



Interact Today

A GLOBAL NEWSLETTER
BY A TEAM FROM DISTRICT 7620

SPRING 2014 ISSUE

DON'T MISS OUT

- Submit your article, get published!
- May 10 Interact Leadership Conference

THIS ISSUE

Ron Burton Interview	1
Cambodia Reads	4
Muso in Mali	5
Ari and Jessica	7
Broadneck 5k Race	8
US-Russia Exchange	9
You Can Help!	9
Interact Leadership Conference	10
Interact Today	11

Two Great Opportunities

Submit Your Article, Get Published!

Tell us about your service work and write for Interact Today—you do not need to be an Interactor to do so. Submit your article to our editorial team at interact4today@gmail.com and we'll get back to you. To get Interact Today by email, register at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/56Q7ZJK>.

Join the Interact Leadership Conference

If you live in the US in the MD-DC-VA area, meet other Interactors, listen to great speakers, learn, and have fun at the District 7620 Interact Leadership Conference on May 10, 2014 in Baltimore. See the program on page 10.

Interview with RI President

Ron Burton

A Rotarian since 1979, Ron Burton is President of Rotary International (RI) for 2013-14. A lawyer by training, Ron Burton retired as president of the University of Oklahoma Foundation in 2007. He is a member among others of the U.S. Supreme Court Bar, the Oklahoma Bar Association, the Cleveland County Bar Association and the American Bar Association.



He was vice president of the Last Frontier Council of the Boy Scouts of America and received the Silver Beaver Award. He also received the Norman United Way and Junior League Volunteer of the Year Civic Award. Ron Burton was interviewed by Interact Today in Washington, DC, on January 30, 2014 on the occasion of his delivery of a keynote address at the Organization of American States.

Interview with Ron Burton *by Naina Wodon*

Mr. Burton, what influenced you to join Rotary, when did you join and why did you stay?

When I was in high school, I was very active. Believe it or not, many years ago I was part of a service organization sponsored by another service group because Rotary did not have Interact in those days (I am that old!). I enjoyed it very much and I have always felt that we have an obligation to give back to our communities for what they give us. In Rotary the nice thing is that our community is the world. This is why when I became old enough I joined Rotary. I have thoroughly enjoyed it ever since. It gives me an opportunity to stay in touch with what is happening in my own community and the world, and maybe just to make a little bit of a difference.

An important part of the work of Rotary takes place through the Rotary Foundation. How does the Foundation work, especially for international projects?

We have simplified how the Foundation works and we have launched what we call Future Vision projects that are larger and more sustainable than the smaller projects we used to do in the past. Rotarians contribute more than US\$ 115 million per year to the Rotary Foundation. These funds are used to match funds generated at the local level by Rotary clubs and districts. The idea is to turn small projects through matching grants into larger and more sustainable pro-



jects all around the world. But the work remains driven by volunteers, the Rotarians who contribute the ideas and the initial funding, and come up with projects that try really hard to address important needs that communities have. The Rotary Foundation is a tremendous tool for all of us and we hope that we can attract more non-Rotarian contributions and involvement to do some good in the world.

Why have international Rotary projects become larger in recent years?

Well, the objective was to help the Rotary Foundation become a little more focused. Over the years we had developed the Foundation into a tool for funding all kinds of projects. While there is nothing necessarily wrong with that, some of our projects were not sustainable. For example, we put a lot of money in one-time projects like water wells but the wells were not checked up on. As we never taught communities how to re-

pair them, many stopped functioning. We never taught people the basics of how to care for themselves. It is like the old adage “Give a man a fish and he eats for a day, teach a man how to fish and he eats for a lifetime.” The whole concept of the larger projects under the Future Vision initiative was to implement larger projects with great partner organizations and thereby make the projects more sustainable and impactful.

What do you believe the comparative advantage of Rotary is, in comparison to larger foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation?

