

Stamping out melanoma one screening at a time

THE Rotary clubs of Kiama and Gerringong, NSW, are leading the fight against melanoma in their communities through hosting free skin cancer screening clinics, with the support of up to six local volunteer GPs.

A recent clinic held at the Kiama Surf Life Saving Club saw 89 attendees inspected by three doctors. Of these, 13 people were referred to their own GPs for further review.

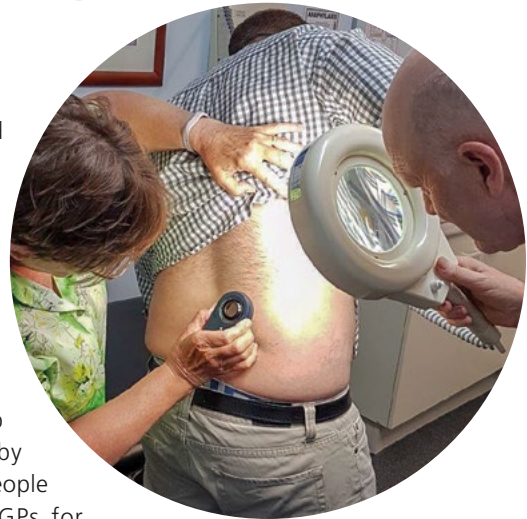
A prior clinic was held at the Kiama Auto Expo, a major fundraising event for both clubs hosted every November. Around a third of those who took part had skin lesions necessitating further examination. Some lesions were likely to be melanomas, and a small number of possible basal cell carcinomas.

Melanoma remains the most dangerous skin cancer, impacting more Australians under 39 years of age than any other. Nearly 90 per cent of melanomas are induced through UV exposure, with serious skin damage giving rise to precursor melanoma cells able to take place within only four minutes of sun exposure.

Current medical techniques can only treat melanoma successfully if it is detected in the early stages of development, allowing the entire tumour to be excised. The speed at which it spreads, and the fact that it thrives in hostile environments with limited nutrients and oxygen, make it particularly difficult to contain.

The Rotary clubs of Gerringong and Kiama have also invested significant funds, raised through the Kiama Auto Expo, into groundbreaking melanoma treatment research by Australian Rotary Health PhD student Sheena Daignault. Sheena has been experimenting with potential novel therapies for melanoma, including using a specialised drug that “tricks” the body into recognising the cancerous cells as foreign invaders, activating an immune system response. It is hoped further testing will result in a positive outcome.

In the meantime, the clubs will continue to organise cancer screening clinics, aiding in the early detection of melanomas and facilitating treatment – before it’s too late.





Breathing easy: The Fiji Oxygen Program

THE Fiji Oxygen Project is working to save the lives of children currently dying as a result of the lack of reliable oxygen supplies in hospitals and clinics in Fiji.

The project was established by the Rotary Club of Remuera, NZ, in conjunction with other charitable organisations and trusts, including Cure Kids Fiji.

It provides bedside oxygen concentrators, which remove nitrogen from the ambient air. The oxygen remaining can be used immediately or stored. These replace oxygen cylinders, which are expensive, difficult to move, and require a reliable supply chain. Cylinder dependence often leads to shortages in oxygen supplies for patients.

For health centres with uncertain electricity, custom-designed solar power systems are also installed to ensure equipment can operate 24/7.

Training for the use of the machine, maintenance and repair is provided, and ongoing supervision is carried out.

A number of units have already been successfully installed, with positive impact upon the likes of Taveuni Hospital and its patients. Yet many more are needed to ensure coverage of Fiji's medical facilities.

In February, the Rotary Club of Auckland South, NZ, working with the Rotary Club of Remuera, initiated a Shooting for Oxygen event held at the ASB Showgrounds during the dazzling Chinese New Year Festivities. Over 20,000 people passed the Rotarian-

manned booth raising awareness and funds.

