

A Brief History of the Rotary Club of Iowa City

The Rotary Club of Iowa City dates from the presentation of its charter by District Governor John Knutson on November 4, 1915. On that date 30 local business and professional men and university officials gathered to celebrate the culmination of the process of incorporation. The event must have had special significance, in part, because the founder of Rotary, Paul Harris, was an 1891 graduate of the University of Iowa Law School.

The Iowa City Club was sponsored in its application for membership by the Cedar Rapids Club. In turn, the Iowa City Club has sponsored three additional clubs – the West Liberty Club in 1925, the Tipton Club in 1954, and the Iowa City AM Club in 1989. The first club president was William Peter Hohenschuh. Mr. Hohenschuh owned a furniture store and was a local undertaker, as was the custom for furniture store owners to be at that time.

With several hundred members from a broad range of professions, the Iowa City Club meets each week on Thursdays and meetings have often featured speakers of national and international renown. Among the prominent visitors have been six Rotary International presidents and even Paul Harris himself, who attended the club meeting in 1938 at the time his portrait was presented to the Law School.

For the first fifty years of its existence, the club held its meetings in the Rose Room of the Jefferson Hotel in downtown Iowa City. Beginning in 1965 the club moved its weekly meetings to the University Club on Melrose Avenue. The club continues to hold its meetings at the University Club every Thursday noon.

The Iowa City Club has grown substantially in the services and programs since 1915. Of great significance has been the aid and assistance that the Club has provided to communities in Guatemala, San Salvador, and Mexico. In 1990, the Club officially formed FAMSCO (Fire and Medical Supply Company), which had been in the works since 1979, by a group of community volunteers who brought the program to our club. Members Pete Peterson, Bud Louis and Dick Kennedy took on the task of organizing it into a corporation. FAMSCO acquires and donates used fire, medical and school equipment and supplies to countries in Central America and around the world. So also, the Club has provided medical assistance in San Salvador by providing cleft palate and dental surgery in partnership with Rotaplast. In 2004, Iowa MOST (Miles of Smiles Team) was formed by club members Dr. Bill Olin, Dr. John Canady and Gary Pacha amongst others. They have since made annual missions to Guatemala.

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In 2009, the club began a partnership to work with doctors around the world with orthopedic remediation of club feet using the methods of famed University of Iowa professor, Ignacio Ponseti. Dr. Jose Morcuende, a member of the club and current Ponseti program facilitator, has been instrumental in working to share these non-surgical methods with the world. Club members Tom Cook, John Buchanan and Herb Wilson have also played an important role in sharing the Ponseti story throughout Rotary.

Another significant achievement is the Xicotepec project, a project initiated by club members Ray Muston, Jim Peterson and Gary Pacha in 2003 with help from other district Rotarians. Among the many community assistance activities that have evolved throughout the annual missions since 2003 is the school library that the club helped to build with matching grants instigated by the Feddersen-Mercer-Bywater-Parker families. The club continues to be a sponsor in Xicotepec, Mexico with expanded programs throughout the community.

Members are rightly proud of the Club's long tradition of service above self. That motto has been reflected in a range of social programs in Iowa, the nation, and around the world. In addition to the programs noted above, the Club annually sponsors two student scholarships to study abroad at a school in a country of the students' choice. The purpose of these scholarships is to foster international peace and understanding.

Other programs have benefited both families and organizations in the state of Iowa. With several other Rotary clubs, the Iowa City Club has built homes for Habitat for Humanity. The club's annual golf tournament has raised over half a million dollars for the benefit of the Ronald McDonald House at the University of Iowa. The club has also worked with the City of Coralville to establish Rotary Camp Park on land that was once owned by the club. The proceeds of the sale continue to support area Boy and Girl Scout programs. Finally, the club has continued to provide small grants of funds to worthy organizations located in Iowa City and Johnson County.

The "I Can Read" Project was introduced by club member LaDonna Wicklund. Beginning in 2007 and continues to the present, the club has assisted more than 72 teachers and over 6,000 families in the Iowa City Community School District by providing them with books and curricular materials. The goal is to enhance literacy skills for children from low-income and immigrant families.

The Iowa City Noon Rotary club has been instrumental in providing many scholarship opportunities

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to local students for Rotary leadership programs such as RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Award) and study abroad.

The club marks each year with several annual events. At holiday time, for example, the club participates in the Salvation Army's Kettle campaign to raise funds for that worthy organization. For many years the club held an annual picnic at the summer home of Rotarian Bill Olin. Not to be overlooked, the club hosts a joint service club luncheon each year that features a noteworthy address by the president of the University of Iowa.

Members of the club have been active in the leadership of Rotary International. The club has hosted or cohosted several district conferences and counts among its membership nine former district governors: Allin Dakin (1953-54), George Rigler (1965-66), Alson Braley (1968-69), Lloyd Knowler (1980-81) Paul McNutt (1985-86), John Dasher (1992-93), Ray Muston (1999-2000), Herbert Wilson (2001-02), and Gary Pacha (2002-03). The Club is also proud that Dakin served as a Rotary International Director during 1955-56 and was a vice-president of Rotary International in 1956-57.