We work closely with other foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. They are larger in the sense that they have more assets and thereby can provide more funding for projects. But we have 1.2 million members plus wonderful Interactors and Rotaractors as well as RYLA and exchange students in Rotary. We can muster the human manpower. If you place a dollar amount on what we put on the ground, the feet that we put on the ground, the hearts that we put on the ground,



Interview with Ron Burton

the people doing great projects, it is invaluable. This is recognized by our partners. As an example, we recently obtained a large grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for our work on eradicating polio. We get the work done and they help us fund this work. The great comparative advantage of Rotary is that we actually get the work done on the ground by our volunteers - Rotarians, Rotaractors, and Interactors.

Do you think that more innovative pilot projects could be created and supported by Rotary, and then if successful replicated by other organizations on a larger scale?

Yes, I love the idea of pilot projects. I am one their biggest advocates. We need to try new ideas, and in a way this is what we did with Future Vision. We selected 100 pilot Rotary districts around the world to test whether the theories that we were working on would actually work in the field before we rolled out the entire Future Vision package, which we did this Rotary year. What I like about pilot projects is that you can learn a lot from them, and it forces you to be more innovative. I would not sit here and tell you right now that Rotary has all the answers. We are still growing, learning, and trying to improve what Rotarians do in their service work around the world.



What are the challenges faced by Rotary today, and what are potential solutions?

We first need to get young people like you into Rotary! We are dealing right now with membership loss in North America. While this is compensated by growth elsewhere, we need to do better. One of the initiatives I am promoting is that of New Generations conferences all around the world to try to grow Interact and Rotaract as well as Rotary. The first conference one was in Chennai in India in October where we had 10,000 Rotaractors, and the second was in Kampala, Uganda, where we had 3,600 Rotaractors and Interactors. We have three more conferences coming up in Argentina, California, and England. The concept is to have new and younger generations tell Rotarians how we can be more attractive. We need to treat Rotaractors and Interactors as equals, to bring them into the Rotary family and work on projects together. I tell audiences all the time that you – the new generations - are the future. Apart from working on our membership, we must also continue to do these great sustainable projects that get us attention, including from the media. Local media are critically important to us. Finally, we need to continue to fight polio. I could go on and on. There are tons of things that we have to do, but the most im-

portant one is to make Rotary attractive and engage our members.



You have been a member of Rotary for a long time. What is your fondest memory?

I love projects with children. Back in October I was in Takeda, Alabama, and I got to read to a class of first graders. They had a big easy chair for me and the little kids were sitting in front of me. I got to show them skills that I learned in first grade. They picked out a book for me to read and I could read it upside down to them so that they could see the pictures. I also like participating in national immunization days for polio. It really touches your heart when you hold those babies in your arms and you may have changed their life, because they will never have that debilitating disease. I have also provided food to children in need, with other members of my Rotary club. Working with children, including through sporting events, really touches my heart. But then you know there are other projects that you can participate in too, such as simply cleaning up trash in your local community. So I don't think that I have one specific memory of my involvement with Rotary that I am especially fond of, but I have been blessed to be able to contribute.



Cambodia Reads *by Greta Dylus*

As President of FHS Interact Club, I believe in the importance of fostering a lifetime of volunteerism in our members. In today's global society, it is essential that we endeavor to become responsible citizens of our local, national and international community. For some of us, this club is our first experience volunteering in our community. Sponsored by the adult Rotary Club of Frederick County, the Interact Club of Frederick High School is run entirely by students of Frederick High School with a strong commitment to our sole purpose: service. Every club event is a service event and every member is required to participate in at least half of our events.

Each year, our club participates in improvements to our school community. This year we have chosen not to do that for the simple and happy reason that our school is going to be demolished and rebuilt in the next couple of years. This year, we decided to focus our energies and efforts on

adding and renewing old volunteer projects in our local community and to focus on fundraising for an international charity. This fall semester we volunteered parking cars at the Frederick Fairgrounds in late September to raise funds for our international charity. In October we volunteered for Light the Night Leukemia and Lymphoma walkathon in Baker Park and during two weekends in November and December we volunteered for Salvation Army Bell Ringing for many hours in frigid temperatures. This spring we will be parking cars during a St. Patrick's Day event to raise money for our international charity, assisting in back breaking Catocin National Park trail maintenance work and tirelessly providing labor to restore a home during Frederick's Rebuilding Together Day, formerly known as Christmas in April.

