

South Rotary celebrates successes, looks to next year

SUBMITTED BY NICKI KLEIN
for the Neighborhood Extra

During the annual Changing of the Guard meeting on June 25, Dave Dietz, 2020-21 Lincoln South Rotary president, reviewed the past year (July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021), and DeEtta Vrana, 2021-22 president, introduced the focus for the next Rotary Year.

"This was a year of surprises and challenges," said Dietz, pointing out that the ideas and goals he had hoped the club would accomplish during the Rotary year did not happen as he had planned due to the pandemic.

The club transitioned from in-person meetings to a virtual format to continue to meet weekly. With the typical activities on hold, the club was hungry for ways to serve the community. Members learned of community needs from club presentations and local news stories, and found ways to help.

Learning that some sections of the trails system needed to be adopted, the club started regular cleanup,

allowing members to provide service while social distancing.

Heroes Into Homes was another project that provided donated items and cash to help homeless veterans.

"That the club really got behind this project, even with the weather being very cold, gave me an early indication that our club would come together to accomplish service to the community," said Dietz.

While respecting health protocols, donated items were delivered to a warehouse to be distributed to the Heroes Into Homes organization. In all, nearly \$2,000 was donated in goods and cash.

The club also recognized the need for feeding the hungry. Having participated in a multi-district project that collected \$30,000 for the Food Bank of Lincoln and the Food Bank for the Heartland, Lincoln South Rotary Club knew there was a continuing need. Club members learned of the Food Bank of Lincoln

Capital Campaign and donated \$12,450 from among the members.

A dozen South Rotary members serve Tabitha Meals on Wheels. Using expanded precautions due to the pandemic, the club continues to serve those in need every week.

Another club program - even during the pandemic - was providing scholarships to high school seniors. South Rotary members know that our future is in the hands of our youth and presented three \$1,000 college scholarships.

Other projects promoting development of our youth continued - though in varied formats from the past. Those included dictionaries delivered to fourth graders (a joint project of all Rotary Clubs in Lincoln), co-sponsoring the UNL Rotaract Club, and hosting a high school student to participate in Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, which was virtual this year.

International support included the Lucaya Rand Memorial Hospital, which

needed to replace hospital beds after hurricane damage; and a grant to a rural area of the Republic of Georgia with extremely impoverished people who do not have family members who can help them.

In closing, Dietz said, "Although this has been a very non-typical year, I am very proud of how Lincoln South Rotary Club has pulled together to do some very good service projects."

While passing the gavel, the 2021-22 Club President DeEtta Vrana said, "Dave, through your leadership, you have kept the club connected through our Zoom and hybrid meetings and making personal contacts. In spite of the challenges, you have forged ahead with grit and determination, and guided the club through a successful year."

The major focus for the 2021-22 Rotary Year will be to "find ways to get the club back to normal and beyond by re-engaging members and bringing back events," said Vrana.