtn. Sesha Sai M Hon. Secretary
Rtn. Suresh Amirapu Chairman Interact-Zone 1	Rtn. Shvakumar Vellur Chairman Interact-Zone 2	Rtn. IPP Jayashree Sridhar Chairman Interact-Zone 3
Rtn. Aswath Kumar Reddy Chairman Special Project		

ROTARY'S SCOTTISH PAST

As Gordon McNally assumes the RI presidency, we look back at Rotary's early history in Scotland

Scotland has important ties to the history of Rotary International. The British Association of Rotary Clubs, which eventually became Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland, set up its original headquarters in Edinburgh in 1914. Seven years later, Edinburgh became the first city outside the United States to host a Rotary Convention.

The city was also the birthplace of Jean Thomson Harris, the wife of Rotary founder Paul Harris, and the couple witnessed the organization's growth in Scotland over several visits.

The enthusiasm and missionary zeal of Irish American Rotarian William Stuart Morrow set the course for Rotary's development in Scotland. Morrow helped form numerous clubs in Great Britain and Ireland, including the first two in Scotland, the Rotary clubs of Glasgow (chartered April 1913) and Edinburgh (May 1913).

Another pioneer was Scottish pharmacist Tom Stephenson. As charter secretary of the Edinburgh club, Stephenson emphatically directed Rotarians to forget the "business-boosting" aspect of club membership and instead focus their efforts on useful civic service. After the club's charter president, R.W. Pentland, was elected to the RI Board of Directors at the 1913 Rotary Convention in Buffalo, New York, he and Stephenson encouraged other clubs in Great

Britain and Ireland to form the British Association of Rotary Clubs.

The association officially came into being in May 1914. Stephenson became its honorary secretary and set up its headquarters in Edinburgh. Even after the headquarters moved to London in 1921, Stephenson remained involved. He was 1927-28



Rotarians parade through the streets of Edinburgh, Scotland, during the 1921 Rotary Convention.

president of the group, which by then had changed its name to Rotary International — Association for Great Britain and Ireland, before he served on the RI Board of Directors in 1928-29.

In June 1921, Edinburgh welcomed 2,500 attendees to the 12th annual Rotary International Convention, the first held away from the country where the organization was founded. The ocean liners *Cameronia* and *Caronia*, full of Rotarians and their wives, crossed the Atlantic from North America. It was at this convention that Rotary amended its constitution to include the goal "to aid in the advancement of international peace and goodwill through a fellowship of business



Edinburgh Rotarians and spouses and 1920-21 RI President Estes Snedecor (center) are flanked by men in traditional Scottish attire at the convention.



110 years of making history

Rotary in Scotland has come a long way from its formative years. Today Scotland has 181 Rotary clubs, seven Rotaract clubs, and more than 4,300 members across two districts (1010 and 1320).

At the same time, Scottish Rotarians continue to make Rotary history. Gordon McNally is the second RI president from Scotland; the first was John Kenny of the Rotary Club of Grangemouth in 2009-10. Kenny had been the first member of a Scottish club to be elected to the RI Board of Directors since Tom Stephenson in 1928. More recently, Tony Black of the Rotary Club of Dunoon served on the Board in 2019-21.

More than 75 years after Edinburgh hosted the first Rotary Convention outside the United States, Glasgow hosted the 1997 convention, with the theme Welcome Home to Scotland. With more than 23,000 attendees, the event was touted at the time as the largest meeting ever held in Scotland.

plaque is now displayed outside her birthplace in central Edinburgh.

Adapted from an article by James McKelvie in the February 1997 issue of this magazine. ■

Credit: www.rotary.org

and professional men of all nations united in the Rotary ideal of service.” Summing up the event’s success, 1920-21 RI President Estes Snedecor told delegates: “This convention is Rotary’s greatest opportunity. It gives promise of being Rotary’s greatest achievement.”

Although serious business was accomplished, fun and friendship were also on order. Convention festivities culminated with a grand parade through Edinburgh’s streets. Participants included Rotarians and their wives, as well as Edinburgh’s lord provost, magistrates, and councilors, resplendent in their robes of office. One highlight for many of the American visitors was sailing down the River Clyde with the Rotary Club of Glasgow, led by its most famous member, entertainer Sir Harry Lauder. Another was the offer of “home hospitality” by Stephenson and members of the Rotary Club of Edinburgh to visiting Rotarians, a tradition that remains a popular feature of the conventions.

Following World War I, Rotary expanded gradually in Scotland despite an economic depression. The visits of Paul and Jean Harris to Scotland in the 1920s and 1930s were reported in the national press, and the couple were given civic receptions during their visits to Edinburgh.

Many Scottish Rotarians regarded Paul Harris as a close friend, especially those in the coastal town of Ayr, near the birthplace of Scotland’s national poet, Robert Burns. On 2 April 1934, members of the Rotary Club of Ayr presented Harris with a copy of the complete works of their world-famous poet, which is now part of Rotary’s archives.

After her husband’s death, Jean Harris returned to her native land, where she lived the rest of her life. Although her expressed desire was to remain essentially a private person, Rotarians paid her regular visits. She also attended a small reception in honor of the Rotary Club of Edinburgh’s 50th anniversary. A commemorative

We don't want to build a park, BUT AN ENTIRE FOREST

Rasheeda Bhagat - June 2023



One of the highlights of the training event Lakshya, held in Kolkata recently for the DGEs and DGNs was a session on the environment chaired by RI director Mahesh Kotbagi. The audience was all ears as Ravishankar Dakoju, the mega donor to TRF, explained how under the leadership of RC Bangalore Orchards, RID 3190, of which he is a past president, and members such as Neil Michael Joseph, the cyanide dumps at the KGF township in Kolar district of Karnataka were transformed from a toxic hellhole to a green area filled with trees, birds and animals.

