



ESSEX ROTARY CLUB – 75 YEARS OF SERVICE

It is indeed an honour not only to be able to speak on behalf of the Rotarians both past and present, but to do so as the sitting District Governor of District 6400. I am indeed proud to be an Essex Rotarian.

As I proceed to give you some idea about the scope and identity of the Essex Rotarians and their commitment to humanitarian efforts both in their community and in the international community, realize that I cannot in the time allotted give justice to all those Rotarians who have played a significant role. However I will try to identify some who I feel has made a long lasting effect.

Imagine you are in the year is 1934. The members of the Rotary Club of Windsor as it was then called (now Windsor 1918) were pestering the business leaders in Essex about how unfortunate it was that Essex did not have a Rotary Club. So on October 24th, 1934 a round-table discussion took place in the Dept. of Agriculture office about forming a service club in Essex. It was moved by Dr. Benson and seconded by H.W. Hall that George Weller, Jan Nightingale and W.R.Rodgers be a committee to interview prospective members for a new Rotary Service Club.

After visiting, Blenheim and Amherstburg, the committee decided if it was good enough for those towns to have Rotary Clubs it should be supported in Essex.

On Dec. 5th, 1934 the committee invited their new friends from Windsor to sit in and give first aid as they felt they were about to give birth to something, but just what, was the question. Rotarian Walter Mussleman was asked to be the physician at this meeting to explain the birthing procedure.

George Weller moved and Art Nightingale seconded, that a provisional Rotary club be formed in Essex. It was moved by lawyer Forbes Geddes that the Constitution and Bylaws of Rotary International be accepted. An election of officers was held and a new club was hatched. Charter night was held on Feb. 5, 1935 at the Town Hall on Talbot Street. At the Charter Night, the club received their “Baby Clothes” in District 23. They were known as Club # 3739. The baby gift came from the Blissfield Rotary Club who had been chartered in the fall of 1934. Essex would remain the “baby club” until the Vassar Michigan club (Tuscola County – Flint Tri-city, now part of D6330) was chartered on Tues, April 23, 1935.

To be able to tell those assembled here this evening all that this club has achieved over their 75 year history would be difficult and nearly impossible. Although there are some interesting news paper articles that complete a chronological list of events, it would take years to research and a book to detail. What I hope to do tonight is to highlight what I believe are some of the most significant items that this Rotary Club has been instrumental in creating.

THE EARLY YEARS

One of the first things that the Rotary club was asked to help with was to get the town to **provide more water to the Empire Food Co.** canning factory, which stood next to the town hall. A 4” water main was installed and that winter the Rotary club had **installed a**

155'x95' outdoor skating rink and Rotary involvement in youth recreation began.

Those early years also saw Rotarians involved in **Tonsil clinics** and **infantile paralysis (Polio) prevention** and in helping the children and their families who had been affected by this horrible virus. It is important to understand that Rotarian Edgar "Daddy" Allen (from Elyria Ohio) was responsible for starting the "**Crippled Children's Society in 1934**" an organization that Essex Rotarians were to embrace. In 1947 when the Windsor Rotary Club started the Ontario branch of the "**Easter Seals Society**" the Essex Rotary Club was one of the charter organizations to fund raise locally for this organization until reached the society reached their 70th birthday. Rotarian Ken Blackmorre and Henry Mulder were instrumental in the last 20 years of the Essex involvement of raising funds and administering this program.

It is also significant to acknowledge that Rotary in 1988 approached the WHO, UNICEF and CDC in Atlanta to help eradicate polio worldwide. In 1988 350,000 new cases in 125 countries while today only 4 countries still have endemic Polio with less than 2000 new cases each year. Rotary is in the last 1% of its eradication efforts. **Rotarians Julie Ricci has just returned from India this past week where she was part of a District6400 team participating in a Polio NID.**

Essex Rotary did not forget their obligation to the Windsor Club and on May 5th 1937 helped to **Charter the Harrow Rotary club** and again on July 26, 1940 they sponsored the **chartering of the Cottam Rotary club**. The Essex Club also **sponsored a Junior Rotary club in Essex**, a program that is now supported by Rotary through our high school Interact Clubs.

