

Columns

Costa Rican Rotarians visit High River

The Rotary Club of High River hosted two special guests from Costa Rica on Oct. 18. Fabio Carballo was in Alberta to speak at the microcredit conference in Calgary on Oct. 13.

Carballo is one of the founders and former vice chairman of the Rotary Action Group for Microcredit (RAGM), past Rotary district governor for the central American countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, organizer of the Costa Rica Uniendo America Project Fair and member of the Rotary Club of San Jose, Costa Rica.

Carballo is a lawyer by profession, and his partner Dr. Melania Pacheco is a dentist.

During Carballo's presentation at the Rotary meeting, he praised the High River club's president Wally Gardiner, who is actively involved with RAGM.

"Wally is a tremendous ambassador. You should be so proud. He has such a big heart," Carballo said. "You are changing the lives of people in Costa Rica."

Carballo showed a video on his country, saying the Happy Planet Index declared Costa Rica to be the world's happiest country.

He said Costa Rica has no military forces. Instead, money now goes to health and education.

Carballo gave an overview of Rotary's activities in Costa Rica.

"The bonds of friendship between San Jose, Noreste and Albertans have changed



Maureen McManus
Rotary Report

many lives, brought smiles, tears of joy and hugs," he said. "From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you."

Microcredit conference

Some High River Rotarians attended the fifth annual microcredit conference in Calgary on Oct. 13 to learn how people living on low incomes can move out of poverty the micro way.

As well as topics about international development, there were presentations about domestic microfinance projects.

For example, Steve Pedersen talked about the Southwest Alberta Community Loan (SWACL) fund.

He highlighted the experiences and future outlook of SWACL in the start-up of this organization to offer loans and microfinance to entrepreneurs in rural Alberta.

Selim Fahmy spoke about Grameen North America which is based in New York City.

The original Grameen microfinance bank was established in Bangladesh, South Asia by Nobel Peace Prize recipient Muhammad Yunus. With RAGM, Fahmy is exploring the

possibility of Grameen microbanking coming to Montreal or Toronto.

SOS Children's Villages

Myra Miller is Western Regional Representative for SOS Children's Villages Canada. She was the guest speaker at the Rotary Club of High River on Oct. 25.

"SOS is the largest orphan-serving agency in the world," Miller said.

In fact, this organization was formed more than 60 years ago in Austria to help orphaned and abandoned children have a caring, loving and secure home environment.

It is now active in 130 countries with 1,700 projects, including one in Surrey, B.C. that helps mostly aboriginal children. SOS Children's Villages Canada was founded in 1969.

Among its supporters in High River are Rotarians Maureen McManus and Maurice Walsh, and Scott Tannas, who is on the SOS Board of Directors.

Tannas and his colleagues at Western Financial Group raised \$25,000 to run a home in the SOS Village of Ondangwa, Namibia.

Highwood Lions Club donation

Ina Carson and Irene Brown represented the Highwood Lions Club at the Oct. 25 Rotary meeting. They presented a cheque for \$1,000 to Rotarian Jim Ross for the cancer treatment room at High River Hospital. This was added to the net amount of \$96,300 raised at the Rotary art show and sale in October.



Rotarians Dr. Melanie Pacheco and Fabio Carballo from High River hold Rotary banners from club president Wally Gardiner.



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Photo courtesy of Maureen McManus
Rotarians Dr. Melanie Pacheco and Fabio Carballo from Costa Rica accept the High River Rotary banners from club president Wally Gardiner.