

## PR efforts boost success of South African literacy project

During the next three years, District 9300 (South Africa) plans to distribute more than three million books in southern Africa by using resources available to every Rotarian: club members, professional contacts, and public relations tools from Rotary International.

Since May 2007, the Bury Me in Books literacy project has already met about one-third of its goal, distributing almost one million books to schools, libraries, and prisons in South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Rotary clubs in California and Texas, USA, and the United Kingdom collect the books and ship them overseas to be stored at the Humanitarian Distribution and Service Center in Bedfordview, South Africa.

“Local Rotarians [and other volunteers] come to the center every day to sort and pack books,” says Shirley Downie, past governor of District 9300. PostNet South Africa, a partner on the project, helps coordinate distribution and delivery.

Other supporters include the South African Broadcasting Corporation and its foundation as well as Kevin Fine of the company’s 5FM radio station. The project is promoted on Fine’s week-

end morning program, Fine and Shine, as well as on other radio and TV stations owned by the corporation, which donates airtime. The broadcasts feature Rotary’s Humanity in Motion public service announcements adapted with voice-overs in English, Xhosa, and Zulu. PostNet covers production costs.

The publicity has helped raise the effort’s profile. “The Bury Me in Books project has become a brand name,” says Wendy Sweetman, head of marketing, communication, and training at PostNet and a member of the Rotary Club of Randburg. She explains that the project was named after a challenge issued by Charlie Clemmons, past governor of District 5890 (Texas) to “bury us in books.”

Texas Rotary clubs began sending books in 2001 as part of the Books for the World project initiated by the Rotary Club of Bedfordview.



### ON THE WEB

Learn more about this project at  
[www.burymeinbooks.co.za](http://www.burymeinbooks.co.za)

Jacqui Mgudlwa, communications manager of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, meets with 2007-08 RI President Wilfrid J. Wilkinson at District 9300’s book collection site. Rotarian efforts have helped distribute one million books, valued at US\$1 each, throughout southern Africa.