



ROTARY PROMOTES MENTAL HEALTH



EDITORIAL ROTARY AND MENTAL HEALTH- A MOMENTOUS YEAR!

Mental health has always been a taboo subject. It is heavily stigmatized across the globe and treated as a pariah. **The Rotary Action Group Mental Health Initiatives (RAGMHI) was formally launched in 2016** when a few like-minded Rotarians felt the need for it. I was fortunate to be part of the founding team. Our Founder Chair Bonnie Black, a stalwart Rotarian, steered it through tough weathers for six long years giving it stability. The incumbent Chair Bob Anthony, a dynamic crusader, gives impetus and drives us further into **RI President Gordon McInally's theme of Hope, Peace and Mental Health.**

The RAGMHI Board of Directors has been working relentlessly with RI-P Gordon's team to push the agenda on prioritizing mental health. Each Board member has been very busy volunteering in forming chapters of RAGMHI in their Districts, guiding and mentoring interested Rotarians, giving talks and presentations at Zone Institutes, Regional seminars and District events. Enjoy the reports sent by our Board members- Bob, Bonnie, Larry, Alan, (from USA), Darren (UK) and Kathleen (Hawaii) and myself (India). Besides District Chapters, there are District Mental Health Committees that are mushrooming!

This is a golden year for us, as we get opportunities to speak and be heard by Rotarians across the world! As an Action Group we are being recognised! We realize the transformative power of Rotary International, its global membership network, its wide spread base, its ability to spearhead a cause collectively, (such as Polio), and to eradicate it!

If Rotary International continues to prioritize mental health, by collective actions on removing the stigma, generating awareness and building competencies, the world would certainly be saner, hopeful, peaceful, brighter and happier!


-Rita Aggarwal
Editor

PRESIDENTIAL INITIATIVE

Rotary International President R. Gordon R. McInally encourages Rotary members to make mental health a priority. Rotary has a unique ability to connect people and cultures, giving hope and receiving it through acts of kindness. Now is the time to expand this culture of care — both within Rotary and in the world at large.

Providing care in such a way benefits not only the communities we live in and work with, but also our members as they take part in addressing mental health. Research shows that performing acts of kindness is the most effective way to protect our own sense of well-being and become more resilient.

Rotary can create the kind of world we want to live in: one where we all feel supported as part of a community and where we help expand access to quality care. Members can do this by:

- Erasing the stigma associated with caring about emotional well-being
- Raising awareness about mental health needs
- Working to improve access to mental health services

Everyone in Rotary has a role in this effort. **Members can help each other prioritize self-care in the ways that are most meaningful.** Clubs can make sure they offer welcoming environments where everyone who interacts with us is treated with care, respect, and dignity. We can talk openly about mental health, let people know they're not alone, and encourage them to get professional help if necessary. And we can work with community and national leaders to create or expand access to quality preventive care and interventions for mental health. [Check the following resources for education and support.](#)

Review the [Prioritizing Mental Health brochure](#), to learn more about this initiative and find ideas for how your club or district can support activities on mental well-being.

[The Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives](#) is a global community of Rotary members and friends with expertise in or a deep commitment to helping people improve their mental health. Browse the Mental Health Initiatives campaign through [Rotary Showcase](#) to find out how other clubs and districts are doing.

(Courtesy: RI website)



TOOLKITS BY RAGMHI

To support Rotary members acting on RI President Gordon McInally's call to promote mental health and wellness, the [Mental Health Initiatives Rotary Action Group \(RAGMHI\)](#) posts toolkits that anyone can introduce to the community. Several of these toolkits are translated into the eight Rotary languages:

- **Looking Inward** is a PowerPoint slide deck for use in a club meeting. It includes a one minute survey seeking ideas to enhance member wellbeing.
- **Don't Bottle It Up** is a conversation starter using photography.
- **PIP Problems-Ideas-Plans** is a creative problem solving model for an individual or a group.
- **Resilience** is a set of activities for high school or junior high school groups to exercise.
- **Wellness in a Box** is a depression awareness curriculum with a train-the-trainer framework. It is useful for youth groups, peer leadership, school grades and can include increasing professional support in the school and community.
- **A Lever** provides early diagnosis and treatment for anxiety, depression and ADHD through education for pediatric primary care providers, patients and parents.

