

*Random Acts of Kindness* was a service project originated by President Scott Rainey as a special program celebrating the fiftieth year of the Rotary Club of Space Center. Fifty thousand dollars were set aside in the Club's budget in Rotary Year 2014-15 for the program. However much more came out of the program than recognizing 50 years of service. The program epitomized the Rotary motto, "Service above Self". Let me explain, in recent years the Club moved away from the Club members being directly involved with the community and its needs. It interfaced with the needs of the community via of third party, fundraising. The Club became a fundraiser, and a good one, and essentially appropriated funds to projects, many carrying over from the previous years. Occasionally a member would recommend a project but typically the President would prepare a list of projects consistent with the budget and present them to the Club Board of Directors for approval. There were some modifications made but very little. Not until the RAOK and a couple of years earlier the Early Act First Knight's character education program did Club members return to a direct involvement with the needs of the community in addition to fundraising.

The RAOK program was one of the most significant service outreaches the Club pursued in recent years, and perhaps ever. Any Club member had an opportunity to identify a service need, and at any time during the Rotary year. The program did not limit the identification of needs to the first part of the Rotary year consistent with the budgeting process as most service projects do. The program greatly expanded the outreach of the Club into the local community with the entire Club membership (over 100) attentive to the needs of the community throughout the Rotary Year and at least 50 of the Club members directly involved with the needs. However the program was much more to the Club member than just identifying a need; she or he was actively involved with the entire process from identification, to arranging the donation to be given to the recipient, to being present when the donation was made whether at the Club meeting or away from a Club meeting such at the recipient's home or at a school. No other program involved so many Club members in such a personal and specific manner. The merit of the program was experiencing the giving of the donation to a specific end user, normally in the presence of the Club members or at least several of the Club members, without going through a third party such as a charitable organization. Another strong value of giving the donation to the end user at the Club meeting is the potential contacts that are available in the membership that may meet other needs of recipient other than monetary, such as repairing a car, stuffing gift bags for persons on chemotherapy, or applying for a job on internet which was not openly available the general public.

The program resulted in more members attending the Club meetings to experience the giving of a gift to a needy situation, more candidates for Rotary membership due to their experiencing the outreach or being asked by a Club member who was excited by the outreach, and a strong desire by the Club to make more money to expand the RAOK outreach.

