

Providing disaster aid

By Fai CHIVELL

Retired watchmaker (who doesn't worry about time) and committed Rotarian Des Watts visited the Rotary Club of Whyalla last week to relate tales of his motor bike journey around the country to raise funds for Disaster Aid Australia.

Des was born in Whyalla but now lives in Adelaide and is an active member of the Rotary Club of Berri.

"I got involved with Disaster Aid Australia because I need to be active and I don't like mowing lawns so I made a phone call and offered my services," Des said.

"The result of that one call was to load up my motor bike and hit the road to raise funds for this most important Rotary project.

"Disaster Aid Australia is a major project of the Rotary Club of Endeavour Hills, Victoria and it has committees throughout Australia.

"I work with the South Australian committee in Adelaide to raise funds to provide Disaster Boxes where they are needed around the world," Des said.

Disaster Aid Australia not only supplies family survival boxes, which provides shelter and essential items for 10 people it also supplies Disaster Aid School Kits, providing items for 80 children and Disaster Aid Medical Tents, which contains supplies for the ongoing treatment for the sick and injured.

Disaster Aid Australia is also partnered with the SkyJuice Foundation and supplies the SkyHydrant water purification unit that produces safe potable water without the need for power or chemicals.



RAISING FUNDS: Des Watts from the Rotary Club of Berri, SA riding to raise funds for Disaster Aid Australia.

"Not only does this vital Rotary project provide essential tools for families, education and medical units it also has an incredible group of Disaster Aid Recovery Team (DART) volunteers who

travel to disaster areas to help where needed," Des said.

"The DART men and women volunteers range in age from 18 years to 60 years.

"Some have professional skills

and expertise but mostly volunteers come with only a willingness to provide organisational and emotional support.

"Each volunteer undergoes an extensive 'commando' type training program to be ready to face the difficult circumstances they will encounter in disaster areas.

"Young men and women who have participated in Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) programs and other leadership training courses are particularly drawn to becoming DART volunteers.

"These amazing people learn a multitude of tasks that benefit others who have lost everything and meet a wide range of other volunteers from around the world and form close relationships that endure throughout life," Des said.

After listening to Des speak about the work Disaster Aid Australia does and seeing photos of the many disasters DART volunteers are involved in, the Rotary Club of Whyalla donated \$1000 to Disaster Aid Australia and pledged ongoing contributions to this worthwhile Rotary project.

"All donations to Disaster Aid Australia are tax deductible but donating to or becoming an active volunteer in this Rotary project is a priceless gift," Rotary Club of Whyalla president Soto Stuppos said.

"Knowing that we are a part of making life a little easier for those who are suffering incredible hardship through no cause of their own is worth more than money and demonstrates our humanity."