**Rotary Connections**

**A Primer on Rotary and the Babylon Rotary Club**

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***Rotary Connections -*** *A Primer On Rotary*

*& The Babylon Rotary Club**Version 2*

 *May 2017*

This series appeared in the Babylon Rotary Club weekly “Channel” newsletter over a six-month period in 2016. It consists of brief tutorials that we hope will expand an understanding of Rotary for our newer members, be a valuable refresher for veteran members, and serve as a guide to help us become a more effective Rotary club. We welcome all comments and recommendations.

**1.The Basics – Rotary & You**

What Is Rotary? The “official” definition from the Rotary International Board of Directors: "Rotary is an organization of business and professional persons united worldwide who provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations and help build goodwill and peace in the world.”

Although you will see many versions of the above definition, a Rotary club is essentially an association of business and professional men and women of the community who have accepted the Ideal of Service as the basis for attaining success and happiness in personal, business, and community life. Rotarians everywhere believe in the value of action motivated by unselfish service - a belief expressed in the motto: *"Service Above Self---He Profits Most Who Serves Best."*

Why Does It Matter To You? Once involved in Rotary activities, Rotarians find that the Ideal of Service guides them in the conduct of personal, club, business, and community affairs. It leads you to seek opportunities for developing the acquaintance and friendship of others, and motivates you to participate fully in the activities of your club. It encourages you to maintain high standards and practices in your business, trade, or profession. It leads to greater awareness of local and global needs and inspires you to step forward to tackle the toughest challenges – and persevere to create lasting change in communities around the world.

To many, Rotary brings a greater sense of purpose to their lives, provides many opportunities to meet new friends who share their interests and values, and to experience the satisfaction of being a vital part of the largest, most widely-recognized and highly-respected service organization in the world.

**2. The Basics – The Object of Rotary**

Essentially, an expansion of its original mission statement, encompassing the definition of Rotary’s purpose as well as the responsibilities of all club members, the ***Object of Rotary*** is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster:

• First - The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;
• Second - High ethical standards in business and professions, the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations, and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society;
• Third - The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business, and community life;
• Fourth - The advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.

**3. The Basics – The Four-Way Test**

The Object of Rotary, which was discussed last week, is set against the ***"Rotary Four-Way Test,"*** used by Rotarians worldwide to see if a planned action is compatible with the Rotarian spirit:

1. Is it the truth?
2. Is it fair to all concerned?
3. Will it build goodwill and better friendships?
4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

Of all we think, say or do, the test is a moral code for personal and business relationships that can be applied to almost any aspect of life.

**4. The Basics – Avenues of Service**

We channel our commitment to service at home and abroad through five ***Avenues of Service***, which are the philosophical cornerstone and the foundation on which club activity is based:

• Club Service focuses on making clubs strong. A thriving club is anchored by strong relationships and an active membership development plan.

* Vocational Service calls on every Rotarian to work with integrity and contribute their expertise to the problems and needs of society.
* Community Service encourages every Rotarian to find ways to improve the quality of life for people in their communities and to serve the public interest.
* International Service exemplifies our global reach in promoting peace and understanding. We support this service avenue by sponsoring or volunteering on international projects, seeking partners abroad, and more.

• Youth Service recognizes the importance of empowering youth and young professionals through leadership development programs such as [Rotaract](https://www.rotary.org/myrotary/en/take-action/empower-leaders/sponsor-rotaract-club), [Interact](https://www.rotary.org/myrotary/en/take-action/empower-leaders/sponsor-interact-club), [Rotary Youth Leadership Awards](https://www.rotary.org/myrotary/en/take-action/empower-leaders/organize-ryla-event), and [Rotary Youth Exchange](https://www.rotary.org/myrotary/en/take-action/empower-leaders/start-exchange).

**5. The Basics – Rotary Organization**

Rotary is made up of three parts: at the heart of Rotary are the clubs, supported by Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation.

