



District Governor's Newsletter

District 5970

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Governor 2009-2010

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Maria Jose Perez Lopez and the Angels who came into Her Life

Today Maria Jose is a college graduate living in Nicaragua and working for an international shipping company as an accountant. Her journey to that job was recently detailed in a speech to Rotarians in Michigan.

Born in 1983, she began selling vegetables and tortillas on the streets of her hometown of Chinandega at age five. She, her mother and her eight brothers and sisters moved to a ramshackle hut next to the town dump when she was nine so she could scrounge for things to sell to supplement the family income.

It was there, she recalls, that "the angel she had so often dreamed of" came into her life. It was Father Marco Dessy who worked to break the cycle of extreme poverty there through education. He saw in Maria Jose the intelligence and determination to succeed beyond the basic grade school level.

After several years of study, she graduated from high school with a certificate in accounting and Father Marco was able to enroll her in the prestigious University of Central America, a dream so far beyond her expectations that she was stunned.

"Father Marco often spoke of an organization that had supported him for many years called Rotary and told me with their help, anything was possible," she said. "When he spoke of Rotary, I could always feel the gratitude in his heart. He would always say that with the help of the Rotarians, anything would be possible," she said.

More than once Maria Jose faced leaving school because of a lack of funds, but each time Rotarians came through. The last time was in December, 2007 when Rotarians from Iowa, Texas and Michigan were on their annual trip to deliver shoeboxes.

"Through an interpreter we learned that with only one year left, she was leaving school. Within 15 minutes we had raised the \$1,500 she needed to finish her studies," reports Steve Thorpe who heads the shoebox project.

"All that I am today is due to the mission of God that placed in the hands of Father Marco and the Rotarians who work day and night to provide a better future for those in need," she concludes.

Last December Rotarians on their annual trip to Nicaragua threw a graduation party for Maria Jose, the first person to make it from the dump in Chinandega to college graduation.

Rotarians are funneling financial support to young people like her through a non-profit organization, Hope and Relief International, a 501-C (3) organization entirely run by Rotarians. Contributions to help those kids can be sent to Thorpe who can also provide information about other children who need a hand up.

District Governor's Club Visits

I've now visited 53 of the 54 Rotary clubs and have enjoyed every visit. I did find myself much more alert for the noon meetings but a Rotary breakfast meeting is a great way to start the day. Here are some of the projects being conducted by the respective clubs.

Iowa Falls- Club donates funds from their annual chicken dinner to Relay for Life, local hospital needs, boy scouts and a school nurse's fund for needy children.

Fort Dodge Daybreak- Major Fund raiser is their Dragon Boat Races and then donate to local hospital cancer program as well as to an after school learning program.

Eagle Grove- Own & operate the Rotary Ann Homes in Eagle Grove. The campus has approx 200 units with different levels of care. Also assist with Meals on Wheels and park improvements. Major recent activity was hosting RI Chairman Dr Robert Scott of End Polio Now for a meeting on Nov 7th at the Rotary Ann facilities. Club pledged \$5000 to EPN campaign. GREAT!!!

Webster City- Served over 1200 chicken dinners is approx 2 hours this month. Also hosted over 30 student scholars and their parents for a county wide recognition of high school scholars.

Independence- Spaghetti Supper proceeds used to assist local food pantry, back pack supplies for school children and scholarships.

Bellevue- Club sponsored Halloween parade, a Fourth of July parade entry and adopts a highway. Club also refurbishing the city cemetery and do Red Cross Blood Drives.

Cedar Rapids Sunrise- Funds raised from annual chili supper are used for Gear Up for Kids after the flood. Members do work days at Camp Hitaga and are bell ringers for the Salvation Army.

Oelwein- Sponsor a golf tournament, assist with the city clean-up of tires and oil, maintain the Rotary playground equipment area. Have sent supplies to Kenya to help with a local nurse that goes there annual on a health mission.

Kids Carry On the Tradition of Giving

How about three kids who took their great grandpa's story to heart and decided to continue the caring?

That's just what happened this fall when three grandchildren of Rotarian Jim Weems and wife, Marilyn, decided to support the Marion East Cedar Rapids Shoes

for Kids program. Sarah, Megan and Michael had noticed successful fund raising campaigns at Linn Mar High School, where Sarah and Megan are seniors and Michael is a sophomore, and decided they could carry on the Weems tradition of caring.



Gov Retzlaff donating to the fund.

