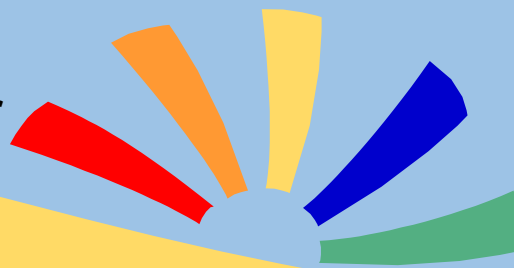


# LitRAG

## Literacy Rotarian Action Group Newsletter

March 2020



### ***The Free Reading Program with over 280,000 students enrolled***

*The Free Reading Program* is an online literacy resource that was created by Rotarians in the Rotary Club of Scarborough, Canada.

With over 5,000 students signing up for the program monthly since the project started in 2016, this resource is now the primary initiative of The Education & Community Learning Center (ECLC), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization created to bring the literacy missions of Rotary to students in need around the world through free, high-quality online programs.

In November 2019, for the fourth year in a row, the

Rotary Club of Nakhon Pathom led over 200 teachers in a full-day training to instruct them how to use *The Free Reading Program* in their classrooms.

**The board chair of ECLC and Rotarian Heather Lennie travelled to Thailand to participate in the event. She stated, *I am in awe at how this group of young Rotarians explained how to use the program for differing grade levels, creating a sustainable and engaging way for teachers with limited English training to create effective ESL lessons.***

To date, over 5,000 students have been impacted by this program through the teacher training in Thailand. Note the images above left and below to see how students are engaged in the program.

The Education & Community Learning Center is looking for Rotary Clubs who are interested in this project to get in touch to help support this initiative. Please contact [connect@edcomcenter.org](mailto:connect@edcomcenter.org) to learn more and visit their website: <https://edcomcenter.org/>

The Education & Community Center provides a sponsorship opportunity to Rotary Clubs that allows them to brand the online program with their own club logo and name. This unique ability has earned *The Free Reading Program* a Zone PR award and is an amazing way to increase your club's brand awareness while making a large impact in the Basic Education and Literacy focus area.





**Stand up and be counted – help us develop the joy and pleasures that reading and comprehension of text can bring to even very young children.**  
(Photo courtesy of [endeavour.sa.edu](http://endeavour.sa.edu))

## Calling LitRAG Members to Be Involved

LitRAG has nearly 200 members from all over the world. We are involved in educational projects in our own communities and internationally. There are many ways that members can be involved in our organization so that we can effectively support Rotarian efforts to improve access to and the quality of education.

We are looking for Rotarians to get involved in the following ways:

- ◆ Website content – reach out to members and clubs involved in literacy and education projects to share those projects through our website.
- ◆ Newsletter contributor – connect with members to obtain articles about literacy/education projects.
- ◆ Resource coordinator – assist in creating a database of members so that we can connect Rotarians with professional expertise to support clubs considering projects and grants.
- ◆ Membership management – assist in maintaining the database of members, connect with new members to welcome them to LitRAG and contact members when their membership is close to expiring.

If you are interested in assisting with any of these highly valued roles or for more information, please contact [info@litrag.org](mailto:info@litrag.org)

## Seeking Nominations for LitRAG Board

**Would you like to be more involved with LitRAG and become a valued Board Member or Officer?**

We are seeking nominations for new Board Members. Board members serve for a three-year term, with an option for renewal.



Officer positions are also open for nomination, including Vice Chair and Treasurer.

If you are interested, please provide information including:

- ◆ your name
- ◆ Rotary Club
- ◆ contact information (email), and
- ◆ country of residence (– we would like to have a board representing a broad geography of involvement).
- ◆ also include a short description of your professional background and involvement in Rotary literacy/education projects. Briefly share what you feel your involvement will bring to the board (– please be sure that your membership is current!). Please limit this narrative to 350 words.

Please send your information no later than 30 April to [info@litrag.org](mailto:info@litrag.org)

Nominations will be shared with the general membership via our newsletter in May. The new Board and officers will be notified and information shared with the membership at the Annual General Meeting (to be held electronically) in late June.





**HONOLULU  
HAWAII 2020**

## Join LitRAG in Honolulu

The RI Convention is a great opportunity to network, meet fellow Rotarians with common interests and learn how to get involved in projects. For LitRAG members and Rotarians with a

passion for education and literacy, the 2020 Convention will offer several options to do just that!