**Rotary clubs** bring together 1.2 million Rotarians worldwide, dedicated individuals who exchange ideas, build relationships, and take action.

**Rotary International (RI)** supports all Rotary clubs worldwide by coordinating global programs, campaigns, and initiatives.

The non-profit **Rotary Foundation** funds a broad spectrum of projects by Rotarians and partners in communities around the world.

Rotary is structured in club, district and international levels. The clubs are chartered by Rotary International. For administrative purposes, the 35,000 clubs worldwide are grouped into 530 districts, and the districts into 34 zones. Babylon Rotary is one of 75 clubs in Rotary District 7255, with a total membership of about 2000 Rotarians, serving Kings, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk Counties in New York. District 7255 is one of 20 districts in Zone 32, with a membership of about 33,000 Rotarians in Northeast USA, Canada, and Bermuda.

**6. The Basics – The Rotary Constitution**

The **Rotary International Constitution and Bylaws** govern operation of the parent organization and associated agencies.

The **Standard Rotary Club Constitution** details member-related governance and administration guidelines for relations with external entities as part of Rotary club operations. A**ll clubs admitted to Rotary membership must adopt this constitution.**

Other constitutional documents that provide clubs and districts the foundation for RI’s policies and procedures are:

• **Manual of Procedure** - a concise version of Rotary’s policies and procedures

• **Rotary Code of Policies** - compiles all of Rotary’s general and permanent policies.

• **Recommended Rotary Club Bylaws -** provides a template for Rotary club bylaws. Clubs can tailor these bylaws to fit their specific needs, as long as their changes align with Rotary’s constitutional documents and the Rotary Code of Policies.

All RI governance documents can be found on the RI website: www.rotary.org. The Standard Rotary Constitution and Babylon Rotary Club Bylaws, Policies and Procedures can be downloaded from the Administration page of our club website.

**7. Benefits of Membership**

Many publications, as well as our own BRC website (About Rotary/Why Join Rotary?), list scores of benefits accruing from membership in Rotary, from improved social and vocational skills to business and leadership development.

Most immediate of all, and perhaps the most rewarding, are those derived from the fellowship of Rotary. Regular weekly meetings, committee assignments, and social gatherings provide opportunities to make new friends who share your interests and values.

Interchange with a diversity of guest speakers, visiting Rotarians and other guests from near and far, as well as involvement in the larger Rotary community, not only enlarges the scope of your interests and breadth of knowledge, but engenders new and alternative viewpoints and a broader outlook on local, national, and international affairs. In Rotary, your circle of friends is limited only by the radius of your own sincerity and interest.

As with any worthy endeavor, he or she who puts the most into it gets the most from it. But with Rotary, you get so much more – the unique satisfaction of knowing that you’ve helped improve someone’s life … that you made a difference.

**8. Member Responsibilities**

The very special benefits you derive as a Rotarian are accompanied by equally special obligations:

• First and foremost, you are responsible for your annual club dues, regular meeting attendance, and active involvement in club activities. This is essential for your effectiveness as a Rotarian and for our efficiency and impact as a club. By working together, we generate a spirit and enthusiasm that strengthens our club and makes us better Rotarians.

• Motivate and support your club’s civic consciousness by ascertaining community needs and inspiring constructive action in cooperation with local social, charitable and government agencies.

• All Rotarians are expected to support The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International financially and through participation in Foundation programs,

• To keep clubs strong, every Rotarian shares the responsibility of bringing new people into Rotary and of keeping members interested in Rotary through fellowship and by helping mentor them through early involvement in club activities.

**•** Club members are encouraged to volunteer for leadership roles at the club level and beyond. Clubs maintain their vitality only if most members assume a progression of committee head, director and club officer roles. This assures that the best ideas are heard and implemented, and provides an excellent opportunity for members to develop and hone their leadership and management skills.

