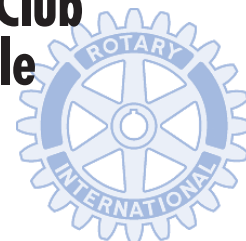


**The Rotary Club  
of Belleville**



# Rotarians help mine away tragedy

by Jack Evans



Belleville Rotarian John Cairns is chair of a District 7070 committee called Rotarians for Mine Action, working to eradicate landmines in war-torn areas and also to assist victims with injuries or loss of limbs. The committee's current goal is to provide at least one dog especially trained to sniff out such hazards at a rate much faster than manual technology can do. This police dog at the Belleville Police Station is typical of the specially trained dogs available.

-photo by Jack Evans

Playing a lead role in the Canada-inspired thrust to eradicate land mines in war-torn areas is the Rotary Club of Belleville.

Much progress has been made since the Canadian initiative resulted in what is known as the Ottawa, or Mine Ban Treaty signed by the international community in 1999. But in many former and present strife-ridden areas in the world, thousands of land mines remain.

Belleville Rotarian John Cairns, is chair not only for the local club on this project, but of Rotarians for Mine Action for District 7070 which takes in

from Belleville through the Toronto area. Thus, the continued eradication is just one more involvement by Rotary International in which the local club is active.

There's a lot more to this project than just clearing mines, said Cairns. "It is also about people and societies and how they are affected by landmine contamination. The primary goal is to reduce the risk from landmines to a level where people can live safely. That includes economic, social and health development free from limitations imposed by landmine contamination. It also includes the needs of victims being

addressed so they can return to a quality of life they deserve."

To illustrate the scale of the problem, Rotary figures indicate that landmines claim a victim somewhere in the world every 22 minutes.

While landmines are often fatal, more often their damage is serious injuries such as loss of limbs. Those are situations to which Cairns can readily relate. As a young man, he was involved in a tragic train accident which resulted in the loss of both an arm and a leg. It may not have been a landmine, but Cairns can certainly understand the trauma and challenge of losing limbs. In his own case, he

has adjusted his lifestyle by making best possible use of prosthetic limbs and maintaining community involvement through activities like Rotary.

Landmines can be mass produced at a cost of about \$3 each, but costs to locate and remove them vary between \$300 and \$1,000 each, depending on the type and terrain.

One ally clearance crews have discovered in recent months is the use of specially trained dogs who can sniff out land mines much more efficiently than manually-operated sophisticated electronic equipment. Even so, Cairns explained, the two go hand in hand.

The dogs can speed up the rate of determining mine locations by about 10 times. Thus, if a manual determiner can clear 100 square metres per day, the addition of a mine detection dog can increase that to 1,000 square metres per day.

For this reason, the Rotary Club of Belleville and District 7070 are focusing their efforts on raising funds to purchase trained land mine sniffing dogs. Each dog purchased by the district will be named in memory of a Canadian casualty of war in Afghanistan.

Such dogs, Cairns noted, cost up to \$16,000 each, so the club is specifically raising funds to provide at least one of them.

One special project coming up is the annual Night of a Thousand Dinners Gala. This event is set this year for Saturday, March 29, in The Banquet Centre, with cocktails and silent auction preview at 6 p.m. and dinner at 7 p.m. The title, he explained, comes from the concept that other Rotary clubs in the district are holding similar events so that at least 1,000 people are dining in sup-

port of landmine eradication on the same night.

Tickets are \$75 each with a tax receipt for \$25 available upon request.

For tickets, email: John Cairns at: [john@voiceofvictory.ca](mailto:john@voiceofvictory.ca), or telephone (613) 966-5032.

John said he encourages people to enjoy an evening for a good cause, thus donating toward the mine sniffing dogs or they could donate something for the silent auction.

Wherever land mines are present, he argues, "no human being can safely exist to be productive in their own land."

"Landmines are indiscriminate. They do not distinguish between a soldier's footsteps or a child's. Once peace is declared, the landmine does not recognize that peace.

As a Rotarian, Cairns said he is particularly proud to be part of Rotary International's efforts to both eradicate landmines and to assist victims.

"As a member of the Rotary Club of Belleville, I am humbled and honoured to be part of Rotary International that is committed to service above self."

*To add your support for  
Landmine Eradication  
Please send your cheque  
or money order to*

**The Rotary Club  
of Belleville,  
P.O. Box 22082,  
Belleville Ontario  
K8N 5V7**

**Attention  
Landmine Action**