Seven other clubs in the area were also invited to take part, including the Rotary clubs of Manurewa-Takanini, Otahuhu, Somerville, Pakuranga-Tamaki River Auxiliary, Harbourside, Auckland East and Papatoetoe Central.

Together, Rotarians educated the public about the project, sold raffle tickets, received donations, and encouraged groups to try the special Oxygen Ball game.

"Blowing the Oxygen Ball was fun, but also connoted the experience of those who lack oxygen in desperate moments," president of the Rotary Club of Auckland South Janet Lee said.



Safe space for carers in small Tassie town

THE Rotary Club of Somerset's Encircle Group provides a monthly lunch and social outing for parents supporting children with disabilities.

Club member Dennis Austin instigated the project at the beginning of his 2013-14 presidency after learning of several disadvantaged families in their area with children suffering debilitating and often life-threatening illnesses. These include cerebral palsy, severe autism and Down syndrome, among others.

Dennis believed the best way to assist was to create a safe space for these parents to share their problems and help find solutions at a free, regular social luncheon. He approached the club's community services director Marie Leicester to help coordinate the project. Marie, who began caring for her brother and his children as a 16-year-old, when her brother became paraplaegic, had a real affinity with the cause.

Rotarians pay to attend the lunches, which, together with sponsors, covers all costs. Each luncheon attracts 10 or more mothers and fathers, with around 20 parents in total attending as their schedule permits.

The monthly meet-ups have turned into a safe haven to share life's experiences and pass on helpful ideas to other parents, including referrals to unknown

service providers. The group came to be called "Encircle", describing the nurturing environment created within the group, enveloping each attendee with empathy, understanding and support.

Rotarians were surprised to discover that prior to the Encircle Group the parents had never met – despite living close together, with children facing similar problems. Many were so busy attending to their children's needs they did not have time to socialise or interact outside of the house. Their financial circumstances were also constrained due to the demand for extra non-funded medical requirements and living expenses.

Communication before and after events takes place within a closed Facebook group, providing additional support and opportunities to interact. This allows participants to share information and celebrate the get-togethers throughout the month, while maintaining their privacy.

Over time, Rotarians have helped alleviate problems faced by Encircle Group members through providing funding for special equipment. This has included providing second skin body suits, vehicle modification and lifts, and assisting with special needs beds and wheelchairs. Other provisions have included organising an undercover carport

area to be installed at one family's home to better allow a child to be removed from a vehicle in all weather, and two eye-gaze units to allow non-verbal young people to communicate.

The highlight of the year for the Encircle Group is the Christmas function, where parents and their families join Rotarians for a Christmas function at the Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden. The club also funds a day at the Metro Cinema for Encircle members' children with autism, for which the cinema adjusts the environment especially for their requirements.

Dennis is thrilled to see what the Encircle Group has become.

"The interaction between participants is particularly special to observe. The level of care between members is very meaningful," Dennis said.

This is not the only project the Rotary Club of Somerset has been involved with in helping young people with disabilities and their carers in their local community. The club raised over \$89,000 towards Give Toby Wheels, the single largest fundraising in the club's history, to help purchase a vehicle able to accommodate the 130kg wheelchair of local boy Toby Neilson, who has cerebral palsy. His family's situation was made all the more unfortunate by his father's

New buggy for Nelson shuttle service

THE Nelson Shuttle Buggy came into being in 2006, when local Rotarian Kathy Cuthbert noticed how some people struggled to navigate Nelson Hospital's steep hillside. With the support of others in the community, enough was raised to purchase a golf buggy and establish a roster of volunteer drivers to take people from their vehicles to the hospital and back again.

More than a decade on, the free buggy shuttle service has continued to operate – eight hours a day, five days a week, in all weather.

The Rotary Club of Nelson West, NZ, recently contributed \$5000 towards the purchase of a new buggy to replace the old vehicle, which had served its time. This amount was supplemented by collections from a donation box filled by patients and hospital visitors grateful for the buggy service over the years.

The new buggy has bench seats, allowing it to carry more passengers than the old buggy, as well as room at the back for walkers and prams.

