

Rotary

District 6940 Newsletter



Volume 111, Issue 6
January 2025

What's Inside?

MONTHLY MESSAGES

- Peace Fellowship 2
- RI Pres. Stephanie A. Urchick 4

CLUB NEWS

- Mid-Bay 5
- Panama City Beach 11
- Perry 12

DISTRICT NEWS

- Mental Health 14
- Rotary Leadership Institute 15



Christmas Joy
see page 12



District Peace Fellow recipient begins his certification program at Makerere University in Uganda

By **KATHY SUERKEN**

District Peace Fellow Co-Ordinator

Our District has been encouraged by Rotary International to sponsor highly worthy candidates from locations which do not have Rotary peace fellow guidance and mentorship -- candidates such as Rafal Pandowski, who has a PhD from Warsaw University and speaks eight languages.



A noted speaker, he has given lectures in Oslo, Kyiv, Moscow, New Orleans, Bangkok, Oxford, Amsterdam, Geneva and many other locations on behalf of his organization, NEVER AGAIN, which he co-founded when 20 years old to address hate speech that leads to violence.

Rafal has devoted his life's work in support of peace, non-violence and human rights and he has begun his journey, representing District 6940, to become a Peace Fellow.

This very comprehensive certification program consists of:

- Online pre-departure course: September – October 2024
- Ten-week on-site program: October - December 2024
- Social Change Initiative Implementation Period: January 2025 - September 2025
- One-week capstone seminar: October 2025

His on-site program at Makerere has been very consequential as it has helped him to focus on what is first necessary to effectively address conflicts.

In this regard he expressed the need "to build the needed underlying bridges of intercultural understanding. My sessions with colleagues have already enabled me to discern common ground



between Poland and East African countries. The program at Makerere is very intense but I am enjoying every minute of my stay in Uganda. The overall experience is wonderful. Thank you District 6940 for making it possible!"

Rafal speaks so highly of the Makerere staff, his Peace Fellow colleagues there and especially the Director of the Peace Center Dr. Helen Nkabala pictured (above) presenting a certificate to Rafal.

Dr. Nkabala has also been a very positive and influential mentor to our 2021-22 District Peace Fellow, Sharmarke Yusuf, with whom she has stayed in touch.

It is important to note that Makerere's Peace Fellow graduates have been incentivized to continue their Social Change Initiatives beyond graduation.

In this regard, Sharmarke's inspiring results in changing the mindsets of Somalia youth in danger of radicalization continue to bear fruit.

"MY SCI participants have formed the Center for Prevention of Violent Extremism in Somalia," he writes.

Here is link to web for more info: <https://www.>

Please see page 3

'Support of this program has brought honor to our district'

PEACE FELLOW - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

cpvesom.org/.

"This initiative aims to continue promoting a culture of peace beyond the conclusion of our initial programs. It represents a pioneering effort in youth-led initiatives to prevent radicalization, support youth engagement, and advance peacebuilding in Somalia. The center is locally registered as a nonprofit and youth-led organization."

Our support of this program -- with no funding needed by clubs or district -- has brought honor to our District while substantially supporting Rotary's Area of focus: Peace and Conflict Resolution which otherwise can be difficult to impact in a tangible way.

All we need to continue to do so is to source



worthy candidates to nominate whom I will help mentor through the application and endorsement process. In February's Newsletter, I will be sharing details on the nomination process to include any updates of new vetting procedures along with link to application forms available late February.

In meantime, if questions: Kathy Suerken, District Peace Fellow Co-Ordinator: suerken@cox.net

Rotary offers fellowships for experienced professionals seeking to advance their knowledge and skills in peace and development. During the one-year program, Rotary Peace Fellows expand their networks and learn innovative ways to promote peace at the community, regional, or global levels. Fellows complete a combination of classroom and field-based studies, and they design and carry out a social change initiative.

THE FELLOWSHIPS PAY FOR:

- Tuition and fees
- Room and board
- Round-trip transportation
- Field study expenses

THE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM INCLUDES:

- A preliminary online course
- A 10-week on-site course
- Field studies
- A social change initiative
- A one-week on-site capstone seminar

ROTARY PEACE CENTERS OFFERING THE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM ARE LOCATED AT:

- Bahçeşehir University, Istanbul, Türkiye
- Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda