

Rotary Club of Cooma Inc

Meeting – 2 April 2014

Rob & Cheryl Pirie - Raising children with special needs



Rob & Cheryl have 2 boys Liam 16 and Ronan 11. Ronan was diagnosed with Autism in 2008 when he was 5 years old. Autism and Asperger's are both classified under the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The word spectrum described the large range of difficulties people with this disorder may have & the difference in degree to which they may have them. ASD is a life long developmental disability. ASD has no known single cause and no cure. People with ASD can benefit greatly from early intervention. Without the help of the Monaro Early Intervention Service & their occupational therapist the family would be in a very different place today. Cheryl feels without the support they have received she & Rob may not be married now due to the amount of stress the situation put on their relationship. Cheryl describes her journey of raising a son with Autism like moving through a maze with many twists and turns. You might even need to move backwards in order to move forward. Ronan's life is also like a maze but his has doors which block his way forward. Some doors are easy to open but many a jammed closed or even locked. Cheryl's challenge has been to meet these doors as they encounter them & workout how, when & even whether she should try to get them open. The doors in Ronan's life have been many and varied. They have included fine & gross motor skill delays, language skills - he is very literal, verbal instructions need to be clear & limited and he needs more time to answer when asked a question as processing what has been asked takes longer. Lessons learnt in one situation may need to be re-learnt in another situation. Ronan is sensitive to sound & he lacks a sense of smell. When he was younger he didn't like to be hugged or even having his hand held. Social skills were very challenging and he has a limited number of interests. He can't interpret body language and also has a number of quirky behaviours that sometimes need to be modified to make them more socially acceptable. Anxieties will continue to be a life-long issue. Sensory overload leads to meltdowns which is not to be confused with attention getting behaviours. These doors have all been dealt with by understanding & acceptance; wisdom & perseverance; patience & joy; humour & creativity. Also with help from professionals, friends & other parents. Learning which doors to push through & which doors to come back to later.

Facets of raising a child with special needs include:

Grieving - when they first learnt of the diagnosis there was a sense of lose and grief for the things that were not to be. They didn't stay there long & dealt with it by getting busy & seeing what they could do. They responded by seeking practical help.

Bureaucracy - Don't give up, ask lots of questions. If something doesn't gel with other information you have heard, keep digging until you find the truth. This is particularly true with government departments. Become your own expert.

Being a mirror - The boys have been a mirror reflecting things in his life back at Rob. This has enabled him to understand himself better and become a better father and husband.

Losses & gains - There are losses and gains with having children with special needs. For example Ronan has learning delays which are made up for by his caring spirit.

Truth - Don't expect to be believed by some people regarding your child's condition. If you have a child with ASD the disability is not obvious to people who only see them some of the time or don't take the time to see them at all.

They may not be where they want to be but they are not where they used to be. Each person with ASD is a unique combination of factors so see them for who they are.

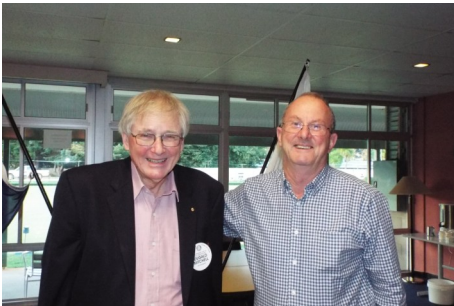


Thought of the Week - Jim H

Wherever there is a human being there is an opportunity for kindness

Rotary Theme of the Month: Magazine Month

The 3 Minuter this week was from Peter D. He shared with us a story about when, in 2001, he won an essay competition for a story titled Ghosts of Gallipoli. He entered this competition and thought he was pretty lucky to win. The prize was a trip to Gallipoli. So off he and Narelle went for 16 days in Turkey with 6 days at the battlefields of Gallipoli. In the late 1990's bushfires had been through the area. Fire fighting in that area could not be done directly due to the unexploded ordinance in the area. So part of the fire fighting effort was to bulldoze a track down a sharp ridge called Russell's Top, this funnelled water down the hill. The water had rushed down the hill and exposed a set of tunnels, which he found. Being safety conscious and wary of enclosed spaces he borrowed a torch and went down the tunnel. As he was crawling along he noticed small holes in the wall where candles had been set. While moving along he noticed the tunnel zigzagged. This was to stop the tunnels collapsing from bombs being dropped. At one point he turned the torch off, it was pitch black. He turned the torch on again and kept moving forward. He did wonder if he would find a body, machine gun or bullets down there. Finally he decided it was time to turn back. As he was leaving he wondered if this was where the ghosts of his essay were to be found.



