

Rotaract

Kudos to the 1997-98 Rotaract project award winners

Natural disasters, disease epidemics, spina bifida, a blood disorder—these are but a few of the concerns that have roused Rotaract clubs worldwide to action. Their humanitarian efforts and commitment to the “Service Above Self” spirit of Rotary have deservedly earned seven of them 1997-1998 Rotary International Rotaract awards.

The Rotaract Club of Visnagar, India, was the recipient of the Outstanding Rotaract Project of 1997-98. Visnagar Rotaractors helped curb the spread of diseases such as malaria and cholera following the flooding of North Gujarat State in mid-1997. This disastrous flood resulted in widespread homelessness, drinking water contamination, crop damage, and home and road destruction amounting to more than U.S. \$150 million.

For 20 days following the disaster, Visnagar Rotaractors distributed chlorine tablets for water supplies, disposed of maggot-infested animal carcasses, and distributed grain and clothing to residents of Visnagar and 50 surrounding villages. In addition to these health initiatives, Rotaractors launched a

disease awareness campaign to inform residents of the health risks posed by the floods. The Rotaractors’ sponsor, the Rotary Club of Visnagar, joined in this massive disaster-relief operation.

In addition to the international winner, the humanitarian efforts of six Rotaract clubs were recognized with regional awards presented during the Rotaract Pre-Convention Meeting at the Rotary International Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, last June.

• In Europe, it was the devastating effects of another natural disaster—an earthquake that struck the Italian provinces of Umbria and Marche in September 1997—that rallied the Rotaract Club of Avellino, Italy. The Rotaractors launched “S.O.S. Umbria,” coordinated with the Rotary Club of Avellino and Inner Wheel clubs, to collect food, clothing, space heaters, and basic medical supplies for distribution to earthquake victims. The earthquake not only caused injury, death, and homelessness, but also led to the loss of irreplaceable art and architecture. The damages were estimated at more than U.S. \$1 billion.

• In East Asia/South Pacific, the Rotaract Club of Kingspark, Hong Kong, was recognized for its “Spina Bifida Concerns” campaign, which aims to heighten public awareness of the condition. Rotaractors organized a fun fair and solicited funds from corporate donors to benefit the Childhood Spina Bifida Support Group of Hong Kong, and worked closely with their sponsor, the Rotary Club of Kingspark, to organize events through which they could educate communities about spina bifida.

• Health was also the number-one concern for Rotaractors in Africa. The “Bandwe Community Health Project” earned the Rotaract Club of Kampala, Uganda, a regional award for its efforts to improve the social welfare and quality of life of the Bandwe community. The club provided general health-care services to approximately 30,000 people forced to survive without the benefits of a local health-care center. Services included disease immunization, dental care, and education on family planning, hygiene, and nutrition. At the start of the Bandwe Community Health Project, lack of a permanent premises



Members of the Cliff Dochterman Rotaract Club and the Rotary clubs of Olentangy and Delaware, Ohio, U.S.A., get to work installing handicap-accessible playground equipment.