

Interota 2020 Hong Kong

By TSANG Lok Chi, Chairlady, Interota 2020 Hong Kong Organizing Committee



“It gives me great pleasure to declare the Interota 2020 Hong Kong officially open.” The Interota 2020 Hong Kong was called to order by District Rotaract Representative Alan Yip in the Opening Ceremony on 5 June 2021.

Being a renowned triennial worldwide Rotaract convention that was started in 1981, INTEROTA is blessed to have tremendous support from Rotary International and wins the popularity of Rotaractors. Continuing its long-standing history, the 14th INTEROTA organized by RI D3450 Rotaractors offered a platform for Rotaractors all over the world to exchange ideas and share experiences. With the theme “Leverage Youth Power | Level Up The World”, over 1,800 Rotaractors, Rotarians, Interactors and friends all over the world from 91 countries/regions were gathered at Interota. Together we achieved more and made an impact on the world through services and international explorations.

Interota Day 1 – Meet Up

House of Friendship marked the start of the programme of Interota 2020 Hong Kong. Representatives from Hong Kong, Macao, Mongolia, Tunisia, India, The Philippines, Taiwan, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Madagascar, Italy, Singapore and Malaysia took the lead to share unique cultures, fun facts and service projects. The introduction and interaction made up a warm welcome for everyone from all around the world.

Later, in the Opening Ceremony, Rotary International President Holger Knaack and Rotary International Director Surgeon Liu shared words of wisdom, recognizing the power from youth generations and encouraging more Rotary-and-Rotaract collaborations. On behalf of RI District 3450, District Governor Eric Chak and Interota 2020 Hong Kong Steering Committee Chair IPDG Wilson Cheng expressed their warm gratitude towards guests and participants, wishing everyone to enjoy the convention. Apart from the addresses, the highly anticipated Keynote Speech session was carried out by Ms. Katharina Unger, founder of Livin Farms. Being a thought leader in the space of design for sustainability, food and agricultural innovation, as well as the founder of companies leading in the field of edible insects and novel food innovations, she shared about how she promotes sustainability through food and agricultural innovation. With her sharing,

participants learnt more about future food and how to level up the world through innovations. This knowledgeable session was followed by a special performance with duration of 34 minutes 50 seconds which was the collective effort of Rotaractors and Rotarians in Hong Kong, Macao and Mongolia. The diverse and wonderful performances include playing musical instruments like guitar, viola, guzheng, harp, saxophone, performing yoyo, performing wheelchair martial arts, singing with a live band, and dancing in the styles of hip-hop, waacking and animal flow. What a surprise was the appearance of some children faces, who are actually the second generation of Rotaractors. This symbolized the involvement of family members in Rotary and Rotaract events, as well as the pass-on of Rotaract spirit to the next generation.

Interota Day 2 – Speak Up

To echo the RI Presidential Theme “Rotary Opens Opportunities” this year, two meaningful discussions on the future were held on Day 2. A group of Rotaract leaders from different parts of the world including Joey Vaesen (General Secretary, Big West Rotaract), Louie Boy De Real (Chair, Pilipinas Rotaract MDIO; Incoming Chair, Asia Pacific Rotaract MDIO), Mafalda Sofia Luis (President, ERIC (European Rotaract Information Center) MDIO), Samantha Fewster (Chairperson, Rotaract Australia MDIO) and Yatin Sehgal (President, Rotaract South Asia MDIO) shared insights and discussed about “Future of Rotaract”, with the presence of RI President Holger Knaack who provided some insights into the original intention of leveraging Rotaract via policy changes. Hosted by Past President Helen Or of Rotary Club of Neoteric Hong Kong who is a Certified Foresight Practitioner (IFTF, 2020), the second discussion aimed to let participants be future ready by interactive and small-group exercises.

Later, participants joined one of the two cultural workshops which unveiled and explored the hidden treasures of Hong Kong traditional culture---they made floral plaques (“Fa Pai” 花牌) and cooked Hong Kong food respectively. Fa Pai is a traditional craft made of bamboo and commonly presented as a gift at store openings, wedding banquets and job promotion celebrations. In the workshop on Zoom, guided by Mr. Wong Nai-chung, one of the few remaining Fa Pai masters in Hong Kong, participants crafted their own mini Fa Pai and added decorations and blessings from their own country’s culture. On the other hand, in the cooking workshop, guided by Charter President George Wong of Rotary Club of Golden Bauhinia Hong Kong who serves as the Director of Message Studio and the host of a cooking show, participants were taught to cook wonderful dishes Satay Kai Lan (沙爹芥蘭) and Yeung Chow Fried Rice (揚州炒飯) by themselves to enjoy.

The night session, a main highlight of one of the key programmes, Interota Academy, which aimed to open possibilities of youth empowerment and innovative resolutions of today’s world issues, staged a floor for delegates of the convention to exchange ideas and inspired each other to take a global vision and develop their insights into an ever-asked question: “What the world should be?”, the theme of the session which discussed inequity, food insecurity, animal abuse, and poverty. Some of them were assigned or had to choose a role to partake in discussions from a certain perspective, stimulating their critical thinking by seeing the issue from a whole other angle, taking into consideration different concerns, responsibilities, and some cruel reality the world is facing.

