

Rotary

from front page

with MusiCares Foundation will help her as president, but that such experience isn't a prerequisite for leading like Rotary. "I would say a sincere compassion for and a love of people, the desire to serve others above yourself, along with having an appreciation for charitable tradition is what's needed," she said. "...Being able to simply maintain a high degree of volunteerism that year after year expands and grows is an important skill to have."

Rhees became involved in the Rotary Club after talking to Jackson, who encouraged her to join the organization and later sponsored her. "He was volunteering in Mexico to build homes," Rhees said. "I had done so much volunteering during my childhood. I missed that."

It was a fit from the beginning. "Having come from a background of non-profit work, I got a feel for the change that it can affect" Rhees said. "But I also got the sense that the Rotary Club of Manhattan Beach seemed to be sincerely and tangibly vested in Manhattan Beach and the local community."

The Rotary Club was founded by wealthy Chicago entrepreneurs who wanted to network and make a difference in their community. According to its website, the organization boasts 32,000 clubs and 1.2 million members worldwide. "What we all have in common is this calling to put service above self," Rhees said. "Rotary was a calling for me. You will find Rotarians are called into this work and into this club."

The beauty of the club for Rhees is that it brings together people from various occupations and experiences. "Our members range from some of the first and notable civic and business leaders in the community, to up and coming young civic and business leaders, to retired men and women who've served the local community for decades," she said.

Sundberg pointed out that Rhees, like many of the people involved in the Rotary Club, show a willingness to lead when called upon. "Many of the people involved in Rotary are people who are leaders in their community," she said. "Usually leaders like to give their time and their talents, as well as their finances to Rotary. Our motto is 'service above self.'"

Jackson said filling the role of president takes a significant amount of planning, effort and involvement. He explained that because many of the club's members are entrepreneurs or successful in their respective fields of business, Rotary Club presidents need to be consensus builders. "You have to be consistent and keep everyone focused," he said. "We like to have continuity in the club of what we do and what projects we get involved in."

Sundberg added that the Rotary Club's goal is world peace and understanding, which it helps promote through service projects and fundraising on the local and international level. The organization's hopes to eradicate polio by 2012. "No other service club has taken on such a major goal as the eradication of polio worldwide," Sundberg said. "It's been a major focus of Rotary for a number of years."

While other organizations might be more specific in their goals or membership recruitment, Sundberg singled out the Rotary Club as having a broader view of humanitarian needs. Four key areas of focus are promoting health, clean water, and literacy and fighting hunger. "We're totally non-religious, non political," Sundberg said. "We're very interested in supporting business ethics. We support each other through our businesses as well as through fellowship."

Much of the work done by Rotarians is through fundraising for overseas humanitarian efforts, whether it's fighting polio or helping people get access to clean drinking water. The Rotary Club of Manhattan Beach has gone to Mexico to build homes and donate medical supplies, and has brought along college and high school students involved with the Rotary Club's Interact and Roteract Clubs. "In my

mind it's all about helping other people," Jackson said. "Almost 99 percent or more of the people we help are the people that we never meet."

A recent meeting with Jan Buike and the Older Adults Program participants at the Joslyn Center reminded Rhees of the opportunities the club has to serve in Manhattan Beach. "I could spend hours with those wonderful seniors who meet every Monday at Joslyn," he said. "We are painting and planting for them. They are so appreciative and we are grateful for the chance to support them."

Rhees added that the club will continue its local efforts, which include delivering Meals on Wheels, reading to MBUSD children and donating picture dictionaries to elementary school children in underserved areas.

Although the organization's national membership has slightly declined recently, President Jan was pleased to report that Manhattan Beach's membership has doubled since she joined. "We are really a family," she said. "We are a cohesive service oriented group and we enjoy one another. We enjoy serving our community together... and we're very committed to our club and one another, and to our work."•



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