- **Launch Your District Chapter** provides the tasks and forms for your district to be recognized as a Chapter of RAGMHI and have dedicated pages with the global website.

The toolkits are free to download. District or global grants can expand their impact.

D6960 contributed toward a D3030 implementation of Wellness in a Box in Nagpur with remarkable outcomes:

- Age 14 students, parents and faculty complete depression awareness education
- A full year Diploma in School Counseling program for teachers has been created
- Students can access counseling
- Training of peer mentors

D3030 is contributing to a D6960 implementation of A LEVER in southwest Florida in the USA, also with remarkable outcomes by empowering the parent to immediately partner in treatment. A video on the program may be viewed [here](#).

-Bob Anthony
Chair - RAGMHI



ZONE 33-34 SUMMIT -BAHAMAS 2023

At the zone 33 – 34 summit in the Bahamas in 2023, there were two sessions on mental health that focused on generating ideas of how clubs and districts could promote those initiatives. What follows is the ideas they generated:

What can we do as a club and district to erase the stigma associated with caring about emotional well-being?

1. Have regular discussions on mental wellness and check in on yourself and take care of yourself.
2. Have TED type talk series with various demographic groups targeting psychoeducation and emotional care.
3. Have clubs work together for a grant for hiring high risk students for a safe space garden to gather together and meet with teachers to talk about and discuss issues at school.
4. Identify a district person to assist such as a mental health advisor.

What can we as a club or district do to raise awareness about mental health needs?

1. Have a website for the district or club as well as a newsletter and utilize social media including public psychological service announcements in various modalities.
2. Have a mental health summit fair for the public.
3. Partner with Interact clubs to leverage mental health organizations to solve their needs.
4. Use existing community needs assessment to identify the mental health needs of the community especially around such topics as loneliness.
5. Have partnerships to let people know of organizations that can help.
6. Have a district committee on mental health.
7. Have mental health resources and links on our club and district websites.

What can we as a club and district do to work to improve access to mental health services?

1. Establish a District Rotary action group on mental health.
2. Identify the barriers to accessing mental health services in terms of cost, transportation and availability in the area.
3. Communicating what's available locally to your members.
4. Participate in global grants related to mental health.
5. Ask the mental health community what they need and help pursue solutions.
6. Identify hotlines and explain how they work and how best to utilize them.

-Larry Kubiak, Ph.D.
Licensed Psychologist PY 4011,
PDG 6940
Director- RAGMHI

EDITORIAL TEAM

- RITA AGGARWAL: EDITOR
- AABHA PIMPRIKAR: CO-EDITOR
- GEETANJALI JHA: CO-EDITOR
- SRIPRIYA SHAJI: REVIEWER
- SHIVANGI GARG: REVIEWER



Click to read
May 2023 Special Edition.



Over 60 Rotarians and friends from District 5340 participated in the San Diego NAMIWalk in April 2023 and raised over \$11,000 for mental health programs.

LUCKY 13 AND GROWING!

We are very pleased to currently have **13 official District Chapters between the Caribbean and Canada as of December 2023**. Some have multiple club projects while others are getting underway. Most chapters are meeting in the evening (between 5p-7p their local time) while others meet midday around the lunch hour.



As in all things Rotary, the local chapters determine their own meeting times, keep the Regional Representatives included in email communication and seek guidance for projects and issues they may be running into.

This first year of chapters in the Americas is **creating hope** while they are determining how they will **break stigma and raise awareness**. Increasing personal and community capacity will be coming in 2024 and 2025. Many are joining AFSP or NAMIWalks to get started. Others have presented our **Looking Inward** program to their clubs, some have begun **Wellness in a Box** with their Interact or Rotaract clubs and others are present at PETS and Zone Institutes. District 6960 has stepped up and initiated **increasing capacity** in their communities by implementing **A Lever** under a Global Grant with D3030 in India.

You can initiate this system wide change for building capacity by reducing wait lists in your mental health clinics and private practices. Go to the RAGMHI website to implement the **A Lever** toolkit in your community which was created by Boston (Massachusetts) Children's Hospital. A part of this program is evidence-based parent and patient education materials to practice emotional coping skills at home, in collaboration with the pediatric/general medicine practitioner. Rotary members can introduce this new resource for rapid adoption in the local community to overcome the fact that, on average, there is a 10-year gap between onset of symptoms and initiating appropriate professional care. Take Action today with our Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives!

