PORT ARTHUR ROTARY REFLECTING ON TWENTY PLUS YEARS OF SERVICE AT THE DEW DROP INN!

Since August 6th, 1997, members of the Port Arthur Rotary have been involved in preparing and serving hot meals at the Dew Drop Inn (DDI) on the 4th Thursday of each month. Founded on February 9, 1981, the Dew Drop Inn is a local soup kitchen that provides a safe warm, welcoming place where hungry men, women and children can come to eat with no questions asked and where they are treated with dignity and respect. Since opening its doors the Dew Drop Inn has served over 1.3 million meals.

"Port Arthur Rotary values its long relationship with the Dew Drop Inn here in Thunder Bay. Community service is a pillar of the type of work Rotarians do in close to 200 countries worldwide. Port Arthur Rotary has been supporting programs like the Dew Drop Inn going back to 1924. Based on the enthusiasm of our members for this type of work, we plan to continue our hands-on service for years to come," concluded Philp.

The Dew Drop Inn opened its doors as an outreach ministry of St. Andrew's RC Church in the second church building which was used as the parish hall. In the first year of operation, they served about 40 people a day. For over 20 years, the task of keeping the Dew Drop Inn running was largely shouldered by a small, but committed, group of volunteers, service clubs, businesses and churches within the community.

Port Arthur Rotary was one of the groups that provided support to the feeding program during this time. From January to March 1998, the Port Arthur Rotary held a Flabathon and raised $29,000 for the Dew Drop Inn. These funds were used to upgrade the kitchen with new flooring, stainless steel counters, a new refrigerator and new wiring with much of the construction work being carried out by Rotarians. Port Arthur Rotarian, David Silliman is the Committee Chair responsibile for Port Arthur Rotary's service to the Dew Drop Inn. Silliman stated, "beyond serving monthly at the Dew Drop inn, Port Arthur Rotary has raised funds exclusively for Dew Drop Inn renovations and improvements and can be found working to keep equipment and other physical aspects of the aging structure in working condition."

In 2005, with the growing number of hungry people using the services of the Dew Drop Inn and out of concern for the future of the soup kitchen, Fr. Peter Groulx, then Pastor of St. Andrew's Parish, established a Coordinating Committee for the Dew Drop Inn. George Burns, a Port Arthur Rotary member and supporter of the Dew Drop Inn was invited to be a part of the committee. The commitee's mandate was to raise the profile of the soup kitchen, develop a fundraising strategy to move forward with renovations and ensure the day-to-day operation of the facility. What followed was a major fundraising effort in 2006 and 2007 which allowed for the completion of the much needed renovations to the building and created a base of funding to ensure the future viability of the organization.

The Dew Drop Inn was incorporated in June 2008 under the corporation name St. Andrew Soup Kitchen Inc. and responsibility for the organization's governance, fundraising and future sustainability was transferred from St. Andrew's parish to the new corporation's board of directors. In June 2009, St. Andrew Soup Kitchen Inc. was formally recognized by the Canada Revenue Agency as a registered charity. Rotarian, George Burns, was a member of the first Board of Directors until his passing in March 2009. Regarding George Burns, David Silliman went on to say " George Burns was the embodiment of Rotary's Motto of "Service above Self". It was his work that paved the way for the Port Arthur Rotary's steadfast relationship with the Dew Drop Inn."

For more information about Port Arthur Rotary, please email parotary@tbaytel.net or go to www.parotary.com or facebook.com/parotary or contact the Port Arthur Rotary Dew Drop Inn Committee.