

MAKING CONNECTIONS in HAMBURG

The Townships Project at the Rotary International Convention - June 2019

From June 1st to 6th, the annual Rotary International Convention gathered 25,000 Rotarians from 180 countries around the world in Hamburg Germany. And The Townships Project was there.

Rotarians Martha Deacon (Townships Founder and Board member), Carole Rowsell (Board member), and Lars Henriksson (Board adviser) spent the week networking among delegates in order to lay groundwork for relationships — informing them about The Township Project's work in South Africa and attracting interest which might lead to supportive partnerships, particularly for the the Building Better Businesses Symposium.

Beyond the general sessions in the morning, the afternoon breakout workshops and, of course, the informal lunches and dinners offered lots of opportunity to talk about The Townships Project and hear about other relevant projects in which Rotary clubs are involved.

Carole, with Lars, focused on the Rotary Action Group for Microfinance and Community Development (RAGM), and were able to build on the good relationship with the key organizers — for example, its president, who is a Canadian and a long-time friend. They took in the group's annual general meeting, and its seminar on Micro Business and Microfinance. Carole volunteered at the RAGM booth and attended a think-tank session as well. This group is perhaps the best vehicle for reaching out to the Rotary world, and Carole plans to write a blog on the RAGM website.

Martha, Carole and Lars all attended the African Banquet, seated with members of the South African contingent. In addition, Martha attended an inter-country seminar addressed by Annemarie Mostert of Martha's Rotary Club in South Africa and by Prof. Dr. Bernhard Maisch of Germany about their joint health project in Alexandra Township; that was followed by a reception hosted by the Germans for their South African partners. An informal dinner with a dozen Past District Governors and their spouses from Ontario provided a chance to introduce The Townships Project and its Building Better Businesses Symposium. We know that PDGs as regional leaders have connections and influence with whole groups of local clubs who are often on the look-out for worthwhile projects to support.

At this stage the aim was not to secure immediate donations, but rather to make connections — making Rotary clubs aware of our work in South Africa, which is happening largely because of Rotary partnerships. Rotary is known and respected around the globe for solid community and humanitarian service, and the hope is that, as an eventual outcome of our presence at the Hamburg Convention, clubs in places like Germany and Holland — and in Canada, too — may become supportive of The Townships Project and its Building Better Businesses Symposium.