The story that prompted this action goes like this: Once, when Marilyn's father was a boy, he boarded a bus. A stranger on the bus noticed that he was not wearing shoes and asked him why. He replied that he didn't have any shoes. The stranger reached into his pocket and gave the boy enough money to buy a new pair. Responding to the boy's question about how he could repay him, the stranger said, "Just do the same for someone else someday." And Jim and Marilyn have done that many times over in honor of Marilyn's father, and have been honored by the Marion East Cedar Rapids Club for their continued generosity and support of this program.

And now a new generation has taken up that honor. The campaign began Friday November 6 and will continue for one week. The students designed an old shoe logo which was pasted on empty cereal boxes to be placed in homerooms at Linn Mar High School. Their goal is to raise \$500 to donate to the cause.

Shoes For Kids!

Donations November 6th - 12th



Pizza Party!
For the 3rd period
Class that raises the most money.

The Shoes for Kids Program has provided shoes to over 1100 needy kids in the metro area (College Community, Linn Mar, Marion and Cedar Rapids) as well as Parkersburg and Eldora. Congratulations to the Weems family for helping to sustain the Rotary ideal of “**Service Above Self**” and the family legacy of seeing a need and doing something about it.

How about those kids?

World famous violinist Itzhak Perlman Performs



World famous violinist **Itzhak Perlman** performed at a sold-out concert November 8 in Cedar Falls. The concert raised awareness of Rotary’s eradication campaign and funds to match the second Gates Challenge grant.

Improved vaccines and stronger support from government leaders in

endemic countries are just recently helping bring wild poliomyelitis under control, according to Dr. Bob Scott of Ontario, Canada, one of Rotary’s leaders in the war to eradicate polio.

Scott spoke Sunday, November 8 at a gathering of over 260 Rotarians and others at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, IA. His presentation preceded a concert by Itzhak Perlman at UNI to raise awareness of the campaign.

Scott told the group that one of the three strains of the wild virus has already been eradicated, so medical scientists have been able to re-formulate the oral vaccine to be more effective against the remaining two. He added that pending government approvals, the new “Bivalent” vaccine could be used in India as soon as this month.

The second development has been improved relations with heads of governments in four countries where polio is still endemic. “I was in Pakistan twice in October, the first time to ask the President to “flag” or support the polio immunization event in two weeks; then again to participate in the event.”

Scott has also made 23 visits to India over the years working to improve efforts there. “The government of India has been very generous in its support of polio eradication and except for a handful of new cases in the northern part of the country, we have polio surrounded there,” he said. For decades India had recorded more new cases of polio than any of the 125 countries where it was prevalent in 1985 when the campaign to eradicate it began.

Though the number of newly reported cases of polio worldwide is down only by 12 percent in the first ten months of the year, there have been no new cases reported in Pakistan since October 17; none in India since October 12, and none in Nigeria or Afghanistan since October 2 according to data from the World Health Organization.

“I don’t know if you realize what an amazing fact that is,” Scott notes. “Those are the four countries where polio is still endemic. During our immunization efforts in Pakistan last month, we were able to deliver vaccines to the tribal areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan for the first time. The volunteers who did that work are real heroes.”

Rotarians and United Nations officials were able to negotiate “days of tranquility” where fighting stopped to allow volunteers to deliver and administer the oral polio vaccine.

Despite the encouraging news, there is still much work to be done. In Africa, polio was retransmitted to many countries neighboring Nigeria during the three-year period when little was done. Today the countries of Angola, Chad and Sudan are facing outbreaks after having been declared polio free. And in some regions of India and Nigeria the virus is not responding well to the oral vaccine where as many as 10 or even 15 immunizations have been given to children. Some medical professionals now believe the only way to totally eradicate the disease is to use the injectable vaccine developed by Dr. Jonas Salk and his team at the University of Pittsburgh in the 1950’s. But that would greatly increase costs and could only be delivered by medical professionals.

Rotary’s top priority for several years has been total eradication. Working with UNICEF and the WHO from the United Nations, and the CDC from Atlanta, and with major financial support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, over two billion doses of vaccine have been

administered and total reported cases worldwide has dropped from over 600,000 in 1954, to fewer than 2,000 in 2008.

But with vaccination rates falling below 90 percent in several developed countries, a single infected person could step off a plane and start a new epidemic in several places.

By PDG Dave Buck

Polio/Rotary Awareness Event

The seven Cedar Rapids area Rotary clubs gathered for their weekly Rotary meeting at Kirkwood Community College Tuesday Nov 17th to hear Doug Oberman's life story about living with polio. Doug contracted both type 1 and type 3 strains of polio at age 8. After a near death experience and after over a week in a coma he slowly regained some of his physical abilities. He told the group of approximately 300 Rotarians and guests what it is like to live with the effects of the polio virus. Doug lost permanently the use of his arms but learned to walk again and fortunately his mind was fine. He attended school and graduated from UNI and later the University of Missouri College of Law.

