

ROTARY CLUB OF POTOMAC BETHESDA'S NEPAL HEARING PROJECT

PREVENTION OF DEAFNESS AND PROMOTION OF HEARING AMONG CHILDREN IN NEPAL

By Dr. Milan Maharjan

Twelve months ago, the Rotary Club of Kathmandu Mid-Town (KTM) invited me to speak at one of its Club meetings about the work of Ear Care Nepal (ECN), a charitable volunteer organization that I lead. The main purposes of ECN are to prevent hearing loss among economically disadvantaged school-age children in Nepal and to promote conservation of hearing through provision of ear care education, ear screening, primary ear care, and middle ear surgeries.



Ed Edmundson, a new member of the Potomac-Bethesda Rotary Club, listened to my speech. When he returned to Maryland, he advocated on behalf of ECN. Ultimately, PB Rotary obtained a matching grant from the District 7620 Foundation and was able to send \$3,700 to ECN through the KTM Club, which had agreed to administer these funds. Following the completion of over

2000 ear screenings, 30 children received middle surgeries to correct problems caused by middle ear infections sometimes known as chronic otitis media. If left untreated, these conditions can lead to eardrum perforations and destruction of little bones, thereby causing hearing loss and even death. After consultation with PB Rotary and KTM, \$400 remaining from the initial grant was released to pay for transportation to the Solukhumbhu District of Nepal for the purpose of ECN conducting "ear screening" camps. Solukhumbhu is located in a remote, mountainous district in Eastern Nepal that includes Mt. Everest. Salleri, its capital city, is about 150 miles from Kathmandu. Due to rough roads, it takes 10 to 12 hours to drive there. The ear screening camps were conducted at government schools and Buddhist monasteries, where school-age children are raised as young monks and nuns. The locations where the screening activities took place are accessible only on foot. Due to the very difficult terrain, the hard walk from Junbesi to Chheskam took four days. All of the screened children and their teachers received education on primary ear care via posters, power point presentations, and distribution of booklets that include drawings related to primary ear care. In Junbesi, ear screening



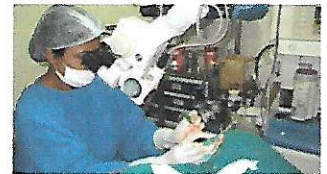
at two schools and two monasteries found that 7.68 percent of the public school children and 12.36 percent of the school-age children in the monasteries had middle ear pathology. In Chheskam, 9.88 percent of the screened children were similarly identified. Here are the overall statistics from the Junbesi and Chheskam ear screening camps:

- Number of children screened: 1,169.
- Number identified as having middle ear problems causing various degrees of hearing loss: 120.
- Number requiring ear surgery to restore their hearing: 15.
- Number fitted with hearing aids: 8.

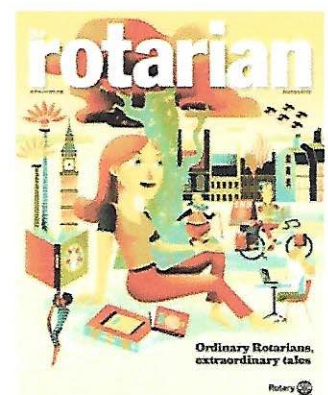
I and ECN's other volunteer ear, nose, and throat surgeons will conduct all of the surgeries free of charge. ECN will incur various costs, including the cost of transporting the candidates for corrective surgery to and from the locations where their surgeries will be performed. Donations to ECN from various individuals and one Nepalese foundation, and discounts from anesthesiologists, a hospital, and a pharmacy will make all of this possible. The Solkhumbhu ear screening camps were a great success that will help in the prevention of deaf-

ness and promotion of hearing among many marginalized Nepalese children.

ECN is very grateful to the PB Rotary Club for providing the \$3,700 grant, which was used very carefully in both surgical correction of deafness and in preventive care for many under-privileged Nepalese children.



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