Fundraising Efforts

Keno, bingos, food sales of hotdogs, car shows and car races, donkey baseball, cake sales, Christmas nuts and chocolates, consignment sales, yard sales, were just some of the innovative ways that Essex rotary has raised funds. The Rotary Club efforts at fundraising in 1935-36 are not that much different from what the current club does in 2010

SIGNIFICANT PROGRAMS THAT HAVE HAD LONG TERM EFFECTS

In the early 1940's the Essex Rotary club **hosted an elementary school track and field meet (all county)**, the precursor to what is now the current elementary school athletic sports program.

In 1940 Essex Rotary began **sponsorship of a Boy Scout Troop and then in 1946**, Essex Rotarians **purchased the Presbyterian Church** on Alice Street for use as a permanent Scout hall and for the next 30 years sponsored cubs & scouting as well as providing a place for all scout groups in the town to use for their meetings. Rotarian Don Wilson, known to many as "Chief" and remembered in the town as one of Essex Citizens of the Year was one of the town's best known Scout Leaders. Ted Strickland also played a vital role in scouts as well. In April of 1991 Essex Rotary reactivated their charter for the 6th Essex Scouts group.

In 1937 Rotary **donated hybrid seed corn** to a number of young farmers. This program went on to be part of the Essex County Jr. Farmer's programs in Essex County. The club also sponsored the town's boy's band.

Another long-term association began between the **Salvation Army** and Essex Rotarians. The Rotarians on behalf of the Salvation Army Red Shield appeal canvassed the businesses in Essex to raise funds for the Appeal. This started in Essex in the early 1940's and

continued in Essex until past Rotary President Major Paul Gilbert left Essex 3 years ago. The support of the Salvation Army Christmas Basket program continued for many years and recently Essex Rotarians have continued this type of work by supporting the **Essex Food Bank** by supporting their van and this Christmas through a DSG the purchase of 200 turkeys and food. Essex Rotarians can be found pushing grocery carts collecting can goods for the Food Bank every year as the Santa Claus parade winds through Essex.

In 1989 rotary International voted to allow women to join Rotary. Essex rotary was one of the first clubs in the district to admit women and **Rotarian Sharon Brown** was one of the first to join. She served the club twice as president and also had a lasting effect on our youth programs as well as convincing many of the old guard that women in Rotary was one of the best thing that happened to Rotary in the last 20 years.

Essex Rotary has for years sponsored **high school bursaries, elementary school VIP programs, Adventures in Citizenship and Agriculture as well as support of town sports teams**. In the last 25 years Essex Rotary has become well known for the number of **Rotary Youth Exchange Students** that have not only been hosted by the club from abroad, but that have been sent from our local schools for a year of study in another country. **Nearly 40 in-bound students** from France, Belgium, Japan, Thailand, Australia to name just a few of the countries, call Essex their second home. **Nearly 60 out-bound students** over the last 25 years have formed family friendships in hosting countries all over the world. What better way to develop world peace and understanding than by having our youth learn firsthand how to make lasting friendships. A number of Rotarians were responsible over the years for assisting this program, but one family was most notable in the early years for hosting many students as well as GSE team members from abroad. They are Ron and Ann Hatch.

Essex Rotary has also been part of International service work. One of the very first **D6400 “Rotary Volunteers”** was Dr. Gord Brown who was recruited by his friend Murray Dryden who created SCAW and who was recognized by RI for his humanitarian efforts. Gord travelled on 23 trips with Murray and when he returned to Essex convinced the Essex Rotarians to support him by drilling water wells in communities that he had visited. **Several Essex Rotary Club Water wells** exist today in India, Sri Lanka, & Ethiopia to name just a few places.

