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***Improving the quality of life of elder  
citizens in Broward, Miami-Dade and  
Monroe Counties***

**September 2005**

### **Project Planning Assistance**

I have received phone calls from a few clubs in recent weeks requesting assistance in the form of professional direction as the members of those clubs grapple with how to develop a Rotary Elder Program project. This isn't surprising since it is very early in the new Rotary Year and clubs are putting together their concepts which will turn into projects as the year progresses.

In addition to the knowledge that I have acquired in the three years that the Rotary Elder Program has been in existence I have amassed a cadre of social service agencies and other professional organizations who's purpose it is to serve the needs of elder citizens in South Florida and the Florida Keys.

If your club has questions regarding what to do, or how to do it, please let me put you in touch with the right people that can guide you through the development phase of a project. I will make myself available, as well, to meet with the REP committee in your club so that the project can come together more quickly. After all, there is a whole lot of need out there right now. The faster that volunteers can come to the assistance of area elders, the better.

Along those same lines I would like to expand upon the project planning suggestions that were included in last month's newsletter by categorizing the two broad types of projects that exist.

*Note: If you missed the August newsletter, by the way, it is on the Rotary Elder Program website, [www.RotaryElderProgram.org](http://www.RotaryElderProgram.org), along with an archive of every single issue since the debut of the program in Rotary Year 2002-2003.*

Projects typically fall into one of two types: home repair or wellness.

Home repair projects are highly gratifying efforts in that a tremendous impact is made upon the life of a senior citizen or, perhaps, a couple. These people have, historically, lived in the home needed repair for decades. Time has taken its toll on the physical structure and, due to financial constraints, the homeowner cannot afford to continue to maintain the home. Club members always enjoy showing up on a weekend and transforming a house before the very eyes of the homeowner. It often creates a bond between the homeowner and the club members that lasts. Project development assistance is provided through agencies such as Rebuilding Together, Habitat for Humanity or The Urban League—depending upon which county your club is in.

Wellness projects make up the other side of the project equation. The very word "wellness", particularly as it relates to elders, refers to the effort to keep these members of our communities in good health by providing a wide variety of service projects. Here, only one's imagination limits what can be undertaken by clubs. Health fairs, social events for isolated elders, PC and Internet training as well as the many types of inter-generational opportunities that were detailed last month are all examples of wellness projects. Distribution of medical information emergency kits, of course, falls into this category as well.

The point is that, for any Rotary club, there is a project opportunity that can benefit the elder members of the community which your club seeks to serve. Please give serious thought to what might best fit the interests of your club members and, more importantly, the *needs* of the senior citizens that are right there where you work and live.

### **Statistically Speaking**

The Florida Department of Elder Affairs, the arm of state government charged with providing services for the vast numbers of seniors in the state, maintains statistics on elder population in order for the agency to allocate funds, plan for the future and, in general, administer the array of programs and projects aimed at creating a better life for Florida's seniors.

The numbers roll out once a year. A comparison of the 2004 figures to those from just a year earlier, 2003, reinforces the projections that have been heralding the next big boom: that of a rapid demographic shift in the state which is leading the entire nation.

In Broward County, for example, overall population grew in one year by 2.5%. The percentage of elders, however, in the county grew by 3.4%.

In Miami-Dade County the total population in-

crease was 3.3% while the elder population increased by 4.1%.

Monroe County, where the overall population decreased year over year, by 1.1% the elder population actually increased by 0.8%.

I put these numbers before you to remind you that the elder segment of society in Florida is a very significant percentage of the total: 19% in 2002, 23% in 2003 and nearly 25% in 2004. The projection for 2015: 35 to 40 percent of the total population in Florida will be considered "Older Americans".

When considering Community Service as one of the Four Avenues of Service within Rotary International this must have an impact on your considerations for community service projects.

### **September = Storm Threat**

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina's push across the Bahamas and Florida, en route to a date with devastation in the Central Gulf region, the clean-up began in earnest in this area.

Therese Homer, president of the Rotary Club of Opa-locka and a commander in the Opa-locka Police Department, stopped by the Archbishop McCarthy residence, a 120 bed retirement center that has been the site of numerous Rotary Elder Program projects.

Finding the residents there without electricity or water, Rotarian Therese summoned the fire department and utilities, then stayed on-site until she was assured that all residents were accounted for and that all medical needs were tended to.

Please follow this example and look after the elders in your community when the next big storm heads our way. Often forgotten, and needing special assistance, these elders need to know that Rotarians, and the Rotary Elder Program will be "on the case".

People, and Rotarians in particular, are a giving bunch.

I feel it important, however, to make sure that people, either as individuals or as the decision maker for a corporation, know what their hard-earned money is going for so that there is no question about why one should consider making a gift to the District 6990 Rotary Elder Program.

In this month's money segment I will give a few examples of how a donation would be put to work to benefit the elder citizens of South Florida and the Florida Keys.

A \$500 gift to the program would, for example, provide matching funds to a Rotary club that is conducting a project at a senior retirement center or assisted living facility. These types of projects, always popular around the holidays, generally provide for anywhere from 80 to 120 elders. In addition to holiday fare, to be served by the Rotarian volunteers, this provides for a modest gift for each attendee and usually allows for the cost of entertainment; a middle school or high school jazz band or other such low-cost group.

The same \$500 can provide, again, match funding to a Rotary club that will then place a PC at a retirement center and then, on an ongoing basis, offer training to the residents on basic computer skills including accessing the Internet. This educational project model is useful in teaching isolated elders a cost effi-

cient means of staying in touch with distant relatives through email and instant messaging.

\$2,500 would enable a match to a Rotary club to repair the home of an elder person or elder couple. Rotarian volunteers would assess the needs, in partnership with a professional agency, and then paint, landscape and fix up

the property. Cabinet replacement and door modifications can also be achieved for this level of support.

\$30,000 would enable the fabrication and distribution of 50,000 medical information emergency kits, the lifesaving little card in a plastic pouch that goes on the

refrigerator of an elder resident for usage by crews during a medical emergency.

All such gifts are, of course, tax deductible. Contact Jack Martin or Lisa Jeffery to discuss your personal interests in giving so that the right project will benefit from your generosity. Please print and share this page with non-Rotarian colleagues and friends. Your consideration of our request is greatly appreciated — and your help is greatly needed.

*District 6990 Rotary Elder Program, Inc. (REPCO) recognizes the priority that is placed upon a Rotarian's responsibility to The Rotary Foundation and the "Every Rotarian Every Year", or "EREY" initiative. Rotarians that choose to give to REPCO should only do so once The Rotary Foundation has been properly acknowledged.*



## MONEY