Buggy drivers go out of their way to support people coming to the hospital, often being their first point of contact with the hospital during times of anxiety and pain. Drivers have been known to take children for an extra few laps of the car park to lift their spirits.

Rotary Club of Nelson West member Russell Egan, who volunteers as a buggy driver, finds the role incredibly rewarding.

"This would be the most satisfying volunteer job I have ever done – people really appreciate what you do," Russell said.

diagnosis of terminal lung cancer.

So successful was the fundraiser, the club ended up purchasing a quality second-hand wheelchair-carrying vehicle for Toby and a \$5000 cruise holiday for the Neilson family to enjoy. Additional funds were distributed to other disabled children in the community, including contributing to a chair lift for a young child in Latrobe and the fit-out of two vehicles with wheelchair lifts for families in Smithton and Wynyard.

The success of the fundraiser was made possible by the support of Rotary clubs throughout Tasmania, with special mention to the Rotary Club of Wynyard.

"Commendation must also go to Leigh Newman for his walk from Smithton to Hobart, which raised the profile of families in need, and the efforts of Jacqui Lambie, who rattled the can at dozens of football matches and raised around 20 per cent of the total. Not to mention the many other donors, with special acknowledgement to the Hislop family for an incredibly generous contribution of \$20,000," Dennis said.

"It is projects such as these that enable Rotary to seriously impact our community, and members of this club can be rightly proud of an amazing team effort with incredible results".



Russell Egan, of the Rotary Club of Nelson West, with the new hospital buggy.

Rotarians boost safety at adventure camp

OPERATED by the charitable Otago Youth Adventure Trust, NZ, Berwick Lodge is used as a camp by many schools, not-for-profits and members of the public throughout the year. Centred among exotic forest and native bushland, the lodge has many outdoor activities on offer, including abseiling, a flying fox, kayaking, orienteering and a rifle range.

However, located 45km south of Dunedin, it has no medical facilities close by. To help address this, the Rotary Club of Dunedin Central, NZ, has donated an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), which can be used by civilians to maintain heart function until further help arrives in the event of an accident or heart attack.

The unit was funded by the club in conjunction with a Rotary Foundation Grant, which club president Dave MacLeod and treasurer Grant Batchelor headed out to Berwick Lodge to hand over in person.

“An AED on site will provide peace of mind not only to the many groups and schools who use the camp throughout the year, but also the local forestry workers and surrounding community,” Dave said. “It is truly a community asset, and important given the distance from the nearest healthcare provider.”



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RIGHT: Set among exotic forest and native bushland, Berwick Lodge offers many outdoor activities, including abseiling, a flying fox, kayaking, orienteering and a rifle range.



Barwon River safety marker project

THE two most important pieces of information during a Triple Zero call are the nature of the emergency and its location.

When an incident occurs at a specific street address, it is generally easy for emergency services to find the caller. However, if it takes place in large open-spaces – walking trails or beaches where no obvious reference points exist – it takes extra, valuable, life-saving time to identify and verify the specific location and vehicle access point.

Keith Dawson, of the Rotary Club of Geelong East, Vic, realised the extensive parklands either side of Geelong's Barwon River could significantly benefit from emergency markers strategically placed along the walking and bike paths. That way, members of the public could quickly and easily be helped in times of crisis.

Keith began researching how to obtain approval for the concept from the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) and found there was no standard sign available for community organisations

like Rotary to sponsor. Once an appropriate sign was developed, approval was then sought from the City of Greater Geelong and Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, which manages the area.

After several hurdles, the project to install 46 double-sided signs along the river was approved. A local manufacturer was approached to produce the signs and posts, funded by the Rotary Club of Geelong East, the City of Greater Geelong, Rotary District 9780 grants and the Stronger Communities Program.

Rotarians then marked the location for installation, checking there were underlying services with Dial Before You Dig. They further mounted all the signs to their posts to ready them for installation by contractors.

