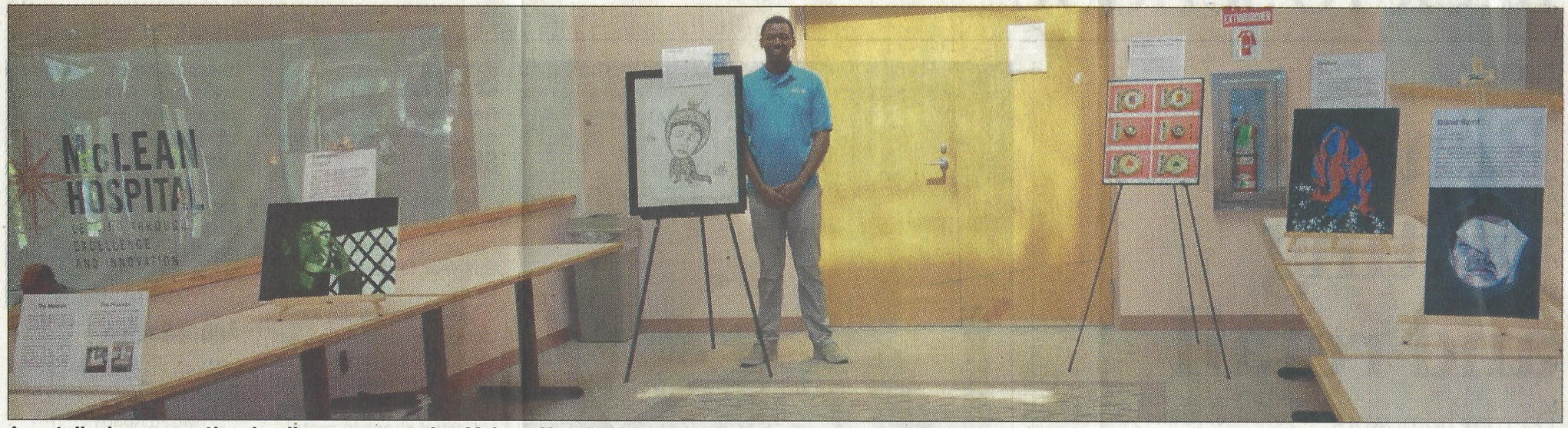
ROTARY CLUB OF WELLESLEY



An art display on emotional wellness presented at McLean Hospital by Interact peer leader Joey Kinyanjui. COURTESY PHOTO

Wellesley is one in a hundred

The Rotary Club of Wellesley recently received a coveted Significant Achievement Award for the 2014-2015 year. Rotary International selected Wellesley Rotary as one of 214 Rotary clubs worldwide out of a total of 34,823 to receive this honor, less than one in a hundred. The Club received the award for its successful Peer Leadership and Emotional Wellness project spearheaded by the Club under the leadership of Rotarian Bob Anthony. In outlining a club's eligibility, Rotary International spelled out specific guidelines including impact of a problem in the community; club involvement; being able to be emulated by other Rotary clubs and, being an active program for the current year by one Rotary Club. Wellesley qualified in all respects.

In its submission, signed by then-Club President, Mitch Freeman and then-District Governor, Val Callahan, the Club carefully outlined the project's credentials. It all began in recognizing a problem young people have in coping with stress, anxiety and depression. It followed on several losses to suicide of Wellesley teens. It was determined it could be prevented.

Under Anthony's leadership, Wellesley Rotary launched an effective Wellness project. In it, Wellesley Rotarians learned and shared exercises on how to promote emotional wellness, including how to deal with stress before it develops into anxiety or depression.

Training included reading the book "People Skills" and viewing the "Break Free from Depression" documentary before attending a workshop by William James College.

Seven teens received additional training as Peer Leaders. They co-facilitated activities to enhance problem-solving and coping skills with over 500 middle school and high school age youth. They also launched Wellesley Rotary's first Interact (International Action) Club for youth ages 12-18 who help solve a community problem through service.

The Interact members leveraged their individual talents to normalize the conversation on emotional health by creating resources such as public art displays, blogs and video. The result has proven an effective way to help solve a community problem.

Jim Fusco (right), Rotary Governor (2015-2016) for District 7910 (East Central Massachusetts), presents Wellesley Rotarian Bob Anthony with Rotary International's Significant Achievement Award. COURTESY PHOTO