Gord convinced fellow club member Gerald Calhoun and his wife to join him and June and they travelled together. Gerald later when returning to Ethiopia convinced Essex Rotarians to request a Rotary Matching Grant from TRF. This **\$47000 helped Essex purchase a medical mobile hospital vehicle for Addis Ababa, Ethiopia** in 1994 that was still in use some 10 years later when PDG Harlan Whichello visited Ethiopia as part of a TRF mission. **Henry Mulder** was the next world traveller to Africa taking with him typewriters, computers and eyeglasses. This year Essex Rotary has requested another TRF Grant for a total project of **\$53,200.00 to drill 12 wells in northern Nigeria** that will help assist Rotary’s Polio Eradication efforts. Many other Essex Rotarians have become Rotary Volunteers, **Dr. Julie Ricci in Haiti and India, Ina and Lance Oliver in Mexico, and my wife Cheryl and I in Ghana and Nigeria.**

Essex Rotarians were crucial to the committee that helped to build the first **Essex Arena**. When the idea for Essex to build an arena took shape in the early 1960’s Essex Rotarians and Kinsmen worked together to fund raise for this project. Rotarian Cliff Cox was a fixture at the arena not only as the contractor to help build the old barn but in financing hockey teams as well.

This community partnership of service clubs working together has continued over the years through many community projects. In 1980, The Rotarians led by former Chief of Police Ed Primeau

recruited support from the lions club and the Legion to support buying the **Town of Essex first Jaws of Life**. Who was the salesman of those Jaws, none other than ADG Arnie Charlton then living in Mississauga. Essex Rotarians were the first service club to step forward and pledge a contribution of **\$50,000 towards the Arts, Culture and Recreation centre** at the high school and have also joined in the funding of the **Essex Train Station restoration**, the new Essex arena.

In 1985 on the club's 50th anniversary they placed a **sign at the high school** to announce upcoming school and community events; this sign was replaced through support of Rotary, the Kinsmen and the Legion 20 years later as part of a DSG. The **town clock** was a gift to the town in 1995 on the club's 60th anniversary. In 2005 on Rotary Internationals 100th anniversary and the club 70th birthday the club donated the **Essex Rotary Mural** to the town outlining the service Rotary has performed for the town over the first 70 years.

In the 1970's the Essex Rotary Club supported the formation of the Essex Social Planning Council now called Essex Community Services. Earl Heil was instrumental in encouraging the start of a senior citizens vehicle that Essex Rotary continues to support. Several Essex Rotarians served as Chair of the early group including Earl Heil and myself.

Since 1986 when the town's Chamber of Commerce changed to the Essex BIA. Essex Rotary was asked by the town leaders to organize the **Essex Citizen of the Year Awards**. Rotary to this day continues with support from the K of C and Heritage Essex to organize this community event. Rotarian Rick Barnett has been instrumental on our part in this endeavour.

In 1990 Essex Rotary took special interest in the **Sadler's Park area**. This park donated to the town by the Sadler families two of whom played instrumental roles as presidents in the 1960's. Essex Rotarians have built a picnic shelter, placed a flower garden and

refuse containers along with picnic tables and benches for those that use the park. In 2005, through a partnership with the town of Essex and ERCA, and Rotary and support from a Trillium Grant, the first phase of the **Essex to Amherstburg walking trail** was constructed.

In the last decade the guard has started to change and leadership has come from many Rotarians who have been in the club less than 15 years. Current President Frank Mazzara serving his second term as president in our Anniversary year as well as the Hyland , Ricci, Oliver, Stowe families are starting to make their mark on this community.

One of the things that have made Essex Rotarians well known across the District is their support of the Rotary Foundation. This club was the first in the **District to achieve 100% Paul Harris Foundation Status**. They have led the clubs in the **District in APF giving by per capita** and I have the pleasure to night to present to the club last years recognition as the **# 1 club in the District and also the 100% EREY participation**.

75 years of community and international pride. Essex Rotarians are as committed today as they were in 1935 to making Essex better and a great place to live or visit. Essex Rotarians, stand up and be proudly recognized.

DG Neil McBeth