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This is news from Jessica Bachman,  
Your Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar to Bangalore District 3190.  
From Tri-Town Rotary Club and District 7890

I have been in India for about a month and a half and have lots to update you on. First of all, the Bangalore Rotary clubs have been instrumental in helping me adjust to life in India. I could not have done it without their support. My counselors, Narayan, Asst. Governor for district 3190 and Chitra Raghavan have gone above and beyond their role to advise and guide me through a difficult cultural transition. They have welcomed me into their home as part of the family. They take me along on fun weekend outings and to friends' homes for pujas (Hindu spiritual ceremonies), festivals and general get-together.

Narayan is very involved in his local Rotary club, and I often attend their meetings and functions. A few weeks ago I went to a meeting where the chief speaker was a famous Indian cartoonist! He was by far one of the most interesting speakers I have seen. After a short talk on the cartooning profession he drew impressions of people at the meeting including myself, the Rotary President, Rotarians' children and other members. In an ingenious fund-raising move, the club treasurer then auctioned off the impromptu cartoons to the highest bidder. The profit was then split between the speaker and the club purse. My caricature was not auctioned off, however, because I was a guest. I felt very honored.

More than anything, however, Narayan and Chitra are always there to support me and lift my spirits when the going gets rough. India is a wonderful, lively country, bursting with life and action. But I am also experiencing many challenges, and so their love, friendship and outreach mean a lot to me.

The other Rotarian who has been in contact with me since the moment I informed the Bangalore Rotary District that I would be coming is Mr. Suresh Bhat, former president of Bangalore South Rotary club. He and his wife Revathi and daughter Mahema have had me over to their beautiful home on numerous occasions and taken me on local excursions around the city. Mr. Bhat is an extremely active Rotarian. He coordinates all of the district's matching grant programs with Rotary International and manages GSE trips.

One of his most notable initiatives is the Sankya project, a program that works to improve children's computer literacy in underfunded government schools in the state of Karnataka (capital, Bangalore) and neighboring state Tamil Nadu. The crux of the Sankya project is procuring used computers and systems from corporate partners (including Hewlett Packard and Microsoft) and placing them in schools lacking computers and network infrastructure.

Mr. Bhat came up with the idea for Sankya, which means digital in Sanskrit, when he learned that IT companies have thousands used computers in good working condition gathering dust in city storage facilities. He was also aware that IT companies were paying big bucks in monthly storage costs. So when he approached Hewlett Packard, and subsequently other large corporates, about partnering with the Rotary who would administer a program donating these computers to schools-in-need, they were happy to jump on board. To date the program has put over 3000 computers in 500 schools in the two states! The project has many other facets and is constantly being expanded, so I encourage you to look at their web site: [www.sankya.net](http://www.sankya.net).

Mr. Bhat has also encouraged me to get involved with other Rotary clubs' projects in the state. For example, two weeks ago he told me about a two-week long cleft-lip and cleft-palate surgical camp that has been going on for the past three years as the main project for Bangalore North Rotary club. He immediately put me in contact with the Rotarian who is in charge of the camp operations and on whose initiative the program started.

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Since I am studying broadcast journalism at the Indian Institute of Journalism and New Media, I asked Bangalore North Rotarian, Mr. Vinod, if I could come along with him to the camp, located in a rural district about 1.5 hours from the city, to make a short documentary of the camp. He very kindly said yes.

So last Monday night, the day before the first day of the camp, I went with him by car to the rural non-profit hospital run by a very well-known Hindu Guru. I stayed in a guest room and the next day got up bright and early to begin shooting.

The Rotary North surgical camp partners with the San Francisco-based Rotaplast, a non-profit that sends some of the world's best plastic surgeons to regions all over the world to perform cleft-lip and palate and re-constructive burn surgeries on patients free of charge. Rotaplast, in turn, is funded by Rotary districts (mainly by those in Northern California). The day I was shooting was a screening day, when Rotaplast's four surgeons, six nurses, two pediatricians, dentists and orthodontists examine the patients' deformity as well as their general health. Almost all of the patients are classified as below-the-poverty-line. Without this camp, they would never be able to afford the expensive surgery. Some patients were in their 30s and 40s,

Although I experienced some technical issues with my camera, I would say my shoot was rather successful. I interviewed many of the Rotaplast doctors and Rotary volunteers from the Sacramento area, the Rotary district that put most of its funds this year into Rotaplast. I also interviewed mothers and fathers of the child patients. The mothers of the girl babies were overjoyed at the possibility of correcting the deformed lip for without an operation, their child would have no hope of getting married. I also interviewed adults with cleft-lip who prior to this year's camp never knew there was a possibility of fixing it.

After I edit the footage and make the documentary on the even, I will screen it at Bangalore North Rotary meeting. I will also pass it on to you if you are interested. Just let me know.

Also, because my host district Bangalore 3190 is so active, please let me know if you want to partner with them in any programs, including a GSE. It would be a perfect time since I am here and can act as a liaison of sorts. I can put you in touch with the appropriate person. The district's web site is <http://www.rotary3190.org>.

Okay, that is about it. Lots more Rotary news from here coming up. This weekend I am attending the ICGF conference on youth service, spearheaded by none other than my counselor Narayan. Oh, and I would like to add that I get to wear a sari for my first time at ICGF.

Warm regards,  
Jessica Bachman

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