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

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The "Win-Win": Intergenerational Projects

Not many Rotary Elder Program projects can touch so many people as those involving both older members of a community and children.

There are a variety of benefits realized when such a pairing takes place.

For example, active seniors realize that they are still valuable contributors to society. A mentoring project such as the one pictured here involves senior volunteers that engage in after school reading programs at area schools. It provides an educational benefit to the students and creates a safe environment for the children who might otherwise be engaging in unsupervised activities.

For middle school and high school aged children there is no better mentoring opportunity than Take Stock in Children, the statewide initiative that seeks to provide low-income youth with the



opportunity to receive a four year college scholarship. A major component of the student's years of preparation, starting in the seventh grade, is a weekly meeting with a mentor at the school. In many cases deserving students are unable to participate in Take Stock in Children because of a lack of mentors. Healthy seniors in your community are ready-made for this role but need the assistance of Rotary clubs in learning about the program and in getting involved.

Of course, intergenerational projects can go the other way, too. Interact clubs have, on occasion, "adopted" a retirement center or assisted living facility and visited the residents multiple

times over the course of a school year. The assistance of your Rotary club in providing funding to the Interact club for such a project and in providing volunteers to accompany the Interact club members on the day of a project is an instant hit! Remember that your club can request matching funds from the Rotary Elder Program for this.

Projects Update

A hurricane named Wilma may have delayed the **Rotary Club of Opa-locka** in conducting a health fair for area seniors but it didn't make the event, which was performed last month, any less of a success.

Over a dozen health care providers set up screening sites at the Archbishop McCarthy Senior Housing Complex and well over one hundred residents and neighboring elder citizens took advantage of the opportunity to have a wide variety of medical checks performed.

The **Rotary Club of Fort Lauderdale-North** is continuing their efforts to distribute medical information emergency kits. For quite some time the club had used "File of Life" kits but a grant to the Rotary Elder Program from Fort Lauderdale Fire-Rescue has enabled this first use of the larger kit in Broward County. Captain Chantal Botting of the city's fire--rescue department will be making a presentation at the club in the near future.

Continuing well into their third year of producing monthly wellness programs, the **Rotary Club of Hialeah-Miami Springs** just keeps rolling on. Themes for recent gatherings, which always draw 120—150 area seniors, have ranged from the patriotic to "go Hawaiian". The annual outing to enjoy the Fleet Week Air & Sea Show will be coming up soon.

In a very special display of caring for area seniors the **Rotary Club of Fort Lauderdale** recently distributed 500 gift bags to residents at the many assisted living facilities that operate out of residential areas throughout the city. This one-on-one approach is a classic example of a Rotary Elder Program project. The gift bags each contained toiletry items and other necessities that those living on a fixed income sometimes struggle to obtain on their own.

Congratulations to all four clubs for a job well done!

Mayor's Initiative on Aging

The months of planning are complete and now the year-long project personally conceived by Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Alvarez is off and running. A press event in January was followed by a training event in February for emergency responders, educating them on the particular needs of seniors in emergency situations. The Rotary Elder Program's medical information emergency kit was on prominent display at this session.

Next up is a certified training program for all healthcare disciplines at FIU. Later in the spring the initiative will move into the many communities of Miami-Dade County with area health fairs. Rotarians will be asked to assist at those events with registration tasks and in material distribution.

Glaucoma in At-Risk Populations

Glaucoma is a largely preventable disease but is prevalent in aging populations due to the lack of proper screening and follow-up treatment. Sadly, many seniors learn too late that they are impacted by Glaucoma and spend a large part of the Third Age of Life sightless, or nearly so, when a simple five minute test could have detected the problem.

Particularly vulnerable are Black ethnic groups. This population group is nine times more likely to contract Glaucoma than Caucasians. South Florida's Haitian population tops the list of at-risk groups, followed by other Caribbean nationalities.

The Rotary Elder Program is working with the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine and the school's Department of Community Service, or DOCS, to create more projects for such screenings. Please contact me so that I can add your club to those who are participating in this sight-saving project.

Donors Forum of South Florida is a nonprofit regional membership association comprised of private and public funders that support nonprofits from Palm Beach County to Monroe County.

For the past several months the Rotary Elder Program has been working closely with Donors Forum to raise awareness in the funding community on the coming demographic shift that will nearly double the number of elder citizens in Florida and create greater pressures on the "aging network", those agencies that seek to provide support to this population group.

Donors Forum CEO Scot Marken envisions an "affinity group" of donors that will then provide financial support to these agencies. Pam Gionfriddo is the Program Director of "EngAGEMENT", Donors Forum's outreach effort to educate its members and stimulate philanthropic awareness.

Mr. Marken is to be commended for his efforts. He follows in the path of Kirk Landon, who saw this need in the spring of 2002 and created the Rotary Elder Program by making a major gift to Rotary International District 6990.

Both individuals recognized the needs of the aging population and the lack of support that this group currently nets.

The Rotary Elder Program depends upon the

gifts of community-minded individuals to continue the work that has been done for the past three years. Failure to secure funding over the coming months will spell an end to the Rotary Elder Program and cause a cessation of matching grant support as well as the end of such projects as the medical information emergency kit distribution effort.

Please consider this a personal appeal to you to assist the program, either through direct contribution or by sharing this with someone that you know, an individual or a corporate entity, who recognizes the importance of maintaining the

safety net of support for South Florida's large aging population.

I am personally available to meet with any and all who share the program's vision and goal of a more world class community for our seniors.

The boom is just around the corner, as was reported just last month in this newsletter. It is our responsibility to look after the wellbeing of our communities, and the individuals that populate the big cities and small towns from North Broward County to the Southernmost Point in Key West.

Please consider a tax-deductible gift to the Rotary Elder Program. On behalf of the 800,000 seniors in the communities of our Rotary District, soon to be closer to 1.4 million seniors, I thank you.

