

# Rotary Basics

Rotary International, the world's oldest service club organization, is made up of over 32,000 clubs in 168 countries. Its members form a global network of business and professional leaders who volunteer their time and talents to serve their communities and the world. Rotary's motto, Service Above Self, exemplifies the humanitarian spirit of the organization's more than 1.2 million members. Strong fellowship among Rotarians and meaningful community and international service projects characterize Rotary worldwide.

Rotary enjoys a rich and sometimes complex tradition and organizational structure, with many programs and customs that can be confusing to new and even not-so-new members. The following pages offer a basic Rotary education – the fundamental knowledge that will make every member better informed about Rotary and proud to be a Rotarian.



1905

Chicago attorney Paul Harris organizes first Rotary meeting on 23 February, leading to formation of the Rotary Club of Chicago.

1906

Rotary Club of Chicago provides a public toilet outside City Hall, Rotary's first community service project.

1910-11

Paul Harris elected first president of National Association of Rotary Clubs at the first Rotary Convention.

1911-13

Clubs formed in Canada, Great Britain, and Ireland; organization name changes to International Association of Rotary Clubs.



**“The more I learn about Rotary, the more I love Rotary.”**

– Michael P. Slevnik, USA



## | the organization of rotary |

Rotary is essentially a grassroots organization, with most of its service efforts being carried out at the club level. The district and international structure is designed to support the clubs and help them provide more service in their communities and abroad.

**CLUBS** Rotarians are members of Rotary clubs, which belong to the global association Rotary International (RI). Each club elects its own officers and enjoys considerable autonomy within the framework of Rotary’s constitution and bylaws.

**DISTRICTS** Clubs are grouped into 529 RI districts, each led by a district governor, who is an officer of RI. The district administration, including assistant governors and various committees, guides and supports the clubs.

**RI BOARD** The 19-member RI Board of Directors, which includes the RI president and president-elect, meets quarterly to establish policies. Traditionally, the RI president, who is elected annually, develops a theme and emphasis for the year.

**THE SECRETARIAT** Rotary International is headquartered in the Chicago suburb of Evanston, Illinois, USA, with seven international offices in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, India, Japan, Korea, and Switzerland. The RI in Great Britain and Ireland (RIBI) office, in England, serves clubs and districts in that region. The Secretariat’s active managing officer is the RI general secretary, who heads a staff of about 600 people working to serve Rotarians worldwide.

**“Rotary lets you give something back, in the knowledge that you belong to the largest family of givers.”**

– Deanna Ann Duguid, Indonesia

1915-16

Club chartered in Cuba, the first non-English-speaking Rotary country.

1916-17

President Arch Klumph proposes establishing an endowment fund, precursor of The Rotary Foundation.

1942-43

Rotary conference in London on education and cultural exchange sets stage for UNESCO.

1945-46

Forty-nine Rotarians help draft the UN charter.

# | responsibilities of club membership |

The club is the cornerstone of Rotary, where the most meaningful work is carried out. All effective Rotary clubs are responsible for four key elements: sustaining or increasing their membership base, participating in service projects that benefit their own community and those in other countries, supporting The Rotary Foundation of RI financially and through program participation, and developing leaders capable of serving in Rotary beyond the club level.

What Rotarians get out of Rotary depends largely on what they put into it. Many membership requirements are designed to help members more fully participate in and enjoy their Rotary experience.

**ATTENDANCE** Attending weekly club meetings allows members to enjoy their club’s fellowship and enrich their professional and personal knowledge. If members miss their own club’s meeting, they are encouraged to expand their Rotary horizons by attending make-up meetings at any Rotary club in the world – a practice that guarantees Rotarians a warm welcome in communities around the globe. For meeting places and times, consult the *Official Directory* or use the Club Locator at [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org), the RI Web site.

**SERVICE** By participating in club service projects, members learn about their club’s involvement in local and international projects and can volunteer their time and talents where they are most needed.

**MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION** To keep clubs strong, every Rotarian must share the responsibility of bringing new people into Rotary. Even new members can bring guests to meetings or invite them to participate in a service project. The value of Rotary speaks for itself, and the best way to spark the interest of potential members is by letting them experience fellowship and service firsthand. Keeping members interested in Rotary is another responsibility. Good club fellowship and early involvement in service projects are two of the best ways to sustain the club’s membership.

**“Thanks to Rotary, my efforts to make the world a better place are multiplied. I’m no longer alone.”**

– Fernando Aguirre Palacios, Ecuador

TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR ROTARY MEMBERSHIP

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE

When the deadly tsunami hit South Asia in late 2004, clubs in the affected countries swung into action, collecting money and goods to provide immediate assistance to disaster victims. Local Rotarians took the lead in reestablishing infrastructures such as schools. At the same time, their counterparts around the world were responding to appeals from Asian clubs. Rotarians in Great Britain and Ireland, for example, raised more than US\$12 million, much of which was used to provide shelter and clean water for those left homeless. In turn, Rotarians in tsunami-affected regions ensured that emergency aid from Rotary clubs quickly reached people in need.

