

GAITHERSBURG ROTARY HELPS WITH COVID-19

By Ken Weiss, Gaithersburg Rotary Club

This year, the Gaithersburg Rotary Foundation added COVID-19 relief to its portfolio of grant awards and scholarships.

The thousands of U.S. Rotary Clubs cannot give tax exemptions, so most create 501c(3) foundations. The club in Gaithersburg formed one in 2003, and it has given numerous small grants to non-governmental organizations that work locally and in developing countries. This year, it has responded well to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has given grant funds to help Nourish Now provide food relief and to the Germantown and Gaithersburg “hubs” for assisting families affected by the virus. It recently awarded \$3,000 to Gaithersburg Family Services to help needy people make rent and utility payments.

Other foundation grants this year have gone to Imagination Library, the Little Free Library at Watkins Mill High School, The Bernie Scholarships, the Montgomery County Muslim Foundation for food distribution; the Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association, to provide auto mechanic training; the Coins for Alzheimer’s Research Trust, Camp Fantastic for children with Cancer; SEEC, which helps persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the Rotary program named Disaster AID USA, and a project to provide water to a small town and a school in Haiti. This project is championed by the Rockville Rotary Club.

In addition, the Gaithersburg Rotary Foundation has awarded scholarships to graduating seniors in Gaithersburg High School (the Sam and Ester Eig Scholarship) and in Quince Orchard High School (the Linda M. Hanson Memorial Scholarship). These annual

awards help outstanding seniors to pay for college education.

YOUTH AND PEACE IN ACTION

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“We are calling it the “Million Dollar Peace Challenge.” A million dollars is a significant number. It is a number that translates, in this initiative, to over 100,000 young people having access to peace education training to the creation of up to a thousand youth-led peace projects. It is a number that provides more than 65,000 Rotarians in 1,700 clubs access to great content about positive peace and thousands of community members will be touched in the process. We estimate nearly 200,000 beneficiaries in just a year and a half for about the cost of a cup of Starbucks coffee. “Here today, I invite each of you to join us in this Million Dollar Challenge to put Rotary and young peacebuilders in the front lines of work to build bridges for positive change. Let’s be a force for peace in this world.”

Starting in July 2020, the Peter and Ana and Patricia, the Peace Fellows from the implementing partners NewGen Peacebuilders and Outward Bound Center for Peacebuilding, began planning and mapping out the action plans for “Champions for Peace.” Beginning in 2021, Rotary “Youth & Peace in Action” hopes to equip 65,000 Rotarians with toolkits and roadmaps, provide training at multi-districts PETS, and ask clubs and districts to commit to the youth-focused peace education program. More details will be announced when the initiative will be officially launched during Rotary Peace & Conflict Resolution month in February 2021.

Million Dollar Peace Challenge.

The organizers have already met the initial fundraising goal of \$61,000 for Phase One of the peace initiative, and 21 district governors of 31 districts have already invested in the program. Many of these “peace champion” districts are already providing input and critical feedback into the peace initiative. The organizers aim to scale up with the goal of creating 1,000 peace projects at schools and communities across the zones. Implementing Partners:

Patricia Shafer is Executive Director of NewGen Peacebuilders and Senior Fellow for Peace Education at the Alliance for Peacebuilding, composed of 110 organizations with a peace mission. NewGen Peacebuilders is an award-winning peace education, training, and mentoring organization focusing on youth ages 14-24 in achieving a peaceful world.

Ana Patel is a senior consultant and former Executive Director of the Outward Bound Center for Peacebuilding (OBCP) and is the RI Representative to UN Women. OBCP uses experiential learning to challenge and inspire leaders to learn and teach peace, working with 3,000 peacebuilding leaders from 25 countries.

For more information, fill out the interest form on the Zone 33-34 website or contact info@youthpeace.org. Also, Rotary international service partners, Mediators Beyond Borders, the Peace Corps, and the Institute for Economics and Peace have offices in Zones 33/34.