-Bonnie Black
Treasurer- RAGMHI
Regional Representative for the Americas

RAGMHI IN NORTH AMERICA

It is exciting to see Rotary Districts in North America rise to the challenge by RI President, Gordon McInally to focus on mental health initiatives. There are now **11 District Chapters** of RAGMHI in N. America and lots of interest by others. Many Chapters are forming affiliations with their local **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI.org)** and participating in fundraising activities such as NAMIwalks. In September we held a very informative seminar when the Chief Medical Officer of NAMI spoke on **"You Are Not Alone"**. Then Dr. DeMaso of Boston Children's Hospital spoke about **"The Lever"**; this is a program to train pediatricians and family doctor practitioners on how to assess and treat mild to moderate mental health conditions. The Lever program is applicable all over the world and has been supported by many Rotary clubs.

We also heard from Rotaractor, Gregor Baum about the **"Inner Journey Journal"** which provides introspection from a student's point of view to establish a successful mindset to combat the struggles that many students encounter on their life's journey. Originally created for university and college students, it is now available for school kids. For more details on how your club can participate please visit www.ginnerperformance.com

FORMING A RAGMHI DISTRICT CHAPTER

As Rotarians organize around mental health initiatives the structure of forming a Rotary Action Group District Chapter provides a platform and valuable resources to support those activities. The **Toolkit on Chapter Formation** provides everything you need to guide you. Chapter Leaders share ideas on projects that their Club and District have participated in; and chapters are open to everyone in their community. Please reach out to alanturner.rotary@gmail.com if you need any assistance or have any questions. You can also reach out to our Regional Representatives.

-Alan Turner
Director-Chapter Formations, RAGMHI

RAGMHI DISTRICT CHAPTERS IN INDIA

We are proud of the fact that the RID 3030 Chapter was formed in April 2021 and was the first one in the world. Since then we have formed 9 more in India (total 10) and 1 in Malaysia. The list is as under:

- D 3030 (Inaugural Chapter)-Nagpur-Nashik-Chair-Dr. Aabha Pimprikar
- D 3192-Bengaluru-Chair-Dr. Rupashree Venkat
- D 3291-Kolkata-Chair-Arpita Chatterjee
- D 3070-Jalandhar-Chair-Nupur Sandhu
- D 3170-Hubli-Chair-Sonal Joshi
- D 3131-Pune-Chair-Sanket Saraf
- D 3011-Delhi-Chair-Sayatan Sinha
- D 3232-Chennai-Chair-Srikumar
- D 3132-Ahmednagar-Chair-Bindu Shirsath
- D 3150-Hyderabad-Chair-Achala Kumar
- D 3300-MALAYSIA-Chair-Bindi Rajsegran

-Rita Aggarwal
Chair of Chapters-Asia, RAGMHI

MIND CRUSADER

With increasing suicide cases in Bengaluru and nearby towns, Mindcrusaders Team from RID 3192 launched this first of its kind helpline in the Rotary world along with Maarga Hospital, Yelahanka Bengaluru and RB Platinum City and RC Bangalore. The helpline is supported by qualified personnel from Maarga hospital and is available 24/7 for the needy to reach out.

The contact number released by the hospital – 9900035245, Rotary Maarga Suicide Prevention Helpline

This was the brainchild of President Rtn Rupashree from RC Platinum city. An MoU was framed by these two Rotary clubs (RB Platinum City and RC Bangalore) along with Maarga hospital in Bengaluru after mutual understanding between the parties. Public image activity to spread the helpline is under process. The world suicide prevention day on September 10 saw large number of non Rotarians, Rotarians, Rotactors, Interactors and District officers and our DG Srinivas Murthy and first lady Rtn Vijaya, join the walkathon organised by these two Rotary Clubs in Bengaluru.

Awareness session by doctors from Maarga and Aster hospital was organised especially for the youth. More efforts were taken up on the World Mental health day at the iconic Orion Mall in Bengaluru. Online sessions are also conducted by the clubs and the helpline is spread across to all.

