

Meet Our Speaker: **Brad Dykens**

Brad Dykens is an experienced career Fire Officer, Paramedic, and Educator, with a broad background in Fire Service Operations and Management, Emergency Medical Services, Emergency Management, Law Enforcement, Life Safety Education, and Community Service. He is also skilled in planning, logistics, finance, leadership, supervision, command, communications, coaching, and teaching.

He serves as the Community Preparedness and Life Safety coordinator responsible for educating the community in fire prevention, accident prevention, emergency preparedness, and health and wellness issues for the community. In this capacity, he also serves as one of the Fire Department Public Information Officers for the City of Seminole and Seminole Fire Rescue serving as the liaison with the media in regards to public affairs, incidents, and events. This position also serves as the Seminole CERT Program Manager and principle CERT trainer.



**SEMINOLE
SMOKE
SIGNALS**



ROTARY 2017-2018

Club Number 4289

May 23, 2018

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Loving God, thank you for your strength that gets us through each day. Amen

PROGRAM THIS WEEK: **Brad Dykens,**
Seminole Fire Dept

PROGRAM NEXT WEEK: **Jessica Jaimes,**
HEP Volunteer Coordinator

PROGRAM LAST WEEK: **Janet Andrews,**
Fischer House at Bay Pines

Upcoming Events:

June 6th	NO MEETING
June 13th	Phil Crow
June 20th	Nathan Wilt, Chief of Volunteer Service - Bay Pines
June 27th	Hayward Hartman J
July 4th:	NO MEETING
July 11th:	Phylis Boksen
July 18th:	Claude McMullen
July 25th:	Wendy Mitchel Matthews

Rotary Club of Seminole Officers 2017-2018:

President	CJ Morris	Sergeant at Arms	Frank Tanzella
President Elect	Ginger Hayes	Bulletin Editor	Jeff Graves/Ruth Berry
Secretary	Lorie Whitney	Past President	Bob Matthews
Treasurer	Mike McQuilkin		

District 6950 Website - www.rotary6950.org
Website - www.seminolerotary.org
Rotary Club of Seminole P.O. Box 3313 • Seminole, FL 33775-3313

Creating a family

After fleeing conflict in their own countries, a group of young Rotaractors is healing wounds and bringing cultures together in a Ugandan refugee settlement

It's Monday morning in one of Uganda's largest refugee settlements, Nakivale, and the line at Paul Mushaho's shop is out the door.

Mushaho has lived in Nakivale since 2016, when he fled violence in his native Democratic Republic of Congo. After receiving death threats, he crossed into Uganda and joined a friend in the 184-square-kilometer settlement that serves as home to 89,000 people.

The soft-spoken 26-year-old, who has a university degree in information technology, runs a money transfer service out of a wooden storefront that doubles as his home.

Business is booming because he offers his clients – other refugees from Congo, Burundi, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Rwanda, and South Sudan – the ability to receive money via mobile phone from family and friends outside Uganda.

He also exchanges currency, and his shop is so popular that he often runs out of cash. On this day, he's waiting for a friend to return with more money from the nearest bank, two hours away in the town of Mbarara.

Sitting behind a wooden desk, armed with his transactions ledger and seven cell phones, Mushaho grows anxious.

He's not worried about missing out on commission – he's worried about leaving his clients without any money.

"I don't like making my customers wait," he says, looking out onto the lively street of tin-roofed stores, women selling tomatoes and charcoal, a butcher shop displaying a leg of beef, and young men loitering on motorcycles.

"There's nobody else around who they can go to."

Paul Mushaho organized a team of volunteers and formed a Rotaract club in Nakivale, Uganda, to give refugees something constructive to do.

As a young entrepreneur who is intent on improving the lives of others in his community, Mushaho is in many ways the quintessential member of Rotaract, the Rotary-sponsored organization for leaders ages 18 to 30.

Yet his story and that of his club are far from ordinary. Established in late 2016, and officially inaugurated last July, the Rotaract Club of Nakivale may be the first Rotaract club based inside a refugee settlement or camp.

