

World Wide Literacy Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 8

March, 2010

Special points of interest:

- Literacy Award Information
- Character Literacy

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From the Desk of Roger Hayward–North American Area Coordinator

LITERACY and EDUCATION: WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

March is Literacy Month in the Rotary world. It is also the beginning of the 2 to 4 month period during which districts and clubs plan for the new Rotary year. Put the two together and it's clear that next year's club and district teams should do some serious literacy project planning this month.

If you are the current DGE—Your role is to make your DGE aware of the opportunities and the options.

If you are the DGE—Your role is to make your ADGs and club presidents-elect aware of the opportunities and options. You might also consider setting a district literacy goal such as 100 % of the clubs doing a Dictionary Project.

If you are the current ADG—Your role is to make your club presidents-elect aware of the opportunities and options.

If you are the current club president—Your role is to encourage your club president-elect to start planning. Perhaps you could provide advice regarding which club members would be ideal to head up specific club literacy projects. Or, perhaps you could ask all club members to review the literacy project opportunities and volunteer to join whichever ones excite them.

Spend three minutes at some point each week in March as part of your regular Rotary meeting to highlight what your club is doing for literacy.

If you are the club president-elect you have the greatest responsibility and opportunity at this time. Of course, you should ask club members to do the detailed planning. But you should at least review the list of opportunities and provide suggestions

based on your knowledge of club capabilities.

Zone Coordinators 2009-2010 are the resource Rotarians within each Zone. Please refer to the back page of this publication for contact information.



Regarding the Rotary year 2010-2011, President-Elect Ray Klingensmith gave district governors-elect their first glimpse of the 2010-11 presidential emphases during the second plenary session of the 2010 International Assembly.

Polio eradication and outreach to youth and young adults top RI President-elect Ray Klingensmith's "to-do" list. Also featured are the Future Vision Plan's six areas of focus:

- Peace and conflict prevention/resolution
- Disease prevention and treatment
- Water and sanitation
- Maternal and child health
- Basic education and literacy
- Economic and community development

"Seldom have district governors been given such a clear vision of the specific programs that are yours to promote and achieve," Past RI President Cliff Dochterman told district governors-elect. "These emphases are not new programs, but they do give the Rotary world a fantastic focus for a great year ahead."

**"Building Communities
Bridging Continents"**

New School in Kilema, Tanzania

For the past five winters Rotarians from District 7070 (Canada) and friends have travelled to the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Africa, to work in a rural community called Kilema.. This year the team was led by Alliston Rotarians David Green and Roger Hayward.

The area of Kilema has a population of about 100,000 people, essentially comprised of a rural community of farms many of which are not much more than one acre. Crops consist of maize, coffee and bananas but other crops could be grown. The Kilema area used to be one of the wealthiest parts of Tanzania because of coffee but this changed when the demand for world coffee grew after the Second World War. Large plantations became the requirement to meet the world's demand for coffee. So Kilema is now considered one of the poorest communities in Tanzania.

Last year the Rotarian team decided, with the Rotarians of the nearest Rotary club of Moshi in Tanzania, that the Kilema community needed to take ownership of their own community development plan so that their work can become more sustainable in the future. To this end Moshi Rotarians held five meetings/workshops in the Kilema area to talk about a community development plan. Over 60 people attended the initial workshops. The initial idea was to create a Rotary Community Corp lead by Moshi Rotarians. However, some individuals at the Kilema meetings felt that they wanted to lead the process themselves and that forming a Rotary Club would be beneficial. The result is that a new Rotary club of Moshi Kilema-Kati has been formed with an initial membership of twenty-one charter members.

The workshops resulted in a five phased vision for the community with water being the central focus. The goal of the vision is to provide more and better quality water to the community to improve: drinking water; irrigation to gardens and coffee and banana plantations; water access for construction; and animal husbandry (meat and milk production).



David Green, past president of The Rotary Club of Alliston, presented a banner from the Alliston Rotary Club to the new charter President of the Kilema-Kati Rotary Club, Cynoc Lyimo.

Over the five years that Rotarians have been in Kilema several projects have been completed. The first was the building and funding of an HIV clinic which now serves over 1800 HIV positive patients with life-saving drugs.



HIV/AIDS Clinic

In the education area the projects completed this year include the building of eight new classrooms for the Kilema Primary School. The original school was condemned after an earthquake in 2008.