Interota Day 3 – Curtain Up

The day's highlight lands on the Cultural Night, a broadcast session of pre-recorded performance videos from 12 teams representing Brazil, Taiwan, Pakistan, The Philippines, Sri Lanka and Maldives, Nepal, India, Mongolia and Hong Kong. The night brought to our virtual stage in the hope of showing and appreciating cultural diversity in today's world. While many social issues across the globe are far from resolved, including inequality and discrimination against diversity, the show served as a fund-raising platform, for the benefits of some local charitable organizations for their use of service projects, for audience to offer donations live in support of the performance and also the underprivileged groups of different kinds here in Hong Kong. With the 90-minute performances, the night received donations totalling around HK\$15,000.

Interota Day 4 – Step Up

Despite the outrage of Covid, the team made an effort in executing the service plan with physical presence of local volunteers. With full precautions, Rotaractors were deployed in small teams to run a 2020-minute Service Marathon in different corners of the territory to deliver various services to different target groups, including food distribution in Kowloon, animal care in Yuen Long, equal sharing in Tin Hau, delivery of sanitary items in North Point and Sheung Shui, beach cleaning in Clear Water Bay, soap cycling in Kwai Chung, and elderly services in Tseung Kwan O. Many of the service sessions in the marathon were designed and operated in partnership with the organizations we supported during the Cultural Night.

In parallel with the service marathon, there were live tours showing different sides of the city's culture, including a trip to Sham Shui Po to show the grassroots lives and famous street food, a trip to Tai O Village to show a rural side of Hong Kong and one of the very few existing mode of living reflecting the city's history of formerly basing the region's economy on fishing, and a tour to Central where the busiest business district is located, an area of mixture of Western and Chinese cultures, of blends of modernity and historical architectures, with much legacy of British colonialism still seen today in it.

The day also drew the audience's attention to a panel discussion session namely Clubhouse in the evening, where 3 voluntary workers, Jeff Rotmeyer (Founder of Impact HK), Father John Wotherspoon (Founder of Mercy HK), and Faby Rusega (Director of YWAM HK – Tuen Mun), who came to Hong Kong years ago as an expat and started to deliver local services here in the city. The panel's discussion revolved around the topic: Kindness is Color Blind – Serving the Community with Down-to-earthness. They shared their initial reasons why they moved to Hong Kong and how they started local services here. What they brought to the night's highlights were the different sides of the city from what in general people have in mind were the busiest businesses and the most exciting enjoyment around town, seen in their eyes as a place where there are underprivileged people who need care, attention, and help. Their passion and experiences tell there are no actual boundaries between races, languages and cultures when it comes to care and love, with their stories and services as some of the best examples how a volunteer should approach, treat and even see a service target by seeking to build true relationships and let them gradually have trust in your service work.

Interota Day 5 – Wrap Up

It came to the last day of the 5 day international Rotaract conference and the end of the four-year journey of preparation work and determination to bring the world's Rotaractors together to share, to learn, and to build a better world. There was another Clubhouse discussion panel in the afternoon on the city's cultural diversity and tourism. Speakers included urban planner Ester van Steekelenburg (Founder of iDiscover), urbanist and artist Samspon Wong (Co-founder of "When in doubt, talk a walk"), and filmmaker and scriptwriter Heiward Mak (Film Director of "Let it Ride") discussed the topic: Travel Like a Local – Exploring Hong Kong from a Non-touristy Perspective.

The Peace 2020 Service Marathon came to its end in the evening after non-stop service deliveries across the city. There were also the sharing session of the renowned District 3450's THE ONE Humanitarian Awards, the Bidding Session for Interota 2023 and the Closing Ceremony.

The award founder Past District Governor Dr. David Harilela introduced how Rotaractors around the world can be a part of THE ONE's meaningful mission, followed by the live Q&A session hosted by Past District Governor Eugene Fong.

Tunisia filed their application and they presented their country and what the place has pending for our exploration during the evening. It is a place of multiculturalism and a country where varied languages are spoken, including Arabic, French, English and Berber languages, reflecting their rich history and incorporation of many cultures through years and centuries of spreads of religions, wars, migrations, of which some events date back to as early as medieval times or even the ancient period, and some are more recent and on-going. We can't wait to see the dynamics of the country in 2 years. We believe, Rotary and Rotaract together, can make the world a better place.

Interota 2020 Hong Kong Organizing Committee Chair PDRR Lokchi Tsang thanked all sponsors, partners, speakers, panelists, facilitators, emcees, performers, committee members and helpers for making the event happen. She expressed her gratitude towards people who supported and contributed to the bidding, preparation and execution of Interota since 2017, and most importantly, towards those who participated in the event and witnessed the outcome. She hoped that all participants could enjoy the interactions and diversity here, as well as have takeaways from the sharing, discussions and service ideas. At last, the Interota bell was virtually handovered from Lokchi (representing RI District 3450) to Bidding-in-Charge Past President Mohamed Amine Mbarek (representing RI District 9010).