In addition to those members who have taken Rotary leadership roles, the Iowa City Club has welcomed among its members a number of other leaders in the community, the state, and the nation. Of note have been the presidents of the University of Iowa including Virgil Hancher and Willard Boyd among others. Professors from many university departments have been members of the club including Wiley Rutledge who later became an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In recognition of its history, the Club has celebrated regular anniversaries. The fiftieth anniversary celebration was held on September 30, 1965 when RI President C.P.H. Teenstra of The Netherlands spoke to 428 members and guests at a testimonial dinner. The club also celebrated the 75th anniversary in 1990 and its 90th anniversary in 2005. Plans are well underway for the club to celebrate its centennial on November 5, 2015.

Perhaps the spirit of commitment to the values of Rotary was most evident in 2013 and 2014 when the Iowa City Club, under President Jody Braverman, became a "100 Percent Paul Harris Club." This achievement meant that every member of the club as of that year had contributed at least a thousand dollars to the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International.

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Presidents of the Rotary Club of Iowa City

1915--17	William P. Hohenschuh	1950--51	Robert H. Lind, Sr.	1984--85	Robert V. Hogg
1917--18	William O. Coast	1951--52	Allin W. Dakin	1985--86	William H. Olin
1918--19	Charles M. Dutcher	1952--53	Dorwan H. Hudson	1986--87	Alan R. Rossmann
1919--20	L. Fletcher Meade	1953--54	Joseph W. Howe	1987--88	Peter D. Wallace
1920--21	Samuel E. Carrell	1954--55	John T. Piper	1988--89	Robert N. Downer
1921--22	Harry D. Breene	1955--56	Leslie G. Moeller	1989--90	Richard P. Johns
1922--23	Ira J. Houston	1956--57	Charles W. Gay	1990--91	Dwight O. Seegmiller
1923--24	Merritt Speidel	1957--58	Alson E. Braley	1991--92	Robert M. Sierk
1924--25	William L. Bywater	1958--59	Leland E. Stillwell	1992--93	Thomas T. Hoogerwerf
1925--26	Carl Cone	1959--60	Frank R. Kennedy	1993--94	Linda K. Muston
1926--27	James L. Luscombe	1960--61	Stephen G. Darling	1994--95	Ted Pacha
1927--28	James L. Records	1961--62	Robert F. Ray	1995--96	John W. Hayek
1928--29	Iver A. Opstad	1962--63	Robert D. Marsden	1996--97	Claude E. Petersen
1929--30	Lee Nagle	1963--64	Ainslye G. Burks	1997--98	Robert C. Crane
1930--31	Rufus H. Fitzgerald	1964--65	E. Jack Liechty	1998--99	Tim L. Brandt
1931--32	W. Hal Stewart	1965--66	Robert E. Holzhammer	1999--00	Gary Pacha
1932--33	Edward Bartow	1966--67	John R. Winnie	2000--01	Jim Lane
1933--34	Harold L. Hands	1967--68	H. Clark Houghton	2001--02	Arleigh Clemens
1934--35	Leroy W. Spencer	1968--69	Lee C. Butherus	2002--03	Roy C. Justis
1935--36	Henry Negus	1969--70	Willis M. Bywater	2003--04	Tom Cilek
1936--37	George R. Gay	1970--71	Eugene H. Hancock	2004--05	Steve Hedlund
1937--38	Fred W. Boemer	1971--72	Jerry J. Hilgenberg	2005--06	Ann Parker
1938--39	John J. Swaner	1972--73	W. Richard Summerwill	2006--07	Maggie Mowery
1939--40	LeRoy Mercer	1973--74	Lloyd A. Knowler	2007--08	Charlie Funk
1940--41	Huber O. Croft	1974--75	Thomas Farrell	2008--09	Jeff Disterhoft
1941--42	Horace W. Stuck	1975--76	John H. Hogeland	2009--10	Karin Franklin
1942--43	Roscoe E. Taylor	1976--77	Donald J. Conlon	2010--11	Bernie Cremers
1943--44	C. Woody Thompson	1977--78	Kenneth D. Dolan	2011--12	Verne Folkmann
1944--45	Charles A. Beckman	1978--79	Paul McNutt	2012--13	Nancy Quellhorst
1945--46	Theodore M. Rehder	1979--80	Frank A. Piersol	2013--14	Jody Braverman
1946--47	Earl Y. Sangster	1980--81	Thomas R. Breese	2014--15	Bruce Kout
1947--48	Wendell R. Smith	1981--82	James A. Lowe	2015--16	Thais Winkleblack
1948--49	Marc M. Stewart	1982--83	Ray A. Muston	2016--17	Usha Balakrishnan
1949--50	Allen C. Tester	1983--84	John R. Hughes		