This was considered a lost cause till Rotary stepped in, built a partnership with the local government and won its confidence. To green the area, “we dug trenches at different levels, each trench being 14x2x2ft. About 14,000 trenches were formed at different levels, and in each trench trees and cactus, along with wild grass, were planted. The grass retains the moisture and binds the soil.”

The trees started growing but hit a rough patch at some point and started dying. What was needed was compost or manure to sustain the greenery.



He explained that the British had extracted gold from the Kolar gold fields; “to do that you need to use cyanide to separate the gold from the slurry.” Once the British left, the mining was stopped and the whole area dried up, and “the residual cyanide dust blown by the wind wreaked havoc on the health of the people in the KGF township, causing cancer, tuberculosis and other diseases.”

“Believe it or not, we had to literally ‘smuggle’ the compost all the way from Bengaluru to Kolar, because the transport of the smelly manure was not allowed. But we Rotarians never give up. We don’t mind failing... I am a failure throughout my life; failed in Class 10 three times, and just about managed to pass Class 12! Anyway, we used to transport it at midnight and we filled all the 14,000

trenches with 700 tons of compost brought from Bengaluru to Kolar,” said Dakoju, amidst applause.

“Finally, we won and the cyanide started giving up.” The Rotarians planted 1.2 lakh saplings and 15,000 cacti and “we want to make it a forest land. We’ve planted Singapore cherries and now the birds come, and so do snakes, rabbits and black bucks.”

This success story was a great compliment to Rotary; the government had given up saying this is a highly poisonous region and nothing can grow here. “But as PRIP Shekhar Mehta said: ‘You should be either mad, passionate or courageous to face failure. We did that and we won.’”

Along with PDGs Suresh Hari and K P Nagesh, Dakoju, who has now joined RC –Bangalore, has initiated a new project, “where we are taking up 1,500 acres to make a mini forest in one of the driest areas of Karnataka. It’s an ambitious and comprehensive project which will cost Rs 26 crore to put up five lakh trees, restore two lakes, put up grasslands, protect the animals and enhance the livelihood of the 8,000-odd tribals in the area. Meenakshi Venkataraman, director, Projects, ESRA (Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group) is helping us. She tells us, develop grasslands, don’t just keep planting trees.”

Admitting that this was “a very ambitious project,” he added, “this is called thinking big... we don’t want to put up a park or a plantation but an entire forest, and thus give something back to the planet.”

Addressing the meet, Meenakshi said that Rotarians in both Asia and Africa will have to respond to the environmental crisis that was unfolding; Pakistan had seen flash floods last year and Sri Lanka had faced the nightmare of its agricultural systems collapsing.

Saying that funding was going to be available for environmental projects, she talked about projects involving pollination, adopting a river, reduction of carbon and methane from the environment. “Three ways we can reduce that is by working on the soil, on mangroves and coral reefs.” Shekhar Mehta, as RI president, had announced at the UN Conference on Climate Change that Rotary would do large projects on developing mangroves. She was happy to tell the participants that as many as 30 global grants were in the pipeline for this work.

Expressing concern about the missing data on projects done by Rotarians, Meenakshi, who is a member of RC –Nilgiris West, RID 3203, said, “We

need to measure our impact as Rotarians. We all rose up to PRIP Ian Riseley’s challenge of planting trees, but no one seems to know how many trees were planted.”

RID 3141 DG Sandip Agarwalla gave details of the biodiversity park that his district, under the leadership of his club RC Bombay, had put up in the Bombay University over an area of 1 ½ acres. “There we have put up a bamboo growing Zen garden, an amphitheatre, revived a lake and put up a huge rainbow model from recycled material.” The trees have been QR coded and the Rotarians will be involved in the development and maintenance of this park for the next 10 years. “We have appointed a naturalist and started getting schoolchildren in groups of 40–50, who spend 4 to 5 hours with the naturalist going around the park and connecting with nature.”

Since the park will be under their care for the next 10 years, “we are going to add to it incrementally. Already we have put up a mini windmill and an interactive fountain; when children pedal on static cycles, the water starts falling. Rotaract clubs have shown some interest in adding to this park with lots of creative ideas,” he added.

Mrutyunjay Suar, head of KIIT Incubator, said he came from a “university bringing the innovation culture and an ecosystem called ‘incubator’ promoting more than 380 companies started by young minds thinking of solutions for society.”

People he worked with were engaged in making inexpensive products; “we bring in to solve local problems the best minds, policymakers, innovators, intellectuals, and give solutions that are scalable, sustainable and affordable.” An example he gave was of extremely cheap technology to test the potability of water in rural areas; “it costs just a few paise.”

Complimenting Rotarians for the several projects they have undertaken on environmental sustainability, RI director Kotbagi said, “We have to understand the importance of reducing carbon emission. Today regulations are in place and many industrial houses are keeping a close watch on this. Developing mangroves is a wonderful project of Rotary, and we need to continue the good work done in this area last year.” ■

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MUTUAL SUPPORT

Rtn. Sanjay Chaganti and daughter Sanjana.
Candid shot by Ann. Lata Murugan taken on the cusp of Sanjana's 21st bday.
"To me this picture captures the mutual support and connect we share."

- Rtn. Sanjay Chaganti