Five and half years elapsed from Keith's initial proposal to the project's completion in December 2018, with the contribution of over 600 hours by Rotarians to make the concept a reality. Their labours have already proved worthwhile, with the signs used in



The signs have also proved a great way of boosting Rotary's public image, with an estimated 5000 people using the Barwon River area daily.



reporting several incidents. These have ranged from medical incidents, to fire emergencies and public security concerns.

The signs have also proved a great way of boosting Rotary's public image, with an estimated 5000 people using the Barwon River area daily. If each individual only passes five of the 46 signs, the Rotary logo is seen over nine million times a year.

For more information on the project, contact Tony Alsop on 0414 324 814 or email aalsop@agbgroup.com.au



Celebrating youth – Capricorn Coast Secondary Schools’ Music Festival

THE Rotary Club of Yeppoon, Qld, launched the annual Capricorn Coast Secondary Schools’ Music Festival three years ago.

The festival is unique in several ways. First, it is not a competition, but rather a celebration of the musical talents of local students, rewarded by the opportunity to perform in a large concert in front of an appreciative audience.

There are also no individual school performances. The large ensembles are comprised of students from all three local high schools: St Ursula’s College, St Brendan’s College and Yeppoon State High School. Students meet and rehearse together for six months prior to the festival, making new friends while building their musical capabilities.

A grant from the Regional Arts Development Fund allowed the Rotary Club of Yeppoon to involve students at Griffith University’s Conservatorium of Music in the event. Conservatorium students compose pieces for each of the large ensembles, as well as the finale piece performed by a combined orchestra and choir of well over 100 students. Each ensemble performs several popular pieces, as well as the piece composed specifically for them.

Conservatorium students work with the schools, developing their pieces alongside secondary students throughout the two-term rehearsal period. They are also heavily involved in the week leading up to the event, helping to fine-tune the performance before hearing their work performed in public on the night.

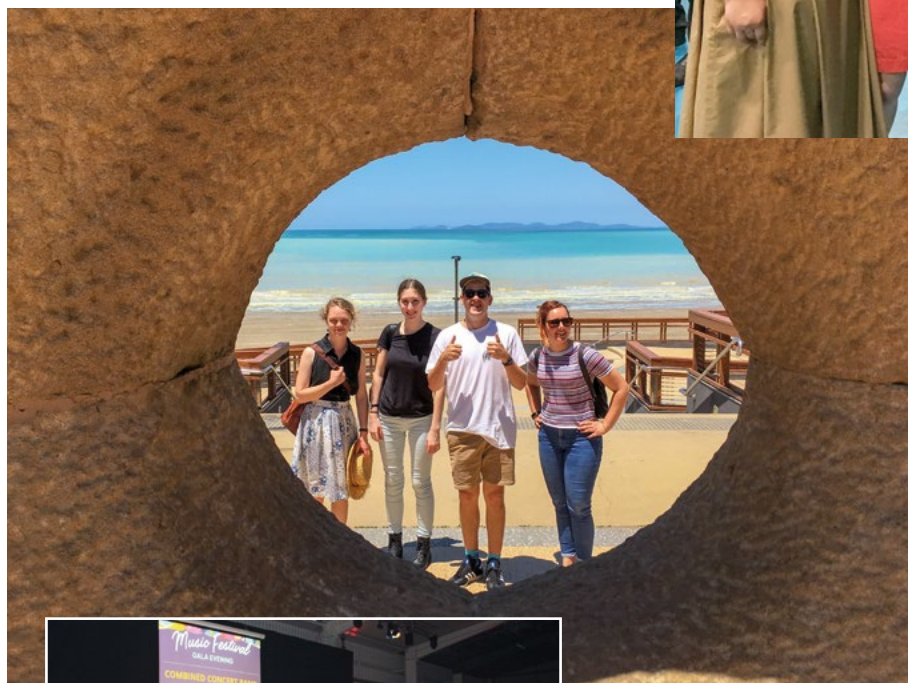
Major sponsorship comes from Yamaha Music Australia, the Livingstone Shire Council, Central Queensland University and Moore Eyes, helping create a highlight event on the local cultural and entertainment calendar.