**9. The Extended Rotary Family**

Rotary service can start at any age, so programs are offered for teens and young adults who want to discover new cultures, develop leadership skills, and make a positive contribution to their community and the world. Organizations that are sponsored, and often mentored by Rotary clubs are:

**Interact** - A leadership program for young people ages 12-18 who want to join together to tackle the issues in their community that they care most about. There are currently over 12.000 Interact clubs in 133 countries.

**Rotaract** – Currently about 215,000 members in over 9300 clubs in 176 countries, these clubs are organized to promote leadership, professional development and service for adults ages 18-30.

**Rotary Community Corps (RCC)** – Groups of non-Rotarians who work with Rotary to improve their communities through a variety of service projects. There are about 157,000 RCC members in more than 6800 communities in 78 countries.

**Friends of Rotary** – In an attempt to bring Rotary to more people in the community, some clubs have formed “Friends of Rotary” groups. These are people who may be interested in joining Rotary in the future, while bringing new talents and other resources to the club as they assist with Rotary programs and club activities.

**10.** **Rotary Programs — Areas of Focus**

The work of Rotary begins with local Rotary clubs serving their community’s unique needs and concerns.

To maximize its impact on a global scale, Rotary International (RI) focuses on a few key areas encompassing some of the most critical and widespread humanitarian needs. Rotary clubs are encouraged to consider these areas when planning new service projects. Current **RI Areas of Focus** are:

• Peace and conflict prevention/resolution

• Disease prevention and treatment

• Water and sanitation

• Maternal and child health

• Basic education and literacy

• Economic and community development

**11.** **Principal** **Rotary Programs**

Rotary offers a broad range of humanitarian, intercultural, and educational programs designed to advance the ultimate goal of world understanding and peace.

**Polio Plus** has beenRotary’s premier humanitarian program for over three decades -amulti-billion dollar, multi-agency effort to eradicate polio worldwide.

Other major Rotary programs include **Interact**, **Rotoract**, and **Rotary Community Corps,** which were outlined in a previous issue, and:

• **Rotary Youth Exchange** – offers students 15-19 the chance to travel abroad for cultural exchanges

• **Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA)** – leadership training program for teens and young adults emphasizing social responsibility, global citizenship, and personal development

• **Rotary Peace Fellowships** – offers students the opportunity to earn advanced degrees or professional certificates from universities that host Rotary Peace Centers

• **Rotary Friendship Exchange** - teams or individuals make reciprocal visits to other countries, staying in each other’s homes and learning about different cultures first hand.

**• Rotary Youth Exchange -** clubs and districts send and host students ages 15-19 who travel abroad for cultural exchanges of one week to a year

• **Global Networking Groups**

 — Rotary Fellowships – devoted to a broad variety of vocational and recreational interests

 — Rotarian Action Groups – focused on humanitarian service activities

Other Rotary programs with international connections are **Twin Clubs**, **Inter-country Committees**, and the **Open World** **Program**.

**12. The Rotary Foundation**

The Rotary Foundation is essentially the charitable arm of Rotary that helps fund Rotary’s humanitarian activities, from local service projects to global initiatives. The Foundation also takes the lead on worldwide Rotary campaigns such as [eradicating polio](https://www.rotary.org/myrotary/en/take-action/end-polio) and [promoting peace](https://www.rotary.org/myrotary/en/get-involved/exchange-ideas/peace-fellowships). Rotarians and friends of Rotary support the Foundation’s work through voluntary contributions.

The Rotary Foundation also offers district and global grants that any Rotary club or district can apply for to support a wide variety of projects, scholarships, and training.

**District Grants**are block grants that allow clubs and districts to address immediate needs, generallysmall-scale, short-term projects, in their communities and abroad. Each district chooses which activities it will fund with these grants.

**Global Grants** fund large international humanitarian projects, vocational training teams, and scholarships that have sustainable, measurable outcomes in one or more of the **RI** **Areas of Focus**. A key feature of global grants is partnership - grants are sponsored by at least one Rotary club or district in the country where the project will take place, and one or more outside that country.

