

Rotarians against Child Slavery

LA Newsletter for the proposed Rotarian Action Group – See website www.racsrag.org

Issue No 13

"It may suit us to think that slavery belongs to the past and, at best, only exists in under-developed countries, but in reality all our lives are touched by it and our demands sustain much of it" (Rahila Gupta..... "Enslaved")



Anti-slavery booth at the RI Convention

It is two weeks since I returned from the RI Convention in Montreal where I was fortunate enough to be allocated a booth in the House of Friendship.

The booth was entitled "District 1080: Rotarians against Child Slavery". I went armed with a suit-

case full of information, articles and stories of child slavery worldwide as well as a plethora of leaflets high-lighting the reasons for the proposed Rotarian Action Group against Child Slavery.

I have to thank especially, Rtn John Howie from the Loanhead & Roslin Rotary

Club in Scotland who kindly printed 1,000 leaflets at no charge whatsoever, DG (1080) John Samuel, who carried 250 of the leaflets to Montreal in his suitcase and DGE Bonnie Korengal (District 7450), PA, USA who brought with her 300 leaflets printed by the Rotary Club of West Chester Downtown, in Pennsylvania, USA..

A successful outcome

I met so many interesting people at the Convention, renewed old friendships, made many new Rotarian friends and contacts and happily came back with only 140 of the Action Group leaflets, thus lightening my load for the journey back to the UK.

I was particularly pleased to be able to speak to two former RI Presidents in our booth, ie Cliff Dochterman (see photo over page) and Luis Giay, who was RI President during my first Convention visit in Glasgow.

What is more important, over a 100 of the visitors to our booth signed up to join the proposed Action Group against Child Slavery.

I am currently sending over 400 Newsletters to Rotarians in 34 different countries.

Several Rotarians from around the world helped me to "man" the booth during the first two days of the Convention, whilst I was helped by a young lady who lives in Montreal

and who volunteers for the Washington DC based anti-slavery organisation called "Free the Slaves".

For the newest Rotarians and Rotaractors who have signed up to join the Action Group, I am keeping my fingers crossed that I have deciphered your names, email addresses and rotary clubs correctly. If I have made any transposition errors please do let me know as soon as possible so that I can correct the Action Group database.

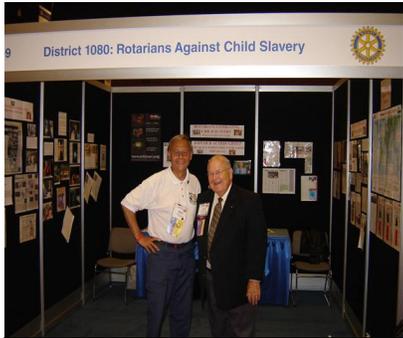
A plea for assistance

Several of the visitors to my booth, mostly from Canada and the USA asked for a speaker to come and talk to their Rotary Clubs about modern day slavery.

Living as I do in the UK has made me realise that I need to think about committing my own Powerpoint presentations and commentary onto

discs which I can share with other clubs.

Can anyone help me achieve this goal ?



With Cliff Dochtermann outside our booth



With helper Marie-Michelle and a new supporter Mark Barnes (RC of Mumbai Borivali East)

Application for RAG approval

In Newsletter No 11 (March 2010), I reported that I had submitted an application to the RI Board for approval as a Rotarian Action Group and that we would know the outcome of that application by the end of June.

Whilst I was at the Convention, I received an email from Evanston which reads as follows:-

“As you may recall, since 2009, the RI Board of Directors has been discussing RAGs and considering policy changes, which may

impact the scope and direction of the Rotarian Action Groups program moving forward. In November 2010, the Board will review the RAGs program, and as a result, has decided to extend its current moratorium on new Rotarian Action Group applications until its November 2010 meeting.

We have noted that your group’s proposal is complete as required by Rotary’s current policies for Rotarian Action Groups. Your application will be resubmitted as

written in November. We will be in contact with you following the Board’s next meeting in November 2010 to provide an update on any new decisions that may impact the Rotarian Action Groups program or your group’s application.

In the interim, we will keep your application on hold at RI World Headquarters”

So, we need to exercise a little more patience on this issue and keep our fingers crossed that the outcome will be a successful one.

Matching grant application submitted

Rotarian Carol Metzker, Past President of the Rotary Club of West Chester Downtown, Pennsylvania, USA, writes “Rotarians are keeping their fingers crossed for a Matching Grant, submitted to The Rotary Foundation on 2nd July, that will benefit rescued child slaves. The goal of the grant is a multi-seat vehicle, capable of manoeuvring in back country roads, to be donated to Bal Vikas Ashram. The ashram is an educational and rehabilitation center for rescued boy slaves in India. The vehicle will provide transportation for children during rescue operations, for medical appointments, for court cases and for their return to their home villages when they are well.

The application is the result of project development and coordination over the past year. It is the outcome of a partnership and financing amongst the Rotary Club of Pratapgarh (host club in India), the Rotary Club of West Chester Downtown (primary international partner in PA, USA), the Rotary Club of Norwich St Edmund (UK) and the Rotary Club of Exton Frazer (PA, USA). Rotarian Raj Pandey – who was born in Pratapgarh and is now a member of the Rotary Club of Hertford in England – provided crucial coordination and communication efforts that brought the application to reality”.

Those of us involved with this Matching Grant application, with Rtn Carol Metzker leading, know that it would not have been possible but for the efforts of Rtn Raj Pandey, who travelled to India on the Action Group’s behalf a) to seek out an appropriate vehicle for the Ashram, b) to identify a reliable supplier and c) to find a local Rotary Club which would be our partner in this Matching Grant project. **In the next edition of the Newsletter, Raj will tell us about his visit to Bal Vikas Ashram, the Child Slave Rehabilitation Centre near Allahabad.**

UK adopts new Anti-slavery Day

In Newsletter 10 (February 2010) I referred to the fact that in June 2007, the US Senate passed a resolution establishing a national day of human trafficking awareness on 11 January. Well I am pleased to say that on 8 April, one of the last laws to be passed by Parliament before the UK election was the Anti-Slavery Day Act 2010, which will establish one day (still to be determined) for the purpose of (and I quote the Act itself)

- a) acknowledging that millions of men, women and children continue to be victims of slavery, depriving them of basic human dignity and freedom,
- b) raising awareness amongst young people and others of the dangers and consequences of slavery, human trafficking and exploitation and encouraging them to be proactive in the fight against it.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if Rotary International followed suit and established a day when we Rotarians could promote the need for individuals and organizations to take positive action to eradicate slavery. Such a move would give immense support to the work of the Action Group.

Mark Little, RC of Norwich St Edmund
10 July 2010
Action Group's Website: www.racsrag.org.