**House of Friendship** - come by the LitRAG Booth (booth number 727, in Kalakaua Ballroom).

Information about projects will be featured. We would love to feature your club's literacy/education project! Contact LitRAG Vice Chair **Carolyn Johnson** [cfj2@mac.com](mailto:cfj2@mac.com) for more information. Note that because of space limitations, handouts and space, only projects of current LitRAG members can be accommodated. A representative for your project must be available to assist at the booth during the convention.

**Breakout session - Educating Girls: A Long-Range Community Investment Tuesday, 9 June 2020 from 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm.** Hawaii Convention Center in room 314. An international panel of Rotarians will discuss:

- Why is girls' education a game changer for our global society?
- Why, despite this, does educating girls remain a chronic issue?
- What are proven, effective practices which work: what projects can we replicate?
- How can one scale up through Rotary?

**Breakout session - Technology in Education: Help or Hindrance? Wednesday, 10 June 2020 from 10:30 pm – 12:00 pm.** Hawaii Convention Center in room 311. Program description: The world becomes more technological every day, however, the way we utilize technology in the classroom varies greatly and impacts project success. Join us as we explore technology and the role it plays in education. During this session, we will provide you with the data on technology in education, best practices on successfully incorporating technology into your BEL project and expert Rotarian feedback to help guide you in your project planning.

Booth sign up: Information and a sign-up list will be sent separately. Consider taking a shift helping with our booth – it's fun and truly enjoyable way to meet Rotarians!

We do **not** anticipate holding the **LitRAG Annual Meeting** at the Convention this year, due to limited availability of meeting space and because this format limits participation to those attending the convention. An announcement and information will be provided regarding an electronic meeting format.

## WaSH in Schools: Partnering Water/Sanitation with Education A Call for Action

Rotary International issued a challenge to Rotarians asking them to improve education quality and access by helping to improve schools by integrating water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) with basic education and literacy. When a community's lack of access to safe water and sanitation coincides with an inability to provide quality education, the impact on health and the opportunities for its children is adverse and long-term.

In response, Rotary's goal is to provide investments in infrastructure such as toilet blocks and hand-washing stations AND to help teachers build capacity by becoming more effective in incorporating hygiene lessons within the curriculum. By integrating two areas of focus, water/sanitation with basic education, we aspire to establish integrated, interactive learning environments that truly enable students to internalize good hygiene practices, elevating classroom lessons to daily practice and advocacy for their families and communities.

Our colleagues in WaSHRAG (Water/Sanitation/Hygiene Rotarian Action Group) are doing incredible work to improve the infrastructure of schools. Here's where LitRAG members can be value added to these projects:

We'd like to form a task force to create a library of resources for WaSH in Schools projects. There are many opportunities, but I suggest that we begin by creating a bibliography of age- and culturally-appropriate children's literature: picture books for young learners to non-fiction literature for upper-primary and secondary students. It will also be important to indicate the languages in which each book is available. Along with titles, we would want to create sample lessons to help teachers use the resources effectively with students.

Many teachers in developing countries have never used, nor have had access to children's literature in their classroom, so offering guidance on effective use of these resources is essential. Once the resource is available, we will make it available to Rotarians to include when developing WaSH in Schools projects. What an opportunity for LitRAG to be involved, as educators, in future WaSH projects!

If you are interested in being involved in a task force to develop this resource, please contact me directly ([cfj2@icloud.com](mailto:cfj2@icloud.com)). We will organize a conference call to decide how to move forward and make this valuable resource a reality. Thanks, in advance, for helping to make this valuable resource a reality.

**Carolyn Johnson**  
WaSH in Schools  
Target Challenge  
Committee





## Rotary SAARC Gopal Kamala Raj Bhandari Humanity Award for Literacy 2020

by Chair: PDG Dr Bal Inamdar

Rotary has organized a **Rotary SAARC Gopal Kamala Raj Bhandari Humanity Award for Literacy** which will recognize one selfless individual or organization working in the field of **“Basic Education and Literacy”**. **The cash award will be for US\$15,000 only**. The award and citation will be given on 16 May 2020 at Kathmandu, Nepal.

**At the behest of RI District 3292, the Rotary SAARC Gopal Kamala Raj Bhandari Humanity Award has been instituted.** The

Award is named after Rotarian Gopal Raj Bhandari and Kamala Raj Bhandari. The Raj Bhandari family has graciously agreed to contribute the prize money for this award.

The Award will be given every two years in different areas of focus. In this first year, the award will be given in the field of **“Basic Education and Literacy”**. The main objective of this Award is to recognize a person or organization among the SAARC countries for outstanding service extended to the community or society at large, in a selfless and dedicated manner, in the true spirit of the Rotary's motto of **'Service Above Self'**.