The “Every Rotarian, Every Year” initiative encourages all Rotarians to contribute $100 every year to the Foundation’s Annual Fund.

 Through this generous act, Rotary continues to make a difference in the lives of millions around the world - every minute of every day someone’s life is being improved by The Rotary Foundation.

**13. Rotary International Website**

The [Rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org/) website tells Rotary’s story to help potential members, volunteers, and donors understand what makes Rotary unique and how they can get involved. It also contains a wealth of information to help Rotary districts, clubs and members perform more effectively - it’s actually two sites: one for the public and one for Rotarians.

To explore all that the site offers as a Rotarian, you must first register. To register, go to [www.rotary.org/myrotary](http://www.rotary.org/myrotary) and follow the instructions.

Once registered, clicking on “My Rotary” allows you to choose from scores of topics about RI, The Rotary Foundation, Club and District administration, how to start and manage a service project, participate in broader Rotary activities, connect with and exchange ideas with other Rotarians worldwide, keep up with the latest Rotary news, and a great deal more.

To familiarize yourself with the site, it’s best to start by viewing the three video tutorials accessed by clicking on Learning & Reference/Learn by Topic/Rotary.org. Then, start exploring – you’ll learn more about Rotary, how to help improve your club, and how to become a more effective Rotarian at this site than from any other source.

**14. Rotary District 7255**

The Babylon Rotary Club is one of 76 member clubs of Rotary District 7255. The district serves about 2000 Rotarians in Kings, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk Counties in New York State.

**District Administration**

The District is administered by a District Governor (DG), DG-elect, DG-nominee, four district officers and 15 assistant governors (AG). The AG’s act as district liaison for Rotary clubs in their area, providing reports, coordination and club assistance as required. Our own Frank Seibert is the AG for Area 3, which includes our club. District committees and representatives are organized essentially in accordance with RI and Rotary Foundation programs and activities. They exist primarily to help clubs in the district understand and engage in related RI pursuits.

**Education/Training**

The District conducts an Annual District Conference, District Assembly and membership, leadership and Rotary Foundation seminars that are important educational and fellowship opportunities for all club members. Additionally, the district conducts President-Elect and Secretary-Elect seminars for incoming club officers, and organizes local seminars given by the Rotary Leadership Institute for aspiring club leaders. District committee heads and other district representatives frequently conduct programs at member clubs and work to enhance inter-club communication.

**Resources**

Several sources that provide information on district organization, events and activities are:

* District Website — www.rotary7255.org
* District Newsletter & Calendar of Events — Issued via e-mail to all club members each month

**15. The Babylon Rotary Club — Administration**

**The Board**

The board of directors is the governing body of the club. The board consists of the president, immediate past president, president-elect, vice president, secretary, treasurer, standing committee heads, and members at large. The number of standing committees and board members at large is set at the discretion of the club president. Virtually all of the club’s projects, administrative functions and other activities are conducted under the guidance of the board of directors.

**Club Officer Progression**

Currently, all club officers, except the treasurer, serve a one-year term at each level of responsibility, starting as club secretary, progressing through vice president and president-elect to club president.

**Board Member Election**

The Rotary Constitution and BRC Bylaws require an annual election to select all board members. Ideally, a number of members would be eager to assume a board member role each year. However, that’s not been the case in the BRC for several years, and the club leadership has been forced to cajole reluctant candidates to fill open board positions. We are currently working to reverse this unfortunate situation with revived leadership development programs.