In addition to these local service projects, we have chosen an international charity to support through the



school year. This year our club selected a literacy program in rural Cambodia called Cambodia Reads. This charity was begun locally in Frederick, Maryland by a Cambodian naturalized U.S. citizen, Pouv Judd, and a survivor of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge rule.

In 1970, Pouv was born the youngest of four children in a poor rural Cambodian province. That same year, a military coup began the rise of the dreaded Khmer Rouge party that controlled the Cambodian government until 1979 and was responsible for the torture and genocide of over one million Cambodian people. Because

Cambodia Reads

of the Khmer Rouge organization and their leader Pol Pot, widespread famine, malaria, and extreme poverty threatened all Cambodians, including Pouy and her family. Fear of arrests and executions terrorized the people as their basic freedoms were eliminated. Learning was banned and all citizens were forced into farming labor. As schools no longer existed, some were converted to prisons. In 1979, after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, and teaching was no longer banned, Pouy finally began school at the age of nine. Unfortunately, by middle school, Pouy was forced to quit school, like her brother and sisters, and labor in the fields to help support her family. In 2002, Pouy met and married an American while in the city of Phnom Penh. She immigrated to the United States and became a US citizen, finally continued her education, and vowed to extend her good fortunes to poor Cam-

bodian children in her home country. In 2010, Pouy began the literacy program Cambodia Reads.

This September, Cambodia Reads board members Carolyn Judd and Ingrid Palmquist came to speak at our first Interact club meeting and inspired our members to help Pouy's efforts. We were especially excited to hear that every dollar donated goes directly to the children in the Cambodia Reads program because it is run entirely through volunteers. The board is completely staffed by volunteers and has no overhead costs. This fact gave us additional incentive to fundraise. Our club raised funds for Cambodia Reads through endless hours, rain and shine, parking cars at popular fairground events throughout the year and a donation letter distribution campaign by our members. With these two efforts, we've raised almost \$1,000 and



we hope to try and double that by the end of the school year.

Though many of our club members studied about the Khmer Rouge in AP World History class, Pouy's life story made it seem more real to us. Listening to the story of Pouy Judd and her new charity, we realized there was something we could do to change the lives of the Khmer Rouge victims' families thousands of miles away from our classrooms here in Frederick, MD. We had the power to help provide an education for these children and, in some way, improve their lives.

Muso in Mali *by Divya, Naina, and Quentin Wodon*



Mohammad, a three-year-old boy, lives in Yirimadjo, a community in Mali. A few weeks ago he woke up feeling ill with a high fever. That same morning, Kumba, a community health worker with the nongovernmental organization Muso, visited his family's home during her daily door-to-door active case-finding visits. On discovering that the child had a fever, she administered a rapid diagnostic test

for malaria, and he tested positive.

Kumba administered free Artemisinin-Based Combination Therapy on the spot, counseling Mohammad's mother on how to take the oral pills the following two days. Mohammad was able to start curative treatment for malaria within four hours of falling ill. Kumba visited him the next day, and the day after that, to make sure he was taking his medication and improving. Because most children

Muso in Mali

who die from malaria are killed within 48 hours of symptom onset, speed matters in providing treatment. Mohammad's treatment was more effective and less expensive than might have been the case if he had started treatment at a later, more severe stage. And early, proactive health care may have saved Mohammad's life.

Roughly 3.3 billion people, or half of the world's population, are vulnerable to malaria. Every year, some 216 million cases of malaria occur, and 665,000 people die from those episodes. Many of those deaths occur among children under five. More generally, more than 6 million children under five die



every year worldwide from malaria and other curable diseases. Many of these illnesses can easily be prevented through simple tools such as bed nets or easily treated by oral medications at home if caught early.

