

Community Comment – Jon Sapper 10/1/2012

Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? And.....Will it be beneficial to all concerned? Those are the principles that over 1 million Rotarians try to live by in over 34,000 clubs worldwide.

Before I was a Rotarian, I thought they were just a bunch of old men who got together once a week and levied fines against each other. I knew they did a few community projects, but I really had no idea of the tremendous work that was being done by Rotarians around the world.

Rotarians have made a commitment to eradicate polio from the face of the earth. When this effort started in 1985, there were 400,000 new cases each year of this crippling and potentially fatal disease. Rotarians took the lead and partnered with others, where this year, the number of new cases is just 145 in four countries...Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria and Chad. Many local Rotarians have travelled around the world to help immunize thousands of children against this disease. We will see polio wiped off the face of the earth in our lifetime. We're that close.

There are 12 Rotary clubs in Humboldt and Del Norte counties. These clubs support local projects ranging from helping kids learn how to read, to weekend meals for children who don't have enough to eat, to projects beautifying our community, supporting seniors and many others.

Local Rotarians have also launched national and international humanitarian projects. The National Bone Marrow Registry, medical equipment and supplies in Siberia and Mexico, supporting orphanages, building schools in Asia, making sure there is safe blood products in Africa and bringing lifesaving water to remote villages are just examples of the impact local Rotarians are having here at home and throughout the world.

I had the privilege of seeing the power of Rotary first hand when my son and I travelled to Tanzania. We went to dedicate wells in two remote villages where 7,000 people live. I know this is hard to believe, but these people had to walk 9

miles one way to fill a 5 gallon bucket with muddy looking water. They put the bucket on their head and walked back in hot humid conditions. Through the generosity of three local Rotary clubs partnering with the Rotary Foundation and a club in Tanzania, these wells provided enough clean water for both villages. To say they were appreciative is an understatement.

There are other wonderful service clubs in our community, Kiwanis, Lions, Soroptimists, the Elks and others that are helping to make our community and the world a better place to live. Get involved. The friendships are lasting, the work is important and it is a privilege to have the opportunity to give back in service to others.

No, Rotarians are not just a bunch of old men getting together for lunch once a week. They are men and women of all ages working hard for a better world and dedicated to service above self.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.