On the day of the festival, there are three major events. From 1:30 to 3:30pm there is a concert of soloists, duets and small ensembles. Pre-concert entertainment of rock bands, drum lines and other groups begins at 5:30pm.

The Rotary Club of Yeppoon’s food van sizzles up steak burgers, hotdogs and the famous Yeppoon Rotary pulled-pork rolls. The venue is set up cabaret style, with people free to move in and out to grab a bite to eat as they please.

The day culminates with the Gala Concert, featuring the combined schools’ jazz band, concert band, choir and string orchestra. Also included are a selection of the early afternoon solo and small group performers, giving variety to the evening showcase.

The 2018 festival ended with a finale of *Here We Are*, composed by



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The brass section of the Jazz Band; Griffith University Conservatorium of Music students, who composed pieces for each of the large ensembles, as well as the finale piece; The sound crew kept the tunes in check; The Combined Concert Band in full swing; Conservatorium students take a well-deserved break from rehearsals.

Conservatorium student Tanya Jones. This was executed by the entirety of the night's performers, forming a combined orchestra and choir in excess of 150 students.

The event has become a highlight of the year for everyone involved.

"It's a wonderful celebration of participation and friendship through music," teacher Jack Ingram said. "It's an opportunity for students, teachers and composers to all interact and grow."

Conservatorium student Alys Rayner agrees.

"The event is an impressive, exemplary

platform for personal and collective growth through education, music and community action," Alys said.

Audience members leave performances with glowing reviews.

"There is so much work involved from teachers, musicians, parents and all the other people to organise this recurring event. It's fantastic to see where all the effort goes and, of course, we are so proud of our kids being part of it all," one enthusiastic parent said.

The Rotary Club of Yeppoon has now forged an agreement with Yamaha Music Australia for the next three years.

Yamaha is keen to promote the festival concept to other regions and towns, and to that end is willing to support Rotary clubs prepared to replicate the concept in their area. The Rotary Club of Yeppoon is currently working with the Rotary clubs of Mount Morgan, Biloela and the newly chartered club of Mackay Northern Beaches to develop the program in their areas.

Any club interested in finding out more can contact the festival coordinator Danny Moyle on 0499 755 522 or email moyle.danny@gmail.com. Performances on the gala night can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ge3KyKn5HZI

Rainforest revamp

THE Rotary Club of Boyne Tannum, Qld, has led a rainforest garden revitalisation project at their local kindergarten.

Tannum Sands Kindergarten is a community-based incorporated association, with all profits re-invested to benefit children and the kindergarten community. The project began when Rotarians asked if they could assist with any projects on the kindergarten's to-do list. Redevelopment of the outdoor area, which had become overgrown and consequently under-utilised, was suggested as an option.

Rotarians got to work cleaning up, trimming and maintaining existing plants, enlisting the help of the Boyne Tannum Scouts.

"We have worked together on planting trees previously, so we were confident they would be keen to help out – and what a terrific group of young community members we have there!" club president Wendy Brading said.

The second phase of the project included installing garden edging, adding new plants and mulching the garden beds.

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The children are thrilled to have the chance to play in a safe, outdoor learning space – but the Rotarians had even more surprises in store for them, after approaching local sculptural artist Christine Holden to host a series of workshops with the kinder children to create masterpieces of their own.

Christine specialises in transforming waste objects, ranging from cigarette

lighters to toothbrushes, into art pieces with an environmental theme.

She is well-known in the local area for her 4.5m barramundi sculpture, crafted predominately from fishing nets and fishing line.

This was followed last year by a life-sized fisherman built out of plastics collected in beach clean ups, with both public art projects sponsored by the Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership.

Now, Christine is guiding the children in creating their own jellyfish, dolphin and turtle out of marine debris, which will be installed in the rainforest garden once it's complete.

