



Presidents' News Letter

September 2011

It is now two months into the new Rotary Year and for our club it has been a period of Summer fun mixed with serious fund raising and giving of service.

We started with our annual International Garden Party for members and guests in the beautiful surroundings of an English garden, many thanks to Gill and Colin, which raised money for people in crisis around the world. Perhaps the most striking and immediately beneficial example of Rotary International giving is the "Shelter Box" programme. Shelter Boxes can be delivered at very short notice into disaster areas such as Haiti and Pakistan. Each box contains equipment for the relief of a family of up to 12 people and includes a large tent, sleeping bags, blankets, cooking equipment, water purification, tools etc that give immediate shelter and the means of cooking and serving food. At about £500 each they are a bargain. The distribution system for these boxes is so efficient that donors can track them from the warehouse to the point of delivery in the disaster zone.

We are trying to raise public awareness of Rotary in Woking and for the first event our club and our sister club, Woking District Club, mounted a Rotary Awareness exhibition in the Town Square which included a Shelter Box tent and equipment for families to examine. Many thanks to Terry Smith for organising this event in conjunction with other Woking service organisations.

Mizens Railway in Knaphill has provided the ideal venue for two further recent events. The first included a further display of Shelter Box at the Mizens "Teddy Bears Picnic" day where hundreds of teddy bears were set out in picnic groups alongside the track for the delight of the children. For the second event Mizens and Woking Rotary hosted a "Kids Day" for disadvantaged children including free train rides, a delicious BBQ, ice creams, and face painting sessions. Over 150 children and helpers could again enjoy a day out with the teddy bears.

Thanks to Arthur Vicary we have recently had some fine speakers from outside the club covering such diverse topics as the Hindhead Tunnel and prostate cancer and from within Rotary we have listened to a very informative "job talk" on produce marketing from Bob Scriverner and a talk by a remarkable young Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar from the United States, Andreana Lefton, who won the award for a year's study at the London School of Economics. She is tutoring

children in East London who are Roma Gypsy refugees whilst analysing education policy for those “marginalised society” groups. Sir Jeremy Hanley delighted the Club during his recent visit. The comparison of his life in politics and the goings on in “Yes Minister” and “Yes Prime Minister” were hilarious. His account of the period in the Cabinet and as Chairman of the Conservative Party exposed the inner workings of Government to be even more bizarre than the TV shows.

In James Burns' description of the work of Help for Heroes at our Partners Lunch he described the charity's hugely impressive fundraising efforts for creating additional facilities which aim to provide the optimum rehabilitation of servicemen and women injured and wounded whilst serving their country. Gary Stowbridge amused us greatly with his tales of being a very "clean" chimney sweep.

Graham Fagence

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