



ROTALEC – a fresh view



Introduction

Rotalec, an acronym for **ROTARY LIFE EDUCATION CENTRE**, has come a long way since it was started in 1996 by five Rotary Clubs in the West area. These Clubs were Chelsea, Fulham, Hammersmith, Kensington & Shepherd's Bush. These five Clubs still provide the Trustees and Management Committee personnel today. The current Chairman (third) is Popo Pruthi of Kensington; Secretary is Ian Caldwell of Chelsea and Treasurer is Alexandra Lloyd-Jones of Shepherd's Bush. The five original sponsoring Clubs and have been contributing considerably both in volunteers and financial support over the past 9 years but this now needs to change. More Clubs need to get involved.

The Mission Statement

Rotalec's mission statement has changed and now reads

To work in partnership with schools and engage with others in the community to help children make healthy choices by:

- **Contributing to life skills & health education programmes utilising models of best practice**
- **Educating children about the best effects and risks associated with the use of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco.**
- **Working with and supporting parents, carers, teachers and others in the community in communicating healthy lifestyles messages effectively.**

What has NOT changed is that Rotalec still provides this service this service by means of sending mobile classrooms to Primary Schools in Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster on a regular basis and in the last year over 22,000 children were educated as per our mission statement. In addition we sometimes receive requests from Schools in other boroughs which we service on an ad hoc basis with the occasional and sporadic help of other Rotary Clubs in District 1130.



What has been achieved so far

We now have 2 mobile classrooms and 3 part-time highly qualified and able educators. Running costs are at approx. £175,000 per annum whilst we are only able to recover about £70,000 from the schools visited. Rest comes from LEAs and fund raising. It costs us £ 7+ per child to deliver the service but most schools are only able to pay £ 3 – 3.50 per child. So it is an uphill task all the way. Salaries are on the increase but revenues remain static and are always under pressure. The only way forward now is to raise Corporate Funding & Sponsorship. This is now being tackled by the Chairman himself but he is in desperate need of volunteer help from Rotary Clubs other than the sponsoring ones.

Moving into the City of Westminster about three years ago has been very successful but not so the involvement of Clubs in that area. Help has been received from both Paddington and London Clubs but not yet on a fully committed basis. The help has been most helpful and Rotalec is very thankful for it. It has saved a few schools from opting out of the program because of their inability to pay.

Volunteering help is also required. We need trustees from Clubs in Westminster so that the needs of that area can be fully understood and met. We need volunteers to help out in monitoring & appraising the services provided in that area. We need help to raise Corporate Funds in that area to meet the costs of providing the service.

We need to add many more names to ‘sponsors’ as shown in the picture below; both from within Rotary and out of Rotary.



Additions have been made to the National Curriculum by Government but no provision seems to have been made for funding the same. So every one is in a state of flux and all avenues are being explored. We need all the help we can get. To achieve economies of scale it is felt that expansion of the scheme would be highly beneficial. Ideally we have to aim for slow expansion so that all boroughs become part of Rotaltec and every child in Central London gets the opportunity of making healthy choices they need and deserve.

The All Important Funding

The method of funding has also been changed and funds which we received from Local Education Authorities is now given to Schools themselves who now have the choice to spend it as they like. Various Head Teachers have different priorities and sometimes they opt out of the scheme. A very short sighted policy as they themselves are not yet equipped to educate the children in the areas of making healthy choices in food consumption and drug, alcohol & tobacco abuse prevention. Rotaltec delivers such a service. Children also need to take this knowledge home and guide their parents. Rotaltec has already started a parents session in the Schools they visit and material is being produced by Life Education Centres to enable us to deliver ‘Parenting Guidance’ sessions – another area now part of the National Curriculum: NBD (not being delivered) – YET. Children one day may well be the fathers of Men.

The New Partner

The partnership between Rotary and Life Education Centres is being enhanced by the introduction of BUPA as the third partner. Their brief (from Government who suggested it to them as leaders in Medical Insurance) is to help (financially develop) expand the services which Rotalec delivers to school children in Central London. This will certainly expand to other areas of London within the purview of District 1130. Rotalec is the biggest COMMUNITY project ever undertaken in our District and slowly but surely it will cover, one day, all areas of London.

Time is precious and wasting it a crime. There is much work to be done. It has been forecast that 2005 is the first year since the end of World War 2 that the life expectancy of children born this year will be less than that of their parents. Do we really want to leave this very poor legacy? i.e. UNLESS CHILDREN'S LIFESTYLES CHANGE!

What you can do now

So let us not tarry but try to solve this dilemma as Rotarians should. The children are our future and the future of our Country. Rotalec affords us the opportunity to make a significant difference. Lets not waste it. If there are still questions in your mind please ask the Chairman to visit your Club and speak and answer your questions. His details are in the District Directory under Community and Vocational Service. He can also be contacted on popo@pruthi.freeserve.co.uk.