Community support for this project this year has been exceptional. On community work days over 60 men and women joined the team to paint classrooms, and clear the land to enable the construction of latest phase of the school construction. The community classroom, which is 75% complete, has been completely built by the community including the purchase of all materials to date. The painting, land clearing and digging of the foundations by the community has been acknowledged as an in-kind donation of \$8,000 U.S. in lieu of materials needed to complete the community classroom. The community classroom will be completed by local contractors with materials bought using funds provided by Canadian donors.



The new Kilema Primary School

New School for Tanzania (cont.)

At Kilema there is a boarding school for girls which the Rotarians have helped in the past. These activities have included building a cookhouse to better nourish the students and renovating the dining room and classrooms. The last project was to provide funds for the construction of four flush toilets, four private showers, laundry facilities, and a proper septic system, all of which was completed during this year's visit. The septic system is integral to keeping the water supply pure.



In 2006 Kilema did not have a secondary school but shortly after our visit in 2006 the Tanzanian government decided to build the Kisluni Secondary School. In 2009 the Rotarians initiated a project with the community to put in a community garden to provide food for the students and to improve their nutrition. The garden is now thriving and an on-site water cistern was provided by another NGO. But the problem of getting water to the site has been an issue. With funds from The Rotary Club of Alliston for materials, the furrow bringing water to the school has been cleaned out by students and now a new road culvert is being put in by students under the supervision of the teachers and a local contractor who is a member of the new Rotary Club of Moshi Kilema-Kati.



The picture above shows the beginning of the installation of the culvert which is being supervised by the secretary, Mr. Militi, of the new Rotary Club of Kilema-Kati (centre).



The students were exceptionally keen to help, even though they weren't really dressed for it!



Literacy Recognitions for 2009–2010

Rotary clubs and literacy leaders will be eligible for the following literacy recognitions at the end of John Kenny's year. Projects that are the same but in different locations (eg. books, dictionaries to schools and libraries) count as only one project.

For Clubs—The District Literacy Award

To earn this award a club must accomplish five literacy activities during the year. The suggested list of activities include:

Club Service

- Recruit a new club member with a literacy classification
- Promote International Literacy Day and/or Literacy Month.
- Invite a literacy speaker to a club meeting
- Devote a club meeting to creating awareness of literacy project opportunities
- Conduct Rotary theme of the month projects creating awareness of the literacy aspects of theme of the month, e.g. in December, Family Literacy
- Send club members to a district literacy seminar or conference and devote a subsequent club meeting to their report from the seminar.

Vocational Service

- Conduct a 4-Way Test project or make the test part of other projects such as book gifts or of other character literacy projects
- Conduct a character literacy project such as Who Is Nobody, Laws of Life; BrainWise or gift of books such as *Elmer and Andy's Apple Dumpling Adventure*.
- Recognize a community leader who is a vocational service role model; use the occasion to create public awareness of Rotary's vocational service values.
- Sponsor (perhaps in partnership with an Interact club) a high school workshop which teaches vocational literacy as exemplified in Rotary's Four-Way Test, the second part of the Object of Rotary, and our two mottos.

International Service

- Participate in an international book shipping project, a mini-library project, or school or family book or supplies or equipment project.
- Participate in a literacy and education-focused international project that is connected to health, hunger, and water concerns.
- Find an international partner and support their proposed project. (Project Link can help you find a partner – Go to www.rotary.org).

Community Service

- Support a Concentrated Language Encounter or similar program (such as Yo Puedo)
- Support a Computer –Assisted Literacy Solution (CALS) or similar program.
- Do an Imagination Library project or other reading readiness program such as SOUNDS, Books for Babies, and Sandparents (to cite a few examples). Note that some programs are complementary (e.g. Imagination Library and SOUNDS).
- Partner with the International Reading Association (or its equivalent in your community) on a literacy project. Use the *Every School a Star* tool kit.
- Join or support a local project to raise funds for a school or other literacy organization.
- Engage in a school partnership such as providing reading mentors, financial support, gifts-in-kind, scholarships or other needs identified by the school.

Literacy Awards (cont.)

For Clubs—The Zone Literacy Award

Club must complete ten literacy projects, including the five required for the District Literacy Award, and

- one project from the list of suggested activities on this newsletter's previous page
- either celebrate International Literacy Day (Sept. 8th) or celebrate Literacy Month in March
- complete a book project (e.g. a dictionary project)

For Clubs—The Area Literacy Award

In addition to the preceding two awards that are offered world-wide, there is an Area Literacy Award. The purpose of this award is to recognize clubs that deliver service beyond the club level in leading a project or initiative at the District or Zone level. This requires a club to submit a report along with photos through their Zone Coordinator who will recommend the club's application to the Area Coordinator.

