While You’re Here at Mattison’s 41...

... a bunch of people you know are right about here.

The day dawned bright but a bit chilly Sunday as Sarasota Gulf Gate Rotarians, spouses, family and friends headed for Fort Lauderdale and the Ruby Princess as it set sail for the eastern Caribbean.

But before they could get on that great big, beautiful ship, the gang had to “get on the bus.” A Cruise Connection bus that is. Once luggage was safely stowed and all heads were counted, off the adventurers went.

Apparently, it didn’t take long for everyone to relax and start their vacation in earnest. From the photographs received thus far, everyone seems to be enjoying each others’ company as well as that of the other folks aboard the ship.

By 9:00 AM Monday, the ship had arrived in the Princess Cays where some probably did the sightseeing tour and meal while others could have been off kayaking or snorkeling the warm waters. Mostly likely, a number of our friends simply relaxed and enjoyed the amenities of the boat and nearby shore sights (i.e. shopping).

The Ruby Princess left the Cays Monday evening and sailed straight to St. Maarten where they will spend today (Tuesday) before departing for St. Thomas, U. S. Virgin Islands later this evening. On St. Maarten, there are literally dozens of shore activities ranging from sight seeing tours on the Macarena Choo-Choo party bus (?!) to helmet diving at the Sea Trek underwater park to a visit to a butterfly farm with hundreds of the world’s most exotic butterflies. One sight on St. Thomas that some won’t want to miss is Blackbeard’s Castle and Magen’s Bay.

While aboard, guests can choose from some 16 widely diverse eating areas, eight areas with live entertainment, several combination pools/spas, movies under the stars, digital golf simulators and a nine-hole putting course. Of course for the more serious-minded, there’s a wireless internet café, a library and a world-class art collection. And if all else fails, there’s a wedding chapel in the event anyone is so inclined.

Wednesday evening the ship will sail for Grand Turk and Turks & Caicos islands to spend a day there sightseeing, fishing, or on a dune buggy safari before heading back to Ft. Lauderdale and home. Here’s hoping we get some more photos as the ship carries our fellow Rotarians through the blue waters of the eastern Caribbean.
The Rotary Foundation of RI is a not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to enable Rotarians to advance world understanding, goodwill and peace through the improvement of health, the support of education, and the alleviation of poverty.

The Every Rotarian, Every Year initiative, designed to encourage worldwide annual per capita giving of $100 or more, supports vital Foundation programs and every dollar funds the programs. Clubs and districts apply for Foundation grants to carry out many worthy projects worldwide.

Contributions go into one of three main funds:

- **Annual Programs Fund**, which provides grants and awards through Foundation programs
- **Permanent Fund**, an endowment from which only a portion of the earnings are spent in support of Foundation programs, ensuring the long term viability of the Foundation
- **PolioPlus Fund**, which supports Rotary’s goal of a polio-free world.

Educational programs promote international understanding by bringing together people from different countries and cultures. **Ambassadorial Scholarships**, an international program for university level studies, sends about 500 students each year to serve as ambassadors of goodwill while abroad. **Rotary Peace Fellowships** are awarded to individuals for study in master's degree and professional certificate programs at one of the six Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution. **Group Study Exchange** is a short term cultural and vocational exchange program between districts in different countries for non-Rotarian professionals ages 25-40.

Humanitarian grants enable Rotarians to increase their support of international service projects that provide water wells, medical care, literacy classes and other essentials to people in need. **Matching Grants** assist Rotary clubs and districts in carrying out humanitarian projects with clubs and districts in other countries. **District Simplified Grants** enable districts to support service activities or humanitarian endeavors that benefit local or international communities.

Eradicating polio is Rotary’s top priority. The **PolioPlus program** provides funding for mass immunization campaigns and support for social mobilization, surveillance and laboratories to help carry out the final stages of global polio eradication. Rotary is a spearheading partner with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in this initiative.

Rotary’s **$200 Million Challenge** got its start in 2007 and 2009 when the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recognized Rotary’s leadership in the polio eradication effort with challenge grants of $100 million and $255 million. Grant funds are spent on immunization and other polio eradication activities. Rotary’s challenge aims to raise $200 million in matching funds by June 30, 2012, and every Rotary club is asked to help by organizing an annual public fundraising event.

**By the Numbers**

- **2 billion**: The number of children under the age of 5 who have received the polio vaccine.
- **5 million**: The number of people who might otherwise have become paralyzed who are walking today.
- **500,000**: The number of new cases of polio that are prevented each year.
- **99%**: The per cent drop in the number of polio cases worldwide.
- **$223.8 million**: Contributions to the Rotary Foundation as of June 30, 2009.
- **$187.8 million**: Amount spent by the Rotary Foundation in support of humanitarian and educational programs implemented by clubs and districts and global polio eradication activities.
Candidly Speaking

News of upcoming speakers.

February 22 - Lee Fox, Founder and Executive Director of: SOS (Save Our Seabirds) Ms. Fox has dedicated her expertise, and the rehabilitation center she founded 20 years ago, to the three R’s (rescue, rehabilitation, and release) for local and migratory birds of the Gulf Coast as well as mitigating the effects of oil spills on them and their habitat. Be sure to hear what she has to say about her work since the BP oil disaster.