**16. The Babylon Rotary Club — Standing Committees**

The number and type of standing committees represented on the board of directors is chosen at the discretion of each Rotary club, reflecting current club needs and plans. Current BRC standing committees are listed below (with key contacts in parentheses) - committee functions are those envisioned when the BRC bylaws were adopted:

**Membership** — New member recruitment, member retention, education, training, hospitality (Chris Cunningham/Mikel Hoffman)

**Service Projects** — Initiate & manage local and international service projects & supporting fund-raising activities (Michael Simon)

**Rotary Foundation** — Support the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International through program participation & financial

Contributions; coordination of Foundation grants to help fund club service projects (Frank Seibert)

**Club Administration** — Conduct & coordinate all activities associated with effective operations of the club, e.g., meetings & attendance, programs, communications, volunteers & fellowship (Kathy Moore)

**Public Relations** — Provide the public with information about Rotary; promote the club’s service projects & other activities (Michael Hack)

**Youth Programs** — Organize & coordinate interactive activities with RYLA, Interact, Rotoract, Youth Exchange & New Generations programs (Josie Titcomb)

**Club Service** — Provide oversight of all club service operations & counsel to club leadership (Aaron Stein)

**17. The Babylon Rotary Club — Operations**

Club operations are guided by the principles and requirements stipulated in the Standard Rotary Club Constitution and the Bylaws, Policies and Procedures of the Rotary Club of Babylon. These documents can be downloaded from the “View Club Documents” section on the Administration page of the BRC website.

These documents, generated a decade ago, are currently being updated to account for intervening changes in Rotary policies and club operations.

Members are encouraged to review the BRC bylaws, policies and procedures, identify those provisions that you feel should be revived or added, and recommend to the club leadership how the documents should be updated and their provisions implemented.

18. The Babylon Rotary Club — Communications

Primary communication between club members takes place at the regular weekly club meetings and monthly board meetings. Highlights of the weekly meetings and special announcements are included in the weekly “Channel” newsletter that is sent to all members via e-mail.

The club website (www.babylonrotary.com) has many features to facilitate communications between the club leadership, committees and members, such as attendance reporting, event planning, and the E-mail Message Center. Individual e-mail messages and postings are also used to relay important information to all members. A guide on how to use the most common features of the club website can be downloaded from the Downloads section on the home page of the BRC website.

The design and format of both the weekly “Channel” newsletter and the club website are basic, conveying information of interest or concern to club members. We strive to keep the website current so that website visitors will get a topical and accurate overview of our club’s function and activities.

Members are encouraged to recommend alternate designs, format and content changes that would make these communication instruments more attractive, interesting, informative and useful.

**19. The Babylon Rotary Club — Make It Better**

The Babylon Rotary Club is blessed with an entire membership of intelligent, talented, and highly competent people from a wide variety of backgrounds and occupations. Imagine what we could accomplish if we all worked together routinely to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our club; these are a few things we can do as a start:

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**• Learn About Rotary & The BRC** **—** The most productive Rotarians understand how successful clubs work; reread “Rotary Connections”; peruse the RI website; ask questions

**• Get Involved** **—** Join the conversation/get to know your fellow members; volunteer for project & fundraiser committees; make a difference

**• Make Recommendations —** Do you have ideas on how to improve club operations, project efficacy, etc.? Suggest changes & help to implement them

• **Propose New Initiatives** — Does the club provide the projects/activities that motivated you to join Rotary? If not, propose new ones

• **Become A Leader** — There are always openings for project & club leaders - volunteer to be one; join the club officer progression cycle

**• Recruit New Members** – Tell friends & colleagues about Rotary; invite them to meetings; support the Membership Committee; suggest new recruitment ideas

• **Mentor Others** — Introduce newer members to others; help them become acquainted with, and involved in, club operations & projects

• **Stay Active** — Be it project volunteer, new member recruitment, improving club operations, or any of many other areas, your help is always needed - our club can prosper and grow only if every member helps make it happen

**20. Feedback Please**

We’ve completed the planned series of “Rotary Connections” snippets. The idea was to expand an understanding of Rotary for our newer members, provide a valuable refresher for veteran members, and serve as a guide to help us become a more effective Rotary club. I hope we achieved at least some of that.

We welcome your feedback:

• Did you find the series useful?

• Would you like the series to continue with:

 — Greater detail on one or more topics covered in the series?

 — Summaries and/or details on different topics?