

Rotary
Club of
Charlotte



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

May 10, 2022

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Jerry Coughter, Rotary WASH Ambassador

By Elly Clary

Substituting for a program that collapsed 45 hours before the meeting, **Jerry Coughter** explained his involvement in a quasi-Rotary movement that advocates for clean water worldwide.

Our past president Coughter is an ambassador from our District 7680 for WASH, an acronym for **Water**, **S**anitation and **H**ygien**e**, and the accompanying RAG, or **R**otary **A**ction **G**roup.

“The WASH Rotary Action Group supports and ensures sustainable, long-lasting clean water, sanitation and hygiene programs to communities in need,” Coughter explained, and its efforts are global.

More than any other issue, he pointed out, clean water and sanitation can impact the health, education, economy, equality and progress of all people.

“We think of this as being a rural problem but it’s not,” he explained. “In developing countries, water is an issue in urban environments as well – just like it is in America.”

Started in 2007, WASH RAG operates under the auspices of Rotary, but is not an official part of it. The initiative doesn’t take on projects but it helps

clubs and districts support sustainable efforts to provide clean water. It facilitates finding entities with clean water project expertise to carry out initiatives.

In the Philippines, a number of Rotary clubs combined resources to build 222 toilets and other sanitation and hygiene facilities. In Lebanon, the country's 24 Rotary clubs joined to ensure clean water availability in every school. Closer to home, the Huntersville Happy Hour Rotary is helping bring clean water to 14 schools that enroll 5,500 students in three Guatemala towns.

Through a \$2,000 matching grant, Charlotte Rotary is part of clean water efforts in the Haitian commune of Cavaillon. Also participating are the 22 Haitian Rotary clubs and many other clubs in the United States. They accomplish goals in conjunction with HANWASH (**H**aiti **N**ational **C**lean **W**ater, **S**anitation and **H**ygiene Strategy) led by Barry Rassin, Rotary International President in 2018-19. HANWASH assists WASH efforts with administration, operations, program coordination, legal matters and accounting.

"HANWASH coordinates development partners small and large," Coughter said, "and mobilizes communities to address their own issues."

Local involvement is vital. "We need a philosophy of pay for service," Coughter said. "It's not charity. We ensure that a community places a value on what they're receiving."

In Haiti, a country of 11.5 million that is closer to the United States than Puerto Rico, lack of sustainable access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene is dire. Only 30 percent of Haitians have potable water and just 24 percent have access to a toilet.

"Half of Haiti's water and sanitation infrastructure does not function, and the one's that do are not well managed," Coughter said. "Local communities can't come up with the money to fix them."

Cost to sponsor a well in Haiti is about \$20,000. HANWASH projects 50 new rural wells this year.

Rotary clubs that wish to support clean water efforts in Haiti can apply for matching grants from the Rotary Foundation. Individuals and groups can also contribute.

"We ask you to provide support under the auspices of HANWASH to create a more sustainable effort," Coughter said. "Think about being an advocate for what's going on in Haiti."

*A recording of the program is available here: <https://vimeo.com/708696238>

The presentation begins at 12:20 minutes.