

Night Report 30 May 2022

Our meeting on 30 May 2022 was a zoom meeting.

Sergeant David Turnbull welcomed Dennis Carpenter from Thailand and Gemma Sisia, our guest speaker, from Tanzania.

Alan Paynter proposed a toast to his new great great grandson.

President Keith also welcomed Gemma Sisia and Dennis Carpenter.

Sergeant David introduced Gemma Sisia and she proceeded with her fascinating talk.



In 2007, Gemma's achievements were honoured by a Member of the Order of Australia (AM). Her story has been featured twice in the ABC TV documentary program Australian Story, first in 2005 and then a follow-up in 2009.

In 2012, Gemma was named one of The Australian Financial Review and Westpac's 100 Women of Influence, nominated in the Global category, and was also a finalist for New South Wales Australian of the Year. In 2000 and 2019, Gemma was awarded a Sapphire Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary International.

Gemma spent her early years on a sheep and cattle property near Guyra in northern New South Wales, Australia. She is the only daughter among the eight children of Sue and Basil Rice. Gemma's mother still lives on the family property at Guyra, and a number of her brothers live in the area.

After completing her secondary studies at St Vincent's College in Sydney, Gemma completed a science degree (majoring in genetics and biochemistry) at The University of Melbourne, followed by an honours program (where she was awarded first class) in the Northern Territory. Gemma concluded her tertiary studies with a Diploma of Education through the University of New England in Armidale.

At 22 years old, Gemma devoted her time to helping the poor in Africa. She decided to travel to Uganda to put her qualifications to good use, volunteering as a teacher in a local school for three years. This experience fostered her fervent belief that a free, high-quality education should be the right of all children and that education is the strongest weapon in

fighting poverty, corruption and political instability. On returning to Australia, Gemma began fundraising to help underprivileged children in Uganda complete their schooling. Overwhelmed with support and donations, Gemma raised enough money to start an official fund to invest in the education of East Africa's poorest children.

While working in Uganda, Gemma travelled to neighbouring Tanzania and met Richard Sisia, a safari driver, who later became her husband. Richard's father Daniel Sisia, a village chairman, gifted the newlyweds a small plot of land that became home to The School of St Jude.

In 2002, The School of St Jude opened with one teacher and a handful of sponsored students. Today, St Jude's provides free, quality education to 1,800 bright primary and secondary students who come from considerably poor backgrounds. The school also supports 100s of graduates with access to higher education and provides more than 15,000 government school students with volunteer teachers each year. 100% of St Jude's students and scholars are on scholarships.



Located across three campuses, St Jude's also provides boarding for all secondary students and employs over **300** Tanzanian staff across their Academic and Head Office teams, ensuring a sustainable and self-determining future for St Jude's. In a country where 70% of secondary school-aged people are not enrolled in secondary school, the chance to receive a free, quality education is life-changing for the community's most disadvantaged families.

But, the support doesn't stop there. In 2015, St Jude's celebrated its first ever Form 6 (the final year of secondary school) graduating class, which placed in the top 10% in Tanzania. Today, there are over 800 Form 6 graduates, many of whom are supported by the Beyond St Jude's (BSJ) Program.

BSJ is an optional program that enables St Jude's secondary graduates to give back to their communities as volunteers during a Community Service placement. They then go on to access higher education, supported by our sponsors and donors.

During their Community Service, volunteers personify the school's vision by voluntarily assisting in under-resourced government schools, sharing the gifts of their education, or in various placements throughout St Jude's. Our Community Service volunteers teach more than 20,000 government school students each year, who otherwise wouldn't have teachers for core subjects like mathematics and science.

Those who successfully complete their Community Service placement may then be eligible to receive a College or Tertiary scholarship to pursue their first higher education qualification; enabling them to become the future professionals that their country needs.

Gemma and the St Jude's team haven't stopped there. In January 2020, they opened a secondary boarding school for 600 girls. This means more girls in the workforce, more graduates accessing higher education and more role models for future generations to ensure they reach their full potential too.

In December 2021, the school celebrated the university graduation of the first seven St Jude's educated doctors, who completed university with the support of BSJ. This milestone marked the fulfilment of a long held dream for Gemma.



In addition to Gemma's daily oversight of St Jude's, Gemma and Richard also run a safari company and are busy raising four children: Nathaniel (born October 2001), Jacob (born April 2003), Isabella (born April 2008) and Louisa (born July 2012).

Janelle acknowledged John Caruana for organising such a great guest speaker.

Directors' Reports

Treasurer - Tony Coote reinforced the need to make Foundation donations as soon as possible before the end of the Rotary year.

Social - Tony Coote advised friendship lunches/dinners are being organised for June. There are plenty of hosts, more guests are required.

Vocational - Edwina Ruff advised some nominations have been received for the Pride of Workmanship Award.

Youth - Rosemary Clarke advised the Club is hosting 4 students from Coonabarabran for Santos Science Experience from Tuesday 4 October to Saturday 8th October (4 nights). We are looking for hosts. Please contact Rosemary if you are able to host any students. Rosemary will meet the students, their teacher and some parents on Thursday when in Coonabarabran. She will also get ideas for free time with a possible BBQ /get-together on the Friday night.

RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Awards) will occur in January, possibly 8th -15th. New location from Elanora Heights. Kishaya Lye and Sasha Varman who were to go last year are still keen to attend. The price has increased significantly.

Summer RYPEN (Rotary Youth Program on Enrichment) is to be held at Narrabeen Fitness Camp 3 - 5 February. It is open to students currently in Year 9. Applications open in September. Costs have increased from \$310 to \$400.

The Pennant Hills - Cherrybrook Rotaract Club has now folded which is disappointing. Jason Terry is now a member of The Hills Rotaract Club.

Club Services - Janelle reminded members they need to rsvp to Ros Hogan for the Changeover Lunch to be held on 26 June by **Thursday 16 June** and pay \$65 per person into the Club's general Account and identify with surname and CO lunch.

Janelle promoted the Push Up Challenge to be undertaken by the Outgoing and Incoming Boards. They aim to complete 3,139 push-ups between 1-24 June to raise money for suicide prevention and mental health. The money goes to LifeLine Push Up Australia. Janelle will put up a page on our website so we can see their progress and let us know how we can sponsor a Board member. It was even suggested that Alex could be a mentor!!

Community Services - Neville Hansen advised Pennant Hills High School are having a Fete on Saturday 25 June and have asked the Club if we could run a BBQ for them using our trailer. We will need to cater for 1,500 meals (only sausage sandwich and drinks). There will be two shifts - 2pm to 6pm and 6pm to 10pm. Need 8-10 people per shift. Please advise Neville if you are able to assist.

Foundation - Further to David Turnbull's email to members he reminded us that as a club we are required to maintain a level of contribution to the Rotary Foundation. This is how we get our grants so we can do good work.

Other

Kerry Mann thanked everyone who assisted at the Bunnings BBQ on 29 May. We made a net profit of \$684. It helped that the weather was much better than it was at the last BBQ.

Dennis Carpenter spoke about his son in Lismore. He has arranged for sponsors in Australia to produce shirts to raise funds to help the people in Lismore area after the recent flooding. \$100,000 from the sale of shirts has been contributed to the Kurri Kurri Club.

Sergeant David passed back to Keith to close the meeting.

