

"I had no idea how many friends I could make just by having one thing in common!"

Following are the transcripts of the presentations of members of the New Century Middle School Rota-Runner Club given at Rotary District 7690 Conference, April 25, 2005, Sea Trail, Sunset Beach, North Carolina:

The New Century Middle School Rota-Runner Club was designated as the first middle school Rotary Club in the world. Due to the collaborative efforts of many individuals, 'middle school students have been learning about, "Sowing the seeds of love" and accomplishing "World peace through understanding". Carthage Rotary Club in Carthage, N.C., especially Robert Nunnaley, launched the Rotarian middle school program. Cathy Harpster, Union Pines High School Interact Faculty Advisor, was instrumental during the start-up phase. I also want to acknowledge the support and commitment of two colleagues Charlene Vermeulen and Pam Bradley.

In October 2002, Henry Brown, District Governor, District 7690 and Felton Capel, Past District Governor, District 7690 came to New Century Middle School to preside over the student induction ceremony. Rota-Runner Membership consists of about thirty active students and many parent volunteers. The club elected four officers and held meetings once or twice a month as needed. It has been a gratifying experience to serve as faculty advisor and be a part of this youthful initiative. Read on to hear about some of the projects the club attempted this year.

Sincerely,
Caryl Waits
School Counselor



Back Row: "JustPat" Lowenstein, DG Henry Brown,
Elliot Lowenstein, Caryl Waits, AG Rob Nunnaley.
Front Row: Rota-Runners (all in 6th grade): Venson Nunnaley Meghan Osborne,
Secretary/Treasurer Taylor Bridgers, President Will Maness, Vice-president
Jake Waits

Hey, my name is Venson Nunnaley and I'm from the New Century Middle School Rota-Runner Club. I first got into the Rota-Runner Club because my dad was helping out with the meetings and stuff like that. Another reason I got in the Rota-Runner Club was because most of my friends joined too.

One project we did was raise money for a boy at our school who was sick. The first thing we did was we decorated big envelopes for each classroom to put their donations in. Our school raised over \$800.00. After a while we collected the money and we gave it to the family for the doctor bills or for more treatments. His sickness was diabetes. Although he didn't survive, the family was grateful for what we did.

Hi, my name is Jake and I am a 6th grader from New Century Middle School. At first I joined the Rota-Runner Club because a lot of my friends joined, but so far I have greatly enjoyed being in the Rota-Runner Club. In October of 2002 the Rota-Runners went to the Hunted Forest at Sandhills Community College. We went through it and, boy, it was scary. It was an icebreaker for those of us who didn't know each other and a social for those who did! We all had a great time. We even dressed up in costumes and had a good scare! There were caves with things jumping out, glowing eyes, haywire machinery, and operating tables gone bad! We liked it so much, that some of us went through twice.

Even though we do a lot of community service projects it's not like we don't have fun, we do all sorts of fun things - just like this. Thanks for asking us to be a part of the Regional Rotary Conference!

Hi, my name is Will Maness, and I am Vice President of the Rota-Runner Club at New Century Middle School. First of all, I would like to thank you for giving my fellow classmates and me the opportunity to do something this extraordinary. I first joined the Rota-Runner Club because most of my friends joined and there was free food. But once I became involved, I found out the true mission of Rotary and knew that I wanted to be a part.

We have done many things in the Rota-Runner Club and one of them was the Relay for Life. The Relay for Life is a fun-filled, overnight event designed to celebrate survivorship and raise money for research and programs for the American Cancer Society. During the event, teams of people gather together at our high school and take turns walking or running laps. Each team tries to keep at least one member on the track at all times. Because of time our group did not spend the night, but went for opening ceremonies and walked for a few hours. All of our club members collected money and in less than six weeks we raised over \$2,000.00, which was donated to the Relay.

Relay for Life represents the hope that those lost to cancer will never be forgotten and that those who face cancer will be supported and that one-day cancer will be eliminated. It really made me feel good to be a part of this event because both of my grandparents died from cancer. Whenever I help people it gives me a good feeling inside. I know I am doing the right thing, whether it is washing somebody's car or giving somebody advice, or even just sparing a few pieces of change.

Again, thank you for this opportunity.

When my 6th grade counselor came to my homeroom and gave me a flier about a club starting at our school the first thing I thought was, "I'm only going to join if my friends will, too. I should thank them because if they had not pushed me to come to the meetings, I wouldn't be here right now.

