

Rotarians hear of club’s far-reaching impact on world

By *Tristan McGough*
Special to *The Reporter*

The Edgerton Rotary Club heard Executive Director Nathalie Pratt present the practical work of Pure Water for the World, begun in 1994 as a Rotary Club Project in Brattleboro, Vt.

“My whole life turned around,” Pratt confided online to the group assembled in the Community Room at Culver’s Newville on April 6, “when I met the people running these programs.”

She had been looking for a group she believed worthy of her volunteered time and effort, something that was having a positive impact on the world.

“I went down in person in 2013 to Haiti, and I got hooked! I’ve been with the organization ever since.”

“Today,” Pratt said, “Pure Water for the World programs have reached over 700 communities, which is over 750,000 people’s lives we’ve affected by providing filtration systems and monitoring to ensure safe drinking water for families.”

A 501(c)(3) since 1999, Pure Water for the World, Inc. has its headquarters in Rutland, Vt., with a mission “Dedicated to Safe Water, Sanitation & Hygiene for All.”

The organization’s primary

service areas are at Port-au-Prince, Haiti and three areas in Honduras: Tegucigalpa, Trojes and Maraita.

The group focuses on basically three things: safe water, proper hygiene and sanitation, and the knowledge to sustain these for future generations.

“It’s the old adage,” Pratt said, “‘Give a man a fish, feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.’ Our mission is an educational one as well as a practical response to need. We not only provide a domestic water filtration system, we give the training to use and maintain it.”

Rotarian Jim Raymond asked, “When I visited down there, we noticed many of them had the physical units, but they were filled with bananas or something else.”

“Yes,” smiled Pratt, “or used as a flower pot or for storing something else.

“We hope we’ve solved this. Today we use community agents, who are volunteers trained in maintaining the systems. We assign between 3 to 5 local people who are now part of our outreach group, and they walk into a home of someone they are acquainted with, asking, ‘How’s the system working? Is everything going, OK?’”

“It’s made a big difference in families’ lives because they now have a local person they can go to if they have a problem. And the volunteers are on regular rounds, too.”

Pratt emphasized the critical



A Honduran school is thankful for the WASH (Water And Sanitation & Hygiene) station provided by Pure Water for the World.

need for Pure Water’s and similar services around the world, “2.2 billion people lack reliable access to safely managed drinking water. 4.2 billion people have no access to safely managed sanitation and 3 billion people still lack basic hand-washing facilities at home.”

She estimated, “There are around one-million deaths every year due to unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene practices.”

Pure Water provides WASH (Water And Sanitation & Hygiene) stations to the rural and underserved, whether individual homes, schools or healthcare facilities. They also share their expertise and train other

NGOs, government entities, businesses, schools and others.

For example, one of the slides displayed a Bio-Sand Water Filter system, illustrating what’s been installed in 16,975 homes and 2,080 in schools. In a slide, featuring a Ceramic Water Filter system, it showed one of the 1,145 families whose home has received one. The organization has also installed 19 rainwater harvesting tanks in schools for water sourcing.

Sanitation tools include home latrines, gender-specific latrines in schools with hand-washing stations and the same at healthcare facilities, which

also get a shower. 2,742 latrines have been installed in homes, and 71 Honduran schools have received WASH stations. 86 schools in Haiti have gotten WASH stations.

In 2016, the Edgerton Interact Club – the Rotary outreach program for high school students – funded a WASH station and, in addition, a Bio-Sand Filter in the classroom. These served 6 female students and 15 male students, plus 1 teacher.

In 2017, the Edgerton Rotary Club funded a WASH station that served 22 female and 37 males students, as well as 2 teachers.

Photo courtesy of Pure Water for the World

Rotarian impacts continue with the recent Rotary WINS Initiative, selected by the South Rotary Club of Guatemala to provide WASH teacher training to 50 teachers and 12 Health Promoters, who will train over 800 more people.

“What I particularly like about Pure Water,” Pratt concluded, “is that over 90% of staff are serving in their countries, most native to the region and in touch with what’s going on.”

It’s that kind of grounded approach that particularly appeals to Rotarians, who like to see their dreams pragmatically better someone else’s future.

