



Jack Martin
President
District 6990 Rotary Elder Program, Inc.
4000 Ponce de Leon Boulevard
Suite 470
Coral Gables, Florida 33146

Telephone: 305-865-0747
Fax: 786-513-0253
Email: jmartin@rotaryelderprogram.org

www.RotaryElderProgram.org

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

September 2006

The Sandwich Generation

Since the Rotary Elder Program's early days, back in Rotary year 2002-2003, one of the messages that I have carried to Rotary clubs is that of the evolution of the Baby Boomers into that of the "sandwich generation", a demographic in which adults in their 40's and early 50's are still consumed with the responsibilities of raising children—or getting them out and on their own—all the while facing the opposite challenge of coping with the issues relative to aging parents. These "bookend" issues pose new questions, some without answers, yet.

I don't have hard data statistics to back up my personal belief, instead just the daily conversations with colleagues, friends and acquaintances. But those conversations and email messages are indicators to me, as someone whose work focuses on aging issues, that the prediction of a growing sandwich generation is doing just that: growing.

At least three or four times per week I now hear from others, frequently for the first time, that a large part of a person's formerly free time is now being spent on a cadre of responsibilities having to do with caring for one's parents who can no longer fully care for themselves.

Soccer moms and golf dads are now learning the new tasks of scheduling doctors appointments—not with the pediatrician but with the cardiologist, orthopedic surgeon or oncologist—and are learning the ropes as it relates to adult day care, home health care, reverse mortgages and assisted living facilities.

As I have said in many a presentation to Rotarians and others, science, medicine, technology and simple awareness of what is good for us has created a lifespan never before seen on this earth. People are living longer. From a purely societal standpoint, however, they aren't necessarily living better.

Generation "X", which follows the Baby Boomers is a much, much smaller group. Over the next twenty years there will be such a drop in those in their 30's and 40's and such a rapid increase in higher age groups that it will impact every facet of life. By 2030 and beyond as Generation Y and the Millennium Generation approach middle age the pendulum will swing back since the latter two generations exist in much larger numbers.

Now is the time for Rotary clubs to realize that it is incumbent upon them to realize the importance of this shift and embrace the social change. Know

that communities will be seeking support for projects that benefit elder citizens.

As plans for this Rotary year crystallize over the coming weeks please do your part in your city or town to include support for the entire community, including those considered to be in the third age of life. You'll be doing the right thing and those that you reach out to will quietly thank you for the good work that you do.

Storm Assistance

Last month Tropical Storm Ernesto served as a dress rehearsal for what might still come during this hurricane season. September marks the peak month of storm activity from a historical standpoint.

During any storm some of the most vulnerable are the elderly. These, generally, are also the last people to ask for assistance. In the aftermath of Hurricane Charley in 2004, on Florida's Gulf Coast, seniors were found in their homes more than a week following the storm's passing without food or water and in horrible living conditions. Elderly couples were attempting, and failing, to take care of each other.

In the wake of any storm Rotarians want to know who they can help. Consider those in your own immediate neighborhood who might need help cleaning up their yard or taking down storm shutters. I would wager that, within a quarter mile radius of where you live there are people that find the tasks associated with pre-storm preparation and post-storm cleanup to be daunting if not impossible chores. But, more than not these members of the "Greatest Generation" will be the last to ask for help. Beat them to it by offering help before the storm arrives or immediately after. You'll not just be doing something nice for a

neighbor, you might just be saving a life.

Grandparents Month

September, nationally, is considered Grandparents month. Consider a small project, perhaps in partnership with the Interact, Youthact or Rotakids club that is sponsored by your Rotary club, that would benefit a small group of elder citizens. Think about visiting a local senior center or adult day care center . . . even if it's only for a couple of hours. Not only will you be building goodwill and honoring those a generation or more ahead of the average Rotarian you'll be instilling the Family of Rotary spirit in your community.

If you're not sure where to start just call or email me for assistance.

Holiday Planning

Please include the Rotary Elder Program—and service projects for the elders in your community—as your club assembles plans for the upcoming holiday season. South Florida's high percentage of elders in the overall population has a correspondingly high percentage of those over 65 living alone. Broward County is the highest of the three counties in Florida served by this Rotary district but all three have very significant single resident populations. Many of these individuals will go through the season, more times than not, with the television for companionship. That's no way to spend the holidays—or one's life.

Include those who are alone in the Family of Rotary and you'll be making a vast improvement in the lives of many. Not only that, you'll be making your community a better place simply by sharing.