Muso is on the frontlines of providing timely, proactive health care to poor, hard-to-reach populations in Mali, said Dr. Ari Johnson, co-founder of Muso, at a recent World Bank seminar, and thus is effective in reducing malaria deaths.

The group works in communities through a four-step approach. The first step consists of mobilizing the existing health care delivery system. This includes selecting, training, employing and supervising local individuals who go door-to-door and identify children sick with malaria and other illnesses. These community health workers diagnose malaria in the household and treat simple cases. When care is needed from a doctor, they refer patients to government health centers.

The second phase consists of removing barriers that prevent people from accessing care when needed. As in Mohammad's parents' case, most families in the regions covered by Muso are poor and do not have enough money to pay for hospital fees. In addition, many are not able to get to the hospital in time for treatment.

Even when families can scrape enough money together to go to the hospital, they fear they will be diagnosed with an illness

or disease which would cost a lot of money for medication. By eliminating point-of-care user fees, Muso ensures that even the poorest can benefit from life-saving comprehensive and universal care, whether at home, in community health centers, or in referral hospitals.



The third step consists of creating rapid referral networks by training communities in identifying health risks, prioritizing rapid treatment, and navigating the health system. These networks are essential for community organizers, religious leaders, and educators to help families in need and bring children and adults suffering from malaria to community health workers or to centers where care is provided.

The fourth, and final, step consists of clinical capacity building. As Muso systematically removes access barriers to achieve universal health coverage, it also reinforces the ability of the public sector to provide quality care to its patients. This includes expanding infrastructure and training providers.

Muso in Mali

How do we know that Muso is successful? A study recently published in PLoS ONE documents a ten-fold reduction in child mortality in Yirimadjo after the launch of the Muso model.

At baseline, the child mortality rate was 15.5%. After three years, it plummeted to 1.7%. During the same period, the study documented a ten-fold increase in the number of patient home and clinic visits; a doubling of the rate of rapid



access to malaria treatment for children in need; and a reduction by one-third in the share of children becoming sick with fever. Because the study was not based on a randomized controlled trial, but on repeated cross-sections in Muso's area of intervention, it is important to exercise caution in assigning causality. Yet the results are very encouraging.

Muso has received substantial support from Rotary and the project has recently received two global awards. The 2013 GSK Global Healthcare Innovation Award recognized Muso as one of five effective new models for better chances of child survival. The Caplow Children's Prize named Muso one of eight finalists for its global award for high-impact new models saving children's lives.

This article is reproduced from a World Bank blog on Investing in Health at <http://blogs.worldbank.org/>

Ari and Jessica

How did Muso start? In 2005 Jewish alumni from Brown University got together and went to Mali. The team included professionals, educators, and graduate students. Together they “shared a common vision for extending the scope of health interventions and getting to the root of crises that affect the world's poorest communities.” (Excerpt from an interview with the Berkeley Center). They decided to focus on the fight against malaria and started with a needs assessment. By the winter of 2005, they had assessed various sites but ended up locating in Yirimadjo.



They created a partnership with the community. Since 2005, Muso has grown and contributed substantially to better health in the community.

Jessica Beckerman
and Ari Johnson



are the founders and co-chairs of Muso. Jessica was an Interactor when she attended high school! She told us that she chose to be an Interactor because she felt that she could make a difference that way. Together with the help of others she could help change the world. Ari and Jessica have applied the same philosophy to Muso which is integrated into the local community and ties in families as well. Jessica hopes to inspire other Interactors by proving that with commitment you can do anything you set your mind to and help tackle problems in order to improve lives.

Broadneck Without Borders 5k *by Patrick Haney*

On Saturday, April 12, the Broadneck High School Interact Club held their first 'Broadneck Without Borders' 5K to benefit the organization Doctors Without Borders. Doctors Without Borders is an international non-profit organization founded in France in 1968 that sends medical professionals around the world to give medical aid to populations that are in serious need or have experienced disasters. They do wonderful work and are deserving of donations.