Doug practiced law with a firm in Waterloo until his health would no longer allow. Doug continues daily use of an iron lung which he's used since he contracted the disease.

Doug's life story is a very compelling account of what life can be as a polio survivor and a testimony as to why Rotarians need to continue to support the world wide effort to eradicate the world of polio.

Tuesday's awareness event was organized by David Sorg, president of the Cedar Rapids-Hiawatha Rotary Club and committee members, and was corporately sponsored by the Simmons Perrine Moyer Bergman PLC of Cedar Rapids.

While the day's event was a first for all Cedar Rapids clubs to have their weekly meeting jointly it was also a

Fund raiser to meet the EPN challenge and an awareness event for the area. Early estimates of funds raised are in excess of \$10,000. Great job Cedar Rapids Area Rotary!!!

SAVE THE DATE

District Conference, April 30th- May 1st
Grand River Center Dubuque, Iowa

<i>Rotary District 5970 Monthly Attendance</i>		Oct '09			
	Last Report	Meetings	Members	Attendance %	Notes
ACKLEY	Oct	3	19	75.00	
ALGONA	Oct	4	62	81.00	
ANAMOSA	Oct	4	29	78.00	
BANCROFT	Oct	4	25	63.00	
BELLE PLAINE	Oct	4	22	80.00	
BELLEVUE	Oct	4	26	61.00	
CEDAR FALLS	Oct	4	118	58.00	
CEDAR RAPIDS	Oct	4	306	63.00	
CEDAR RAPIDS DAYBREAK	Oct	5	118	62.00	
CEDAR RAPIDS HIAWATHA METRO	Sep	3	68	56.00	No Report
CEDAR RAPIDS SUNRISE	Sep	4	37	75.00	No Report
CEDAR RAPIDS WEST	Oct	4	101	71.00	
CHARLES CITY	Oct	4	46	67.00	
CLARION	Sep	4	23	65.00	No Report
CLEAR LAKE	Oct	5	20	69.00	
DECORAH	Oct	4	81	64.00	
DUBUQUE	Oct	4	196	40.31	
EAGLE GROVE	Oct	4	32	63.00	
ELDORA	Sep	5	47	67.67	No Report
ELY GATEWAY	Oct	2	20	63.00	
EMMETSBURG	Oct	4	39	77.00	
ESTHERVILLE	Oct	5	59	50.00	
FOREST CITY	Oct	4	54	63.00	
FORT DODGE	Oct	4	103	57.00	
FORT DODGE DAYBREAK	Sep	5	27	57.00	No Report
GARNER	May	4	44	74.70	
GUTTENBERG	Oct	5	19	43.00	
HAMPTON	Sep	5	39	65.00	No Report
HUMBOLDT	Oct	4	26	66.00	
INDEPENDENCE	Oct	5	40	65.00	
IOWA FALLS	Oct	4	39	66.00	
IOWA GREAT LAKES	Oct	4	83	58.00	
MANCHESTER	Oct	4	29	53.00	
MAQUOKETA	Oct	4	35	74.90	
MARION EAST CEDAR RAPIDS	Sep	5	35	95.00	No Report
MASON CITY	Oct	4	102	74.14	
MASON CITY RIVER CITY SUNRISE	Oct	5	24	87.00	
MONTECELLO	Oct	4	31	68.00	
MT. VERNON-LISBON	Oct	5	28	56.00	
NEW HAMPTON	Oct	4	40	67.00	
ODEBOLT	Oct	4	19	66.00	
OELWEIN	Oct	4	34	61.00	
OSAGE	Sep	4	30	79.00	No Report
PARKERSBURG	Oct	4	16	83.00	
POCAHONTAS	Oct	4	16	56.00	
ROCKWELL CITY	Oct	4	35	70.00	
SPENCER	Jun	5	47	55.00	No Report
STORM LAKE	Oct	4	45	50.00	
SUMNER	Oct	4	22	76.00	
WATERLOO	Oct	4	192	52.36	
WATERLOO CROSSROADS	Oct	4	28	57.00	
WAVERLY	Oct	4	69	53.00	
WEBSTER CITY	Oct	4	56	73.00	
WEST UNION	Oct	3	30	75.00	
District 5970 Total			2931		
Average Monthly Attendance %				65.76	

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