

## Rotary Star – December 22, 2005

Christmas carols opened the meeting of the Boothbay Harbor Rotary Club on Thursday, December 22, with members, guests and children gathered around the piano to sing the old favorites to the accompaniment of Viv Daniels. A picnic-style supper featuring franks, cheeseburgers and potato salad followed, after which the group set off in vans (generously provided by the YMCA) for some old-fashioned caroling at the hospital and St. Andrews Village. The event drew favorable reviews from participants and listeners alike.

The approach of the new year is a traditional time to look back on the past twelve months. And as we do so, we can take pride in our club's accomplishments in 2005.

The year hadn't even begun when the Southeast Asian tsunami hit: We "passed the hat" early in January and in short order raised \$2,100 for tsunami relief. This is in addition to our average contribution of just over \$200 per member to the Rotary Foundation last year, making us the club with the third-highest per capita giving in the District.

But international giving means more than writing checks: Last year's Club president Mike Thompson traveled to Uganda this fall to help build new homes for Watoto orphans; we sent him off with good wishes and \$2,500 in building funds. Earlier in 2005, three of our members spent a week volunteering at Safe Passage, the Guatemala City educational support program. While they were in Central America they went shopping for the 15-passenger van sponsored by our club with additional funding from three other Midcoast Rotary Clubs and a matching grant from the Rotary Foundation.

We hosted the Friends Forever youth, visiting here in the Boothbay Region from Northern Ireland. Mike Lorrain put them through their paces at the Y ropes course; they exchanged opinions with our own Interact youth from BRHS and enjoyed home-stay dinners with us, and we continued our financial support of the program.

We also provided funding for Rotoplast, the Rotary International program that gives new hope for children born with cleft palate/cleft lip deformities, and we donated to the Rotary District 7780 Aids project.

Despite our international activities, we believe that supporting our area youth is our most important goal. That's why we contribute substantially to the Student Aid Fund (which our Rotary Club was instrumental in starting several generations ago). This year, in addition, we once again presented a scholarship to a deserving BRHS senior.

Also in 2005, we provided funding to help six local teenagers attend academic and athletic programs as far afield as Australia and Bermuda as well as in Florida, Washington DC, and New Jersey. And we have put our muscles to work as well as our monies: Although construction has been stymied by bad weather (lots of it!), the outdoor stage at Camp Knickerbocker is slowly taking shape. And despite a snow-out, under I.J. Pinkham's leadership we again provided refreshments, timekeepers and general support for the coed Basketball Tournament.

Our elders are pretty special people, also. That's why we provided financial assistance to Rebuilding Together and worked hard to remember our Rotary widows. It's also why we annually remember one senior for his/her Lifetime Achievement on the peninsula. This year we honored the incomparable Chetley Rittall, just weeks before his death touched us all.

As in past years, our Home Town Heroes night at Spruce Point Inn in September gave us the opportunity to express our gratitude to the emergency service personnel who stand always ready to help in times of crisis in our community.

And our commitment to Regional arts programs continues. We sponsored the Bowl Supper with all proceeds going to the Watershed Center in Edgecomb, and we provided financial assistance to the Boothbay Region Arts Foundation.

The year ended much as it had begun: With us thinking about our neighbors made homeless by nature's fury. In September we again "passed the hat" to provide support for Katrina victims and raised another \$2,200; in December we helped fill not one but two duffel bags with Christmas toys and gift certificates for volunteer Marty Peak Helman to take with her to children and young adults currently living in a New Orleans shelter.

We don't mind if you know us for the citrus fruit and Vidalia onions we sell, for our fundraising Bowl Supper and Golf Tournament and, most especially, our August Auction and Flea Market. We don't mind because, thanks to your generosity and participation in these activities, we raise around \$30,000 each year, most of which comes back to the community but which also goes out to our neighbors around the world.

The program at the December 29 meeting will feature Katelyn Brewer, who will tell us about Eau Sans Frontières, an international effort to provide clean water to Africa that is supported by Rotary in France. While at Boothbay Region High School Katelyn was a leader in Rotaract, the Rotary-sponsored service club there. She has been studying in Paris and was then awarded an internship at Eau Sans Frontières. Brenda Blackman will act as greeter for the meeting and offer the invocation; waiters will be Bob Jacobson and Seth Hedgcock.