These unique features will add a creative and colourful dimension to the space, as well as act as an important reminder of the longevity of plastics and the dangers it can present to the marine ecosystem when discarded carelessly.

Rotary Club of Boyne Tannum volunteers and Boyne Tannum Scouts clear out debris at Tannum Sands Kindergarten to make way for the kindergarten's new outdoor area.



Mock accident brings reality of irresponsible driving to life



The Rotary Club of McLaren Vale's mock accident demonstration provides a confronting visual enactment of the consequences of irresponsible driving to high school students ready to get their licences.



THE Rotary Club of McLaren Vale, SA, has held a "mock accident" event in Willunga for the past 19 years. The event is a graphic display of a car accident and its repercussions for an audience of high schoolers. Of the age when they will soon be getting their licences, the mock accident is a hard-hitting demonstration of what can happen as a result of being irresponsible behind the wheel.

The event starts early in the morning, with SA Police closing the main road of Willunga, outside the Community Hall, and redirecting local traffic. Two smashed cars are delivered from Aldinga Crash Repairs and Towing and arranged as if they have been in a head-on collision. The Country Fire Service sets up near the crash scene with two trucks and their team.

Actors from Willunga High School take on the role of victims, dressed

in fake blood and bruising to look the part. Alfred James Funerals also participates, dressed in suits with a trolley to pick up the victim who has "died" at the scene.

The students arrive at around 9am and to witness the scene unfold. In 2018, Rotary Club of Blakiston member and SA Police Officer John Illingworth acted as narrator, alongside SA Ambulance Service's Jennifer Albrecht.

Everything kicks off with the victims of the accident coming to terms with what has "just happened", with a grieving father running to the scene as sirens start up in the distance. Ambulance workers arrive, assessing the situation and springing into action, while the Fire Service team uses the Jaws of Life and cuts through metal to rescue a trapped victim.

While all this is taking place, the narrators break down all aspects of the rescue process for the students

to understand. They emphasise the importance of safety for the rescuers as well the element forensic science plays in documenting the scene for prosecution.

For the finale, the driver is taken into custody and led into a makeshift courthouse within the Community Hall. Southern Value Legal staff ran the trial before Judge Sophie David, with justice served to the dangerous driver for the fatal result of their actions.

"The onlookers have a lot to take in over the two hours, but I really feel everyone gets something out of it," Rotary Club of McLaren Vale member Briony Casburn said. "Our club could never carry off such an amazing event without the help of all the volunteers on the day and I am proud our community cares enough to make it happen."

Any clubs that would like to be involved in the project can contact Briony on 0407 646 396.

FOR THOSE WITH MEDICAL ISSUES

Wandin's Blade Runner

A CONGENITAL deformity gave doctors no choice but to remove Emmanuel Megee's right foot when he was two years old. The following year, he underwent amputation of his left foot as well.

Now 10 years old, Em has always done his very best to play sport, though his prosthetics have always hampered his ability to keep up with his mates. Together, his friends, school and the Rotary Club of Wandin, Vic, came together to change that, through purchasing Em a set of carbon fibre blades like those used by Paralympians.

To raise funds, the students of Mountain District Christian School coordinated a Colour Run, integrated into their annual cross-country run. The

local community, including local businesses, embraced the event – a cash donation was contributed by Bendigo Community Bank Monbulk Branch and sausages were donated by Emerald Rainbow Meats to barbecue and sell on the day. A commendable total of \$2100 was raised, however, this was just under half of what was needed.

The Rotary Club of Wandin came to the rescue, with a donation of \$2800, which was doubled with a matching grant to \$5600, the total allowing a buffer for contingencies. The grant was provided by the Rotary Australia Benevolent Society (RAWCS group), from funds available as a result of the donation by the Dick and Pip Smith Foundation. The club's \$2800 contribution was raised from their annual Custom Car and Bike Show, which, in April 2018, contributed a further \$21,000 to the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal, where Em has been looked after and had his blades fitted by occupational therapists.