More About Literacy Awards

For District Awards

1. A club downloads the certification form from the RI website, completes it, and sends it to the DG for endorsement.
2. The DG sends it to the District Literacy Chair who confirms that the club qualifies for an award.
3. The District Literacy Chair and the DG make arrangements to complete the award certificate, sign it, and present it at an appropriate venue.
2. The DG sends it to the District Literacy Chair who sends it to the Zone Coordinator who confirms that the club qualifies for an award.
3. The Zone Coordinator signs the award certificate and makes arrangements with the DG, through the District Chair, to sign it and present it at an appropriate venue.

For Zone Awards

1. A club downloads the certification form from the RI website, completes it, and sends it to the DG for endorsement.

For Area Awards

1. Area awards are only issued by the Literacy Resource Area Coordinators. Zone Coordinators along with DGs and District Chairs need to coordinate the appropriate data to be sent to the Area Coordinator by April 15th.



RECENT RESEARCH SUPPORTS THE TEACHING OF THINKING SKILLS Helping Children Become BrainWise

The following article was submitted by Dr. Patricia Gorman Barry, a developer of the BrainWise program that has been highlighted in previous issues of this newsletter, and was issued as a press release from The University of California at Berkeley:

In a study recently accepted for publication by the *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, scientists at UC Berkeley's Helen Wills Neuroscience Institute and the School of Public Health report that normal 9- and 10-year-olds differing only in socioeconomic status have detectable differences in the response of their prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that is critical for problem solving and creativity.

Electroencephalography,



Electroencephalography, or EEG, uses electrodes on the scalp and held in place by a cap to measure underlying brain activity. (Lee Michael Perry/UC Berkeley) Brain function was measured by means of an electroencephalograph (EEG) - basically, a cap fitted with electrodes to measure electrical activity in the brain - like that used to assess epilepsy, sleep disorders and brain tumors.

"Kids from lower socioeconomic levels show brain physiology patterns similar to someone who actually had damage in the frontal lobe as an adult," said Robert Knight, director of the institute and a UC Berkeley professor of psychology. "We found that kids are more likely to have a low response if they have low socioeconomic status, though not everyone who is poor has low frontal lobe response."

Previous studies have shown a possible link between frontal lobe function and behavioral differences in children from low and high socioeconomic levels,

but according to cognitive psychologist Mark Kishiyama, first author of the new paper, "those studies were only indirect measures of brain function and could not disentangle the effects of intelligence, language proficiency and other factors that tend to be associated with low socioeconomic status. Our study is the first with direct measure of brain activity where there is no issue of task complexity."

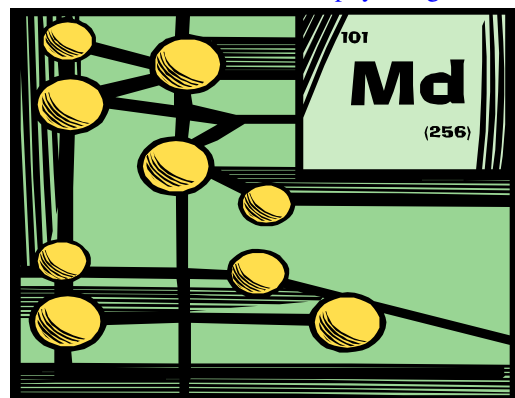
Co-author W. Thomas Boyce, UC Berkeley professor emeritus of public health who currently is the British Columbia Leadership Chair of Child Development at the University of British Columbia (UBC), is not surprised by the results. "We know kids growing up in resource-poor environments have more trouble with the kinds of behavioral control that the prefrontal cortex is involved in regulating. But the fact that we see functional differences in prefrontal cortex response in lower socioeconomic status kids is definitive."

Boyce, a pediatrician and developmental psycho-biologist, heads a joint UC Berkeley/UBC research program called WINKS—Wellness in Kids that looks at how the disadvantages of growing up in low socioeconomic circumstances change children's basic neural development over the first several years of life.

"This is a wake-up call," Knight said. "It's not just that these kids are poor and more likely to have health problems, but they might actually not be getting full brain development from the stressful and relatively impoverished environment associated with low socioeconomic status: fewer books, less reading, fewer games, fewer visits to museums."