Celebrations

Upcoming Birthdays
2/9 Jere Berkey
2/14 Mike Ries
2/20 Brian Hickey

Upcoming Anniversaries
2/11 Mary Jane Hay (Jim)
2/27 Cuppy Katz (Elaine)

Highlights From History

In celebration of Rotary’s golden anniversary, postal administrations from 27 countries and geographical areas authorized commemorative postage stamps. The stamp issued in the United States debuted in February 1955, 50 years after the date of the first Rotary club meeting. The blue 8-cent stamp for international postage was printed in sheets of 50. The illustration was by Willi Wolf Wind, an award-winning stamp designer.

Upcoming Events

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Yard Sale</td>
<td>Iberia Bank 2207 Gulf Gate Drive (the Mall)</td>
<td>After the cruise!</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 18</td>
<td>Charter Night for the Rotary Club of Sarasota Southside</td>
<td>TPC Prestancia, Sarasota</td>
<td>Welcome the newest District 6960 club. Black tie optional, begins at 5:30, $45 per person; register at <a href="http://www.directory-online.com">www.directory-online.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>February 23</td>
<td>Rotary Day</td>
<td>Anywhere and everywhere you happen to be</td>
<td>Happy 106th Birthday to Rotary</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 26</td>
<td>Team Leader Training</td>
<td>Port Charlotte</td>
<td>Parts 1, 2 and 3; go to <a href="http://rlitraining.org/participant-information">http://rlitraining.org/participant-information</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Literacy Month</td>
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<td>March 19</td>
<td>Community Food Packing Day</td>
<td>Boys &amp; Girls Club, Fruitville Road</td>
<td>Nikki Heil, Rotary Club of Sarasota, 941-374-5896 or CommunityFoodPackingDay.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 9</td>
<td>District Assembly</td>
<td>Cultural Center of Charlotte County 2280 Aaron Street, Port Charlotte</td>
<td>Registration begins at 8:00 AM. Continental breakfast will be available. Programs run from 9:00AM - 12:00PM Business Meeting begins at 9:45 AM $25.00 per person</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 20-21</td>
<td>Rotary Reunion</td>
<td>At the International Convention</td>
<td>Welcome reception May 19; details at <a href="mailto:international.institute@rotary.org">international.institute@rotary.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>May 21</td>
<td>International Convention</td>
<td>New Orleans</td>
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<td>June 9-11</td>
<td>District Conference</td>
<td>Marina Resort at Tarpon Point Cape Coral</td>
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Lori White and Sarasota District Schools

Last week (February 8) we were honored to have with us Lori White, Superintendent of Sarasota County Schools. Ms. White divided her presentation into two segments: the first focused on statistics emphasizing the size, structure and services of the schools and the second dealt with the impact of budget cuts and many questions from the audience.

* There are 41,000 students and 5,000 staff members in the district’s 55 schools.
* Sarasota is considered an “A” district based on its high number of schools that perform at the “A” level in standardized testing.
* 84.3% of students in the district graduate from high school.
* At $400 million, the education budget is no longer the largest item in the state budget - Medicaid is.
* The education budget is expected to be cut by about $36 million this year.
* By state law, schools may not increase class size so laying off teachers to save money is not an option.
* On the subject of standardized testing, Ms. White made note of what she calls the “food factor.” Since such testing is just a snap shot of a student’s ability, results may vary wildly from day to day, depending on such factors as whether or not the student is eating well, sleeping well and other factors.

You can find a wealth of information about Sarasota schools, including Ms. White’s profile, information on the school board, schedules and volunteerism at sarasota-countyschools.net.

Wisconsin Ambassadorial Scholar Escapes Egypt

Rotary International Travel Service (RITS) stepped in to help Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholar Jamie Gajewski and four other scholars to leave Egypt when civil unrest made it unsafe for them to complete their scholarships there.

Ms. Gajewski, from Madison, Wisconsin, was studying Arabic at Alexandria University. After widespread street demonstrations erupted on January 25, her previously safe neighborhood in Alexandria was overrun by military tanks and demonstrators.

"My neighborhood is a labyrinth of dark, narrow streets, and in front of every building there were bands of men and young boys armed with wooden planks, metal rods, knives, and guns, working together to protect their businesses and families from looters," she said. "Overnight, this safe neighborhood became unstable and dangerous."

Ms. Gajewski says that when foreigners were urged to leave the country, Internet and cell phone interruptions made it difficult to get information about evacuations. But, using a landline phone, she was able to reach her mother, Janet, who contacted RITS. Within 24 hours, RITS secured transportation to the airport, as well as a plane ticket to Kuwait. It also obtained flights out of the country for four other Rotary Scholars.

"It was pretty scary not having reliable communication with anyone. Since the Internet was shut down, all I brought to the airport was a slip of paper with my ticket number written on it," says Ms. Gajewski. "Within a few hours, I was in Kuwait and continued on to Germany, Belgium, and finally France. I'm very lucky Rotary was there to pull me out."

Ms. Gajewski acknowledges that it's unlikely she'll be able to return to Egypt. She is scheduled to finish her scholarship at the University of Granada in Spain.

"I wish I could have said goodbye to my friends the way I would have liked," she says. "I worry about their safety. I hope all Egyptians can achieve their goals peacefully and return the country to stability."