Since being fitted, Em reportedly hasn't stopped running and bouncing, with a literal spring in his step thanks to his new supple, high-tech prosthetics.



ABOVE: Em, centre, with classmate Jacob, who came up with the idea of a Colour Run fundraiser. Behind is Chaplain Ed Eadon, left, Mark Southall, of the Rotary Club of Wandin, Cath Megee, Jandi Gibson, Colour Run coordinator, and Russell Hayes. (Star Photos) ABOVE RIGHT: Em at the completion of the Össur clinic on the Gold Coast. OPPOSITE: Em's new blades allow him to run faster, jump higher, and change direction with ease – making a huge difference to his athletic capabilities.

Em's new blades allow him to run faster, jump higher, and change direction with ease – making a huge difference to his athletic capabilities. Since being fitted, Em reportedly hasn't stopped running and bouncing, with a literal spring in his step thanks to his new supple, high-tech prosthetics.

"There aren't words... it's extraordinary, we're just so thankful," Em's mother, Cathie Megee, said. "His

previous ones were base level; he could walk around fine, but in terms of running and jumping his progress had plateaued. He's a really sporty kid, so it will mean he can do all the activities his friends and peers are doing. It will just transform his life and what he is able to do."

The remaining \$2550 left available in the RAWCS account for the project was used to cover the cost of Emmanuel and his mother's attendance

at a mobility clinic on the Gold Coast in April. Run by leading international orthopaedics company Össur, it is a specialised program for aspiring athletes using blades designed to improve their capabilities.

"I just want to say thank you so much to everyone at school and Rotary for raising this money for me," Em said. "This time next year I will be running down the track with my classmates."

New wheels for the Peach family

LIFE has many challenges for the Peach family, with eight-year-old Molly and her little brother Luke both suffering a rare neurological disorder causing a variety of development issues.

Known as BPAN (Beta-propeller Protein-Associated Neurodegeneration), their condition arises from a lack of protein in the brain. Luke is confined to a wheelchair and suffers from epilepsy and signs of quadriplegic cerebral palsy. While Molly can run freely, she has autistic tendencies affecting her speech and other capabilities.

Parents Erin and Stewart take both children to multiple medical appointments each week, including speech therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy. Getting around was a daily struggle in the standard family sedan, which was ill-equipped to accommodate Luke's wheelchair. While the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) would fund a wheelchair lift, Erin and Stewart were left to buy the van, no simple feat with only Stewart's wage coming in to support the family.

Erin's gym instructor, Amy Pirrone, witnessed firsthand the struggle Erin had every time she got her kids in and out of the car and decided she would fight for Molly and Luke in a special



The Peach family has been overwhelmed by the community's support. Tears started flowing when the Peaches were officially gifted their new set of wheels.



Tim McKee, of the Rotary Club of Townsville Sunrise, left, and project organiser Amy Pirrone present Erin and Stewart Peach and their children Molly and Luke with their new LDV van.

charity boxing event, raising over \$2500 towards the cost of the van. She also approached the Rotary clubs of Townsville Sunrise and Mundingburra, Qld, to see if they could help.

Both clubs answered the call straight away by donating \$5000 each, a contribution matched dollar for dollar by the Rotary Australia Benevolent Society (RAWCS Group), to quickly reach the fundraising target of \$25,000.

Pickering's Auto Group also got behind the Peach cause, significantly reducing the cost of an LDV van, which the NDIS will soon fit with a wheelchair lift.

The Peach family has been overwhelmed by the community's

support. Tears started flowing when the Peaches were officially gifted their new set of wheels.

"The handover was easily the proudest day I've experienced in 30 years of community service," Rotary Club of Townsville Sunrise member and Peach Project Chair, Tim McKee OAM, said. "It is so good to be able to help a family in our very own community in need. We hope that this van will in some way provide relief to the hardship the Peach family endures every day."

"They are a beautiful family," Amy said. "Erin never complains. She is always happy and upbeat for her kids, so it is a great honour to help."