The final awardee winner will be **selected through a stringent three-step process**:

1. Sub-jury within each country will select 10 applicants out of all applications based on their work.
2. Online country-specific voting to select three applicants out of the 10 for final round.
3. International Jury (not from any of the SAARC countries) will select the final winner based on their work.

On the basis of the above, Rotary is inviting applications from worthy individuals or organizations working in the field of **Basic Education and Literacy**.

### Instructions for completing in the application form:

- 1) Applications must be submitted online only. The website link is: <http://rotarysaarcgopalkamalahumanityaward.com.np/home/>
- 2) Choose correct country to apply.
- 3) Applications close on **23 March 2020**.
- 4) Tax implication (if any) of cash award shall be borne by the recipient.
- 5) Eligibility criteria:
  - a. Could be an individual or an organization.
  - b. Work should be directly related to Basic Education and Literacy – awareness/sensitization/direct contribution/significant change, etc.
  - c. Should be currently active and or involved in this field.
  - d. Work should have been consistent over the period of last five years.
  - e. Should have not received any major State/National/International recognitions or awards.
  - f. Should have substantial visible social impact.
  - g. Work must be national. Additionally, work could be international.
  - h. Should not be a member of Rotary/Inner Wheel Club or blood relative of any Rotary/Rotaract/Inner Wheel member.
  - i. In case of an organization, any member of the Governing Board should not be a member of any Rotary/Rotaract/Inner Wheel Club.

Rotary SAARC GOPAL KAMALA RAJ BHANDARI HUMANITY AWARD

**ROTARY SAARC GOPAL KAMALA RAJ BHANDARI HUMANITY AWARD 2020**  
THEME: BASIC EDUCATION & LITERACY

WINNER FROM ONE OF THE SAARC COUNTRIES  
WILL GET AWARD OF US\$15,000

APPLICATIONS INVITED FROM SAARC COUNTRIES  
INDIA, NEPAL, PAKISTAN, BANGLADESH,  
SRI LANKA, BHUTAN and MALDIVES

visit  
[www.rotarysaarcgopalkamalahumanityaward.com](http://www.rotarysaarcgopalkamalahumanityaward.com)

**LAST DATE 23.03.2020**



## LitRAG Members Featured at International Women's Day

Rotary partnered with the World Bank to celebrate International Women's Day. This year's theme, Equality for Education, reinforced Rotary's commitment to improving opportunity for basic education and literacy. **Rotarians (and LitRAG members) Brenda Erickson, Carolyn Johnson and TRF Trustee-elect Geeta Manek** (pictured left) were invited to address the Bank and share their stories of how Rotarians are making a difference to improve access to quality education.

Hosted by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) <https://www.globalpartnership.org/>, this Women's Day program highlighted challenges and successes regarding education today – particularly as it relates to girls and women – and the role Rotary and GPE play as catalysts to creating opportunities and improving education at local, regional and national levels. Rotary and GPE share a commitment to advancing opportunities and access to

education and economic empowerment. This event reinforced GPE's support and investment in girls' education across almost 70 developing partner countries and the basic education and literacy by highlighting projects of women Rotarians who have long been leaders and change agents in communities across the globe.

Alice Albright, CEO of the Global Partnership for Education, spoke to GPE's goal to strengthen the capacity of communities to support basic education and literacy, reduce gender disparity in education, and support education for all children and literacy for children and adults. Ms Albright shared a global perspective on the status of basic education and literacy, particularly as it relates to educating girls and women. She emphasized the growing GPE-Rotary strategic partnership.

Rotarians described how, through Rotary, each of us are *People of Action* who create positive, lasting change in education not only in their own communities – but in places across the globe.

**Geeta Manek** explained how Rotarians are taking the long-term view in Kenya by working with local communities and governments to improve access to school. Rotarians collaborate with local communities to identify specific needs, assist to improve school infrastructure (particularly in rural communities) and improve the quality of teacher preparation and classroom instruction.

**Brenda Erickson** described how, through Rotary, she developed and implemented SOUNDS, a Montessori-minded early literacy program that teaches the fundamental tools of print. It is an easy-to-implement, low-cost and effective approach to developing early literacy skills and the fundamentals of print in young children in the child's mother tongue. SOUNDS has been introduced to pre-schools in South Africa, Puerto Rico and disadvantaged areas of the US.