The club worked very hard to prepare for the event, including sending members to get business sponsorships and delegating specialized tasks to get the materials that made it so successful. The planning for the event started months before. The club met once a week, and the officers worked the background to get all the technical planning done—we cannot thank them enough for their hard work and dedication to the club. Obviously, as the club's first time organization of a large event like this, we faced some issues. Planning was done relatively well for the event itself, but some things felt very time-crunched, for example the orders for the banners and t-shirts. But as they always seem to, things worked out in the end with a little hard work and perseverance.

The day itself was beautiful - 66° and partly cloudy, an excellent day for a run in the beautiful Ulmstead community in the full bloom of spring. Rotarians and Interactors worked to-

gether before the event to get everything set up and ready to go for the race, checking in runners, handing out t-shirts, and providing water to prepare them. The runners met at the starting line, were given their in-



structions, and the race started in mid-morning. The first runners finished in around 15 minutes after the start, and the rest of the runners steadily streamed in afterwards, with visible satisfaction and pride on their faces for taking part in a great charitable event.

Over 50 attended (not including the volunteers coordinating the event), many from the Broadneck track team. Attendees and volunteers received Broadneck Without Borders t-shirts, and were treated to bagels and bananas afterwards. The event was very successful with over \$2,000 raised for Doctors Without Borders! Hard work and youthful determination from Interactors came together and made such a great event for such a great cause. If we do this event next year, we can only imagine the success we will have building on this year's success.



US-Russia Exchange Via Skype *by Barton Goldenberg*

Despite the current chill in the US/Russia government relationship, there was no sign of chill in the wonderful 60-minute Skype session between BCC High School Interact Club members and Kirov (Russia) Interact Club members held on March 22.

5 Kirov Interact Club members and 3 BCC High School Interact members and their adult advisor participated in the Skype session. It was a wonderful example of international collaboration! In addition to talking about possible activities that the Kirov Interact Club can do for the visually-impaired children attending the boarding school in Belaya Kholunista including their planned April 12th “fun day,” the BCC High School Interact Club also agreed during the Skype session to look into creating a video for the children at the boarding school and email this video to the Kirov Interact Club or give it to Barton Goldenberg (current president, metro Bethesda Rotary Club) prior to his planned visit to Kirov in April to work on implementation of the Beacon Hope Initiative project, aimed at

renovating this boarding school for visually impaired children, many of whom are orphans.

Of greatest importance, members from both Interact Clubs laughing and enjoying the Skype session. It reinforces the phrase that Rotarian Nina Kostina teaches us, namely that “all children smile in the same language.”



Interested in this Newsletter? You Can Help!

Interactor or Not, Submit Your Article

You do not need to be an Interactor to write for Interact Today. And you do not need to be in high school either—we are also interested in hearing from teachers as well as Rotaractors and Rotarians working with high school students. We are especially interested in your service work. Please send us your article. We will read it and let you know whether we can publish it. We hope to publish the newsletter at least four times a year. To contact us, please send an email to our team at interact4today@gmail.com.

Help Us Translate Interact Today


We hope to print articles from many countries around the world, and we also hope to translate the newsletter or at least some articles in other languages. If you would like to help with translations, let us know. You could help us translate the whole newsletter or just one article. Any help would be great.

Interact Leadership Conference


May 10, 2014, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

Morning Program: Learn!


Teresa Scanlan
2011
Miss America



Jack Andraka
Gordon E. Moore
Award



“See Something-Say Something”,
Lowcountry
Rotary Club of
Beaufort
County, SC



There are four morning sessions

District 4 Way Test Speech Competition

Listen to great speeches by other high school students who integrate into a speech the four way test questions: 1. Is it the truth? 2. Is it fair to all concerned? 3. Will it build goodwill and better friendships? 4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned? You will be amazed! And you will be the judge!