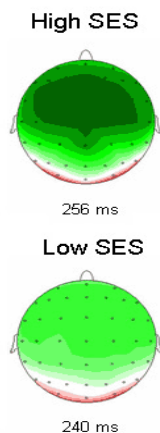
Kishiyama, Knight and Boyce suspect that the brain differences can be eliminated by proper training. They are collaborating with UC Berkeley neuroscientists who use games to improve the prefrontal cortex function, and thus the reasoning ability, of school-age children.

"It's not a life sentence," Knight emphasized. "We think that with proper intervention and training, you could get improvement in both behavioral and physiological indices."



RECENT RESEARCH SUPPORTS THE TEACHING OF THINKING SKILLS (cont.)

Children of high socioeconomic status (SES) show more activity (dark green) in the prefrontal cortex (top) than do kids of low SES when confronted with a novel or unexpected stimulus. (Mark Kishiyama/UC Berkeley) Kishiyama, Knight, Boyce and their colleagues selected 26 children ages 9 and 10 from a group of children in the WINKS study. Half were from families with low incomes and half from families with high incomes. For each child, the researchers measured brain activity while he or she was engaged in a simple task: watching a sequence of triangles projected on a screen. The subjects were instructed to click a button when a slightly skewed triangle flashed on the screen.



The researchers were interested in the brain's very early response - within as little as 200 milliseconds, or a fifth of a second - after a novel picture was flashed on the screen, such as a photo of a puppy or of Mickey and Minnie Mouse.

"An EEG allows us to measure very fast brain responses with millisecond accuracy," Kishiyama said.

The researchers discovered a dramatic difference in the response of the prefrontal cortex not only when an unexpected image flashed on the screen, but also when children were merely watching the upright triangles waiting for a skewed triangle to appear. Those from low socioeconomic environments showed a lower response to the unexpected novel stimuli in the prefrontal cortex that was similar, Kishiyama said, to the response of people who have had a portion of their frontal lobe destroyed by a stroke.

"When paying attention to the triangles, the prefrontal cortex helps you process the visual stimuli better. And the prefrontal cortex is even more involved in detecting novelty, like the unexpected photographs," he said. But in both cases, "the low socioeconomic kids were not detecting or processing the visual stimuli as well. They were not getting that extra boost from the prefrontal cortex."

"These kids have no neural damage, no prenatal exposure to

drugs and alcohol, no neurological damage," Kishiyama said. "Yet, the prefrontal cortex is not functioning as efficiently as it should be. This difference may manifest itself in problem solving and school performance."

The researchers suspect that stressful environments and cognitive impoverishment are to blame, since in animals, stress and environmental deprivation have been shown to affect the prefrontal cortex. UC Berkeley's Marian Diamond, professor of integrative biology, showed nearly 20 years ago in rats that enrichment thickens the cerebral cortex as it improves test performance. And as Boyce noted, previous studies have shown that children from poor families hear 30 million fewer words by the time they are four than do kids from middle-class families.

"In work that we and others have done, it really looks like something as simple and easily done as talking to your kids" can boost prefrontal cortex performance, Boyce said.

"We are certainly not blaming lower socioeconomic families for not talking to their kids -there are probably a zillion reasons why that happens," he said. "But changing developmental outcomes might involve something as accessible as helping parents to understand that it is important that kids sit down to dinner with their parents, and that over the course of that dinner it would be good for there to be a conversation and people saying things to each other."

"The study is suggestive and a little bit frightening that environmental conditions have such a strong impact on brain development," said Silvia Bunge, UC Berkeley assistant professor of psychology who is leading the intervention studies on prefrontal cortex development in teenagers by using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

Boyce's UBC colleague, Adele Diamond, showed last year that 5- and 6-year-olds with impaired executive functioning, that is, poor problem solving and reasoning abilities, can improve their academic performance with the help of special activities, including dramatic play.

Bunge hopes that, with MRI, she can show improvements in academic performance as a result of these games, actually boosting the activity of the prefrontal cortex.

"People have tried for a long time to train reasoning, largely unsuccessfully," Bunge said. "Our question is, 'Can we replicate these initial findings and at the same time give kids the tools to succeed?'"

This research is supported by grants from the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke of the National Institutes of Health.

TURNING NOBODY INTO SOMEBODY, ONE CHILD AT A TIME



Something from Nobody

A Parent's Perspective

It never occurred to me that a doll, a teacher and Africa would all come together to help send my eight-year-old son on a journey of self-discovery.