**Carolyn Johnson** described the Culture of Reading Program (CORP), an approach to developing and supporting quality literacy instruction in developing countries. CORP's primary goal is to develop a love of reading within primary school students by introducing quality children's literature to classrooms. By engaging children in literature, providing a straightforward and engaging classroom process and reinforcing new skills through ongoing in-class support to teach literacy every day, CORP has a strong record of improving literacy scores for students in rural, indigenous schools in Guatemala.

Hosted by Rotarians of Bethesda Metro and accompanied by Rotary's BEL Area of Focus Manager, Mary Jo Jean Francois and RI Manager of External Relations, Jane Lawicki, this International Women's Day event demonstrated the impact and enhancement of projects through of partnerships between Rotary and other organizations.

INTERNATIONAL  
**Women's Day 2020**

**EQUALITY FOR EDUCATION**  
**6 March 2020**  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
World Bank Headquarters  
1818 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C.  
**RSVP by 1 March. Space is limited.**

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP  
for EDUCATION

Rotary

## Reflections from LitRAG Chairman John Thorne

Last week my wife, Shirley and I attended a very pleasant evening called, "Science in the Pub". Four young students studying for their PhD's at our local university spoke about their diverse research. They came from Kenya, India, Guatemala and Fiji. Each of their scholarships had included provision for them to visit their home country to visit local institutions there. That in itself was quite an innovation in my view.

The big lesson brought to me, however, was that each of these young women also visited their primary school and interacted with young students. Many of those children knew the young women and their families and had wondered just what they were doing and where were they now. In each case, there was "wonder" from the young children and what was being achieved by someone they knew who, only a few short years ago, had sat in that same room or at that desk.

YES - we do focus on 'methods' in teaching in basic education but local role models can be just as powerful motivation to continue the learning.

This led me to consider older students in a school situation working with/mentoring younger ones who might need a little more help. Firstly, the adult (teacher or parent) needs to trust that this might work and, in addition, give encouragement and a little training to the mentor.

A well respected charitable organisation in Australia, **The Smith Family**, has a basic education and literacy arm as: "Research identifies a clear link between the development of cognitive skills such as literacy and numeracy at an early age and higher levels of education achievement, greater employability, higher earnings and greater social participation."



The Smith Family has developed a "student2student" program which has proven to be highly effective. In brief, it involves three arms:

- ◆ simple assessment
- ◆ allocation of "reading buddies" where the older child is about two years in advance of his/her assigned buddy, and



"To be able to sit there and not be judged for her reading, I think that's the biggest thing. Her buddy doesn't rush her."

— Michele, Tishah's mum, on the student2student program

- ◆ volunteer supervisors who support and monitor about ten 'buddy' sets.

Many reports world-wide support the notion of "seeing is believing" with regard to reading. Actually seeing adults reading and enjoying books is motivational in encouraging readers. Children also enjoy the opportunity to have a diverse range of book subjects to choose from. In addition, beginning readers enjoy listening to others read and being able to ask questions about the story. In a recent study, 91% of the children said, "My favorite book is the one I choose myself."

If I could return to the young scientists I first mentioned - Mercy, Stephy, Gabriela and Abigail - each one of them (without prompting) mentioned one person who had been a very strong influence in them continuing their education - a mother, a friend or a teacher. Relationships do make a significant difference.

## LitRAG Office Bearers

### LitRAG Executive Committee:

- Chair: John Thorne, PRID (Australia)
- Vice Chair: Carolyn Johnson, PDG (USA)
- Secretary: Courtney Doldron, Pres. (Canada)
- Treasurer: Harvey Baxter, Rotarian (USA)

### LitRAG Directors:

- Rodolfo Bianchi, PDG (Guatemala)
- Sylvia Byers, PDG (Australia)
- Chebab Elawar, PDG (USA)
- David Fowler, Past President RIBI (England)
- Shekhar Mehta, PRID (India)
- Anand Seth, Rotarian (USA)
- Courtney Doldron, Rotarian (Canada)

### LitRAG Advisors to the Board:

- Bill Boyd, Past RI President (New Zealand)
- Noraseth Pathmanand, PRID (Thailand)
- William Stumbaugh, Rotarian (Ecuador)

Website: [www.litrag.org](http://www.litrag.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Reading.Rotary/>

Contact John Thorne or Carolyn Johnson:  
[info@litrag.org](mailto:info@litrag.org)

**The Literacy Rotarian Action Group** is a recognised Rotarian Action Group and operates in accordance with Rotary International Policy but is not an agency of or controlled by Rotary International. Note: Rotarian Action Groups are a resource to Rotary clubs and districts in their speciality but are not an agency of RI and may not act on behalf of RI as part of all agreements.