



## The Madison, WI Rotary News for August 11, 2017

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### Science is Fun Comes Back to Rotary

While the denial of climate change has prompted outcries of “Science Is Real,” Madisonians have for the past 48 years primarily embraced the idea that “Science is Fun.” This is a credit due to the work of Dr. Bassam Z. Shakhashiri, who presented at the Rotary Club of Madison’s August 9 meeting which also signifies the Club’s Family Day.

The presentation, which was attended by 85 guests, the vast majority of whom were children or grandchildren of Rotarians, indeed elicited many fun moments around science experiments mixed with some deep educational and social messages.

On the more serious side, Dr. Shakhashiri reminded the audience that the Number One priority of the work of science and scientific experimentation is about sustaining “Earth and its people.” Specifically, Dr. Shakhashiri cited issues such as population growth, availability of finite resources such as water, climate change, malnutrition, the spreading of disease, war, and deadly violence as the kind of issues that scientists embrace and actively work on bringing about solutions. Above all, Dr. Shakhashiri said, the pursuit and knowledge of science is an essential human right. “Everybody has the right to benefit from scientific and technological progress.” In addition to religion, Dr. Shakhashiri counts science as the “strongest force in society.”

Dr. Shakhashiri, who began his career at UW-Madison in 1970, has always made community outreach an integral part of his work. The “Science is Fun” campaign is a commitment to elicit awe, wonder, and curiosity in science among people of all ages with a particular affinity toward enlightening the youngest members of society – our children. Dr. Shakhashiri said that especially among children, science can elicit emotional responses.

This was the case at the Rotary meeting as Dr. Shakhashiri went about some of his delightfully wacky and magical science tricks, whereby liquids changed color by mixing potassium iodine with lead nitrates. He had the children in the audience in stitches as colors of the liquid frequently changed. He appealed to the audience to hone their observation skills.

Above all, Dr. Shakhashiri’s work is rooted in the notion that education is the great equalizer. “Science literacy enlightens and enables people to make informed choices, to be skeptical, and to reject shams, unproven conjecture, and to avoid being bamboozled into making foolish decisions where matters of science and technology are concerned.”

*Our thanks to Prof. Bassam Shakhashiri for his presentation and to Ben Hebebrand for preparing this review article. If you missed our meeting this week, you can watch the video on YouTube.*



### Thank You To Children & Grandchildren of Rotarians Attending Aug. 9 Luncheon!

On August 9, we welcomed many children and grandchildren of Rotarians to our luncheon as an opportunity for them to learn more about our Rotary Club and how it has impacted their parents or grandparents. Thanks for attending!