

Top honour for Dr Alex

The Global Alumni Service to Humanity Award is given each year to a Rotary Foundation alumnus whose achievement has enriched his or her profession and whose service to humanity exemplifies the spirit of Rotary. It is the top honour The Rotary Foundation gives to its alumni.

The Rotary Foundation Trustees have announced the selection of Dr Alex Buchanan, of the Rotary Club of Melbourne, Vic, as the recipient of the 2008-09 Global Alumni Service to Humanity Award.

Alex is now retired, but trained as a food technologist and scientist in Victoria, Australia. In 1959-60 Alex was an Ambassadorial Scholar, studying at the Iowa State University in the United States. Following further study he achieved a PhD in Biochemistry from the University of London.

Working for the Australian CSIRO, he created the high-protein Australian Milk Biscuit 44 years ago and later the High Energy Biscuit. Today, the biscuits are not only a staple of Australia's foreign food aid but are also permanently stockpiled by the Australian Government for emergency relief purposes. While with the Department of Foreign Affairs, he also developed an affordable infant food out of rice and soy flour that has been commercially produced in Thailand for more than 20 years.

After his initial connection with Rotary through his Ambassadorial Scholarship, Alex later became a Rotarian some 40 years ago, and has been active in it ever since.

"I was drawn to Rotary because it changed my life with the opportunity to work, travel, and study in the United States," Alex said. "This led to the experiences and further qualifications to obtain a position with Australia's national research organisation."

He has been a member of four Rotary clubs: one in Thailand and three in Australia, including the Rotary Club of Melbourne, Vic, since 2000. His favourite Rotary project is one that created the East Timor Roofing Company and a campus for the Dili Institute of Technology



Dr Alex Buchanan, third from the right, is congratulated by Rotary Club of Melbourne Vice-President Robin Syme, left, Regional Rotary Foundation Coordinator Don Jago, Past RI President Royce Abbey, District 9800 Governor Jim Studebaker, Rotary Club of Melbourne Vice-President Peter Bearsley.

in Bacau, Timor-Leste. The company was established by the Rotary clubs of Melbourne and Doncaster, with financial support from the Rotary Club of Adelaide and the Shell Foundation.

"It now employs 15 people and is operating independently and profitably," Alex said. "We also started a revolving loan fund which helped more than 200 locals, mostly women, develop micro-enterprises in and around Bacau."

In addition, Alex has been active in obtaining Foundation Matching Grants on behalf of the Melbourne club for service projects in Cambodia, East Timor, and India. A Paul Harris Fellow, he has also worked closely with Past RI President Royce Abbey in establishing the Royce and Jean Abbey Endowed Fund in The Rotary Foundation. The fund has provided scholarships to 10 students from developing countries for agricultural training in Australia since 2001.

In addition to professional honours, Alex has received Rotary District awards for "providing nourishment in underprivileged countries suffering from famine" and other service efforts. One other recognition is also especially precious.

"My father was a dairy factory manager

in our small village and the outstanding community leader," Alex said. "As a boy, I always felt that I was in his shadow. Later, I worked in Melbourne. I travelled extensively and became well known in the dairy industry throughout the state. One day, at a dairy industry conference, my dad was introduced as 'Alex Buchanan's father.' The pride on his face was a revelation to me and a joy to behold."

In 2003 he received the Australian Government's Centenary Medal "for service to Australian society in food science and technology" and in January, Alex was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia – not a bad start to the year for Alex Buchanan, Rotary Foundation Alumni and member of the Rotary Club of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair Jonathan Majiyagbe will present the Global Alumni Service to Humanity Award to Dr Buchanan during a plenary session at the 2009 RI Convention in Birmingham, England.

From Welly Choy, of the Rotary Club of Auckland City South, NZ, Past Governor, District 9920 with thanks to Regional Rotary Foundation Coordinator Don Jago in Melbourne and Haruka Wada from the Alumni section of The Rotary Foundation. ■