Jack Andraka, local 17-year-old science prodigy and recipient of The Gordon E. Moore Award for developing an affordable test to detect early stage pancreatic cancer.

“If a 15 year-old, who didn’t even know he had a pancreas at the beginning of this project, could find a new way to detect pancreatic cancer, just imagine what you can do.”

Teresa M. Scanlan, Miss America 2011, from Gering, Neb. Teresa, the youngest woman to wear the crown in over 70 years, studies at Patrick Henry College in Virginia. As Miss America 2011, she worked with many NGOs, but she will also talk about an orphanage she founded with her sisters in Haiti. Listen to her passionate story.

“See Something-Say Something”. This is an exciting presentation by the Rotary Anti-Bullying Program from Beaufort County, SC. An amazing project and performance you must see.

Afternoon Program: Share!

Poster Session – Display Your Work

Showcase your club’s service projects and other initiatives by presenting a poster at the conference’s poster session, tentatively from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm. Share your ideas in a flexible and friendly way. Get valuable feedback as a presenter. Establish useful contacts for the future. And compete with other Interact, Rotary and Rotaract clubs for the best poster prize. But you need to register. To register your poster for the session, please go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/5CYZ2CG>

Interact Sessions – Exchange Ideas

Participate with other Interactors in three sessions devoted to Interact. One session will take place during lunch and the other two after the poster session from 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm. Interactors will present ideas in panels with three to four short presentation followed by open discussion. Find out how to recruit new members, raise funds for social projects, or implement creative community service projects!. If you are interested in making a presentation at one of the three panels, let us know and indicate so when registering for the conference (see the link to register for the conference below).

Optional Baltimore Orioles Game

Depending on interest, we may try to get free tickets for the Orioles game against Houston at 7 pm. If you are interested, please indicate so when registering (see below).

The registration fee for Interactors for the day is \$25. This includes a light lunch and refreshments throughout the day. Payment can be made at the conference registration desk. You may be able to benefit from a sponsorship from your club’s parent Rotary Club. Please check with your Interact club President or your Rotarian adviser. But you must register for the conference. To do so, please go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/57P2XXF>



This event is part of District 7620 Rotacon '14

Baltimore Hilton Hotel – 401 Pratt St., Baltimore

Interact Today *by Peter Kyle, District 7620 Governor*

I am delighted to have this opportunity to contribute to and support the launch of the first issue of Interact Today!

You may be interested to learn that the first Interact Club was chartered with 23 students from Melbourne High School in Florida in 1962. Today there are over 385,000 high school students participating regularly as members of 16,742 Interact clubs in 109 countries! Each of these clubs provides an opportunity for students to learn leadership skills and engage in service projects. It may also surprise you to learn that there are two and one half times as many Interactors as there are Rotaractors!

The Interact Today newsletter is the brain child of Divya and Naina Wodon who serve as co-chairs of the Washington International School Interact Club in Washington, DC, located in Rotary District 7620. The newsletter will feature stories from District 7620 and our two dozen Interact Clubs, but its long-term goal is to become a useful tool for Interactors and other high schools students interested in service work all over the world.



This first issue of Interact Today is published electronically in English but hopefully some articles or even the whole issue could one day become available in other languages such as Spanish and French. The newsletter will feature



stories not only from the United States but also from other countries. It should become one of a number of resources to help bring the international Interact community closer together, to share tips and ideas, to tell inspiring stories, and to celebrate great service projects.

A website will soon be available to host the newsletter and make it easier for readers to connect and register to receive the newsletter automatically by email. We expect many of the readers and writers to be high school students. This will include Interactors but you do not need to be an Interactor to write for the newsletter. The newsletter should also be of interest to other members of the Rotary family including Rotaractors and Rotarians.

The newsletter is truly open to the contribution of all. It will focus on youth but it will also welcome stories and accounts of other service projects and innovative activities.

Let me end by saying again how delighted I am that this initiative has been launched. I wish great success to Interact Today.