Rotary’s response to this catastrophe is just one example of how being part of an international network of volunteers allows individuals to maximize their impact and make a real difference in the world. In communities worldwide, Rotarians are working together to organize literacy programs, contribute to food pantries, and provide guidance to at-risk children. Rotary clubs are providing clean water to rural villages, sponsoring microcredit programs for small businesses, and equipping schools and clinics so that more children have access to basic education and health care.

1946-47

Founder Paul Harris dies in Chicago; outpouring of funds from Rotarians used to establish fellowship program.

1948-49

First 18 Rotary Fellows study abroad, a precursor of Ambassadorial Scholars.

1962-63

First Interact club formed in Melbourne, Florida, USA. World Community Service program launched.

1965-66

Special Grants (now Matching Grants) and Group Study Exchange programs begin.

## | rotary's guiding principles |

Throughout Rotary's history, several basic principles have been developed to guide Rotarians in achieving the ideal of service and high ethical standards.

**OBJECT OF ROTARY** First formulated in 1910 and adapted throughout the years as Rotary's mission expanded, the Object of Rotary provides a succinct definition of the organization's purpose as well as the club member's responsibilities.

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.

**CLASSIFICATION PRINCIPLE** This system ensures that each club's membership reflects the business and professional composition of its community. Under this system, each member's classification is based on his or her business or profession; the number of members holding that classification is limited according to the size of the club. The goal is professional diversity, which enlivens the social atmosphere of the club and provides a rich resource of occupational expertise to carry out service projects and provide club leadership.

**AVENUES OF SERVICE** Based on the Object of Rotary, the four Avenues of Service are Rotary's philosophical cornerstone and the foundation on which club activity is based:

- **Club Service** focuses on strengthening fellowship and ensuring the effective functioning of the club.
- **Vocational Service** encourages Rotarians to serve others through their vocations and to practice high ethical standards.
- **Community Service** covers the projects and activities the club undertakes to improve life in its community.
- **International Service** encompasses actions taken to expand Rotary's humanitarian reach around the globe and promote world understanding and peace.

**THE FOUR-WAY TEST** Followed by Rotarians worldwide in their business and professional lives, The Four-Way Test was created by Rotarian Herbert J. Taylor in 1932. It has since been translated into more than 100 languages.

**Of the things we think, say or do**

- 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?



1968-69

Rotaract program launched.

1979-80

Foundation grant to immunize six million Philippine children against polio sets stage for PolioPlus.

1984-85

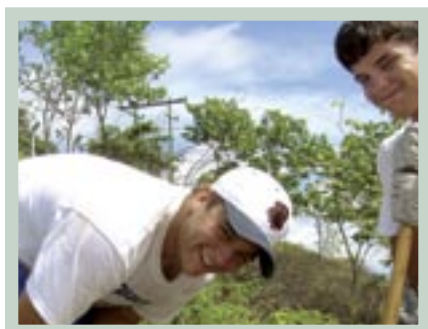
Rotary launches PolioPlus program and campaign to raise US\$120 million to immunize all the children of the world.

1986-87

Rotary Village Corps program (now Rotary Community Corps) established.

## | RI programs |

RI's programs and service opportunities are designed to help Rotarians meet needs in their own communities and reach out to assist people in need worldwide.



**Interact** Rotary clubs organize and sponsor this service organization for youth ages 14-18; over 10,000 clubs in 118 countries.

**Rotaract** Rotary clubs organize and sponsor this leadership, professional development, and service organization for young adults ages 18-30; more than 7,800 clubs in 158 countries.

**Rotary Community Corps (RCC)** Rotary clubs organize and sponsor these groups of non-Rotarians who work to improve their communities; more than 5,700 RCCs in 71 countries.

**Rotary Fellowships** Vocational, recreational, and service-related groups open to all Rotarians, spouses of Rotarians, and Rotaractors sharing common interests; 93 fellowships.

**Rotary Friendship Exchange** Rotarians and their families make

reciprocal visits to other countries, staying in each other's homes and learning about the culture firsthand.

**Rotary Volunteers** Rotarians and other skilled professionals are provided opportunities to offer their services and experience to local and international humanitarian projects.

**Rotary Youth Exchange** Clubs and districts sponsor and host students ages 15-19 who travel abroad for an academic year or an extended holiday; about 7,000 a year.

**Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA)** Clubs and districts sponsor seminars to encourage and recognize leadership abilities of youth and young adults ages 14-30.

**World Community Service (WCS)** Rotary clubs and districts from two different countries form partnerships to implement community service projects.

**Menu of Service Opportunities** RI recommends that clubs planning service activities consider nine major needs or concerns: Children at Risk, Disabled Persons, Health Care, International Understanding and Goodwill, Literacy and Numeracy, Population Issues, Poverty and Hunger, Preserve Planet Earth, and Urban Concerns.