The doll was part of a character education initiative called the Nobody Project. That's where the journey began.

by Karen Horsman

A SUITCASE ARRIVED IN MY SON'S GRADE 2 CLASS last year with Nobody inside. Nobody was a two-foot gender-neutral doll made of denim. The plan was that each student would take the doll home for a week, and during that time would show Nobody how to become Somebody by teaching it to be a good person. For example, they could clean up their local park to show it how to be environmentally responsible or hold a garage sale and donate the profits to a charity.

My son Mark already had a passion for Africa. His teacher, Amber Currie, OCT, had done a unit on Africa earlier in the year, and he was smitten with the beauty of the dry earth and huge animals. He had also seen TV commercials about children suffering from malnutrition in places like Nairobi. He often told me that it "bugged him" that kids were hungry. Once the students had their cause, it was up to them to come up with a plan.

"The kids have to identify someone or something that needs help. Mark just picked it up and ran with it."

When I talked to Mark's teacher, she said, "I love the hands-on idea of the project. The kids have to identify someone or something that needs help. Mark just picked it up and ran with it." Did he ever.

We found out about something called Plumpy Nut or peanut-paste medicine. It's often called the miracle food that saves children's lives. Mark raked leaves for neighbours and managed to raise \$40. I knew he was disappointed and had wanted to raise more. Before returning the doll to the classroom, he was required to attach to it a symbol of his good deed. Mark put a leaf in a sandwich bag and hung it on the doll like a necklace.

The next student to get the doll was Cameron. Her birthday was coming up, and in lieu of presents, she asked for donations so she could adopt a snow leopard at the Toronto Zoo.

"Cameron already had it in her heart to do this," her mother told me. "But having that opportunity at school made a nice connection between home and the classroom." So Nobody soon had a fancy baseball cap from the zoo with a snow leopard on it, and then it was on to the next student.

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NOBODY TO SOMEBODY (CONT.)

By the end of the year, Nobody was decorated with many attachments and had transformed into a Somebody. For me, the best part came at the conclusion of the project when Amber Currie issued the students a challenge. She asked them how they would continue to help those in need.

“It was easy to tell that Mark was already working on another idea,” she told me. “The seed had been planted.”



The class ended up naming their doll. They called him Mr. Harambee. *Harambee* means pulling together in Swahili. When the new school year started in September, my son was fortunate enough to have Amber Currie again. He went to her and said, “I want to hold a bake sale.” This time he planned to raise \$500 for peanut-paste medicine. I knew the school would have to reject the bake sale because of allergy concerns, but I wanted Mark to learn how to problem solve. I decided to sit back and see where this was going. He went to meetings with the principal and his teacher on his own. Mark was convinced that he could make a difference. It was just a matter of figuring out what he would be allowed to do. Ms. Currie encouraged Mark to spread the word about malnutrition and Africa. With some help, he came up with a presentation on Plumpy Nut that he delivered to

his class. He and his brother and sister worked on information posters and school announcements. He settled on hot chocolate and cookies to sell at school concerts. He did flyers to collect donated boxed cookies to keep his costs down.

“The beauty of the project is that the kids can build on their own strengths.”

It was a ton of work and there were lots of bumps along the way, but for me there is one memory that will always outshine the rest. Mark came home one day and said, “Mom, these two little girls came up to me in gym and said, ‘Are you Mark?’ And I said, ‘Yes,’ and they handed me two Ziploc bags with ‘Africa donation’ written on them. It was really cool!” The school was buzzing about Plumpy Nut. Thanks to Nobody, Mark had been able to start a conversation. A conversation about what sorts of things we can all do to help. The staff and students raised \$600 for Plumpy Nut.

“The beauty of the project is that the kids can build on their own strengths,” said Amber Currie. “And then help a cause that’s close to their heart. It’s not forced on them.” The class ended up naming their Nobody doll who became a Somebody. They called him Mr. Harambee. In Swahili, *harambee* means pulling together.

The journey continues for Mark. He’s asked if he can meet some people with the organization Doctors without Borders to find out more about malnutrition and Plumpy Nut. When I asked if he wanted me to set that up he said, “As long as it doesn’t interfere with recess, I’ll be there.”

For a kit or information about Who is Nobody? visit www.whoisnobody.com or write to info@whoisnobody.com

This article first appeared in the December 2009 issue of a magazine called “Professionally Speaking”, the magazine of The Ontario College of Teachers. The editor thanks the publishers for permission to reprint this article.



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