-Rtn Rashmi Tanksali

Director RID 3192 Mental Health Awareness Team 23-24



DISTRICT MENTAL WELLNESS- D3191

District Mental Health Committee 3191 Bengaluru, have signed as implementing partner in the ESTEM (Educating School Teachers on Mental Health) project. This Project of training Teachers and giving awareness to Students of 80 Schools in Bengaluru, Karnataka is funded by Food for Hungry foundation and all knowledge sharing is being done by National Institute of Mental health and Neurological Sciences (NIMHANS) a premier Medical Institute in India.

This program will cover building awareness, removing mental health stigma and referring affected Students to right Counsellors for medical / psychological help. Students will be told how to handle Stress, Time management, Avoidance of Gadgets, Building relationship, Meditation and Super Brain Yoga. Minimum 8 -10 schools in a month will be covered. This will be implemented with support of our Clubs. The project was launched on 7th November 2023 in the presence of Dr. Pratima Murthy Director NIMHANS, Dr. Prashanti Nattala Head, Nursing department, Dr. Radhakrishnan Principal Investigator NIMHANS, District Governor Rtn UdayKumar Bhaskara District 3191, Rtn Seema Sibbal Treasurer Food for Hungry foundation, Rtn Raghu Allam Director Mental Wellness.

The Project training cost is Rs. 15 Lakhs per annum for the year 2023-2024. The Project is led by PP Rtn Raghu Allam Director Mental Wellness, District 3191, Dr. Radhakrishnan Associate Professor, NIMHANS, Dr. Bala Murugan Associate Prof Telemanas Dept NIMHANS.

-Raghu Allam
Director, District Wellness Committee 3191

RAGMHI DISTRICT 3291 CHAPTER: REPORT

From its inception on May 7, 2023, the District 3291 Chapter has been working with emphasis on adolescents and the elderly. **Mental Health Awareness boot camps** have been organized at schools, both government and private, in which students were encouraged to participate in the "Don't Bottle It Up" awareness campaign. The "Wellness in a box" toolkit was also used. Mental Health Clubs are being formed in schools. In addition, Interact Clubs have been encouraged to appoint a **Mental Health Volunteer** who is being given psychological first aid training on a regular basis.

Another ongoing project is that of **Music therapy sessions conducted at Old Age Homes**. A playlist of music was developed to be played during mealtimes or in the lift, so that the therapeutic effects of music would benefit the inmates on a continuous basis. Adding to the reach of this project, sessions have also been held in association with non-governmental organizations working with differently-abled children and adults, as well as special sessions for children afflicted with cancer. During these sessions, participants were provided with a safe and supportive space to express their emotions, fears, and hopes openly.

Another continuous initiative '**Chessmate**' has begun in association with the Indian Chapter of International Chess Fellowship for Rotarians, in which cancer afflicted children are taught chess every Wednesday. It has been observed that playing chess helps these children to improve their emotional well-being. A **Wellness fair** was held in a school, in which different kinds of therapy were demonstrated to the parents who attended in large numbers. As this was a great success, a series of such fairs are in the pipeline.

The RAGMHI District 3291 Chapter continues to work in association with the District Committee of Mental Health, to ensure the well being of all those who reside in this region.

-Arpita Chatterjee
Music Therapist, Chair DAGMHI 3291

NIMHANS: DIGITAL ACADEMY AND TELE-MANAS HELPLINE

NIMHANS (National Institute for Mental Health and Neurosciences) Bengaluru, a premier Institute of the Government of India, has introduced a platform for integrative digital courses- known as 'NIMHANS Digital Academy'. They have a range of about **20 certificate courses and 8 diploma courses**, which focus not only on providing an understanding of basic mental health conditions but also offer case-based learning in specialised areas. All of these courses are led by expert teams virtually, enabling the participants to enhance their knowledge, taking the course from any part of the world. According to their website (<https://nda.nimhans.ac.in/#>), they have trained about 25000 professionals till date which includes doctors, psychologists, social workers, nurses and others.

Tele-MANAS, another great initiative, was introduced in October 2022 by the Government of India, where NIMHANS has been the apex centre. It provides a mental health care service where one can dial toll-free numbers (14416 or 1-8008914416) to get in touch with a mental health professional. This has ensured mental health services for everyone in the country and will emerge as an essential aspect in shaping perspectives towards how mental health is viewed in our society.

-Compiled by Devika Gokhale
Psychologist, Nagpur