Its founding, and the role it has played in the lives of its members and their fellow Nakivale residents, is a tale of young people who've refused to let conflict stifle their dreams; of a country that sees the humanity in all the refugees who cross its borders; and of a spirit of service that endures, even among those who've experienced unspeakable tragedy.

A place where refugees are welcome

Refugees fleeing war, genocide, and persecution find safety in Nakivale. New arrivals to Uganda are allocated a plot of land, are allowed to work and run businesses, and can move freely around the country.

If Nakivale doesn't sound like a typical refugee camp, that's because it isn't one.

Covering 184 square kilometers and three distinct market centers, Nakivale feels like anywhere else in rural southwestern Uganda, an undulating land of banana trees, termite mounds, and herds of longhorn cattle.

Nakivale blends in with its surroundings in part because it's been here since the 1950s, when it was established to accommodate an influx of refugees from Rwanda during a flare-up of pre-independence violence there.



Over the years, its population has ebbed and flowed as it accommodated those seeking refuge from a variety of regional conflicts, including civil war in South Sudan, violent state collapse in Somalia, and rebellions and armed militias that continue to terrorize eastern Congo, the area that accounts for the majority of Nakivale's current residents.

Many have been here for a year or two, others for decades, but most consider Nakivale home.

Unlike other governments in the region, Ugandan authorities grant new arrivals plots of land for farming, as well as materials to erect a basic house, so they can move toward self-reliance. Refugees also have access to free primary education for their children and permission to work so they can contribute to the economy.

Uganda hosts more than 1.5 million refugees within its borders and allows all registered refugees to move about at will. If they can do business in cities or towns, the logic goes, there's no reason they should be trapped elsewhere.

"They're going about their lives just like you and me," says Bernad Ojwang, Uganda country director for the American Refugee Committee (ARC), which works closely with the Rotaract club in Nakivale.

Although an abundance of arable land allows for the nation's liberal refugee policy, he explains, the system also reflects a high-level belief that refugees can be assets rather than liabilities.

"Uganda has realized that the sooner a country looks at refugees not as a burden but as an opportunity, it changes a lot of things," he says.

A change maker's idea

This mindset — of refugees as catalysts for change — ultimately led to the Rotaract club's founding.

Mushaho learned about Rotaract after entering a competition in 2016 organized by the American Refugee Committee (ARC) for the young people of Nakivale.

The competition, co-sponsored by Uganda's office of the prime minister, challenged young residents in the settlement to propose business plans or innovations that could improve lives.

Out of nearly 850 entries, Mushaho's proposal – a beekeeping business that would sell honey – was among 13 winners. They each would receive a small amount of seed money and present their ideas to a wider audience in Kampala, the nation's capital.

More than 60 Rotarians attended the Kampala event in October 2016, including Angela Eifert, a member of the Rotary Club of Roseville, Minnesota, USA, and an ARC engagement officer, and then Rotary president-elect Sam F. Owori.

Eifert, who first visited Nakivale in 2014, had previously proposed creating an Interact club for 12- to 18-year-olds to help engage its large population of young people. After the event, she mentioned her idea to Owori, who embraced it with one modification: He believed the 13 winners could become leaders in their community, so he proposed a Rotaract club.

"He told me, 'I was once a Rotaractor,'" Eifert says. "When he saw these young people on stage, he felt they were ideal Rotaractors. He loved their ideas. He saw they had talent and potential, and thought we should be getting behind them."

Leaders from the Rotary Club of Kiwatule in Kampala and Eifert's Minnesota club agreed to work together to get the club started and support its growth.

The duo then approached Mushaho about serving as the new club's president. Of the 13 winners, he'd stood out to them. Humble and charismatic, he also spoke fluent English, had helped the other winners communicate their ideas, and appeared eager to assist the wider Nakivale community. Mushaho and another winner, Jean de Dieu Uwizeye, hosted the Nakivale Rotaract club's first official meeting in late 2016.

"He was really into it," says Eifert, who began texting regularly with Mushaho. "He was learning everything he could about Rotary. I think it gave him a great deal of reward and purpose."