

Rotary District reflects on million-dollar success, impact of ?Million Dollar Gala?

By Kathryn Fraser

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On May 22, Rotary District 7080 held its ?Unite for Good? Million Dollar Gala at the home of the RBC Canadian Open, Osprey Valley Golf Club in Caledon.

Not only was this gala a success, but it marked a landmark achievement for Rotary District 7080.

The Gala marked the end of the district's million-dollar campaign to raise funds for The Rotary Foundation Canada, and was aimed to secure long-term resources for the foundation.

The intimate event hosted 63 guests with special notable appearances, one being the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health of Ontario, Sylvia Jones, MPP for Dufferin-Caledon, who delivered the opening remarks of the night.

In her remarks, Minister Jones highlighted her family's involvement with the Rotary and all the success the company has had over the years.

Keynote speaker Jennifer Jones delivered a deeply moving speech about experiencing a polio project that had taken place in Pakistan. She expressed her goal for the trip was to meet with healthcare workers on the frontlines and offer her thanks.

Jones explained that tens of thousands of females and some male frontline healthcare workers go door to door to administer polio vaccines every day to make sure that no child is forgotten and receives proper treatment, and that they deserved some thanks for all their hard work.

In her address, Jones told the audience, ?That moment is why I do what I do, so that no more children will have to suffer from this preventable disease?.

Another noted speaker at this event was Event Chair and District Endowment and Major Gifts Chair Richard Delongte, who reflected on his personal journey and recalled his younger days as a firefighter helping in New York City during the 9/11 attacks.

Delongte explained his assistance in responding to these attacks led to his being exposed to toxic smoke and dust at Ground Zero, which eventually caused him to be diagnosed with two separate cancers and a need for a liver transplant.

He then explained to the audience that his journey through all these experiences became the driving force behind his motivation to give back to the Rotary Foundation.

Both Delongte and his wife, the former District Governor of 7080 Susanne Zbinden, are both deeply dedicated to The Rotary Foundation and are amongst the major donors for the charity.

Many of the attendees of the event were also major donors or Bequest Society members and Rotary leaders, all who generously contributed to helping to raise a total of \$1,414,828 CAD at the Bank of Canada rate on that day for The Rotary Foundation.

All funds raised from the event will go towards local initiatives in District 7080 and global initiatives for the Rotary Fund focusing on areas including peacebuilding, health, education and economic development.

Being one of the biggest top ranked charities in the world, the Rotary Foundation has roughly 1.2 million volunteers worldwide with

many other partnerships. The Rotary Foundation's partnership with the Global Polio Initiative has helped to vaccinate nearly 3 billion children and has protected about 22 million children from suffering lifelong paralysis caused by polio.

In addition to its many partnerships, District 7080 also has several different district grant projects and global grants projects for a variety of communities. Some of these include installing a peace pole in a Mississauga community park, refurbishing a food pack room in Bangladesh etc.

Highlighted global grant programs included Water First program, which trains indigenous youth in Northern Ontario as certified water operators and water quality analysts, installing solar power clean water systems for secondary and primary schools in Kenya and the Heart2Heart Pediatric Care Project in Egypt which completes non-invasive cardiac procedures on infants.

By having projects such as these it shows how dedicated The Rotary Foundation is to create change both and how much long-lasting change, they have accomplished in their community and for other communities across the globe as well.

?This evening was a powerful celebration of what happens when Rotarians unite with purpose,? says Richard Delongte in a statement. ?The generosity shown by our members and partners ensures that the promise of Rotary will continue to grow for generations to come.?