Claire N wished to share that the movie night was a great success. Many people attended and asked her to pass on to Rotary their thanks for a very enjoyable evening. From the funds raised approximately \$600 will be given to the Hospital Auxiliary and the Community Chest.

Request for Assistance – Rotary Peace Fellows

As previously advised, the Peace Fellows who are undertaking the Masters in International Studies in peace and Conflict Resolution at the Rotary Centre at UQ in Brisbane in the current year will be visiting Canberra **May 3- May 6 2014**. The Fellows will follow a programme of professional, academic and cultural visits that aims to introduce them to Canberra and some key actors in the peace and conflict resolution space here. Of course, many local Rotarians will also be involved in the programme, in particular **the formal dinner to be held on the evening of Monday May 5**, at which the Peace Fellows will describe their work and talk about their plans. This is being publicised separately and **ticket sales will open shortly on the District website**.

We are also seeking support from Canberra clubs to assist in the accommodation and transport of the Fellows.

We already have some offers of assistance for accommodation, but there will be at least 10 scholars, so we still need several more. Could you **ask if any of your members would be willing to act as Home Hosts** for one or two of the Fellows during this visit - providing accommodation for the nights of 3, 4 and 5 May. In addition, subject to finalisation, it would involve meeting their guests for dinner on the evening of Saturday 3 May (the District bears the cost of this dinner); transport to a central point on the mornings of 4, 5 and 6 May; transport from a central point on the evening of 4 May and to and from the formal dinner on 5 May; and providing a simple dinner at home with their guests on Sunday 4 May.

Could you also please ask if any of your members, although not able to provide accommodation, **might be interested in assisting with transport** or other arrangements on these dates. This need not be for the entire period: if people can just nominate when they might be available between the afternoon of 3 May and the evening of 6 May, we will populate the roster.

We understand that this visit coincides with the District Assembly, but there was no alternative date and this is a wonderful opportunity to meet some very interesting and inspiring young people who are participating in a key Rotary programme. We do hope some of your members will be able to benefit from it.

Rotarians who are interested in helping in either of these ways should email the Peace Fellows Committee chair, Garth Britton (garth.britton@netspeed.com.au).

Easter Bonnet And Hat Parade



EASTER SUNDAY
20 APRIL 2014

at the Rotary Markets in Centennial Park

Join in the fun

Create your original Easter bonnet or hat



Judging - 11.30



PRIZES - Adult (female & male) - Student

No entry fee - receive an Easter egg just for entering!

| April Rosters | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Attendance | Richard L |
| | Tracey A |
| Property | Wolfgang |
| | Patrick K |
| Fellowship | Margaret E |
| | Claire N |
| Market | John K - Co-ord |
| | Alyson - PA |
| | Marco (BBQ trailer) |
| | Elaine S |
| | Robb S |
| | Tony S |
| | Les S |
| | Darrell G |
| 3 Minute Talk | |
| 9 April | Robb S |
| 16 April | Tony S |
| 23 April | Les S |
| Thought of the week | |
| 9 April | Tracey A |
| 16 April | Tom B |
| 23 April | Geoff B |
| Introduction | |
| 9 April | Kevin D |
| 16 April | Margaret E |
| 23 April | Graham F |
| Thank you | |
| 9 April | John C |
| 16 April | Ashley C |
| 23 April | Mark C |

| Upcoming Speakers |
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| 9th April - Doug Alcock Graz Prophet Consulting |
| 16th April - Ian McGufficke Combined meeting with Tuggeranong at Bredbo |
| 23rd April - Gary Nairn Life after Politics |
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MEMBER HAPPENINGS April

BIRTHDAYS

Des T - 15 April

Geoff B - 17 April

JOINING DATE

None recorded

ANNIVERSARIES

Dave & Trish Libauer - 20 April

This Weeks Attendance: 70.5%

Visiting Rotarians:

Guests: Rob & Cheryl Pirie (Club), Rohan Pirie (Margaret E), Christina Laub (Wolfgang), Jan Sutcliff (Les), Rebecca Fisher (Neil)

Apologies:

Leave:

Make-ups:

We Also Missed:

The contact for making apologies and for notifications of guests for dinner meetings is
Les Sutcliffe on 6452 7442 during business hours or e-mail leecooma@bigpond.com