TRANSFER POLICY

During those discussions, Jim Raymond has warned his fellow board members that granting requests to move from Yahara Valley—a rural school with blended classrooms and smaller class sizes—to CES risks shrinking the student body to the point where it’s no longer viable to keep Yahara Valley open. Raymond attended Yahara Valley and has long been a vocal advocate for the school.

Board member Kathy Klein, on the other hand, has steadfastly maintained that the board should protect the rights of parents to send their children to the Edgerton elementary school of their choice. After all, the open enrollment system mandated by state law grants unfettered choice to parents who wish to move their students between districts—why should moves inside the district be any different?

New policy specifics
The policy adopted by the board on Monday night addresses several concerns raised by board members other than Raymond and Klein during the recent discussions.

For instance, it mandates that a student be allowed to finish fifth grade in the school where he or she began first grade, even if the student’s family moves outside the boundaries of the school where the student began first grade. It also mentions no role for the board of education in ruling on transfer requests.

Another concern raised during the debates was the fact that kindergarten students who live inside the Yahara Valley boundaries are forced to go to CES for classes because Yahara Valley doesn’t offer kindergarten classes. Board members addressed that issue by approving a separate motion Monday night to add kindergarten classes at Yahara Valley, beginning this fall.

The biggest change in the new policy is the setting of a floor of 16 for grade sizes at Yahara Valley and class sizes at CES. Here’s how the floor will work.

Say that the blended first grade/second classroom at Yahara Valley has 20 students. If four students from that classroom put in for transfers, the transfers would be granted. If five students from that classroom put in for transfers, a lottery would be conducted to determine which four would be allowed to transfer to CES. Transfers will also be granted when recommended by the team assigned to set curriculum and services for individual special needs students.

Raymond wondered if a

floor of 16 wasn’t too low. What about 18, he asked.

Raymond said he was worried that teachers at CES might look with envy upon the smaller class sizes enjoyed by their colleagues at Yahara Valley. Not to worry, said Lindsay Eimerman, the intermediate principal at CES who also serves as the principal at Yahara Valley.

“I’ve never heard anyone complain about or compare class sizes,” said Eimerman.

Pauli admitted that it was impossible to write a policy that would address every conceivable issue related to transfer requests.

“We will find areas where we say, ‘We didn’t think about this,’” Pauli said. “When that happens, we’ll come back to the board and say ‘We didn’t think about this.’”

Beginning in 2022, transfer requests under the new policy must be made between February 1 and March 1. For this year,

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requests must be made between April 27 and May 28.

Other business
Board members accepted the following gifts during Monday night’s meeting:

—Tools and tool boxes (value \$2,000) from Joe Nendze to the high school tech ed department

—\$1,250 from Jean Love to the high school, for the Jean North Falligant Scholarship.

Board members also accepted the resignations of Sheila Fox, an elementary school STEM teacher (effective June 4, 2021) and Gary Smith, the music teacher at the middle school (effective Aug. 1, 2021), and approved the following hires:

—Alan Northouse, intermediate principal at Community Elementary School, effective July 1, 2021

—Marissa Ruchti, middle school physical education teacher, effective Aug. 16, 2021.

Board OKs facilities director position

Edgertonians wishing to use facilities at the high school will soon have a point person to contact. During their meeting on Monday night, April 26, members of the Edgerton Board of Education unanimously approved a motion to create a half-time facilities and activities coordinator.

Tad Wehner, the district’s director of finance and personnel, told board members that having a facilities coordinator would help ensure that members of the community that approved a \$40 million referendum in 2018 are able to enjoy facilities improved with referendum dollars, including the refinished tennis courts.

Wehner said the facilities coordinator would perform the following tasks:

- Explain facility rules and COVID-19 protocols to youth sports organizers
- Create and track facility use agreements
- Coordinate schedules for the facilities
- Promote use of the facilities.

Wehner said the new half-time position would likely be filled by Jon Dupuis, who currently works half-time as the athletic director and half-time as a special ed teacher. Were Dupuis to become the activities and facilities coordinator, Wehner said, his teaching duties would be reassigned.

Experience The Difference



Standing: Theresa Gunderson, Bob Cullen, Dan Honold, Tony Astin and Jodi Schumacher.

Seated: Pat Larson, Steve Hein, Janis Frank, Amanda Benway, Danny Ozga and Wendi Sahr.

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