WORLD HEALTH FAIRS RAG BECOMES HEALTH EDUCATION & WELLNESS RAG

The World Health Fairs Rotarian Action Group (WHFRAG) was formed in 2006 by Rotarians working to improve world health. In Spring 2014, its officers were contacted by Rotarians who created and administered a successful Global Grant program of health education and preventive dental care for children in Kenya. Because of considerable interest in extending that project’s basic principles to other geographic areas, age groups, and health issues, its leaders reached out to the WHFRAG Board about combining efforts. The groups met in Sydney and have communicated regularly since then to develop and refine ideas for building awareness, providing information, and promoting health education. While Health Fairs will continue to be a major forum for delivery of services, information, and treatment, there will be an expanded emphasis on health education including lifestyle choices and disease prevention.

This recent activity, infusion of new leadership, and expansion of the scope of purpose has led to a corresponding change of our name from the World Health Fairs Rotarian Action Group to the Health Education and Wellness Rotarian Action Group, HEWRAG. We believe this broader scope will enhance our ability to help Rotary Districts and Clubs to plan and implement health-related projects.

HISTORY of WORLD HEALTH FAIRS

1998 – the Russian ruble crashed. Our friends had a tough winter in the dark and cold. No electricity, no heat, no light. What could we do? We could help folks find ways to cope with their own health, give them hope. We did, and they responded.

The Health Fair in Russia was born in Yelizovo on the Kamchatka Peninsula. People are finding ways to live healthier lifestyles, to have hope for themselves, their families and communities. Prevention is the intention! Profilaktika-nasha taktika! ¡La Salud Vamos a Duidar!

Milestones:
February 2007 – The Rotary International Board approved World Health Fairs as a Rotarian Action Group
June 2007 – Brochure published – over 1,000 copies distributed
June 2007 – Salt Lake City — first meeting of the World Health Fairs RAG
September 2007 – WHFRAG web site online.

Membership 2009:
158 members, including 16 life, from 26 countries

Operations:
Russia - 13 Health Fair Centers and 3 satellite offices were fully operational, or in final planning for service.
Vladivostok with Satellite offices in Yelizovo (Kamchatka) and Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Khabarovsk, Blagoveschensk, Yakutsk, Irkutsk with a Satellite in Ulan Ude, Chita, Kursk, St. Petersburg, Nijinii Novgorod, Moscow (East), Dubna, Tver, and Ulyanovsk

Health Fairs have been conducted and are targeted at many different audiences, but the most popular is youth. Some disease specific health fairs have been held, such as HIV/AIDS, diabetes or hypertension. Mobile health fairs have helped to deliver preventive health care to smaller communities. A Rotary 3-H grant has helped seed this effort. Open World has begun selecting health fair/Rotary personnel for their training/exchange programs.

Philippines:
The first health fair was held in November 2006 by members of the Paranaque East Rotary Club, under the able guidance of PP Ric Santiago. Plans are to expand to other areas with cooperation from PDG Ben Hanson.

Mexico:
Merida, Yucatan
PDG David and his wife Ruby Gonzalez are spearheading efforts in the Merida area, and have conducted health fairs in D 4200 communities of Progresso, Vera Cruz, Chetumal, Motul, Izamal and Cozumal. A group 5 Rotarians and one non Rotarian from District 7080 participated in the Health fair In Merida, Mexico. with 3 Rotarians from Homer, Alaska. It was organized by 4 of 5 Clubs in the city. 2000 local people from the poorer area participated in the Health Fair. Children from the local schools also received information on drug abuse, harmful use of tobacco, diet, and general health issues.
There were several workshops, on sexual abuse, dental hygiene, maternity clinic, blood pressure clinic and many others. The Lion’s Club dispensed eye glasses. The members from District 7080 donated Dental supplies, used eyeglasses to the Lion’s Club and 4 Hearing Aids. It was a very rewarding experience for all the Rotarians and guests.
This will be repeated again in 2008. (submitted by Hajra Wilson from Canada).

PDG Gonzalez and PDG Doug Vincent from D 7080 in Canada have plans to expand into other parts of Mexico.

Villahermosa, Tabasco:

PP Sofia Falcon and her husband Rotarian Angel Castillo Dorantes have conducted health fairs in Villahermosa for a number of years. They are large affairs with 10,000 citizens attending over a three day period. They have plans to expand into other communities of Tabasco State.

Fiji:
PDG Warwick Pless reports that a three year series of highly successful health fairs which served 1% of the population are now being conducted by the government. Thus this has been a program seeded by Rotary which now exhibits a good level of sustainability. Some small Rotary clubs are continuing to provide health fairs.
Mongolia:
A health fair was held in June 2006, attended by WHFRAG Co-Chair PDG Steve Yoshida.

Thailand:
We are in the beginning stages of a health fair program in the northern area of Chaing Mai.

United States:
The Homer (Alaska) Kachemak Bay Rotary will be conducting its 24th annual health fair on November 10, 2007. Rotarians from this club were responsible for initiating the Rotary World Health Fair Program.
HealthFair based in Denver, Colorado, conducts over 160 health fairs in the State of Colorado during a two week period in April. At least 3 Open World Health Fair Teams will be participating in these fairs as observers.
Alaska Health Fair Inc conducts health fairs across the State of Alaska, including many remote villages.
They have regional offices in the three major cities of Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau.

Leadership:
Founding Co-Chairs are PDG Steve Yoshida and PP Will Files of the Homer Kachemak Bay Rotary.
DG Maynard Gross (D5010) serves as treasurer, and PP Evgenia Klokova from the Vladivostok Central Rotary is Secretary.
Directors are from Russia, the Philippines, Mexico, Fiji, and Canada, including PRID Grant Wilkins of Colorado.

Future Goals:
Efforts are underway to expand into Colombia at the request of PRID Jose Antonio Salazar. Other South and Central American countries are also being considered. We will be working with members from other countries, but a high priority is Africa.

 acknowledgements to the Group, Members and Webmaster
posted by RGHF Webmaster, Greg Barlow. March 2009