

Thursday 9 November 2023

To whom it may concern,

My family have been blessed with the tremendous company and enthusiastic assistance of some incredible Rotarians over the past three days. These individuals have worked tirelessly in hot, filthy conditions, cleaning and clearing all of the belongings out of our home in Northam which was devastated by fire several weeks ago. These amazing individuals have even arranged mulch for our exceptionally neglected gardens and have been tidying the exterior as well.

The emptying, cleaning and storing of all of our personal effects, which was a stipulation imposed on us by the insurance company prior to repair work commencing on the building, had proven impossible for our family to undertake alone. Our four children, my husband and I had spent several evenings and weekends attempting to tackle this task, including my daughter's 12th birthday two days after the fire. However, the task had proven to be dangerous and painfully slow given the broken fragments of glass, loose wires and other hazards, combined with the logistical issues of supervision and the provision of the complex medical care requirements of our 9 year-old daughter with disabilities.

The mental health and general outlook of my husband and I progressively deteriorated, as the insurmountable task of emptying our home continued to feel unattainable, thus stalling commencement of the repair works on the home for an indefinite period.

On a personal note, earlier this year my father-in-law had passed away extremely suddenly from two successive strokes, and we had also suffered a miscarriage. These two earlier events had understandably already significantly drained our emotional resources even prior to our house fire mid-July. We simply had no physical or emotional energy remaining to even try to ascertain where to start and how to go about planning, much less completing, this enormous task.

At a Camp Quality event recently, my teenaged son had connected with an acquaintance of his whom he had met whilst assembling furniture in support of the 'My Home' project as part of his Minderoo internship - a beautiful, passionate Rotary Club member by the name of Kay Durrant. I recall my son, Joshua, saying that he hadn't known what to say when he was asked by Kay if there was anything we still needed following the fire. I had also experienced the same awkwardness with various groups and individuals, who had offered assistance! It wasn't like in the immediate aftermath, where we could request clothing, linen etc. We were literally in need of an army of people to collaborate and tackle this phenomenal task in an organised, coordinated manner. We couldn't ask for this, and, even if we did, who would possibly have the capacity to source, coordinate and organise this group of people? As we discovered, Kay Durrant not only had the capacity to rally a great many Rotary members. She also recruited the Western Force rugby team! Kay coordinated dates, details and this massive operation with incredible efficiency and compassion!

It is my deep desire to promote Rotary, as well as express the indescribable impact of these individual members' efforts. Whilst Rotary is a highly-regarded philanthropic organisation in the community, and respected greatly for all of the causes and charities clubs donate to, I wish to make known the impact on our family of Rotary's generous donation of time and tremendous effort over the past three days; an enormous weight has been lifted from our collective shoulders and, for the first time in months, we can breathe easy, enjoy the present and look to the future with a sense of optimism.

Please, if there is any way that my son, myself or our family may be able to officially recognise and publicly acknowledge the individual Rotary clubs that supported us, or the individual members who worked so hard on our behalf, we would love the opportunity to do so, through media, socials or in person through a presentation. As an ex-school principal turned carer of a child who has undergone 61 operations, I have seen and experienced a great deal. I can honestly say that I have never seen nor experienced such a large-scale, focused effort to support any one individual or family, let alone my own! I am deeply humbled and overwhelmed; words cannot begin to express the depth of my gratitude. The world needs to know the tremendous work Rotary does!

Yours Sincerely,

Laura West

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