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INSIDE

McDonald is local Rotarian of the Year

By Jodi Rempala, Press & Guide Newspapers

DEARBORN — Many people find ways to give back to their community at some time in their life.

For John McDonald, hanging up his hat as a soccer coach gave him the opportunity to do so.

On the advice of a very dear friend, he was invited to and subsequently joined the Dearborn Rotary Club in 1991.

"Joe Hallissey thought I could make a contribution. He brought me in and I'm very pleased he did so," McDor said.

Hallissey, a longtime Dearborn business owner who is active in the educational community, felt McDonald could make a difference, and he did.

On June 26, McDonald, a 12-year Rotary member, was named Dearborn's Rotarian of the Year.

The award caught him by surprise.

"I was very surprised, it doesn't normally go to the sitting president. I was taken aback ... many wonderful people have received this award," he said.

McDonald was given the award because even as president, he has gone above and beyond what was expected of him, said his fellow Rotarian and longtime friend Hallissey.

"He's a very capable young man, his efforts on reorganization have been very beneficial," Hallissey said.

"He has introduced new programs and brought interesting life to the group."

McDonald has been on the executive board of the club for the last seven years and served as president this past year.

During that time, he has taken on many different roles.

As president he's overseen the club's weekly events and works hard on fundraising activities.

There has been a wide array of fundraising projects sponsored by Rotary including a St. Patrick's Day party he says he spearheaded, Santa Snaps holiday photos, dinner-dance events and the "Detroit Jazz" CD.

"Detroit Jazz," which McDonald co-produced with Rotarian George Bednar, was the group's most recent project and the local Rotary club's most successful ever. Its sale raised almost \$18,000 for Rotary.

Combining all of the group's projects for the year, over \$50,000 was raised to go to various charities.

Around \$20,000 went to the Rotary Foundation for local charities.

About \$35,000 went to Rotary International's polio eradication project.

The polio project is one that deeply touches McDonald.

"Rotary has raised about \$350 million toward the project that has helped inoculate two billion children against the disease. There are just a few pockets left to wipe it off the face of the earth," he said.

"The thought of children being crippled just appalls me ... I remember my parents dreading us getting it."

Another campaign McDonald enjoys is the upcoming Rouge River Pathway. Rotary is planning to raise money for it this year.

The project will create a natural pathway from Ford Road to Michigan Avenue along the river.

"We hope to raise another \$50,000 to create an observation deck at King Fisher Bluff," he said, referring to a spot on the river's banks behind the Henry Ford Community College campus.

But there are many projects that are dear to him, including the various scholarships Rotary gives out and a Patrick's Day dance.

"We do a whole range of things to make you feel like you're doing something good for your fellow man and world," McDonald said.

Rotary, although fun and rewarding, is almost like a second job for the 57-year-old.

"This year as president, I was involved in directing the club, saw increased membership, reduced our debt and held the most successful fundraiser ever," he said.

"It's very rewarding in many ways but takes a lot of effort."

Winning Rotarian of the Year indicates a strong commitment to the group.

Now McDonald's name will be submitted to the Dearborn Inter-Service Club Council for service person of the year.

McDonald doesn't think he'll take top honors there, though, because there are many others doing great work for the city of Dearborn.

"There are tremendous people doing wonderful things around town," he said. Rotary is just one of them.

McDonald was given the award at the end of his year as president of the club and will now sit on the past-president. He will also sit on the club's Foundation board, and will work his way through the ranks there.

His reign as president of Rotary ended June 30 and Lee Hollmann, who is retired from Ford Motor Co., took over July 1.

Outside Rotary, McDonald serves as president of the Henry Ford Community College Federation of Teachers, the union that represents full-time faculty.

He's held that position since 1979.

He began his career at HFCC in 1969 fresh out of grad school, teaching freshman composition and 19th American literature.

He is very active in millage campaigns for the college and public school system.

He is also vice president of the Michigan Federation of Teachers, involved in many committees and on the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO labor council.

McDonald has three grown children who have achieved successful careers and a son who is working hard at college at the University of Michigan.

Rotary, started in 1905, is the world's first service organization.

It is an organization of business and professional leaders, who provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards and help build goodwill and peace in the world.

The Rotary Club of Dearborn began in 1923, and has provided support to the local community in numerous ways.

For more information on the organization, call the Dearborn Rotary at (313) 278-7233 or just let another Rotarian member know your interest.