The first thing that we had to take care of when we started our Rotary Club was to elect officers, create a name, and have our induction ceremony. It was hard electing officers because you didn't know which friend you wanted to be your leader. That's where the four-way test came in handy for me. I thought, "Will this person tell us the truth and always be fair? Will they help us make this club different for the better?" With those questions in mind, it made a big difference in who I voted for. When all the officers were put in their positions, we had to create a name for our club. We had many choices, but finally we decided on Rota-Runners. I voted on this name because it showed how we could help run to serve our community. When we had all of the business taken care of, we had our induction ceremony. This was the moment when I knew that I was not in a dream and that the whole thing was real. I was given a secretary pin to wear on my shirt and a card that placed on my wall, so that I could remember that I am part of the New Century Middle School Rota-Runners. This was my favorite moment because I knew we had gotten off to a great start.

Once our club was ready to take action, we started on a couple of different projects. We ran the Relay for Life, collected donations for our dear friend, created Christmas cards for a nursing home, and held a car wash to raise money for us to travel to Sunset Beach. In many ways, the car wash was my favorite project because it was the first time we had gotten together as one and worked at something until it was complete. The first thing we had to do was set the prices for the car wash. We decided that we would let people pay what they thought we earned. Then, we made sure that we spread the word about the car wash. We decorated signs to hand around the school and had Ms. Fry, our principal make an announcement over the intercom. Next, we got everyone to bring in supplies for the long day, like sponges, rags, buckets, hoses, and soap. When the big day finally arrived, everyone came in with snacks and bathing suits ready for the big day. We made a plan to use shifts, and then started our jobs. Some people were in charge of rinsing and wetting while some were in charge of holding the signs. It took a lot of effort but by the end of the day, we had raised \$147.00 in about 4 hours.

So far, being in the Rota-Runner Club has really made a difference in my life. It has shown me many things like friendship, kindness, leadership, and other lessons that I will need to know all throughout my life. I had no idea how many friends I could make just by having one thing in common! I have also been shown many ways to share my thoughtfulness toward others even when I felt like I was the one who needed it. I have watched Taylor and Will lead the rest of the club this year. They are one of the best examples in how you should be a leader. I once thought that to be a leader you need to be bossy, strict, and the best at everything. Now that I have watched my friends, I realize that is not what leadership is about at all. To be a leader you must be able to understand the people that you are leading, you need to be aware of their feelings, and most importantly, you should be a good listener as well as a talker. Even though you are considered the biggest, that does not change how you should act towards your fellow club members.

I have truly learned a lot this year, but the biggest lesson that I have learned, is to follow the golden rule: do unto others, as you would have them do unto you. Without this rule, I might have never even thought about how other people feel besides me.

Meghan Osborne,
Secretary

Hi, my name is Taylor, and I am here to represent the New Century Middle School Rota-Runner Club as their president. At first when I joined the Rota-Runner Club, I didn't really know what it was about. Once the year started, I realized that this would be an experience that I would remember forever. We all had a great time starting. First we had to elect officers. That was the best part because that was the day I became president. Next we had an induction ceremony and received pins of honor that let everyone know our important role in the Rota-Runner Club. WE had to make up a name for our club and learn how to run the meetings. At first when I started as president, I thought that this would be a very easy task and that all I had to do was to be there. I found that in order to be a leader you have to set a good example and let others know how much you care.

I have had a great time being president and learned a lot of new things. I learned how to run the meetings, and how to respond to other members' ideas. Rota-Runners has helped me become a better person in ways such as learning to respect others. Before I could respect others, I had to respect myself and believe in myself. Because of that I have had some of the best times just by learning and interacting with the community. We did many projects and had a great time doing them. It wouldn't have been the same without the help of our sponsor, Carthage Rotary, and Andrew Gardner and Olajunn Lyles from the Pinecrest High School Interact Club. We also could have never done this without the wonderful support and time of Ms. Caryl Waits and Mrs. Charlene Vermeulen.

One of the projects was to make decorative Christmas cards to send to the local nursing home. We all gathered after school, watched the movie 'How the Grinch Stole Christmas' and created holiday Christmas cards using markers, glue, cut-outs and our creativity. The project was very fun and easy and let all the members spread joy to at least one

person's heart this past Christmas. Then we went over to Tara Plantation and handed the cards out to all the senior citizens. We hugged and talked and laughed and wished everyone a Merry Christmas. Everyone was interested in where we had come from and asked us questions about ourselves and thanked us for visiting. Just before we left, the administrator told us how much this meant to everybody and told us we were welcome to come back and read to the residents. It felt good making all those people have a better holiday, but it felt even better knowing that we gave back to our community. We realized how much a difference we really made in our friends' hearts. Some the residents might not have even received a Christmas card this year. "The littlest things make the biggest difference," is what my mom always says, and come to find out it's true.

This past year Rota-Runners has brought out the best person in me. I have watched my fellow officers smiling and helping people all along the way. Really that is what Rotary is about, helping others. Even if they don't need it, still letting them know that you care. Every community needs a helping hand. Our help was handed down through love and generosity in the first-ever middle school Rotary club. I never thought that one club could change my outlook on life forever. But, I was wrong, because it can, and it did.

Thank you

Taylor Bridgers

President

