

Rotary finds ways to pursue diversity, equity, inclusion

BY SHELLEY CRAWFORD

SO MANY clubs and organizations strive to connect to audiences, prospective members, and people who are not currently represented in their membership. It seems as if the will is strong, but what impedes the process? How is it so many are unable to bring in new members who are from unrepresented communities?

Port Arthur Rotary — a service club that, on Jan. 1, 2024, will celebrate 100 years of service supporting many local charities and international projects — has such a challenge. We struggle to reach our goals in this diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) forum.

While our members are committed to the basic principles of Rotary which has a strong emphasis on equity, fellowship and service above self, we seem at times to be speaking to ourselves



ONE CITY,
MANY VOICES

The Thunder Bay Anti-Racism and Equity Advisory Committee and Diversity Thunder Bay produce this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.

and failing to reach a wider audience to build our capacity and grow our base of support.

It is my contention one must work extremely hard to break the barriers — those invisible walls that separate us from those we wish to work with. To that end, we have determined a few things. For one, financial barriers may exist that preclude

people from even considering joining our club. So, we've created four bursaries that will be a bridge to averting money as the barrier.

If you are a newcomer or recent immigrant who is just starting your life in our community and have yet to establish yourself, we are open to hear if there is interest in joining our group. To share your culture and your expertise will enrich our club.

If you are a young entrepreneur who has little extra to invest in the club, even though it may be an ideal networking opportunity, then give us a call. We relish the chance to hear about new ideas and creative ventures. We strive to connect to your networks and may be able to support your goals.

Should you be a person on a pension of some sort (be it related to a disability or simply life's circumstances) and you feel you can help serve your community

through our service projects, we want to hear from you. Your time and experience are so needed, and we will try very hard to accommodate any challenges you may face. To this end we have recruited a senior who has been on a disability pension all her life. She is kind, generous, hardworking — and she loves to volunteer. It is a joy to greet her in our meetings and watch her work at the Dew Drop Inn or the Giant Food Drive. The joy of serving others is in her spirit.

As another example, we are reaching out through the Women's Tapestry Network to learn from this diverse group of people. We hope to partner and share in helping with their goals of community service. In working together, we feel greater understanding of one another will occur quite naturally; and what a joy to band with such generous and capable women.

There are synergies as Port

Arthur Rotary has a strong cohort of women who are generous with their time and expertise. It is our understanding that Tapestry, while convening regularly to share one another's friendship and culture, also pool their time and resources to give to those struggling in our community.

The time and effort in reaching out and just connecting with others is truly worth the effort as any club will grow and benefit from diverse perspectives and creative energy. Please let us know if you are someone who values service above self and contact us with email sent to parotarytbay@gmail.com.

As the current president of Port Arthur Rotary, Shelley Crawford, a retired arts management professor, returned home in 2018 to enjoy a rich and fulfilling life with old and new friends.