



THE Rotary Club of Varsity Lakes, Qld, is a club of the future. There are 24 members, with an average age of 37. Almost equally male and female, between them they speak seven languages, are of eight nationalities and seven religious denominations.

There are professions of all stripes, including a language translator, emergency nurse, social media consultant, radio announcer turned auctioneer and wealth management CEO. Linus Faustin, from Tanzania, East Africa (whose inspirational journey, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Taree on Manning, NSW, was reported in the December-January 2017-18 issue of *Rotary Down Under*, page 52-53,) and Kofi Kuma-Mintah, from Ghana, West Africa, are final year Bond University graduates, both with political ambitions in their home countries.

The club was the brainchild of district governor elect Andy Rajapakse, District 9640 public image chairman and member of the Rotary Club of Burleigh Heads. This was a district initiative, without a sponsor club, but with the support of a number of past district governors and Rotarians who helped provide inspiration and guides. Over six months, these Rotary mentors helped the newcomers understand how Rotary works and developed a strategic and succession plan until 2020.

"My friend Mark Huddleston's (District 9520) book *Creatures of Habit* and his success in forming the Rotary Club of Seaford, SA, as a district initiative was an inspiration to me to act outside the box," Andy said. "I was able to convince two local community leaders to embrace the idea of Rotary. They became Rotary ambassadors and helped bring in the charter members."

Marketing via Facebook also played a major role, with the social media platform used for all communication between club members, and the public. The club chartered only in September 2018, yet already the club's page reaches 4000 people, and is followed by over 1500. This strong

Club of the Future

Inspired to think outside the box, district governor elect Andy Rajapakse envisaged a new kind of Rotary club... and cocktails and canapés are just the beginning!

public image brings in one or two guests every week to the meetings to see what Rotary is about.

Members meet each Tuesday at 5.15pm for cocktails at a large corporate venue hotel, which provides a space free of charge. There are no frills: no fine boxes, no songs, no readings. Once a month there is a guest speaker, and on an alternating week a member speaks about his or her business. Ongoing projects are reported upon weekly. The meeting closes after an hour on the dot – meaning members who have young families can be home by 6:30 pm. On the last Tuesday of the month members and their families enjoy a dinner, offered at a 25 per cent discount from the hotel.

Annual club membership fees are \$500 – less than \$2 a day. For those under 30 years, or over 60 years, the fees are \$300. Corporate membership is offered at \$750, which allows for the nomination of two active members to the club, and space for up to four managers at meetings. All employees can join club events and projects.

Every four months, the Rotary Club of Varsity Lakes teams up with the Varsity Lakes Business Forum to host a business networking evening attended by around 150 local professionals. It is \$15 per person, covering two drinks each and unlimited finger food. A Rotarian speaks to inform the attendees about Rotary, making the event great promotion as well as an enjoyable work and social function.

“We must market the Rotary message right, to the right people,” said Andy.

For more information email andyrajapakse@gmail.com. •



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TOP: Rotary Club of Varsity Lakes members Louise Agnew, left, Kofi Kuma-Mintah and Dominica Darrington enjoy a laugh and a beverage at one of the club's weekly “cocktail meetings”.

ABOVE: Every four months, the club teams up with the Varsity Lakes Business Forum to host a business networking evening attended by around 150 local professionals.

LEFT: Club charter president Peter Childe-Freeman.