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ISSUE 668

\$5, Post Approved:
PP242296/0065

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New Global Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Rotary Club making a splash
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New Global Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Rotary Club making a splash

Founder of the Global Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Rotary Club, Eve Fraser, is on a mission to ensure every child can swim before they finish primary school.

By Amy Fallon

"IT was Plato who said a man is not learned unless he can read, write and swim," says Eve Fraser, the president and founder of the

recently established Global Water Safety and Drowning Prevention (GWSDP) Rotary Club.

"It's really funny, because I chartered the club with the saying 'there is no point in

learning how to read and write if you can't swim and you drown'."

With more than four decades experience in this crucial area, Brisbane-based Eve is certainly swimming with the greats.

"I never expected to have members wanting to join from the Netherlands and Scotland," she says.

The new club celebrated its first birthday on July 25,



ABOVE:
The Namayingo Project Uganda set out to train first responders in the Namayingo District, Uganda, in water

safety, rescue procedures, immediate response/first aid and first safety management.

The project was developed to strengthen community capacities to prevent and promptly respond to life threatening emergencies involving drowning and fire incidents in, on and around Lake Victoria in the Namayingo District. The training attracted 90 candidates of which 68 were able to complete the training and were certified as community first responders.

2023, which is also UN World Drowning Prevention Day.

Eve's Rotary journey began via the 2018 rescue of 12 boys and their coach from an underwater cave in northern Thailand. She was approached to travel to the southeast Asian country to help tackle hydrophobia, an extreme or irrational fear of water, and why the community wasn't teaching their children to swim.

In Thailand, Eve worked with the Rotary Club of Chiang Mai International, which had received an AusAID grant to train swimming teachers and deliver learn to swim programs to disadvantaged children from local government schools. But she knew that to really make waves she needed more funding, so she decided to join Rotary.

"In Thailand, a country with one of the highest drowning rates per capita,



there was little being done to address the problem," says Eve.

"I understood the structure of Rotary really well, because I've been working with the United Nations for the past 11 years."

In April 2021, the UN General Assembly adopted the first-ever Resolution on drowning prevention, declaring it the top cause of preventable deaths globally.

"I couldn't stop thinking about how many people drown all around the world every year that can be

prevented," says Eve.

In October 2021, she met with then District 9620 Governor Wendy Protheroe. Eve asked why she couldn't get a Rotary district grant to train teachers and teach children to swim. It was well documented that learning to swim is the most effective way to prevent children from drowning. Wendy told Eve to come up with a project and that she would find a way.

Alongside Past District Governor Jitendra Prasad, who chartered the Rotary Club of Brisbane

International, Qld, and sponsored Eve into it, Eve put out feelers about setting up a club dedicated to helping lower drownings around the globe.

Months later, more than 60 people from various Rotary clubs and organisations across the world attended the first meeting of the club.

"I can't even tell you how many countries we had represented that day, it just blew me away," says Eve.

With the added support of Swim Australia CEO Brendon Ward, the Global Water Safety and Drowning Prevention (GWSDP) Rotary Club was born weeks later. Eve was the only Rotarian.

"We had CEOs from some of the top aquatic associations in the world and the hierarchy of swimming across the globe show up," she says. "This meant we could develop quality programs to address the barriers to participation."

To run a cause-based Rotary club, they also needed members who were prepared to 'Serve Above Self' and uphold the Four-Way Test.

The club chartered via the Rotary Club of Alexandra Headland on the Sunshine Coast, Qld. Just a short time later, they trained 60 first responders in Uganda in aquatic rescues, resuscitation and fire management, after receiving their first district grant. The project was run with the Rotary Club of Kampala Ssesse Islands.

In February, a team from the club travelled to Thailand to train 20 teachers and to Phuket, working with the Rotary Club of Chiang Mai. Eve received an award from club past president Professor John Schorr for supporting their mission to improve child safety, health and education in northern Thailand. She later conducted training in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

In September, Eve spoke

at the annual Australian aquatic industry conference SWIMCON23. In December, she took to the stage at the International Lifesaving (ILS) Conference in Perth.

"We've got support from Swim Australia, Swimming Teachers Association UK, Swimming Teachers America, International Federation of Swimming Teachers Association (IFSTA), International Lifesaving Federation (ILS), and many other national and international organisations keen to ensure not one more person drowns unnecessarily."

Eve says that Rotary is the conduit that brings all these parties to the table in a safe and nurturing environment.

"In the most remote corners of the globe we are here to ensure every child can swim before they finish primary school. I believe Rotary is the organisation to help us deliver on our promises." RDU

BELOW & OPPOSITE

(INSET): The Triple T Asia Tour 2023 trained learn to swim teachers across Thailand and Cambodia with the Swim Australia Teacher of Swimming & Water Safety qualification. Overall the team of qualified Swim Australia instructors delivered training to 85 participants in Chiang Mai, 49 in Phuket (pictured below) and 54 in Cambodia (pictured opposite and opening image).

