

## Portland Press Herald    Maine Sunday Telegram

### Healing hands for children

A group financed by local Rotarians performs critical surgery in Peru.

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Photo courtesy Rotary International  
A medical team sponsored by local Rotary International clubs performs free, life-altering plastic surgery on a youth last month at Hippolito Hospital in Tacna, Peru. Each year, Rotary clubs in southern Maine and New Hampshire raise \$30,000 and send members on a Rotaplast International mission to South America..

— By KELLEY BOUCHARD Staff Writer Sometimes the good work that civic groups do locally affects people thousands of miles away. That's the case with 41 Rotary International clubs in southern Maine and New Hampshire, a district that stretches from Damariscotta to Newburyport, Mass., to Rochester, N.H. Each year, the district raises \$30,000 to finance half the cost of a life-altering plastic surgery mission to a country where such services are too costly or unavailable. The missions are conducted through Rotaplast International, a branch of the charitable group, in countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Mexico, China, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Philippines, Romania and Vietnam. Teams of medical and nonmedical club members perform free, reconstructive surgery on youths with congenital malformations such as cleft lips and palates, said William Dunn of the Yarmouth club, who is the district's Rotaplast ambassador. Last month, a Rotaplast team that was funded by the district and included several Mainers spent nearly two weeks on a mission to Tacna, Peru. The mission was cosponsored by a Rotary district in northwestern Washington and southern British Columbia. Mainers on the team were Dunn, who is an international consultant in the electric power industry, Gary Howard, another Yarmouth club member who is a dentist, and Linda Sorensen, wife of a Fryeburg club

member. The 30-member team also included people from Chile, Nicaragua and Colombia. Before the mission team arrived in Tacna, Rotary members there got the word out to surrounding villages, where subsistence farming is the way of life. They conducted initial screenings to make sure medical issues could be addressed by the team and arranged transportation and accommodations for families who were eligible. Once the team arrived, nonmedical members organized medical screenings, scheduled surgeries, set up the operating room and oversaw patients in the recovery room, which was one of Sorensen's tasks during the mission. During eight days of surgery, 12 hours each day, the team operated on 86 people and performed 116 separate procedures, Dunn said. Dunn, who had been on two previous Rotaplast missions to Venezuela, said the surgeries show dramatic results within days. Children who were taunted for the way they looked appear whole. Others who were malnourished because they had no palate, or roof, in their mouths eat normally for the first time. "It fundamentally changes the lives of these kids," Dunn said. Rotaplast team members are changed, too. "The parents are so thankful," Dunn said. "They can't speak English. They're coming up to you and giving you hugs and you see the looks on their faces. When you can directly change the lives of people, it's very emotional." To learn more about Rotaplast International, visit [www.rotaplast.org](http://www.rotaplast.org), call Dunn at 847-9342 or e-mail [wdunn@gestalt-llc.com](mailto:wdunn@gestalt-llc.com). Staff Writer Kelley Bouchard can be contacted at 791-6328 or at [kbouchard@pressherald.com](mailto:kbouchard@pressherald.com)

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