**“Rotary has taught me how an ordinary citizen from a small town can be a world citizen.”**

– Raj Ghuman, India

TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR ROTARY MEMBERSHIP

### PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND PEACE

When it comes to working for peace, Rotarians approach the issue from many angles. The most visible effort is the Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution, where dozens of graduate students are learning how to prevent and resolve conflict in the world. In 2004, the first class of Rotary World Peace Fellows graduated and began their careers in a variety of diplomatic and peacemaking positions with the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and a host of other organizations.

The Rotary World Peace Fellowships program builds on other successful Foundation programs, such as Ambassadorial Scholarships and Group Study Exchange. These educational and cultural programs allow Rotary to promote international understanding at a grassroots, person-to-person level.

Rotary clubs are reaching out to refugees and other victims of war and restoring stability to their lives. In Afghanistan, U.S. and Pakistani Rotarians established a US\$250,000 school project that serves more than 1,000 students, over 50 percent of them girls. The U.S. Rotarians also equipped a computer center and provided textbooks to Nangarhar University, one of the largest universities in Afghanistan that previously had no computers or textbooks for classroom use.

1987-88

Through the PolioPlus campaign, Rotarians raise US\$247 million.

1988-89

First women join Rotary. Rotary returns to Hungary and Poland.

1994-95

Western Hemisphere declared polio-free.

1998-99

Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution established.

## | The Rotary Foundation |

The Rotary Foundation of RI is a not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to support the efforts of Rotary International in the fulfillment of the Object of Rotary, Rotary’s mission, and the achievement of world understanding and peace through local, national, and international humanitarian, educational, and cultural programs.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT** In 2003-04, The Rotary Foundation received contributions totaling US\$106 million and spent more than \$86.7 million in support of humanitarian and educational programs implemented by clubs and districts. Contributions from Rotarians go into one of three main funds:

- **Annual Programs Fund**, which provides grants and awards through Foundation programs
- **Permanent Fund**, an endowment from which only a portion of the earnings are spent in support of Foundation programs, ensuring the long-term viability of the Foundation
- **PolioPlus Fund**, which supports Rotary’s dream of a polio-free world

Every dollar contributed by Rotarians funds the humanitarian, educational, and cultural programs and program operations. Clubs and districts apply for and receive Foundation grants to carry out many worthy projects worldwide. In an effort to maintain sufficient funding for these vital programs, the Foundation launched the Every Rotarian, Every Year initiative, designed to increase annual giving to \$100 per capita or more.

**“I doubt it would be possible to document the extent to which the myriad programs of The Rotary Foundation have done so much good in the world.”**

– Otto Austel, USA

**HUMANITARIAN GRANTS PROGRAM** Humanitarian grants enable Rotarians to increase their support of international service projects that provide water wells, medical care, literacy classes, and other essentials to people in need. Rotarian participation is key to the success of these projects.

- **District Simplified Grants** enable districts to use a portion of their District Designated Fund (DDF) to support service activities or humanitarian endeavors that benefit the local or international communities.
- **Matching Grants** assist Rotary clubs and districts in carrying out humanitarian projects with clubs in other countries.
- **Health, Hunger and Humanity (3-H) Grants** fund long-term, self-help, and grassroots development projects that are too large for one club or district to carry out on its own.
- **Blane Community Immunization Grants** provide U.S. Rotary clubs and districts up to \$1,000 in matching funds to improve immunization levels in their communities.



**POLIOPLUS** The PolioPlus program provides funding for vaccine and transportation for mass immunization campaigns as well as support for social mobilization, surveillance, and laboratories to help carry out the final stages of global polio eradication. Having raised funds that will provide more than \$600 million in support, Rotary International is a spearheading partner with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the initiative to eradicate polio worldwide.

#### 2000-01

Western Pacific region declared polio-free.

#### 2001-02

Europe declared polio-free.

#### 2002-03

Rotary launches a second polio eradication fundraising campaign to help fill a critical funding need. Rotarians raise over US\$129 million.

#### 2004-05

Clubs celebrate Rotary's centennial by launching hundreds of Centennial Community Projects and contributing thousands of volunteer hours.

**EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS** These programs are designed to promote international understanding by bringing together people from different countries and cultures.

- **Ambassadorial Scholarships**, the world's largest, privately funded international scholarships program for university studies, sends 900 students each year to serve as ambassadors of goodwill while abroad.
- **Rotary World Peace Fellowships** are awarded to individuals for study in master's degree programs at the Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution.
- **Rotary Peace and Conflict Fellowships** are awarded to individuals for study in a short-term certificate program at the Rotary Center for Peace and Conflict Studies in Thailand.
- **Group Study Exchange** is a cultural and vocational exchange program between districts in different countries for businesspeople and professionals ages 25-40.
- **Rotary Grants for University Teachers** are awarded to higher education faculty to teach abroad in an academic field of practical use to people in a low-income country.

## | key meetings |

Several key meetings bring Rotarians together to share ideas, celebrate successes, enjoy fellowship, and plan for the future.

**RI CONVENTION** The RI Convention, the largest Rotary meeting, is held in May or June in a different part of the Rotary world each year. This lively, four-day event features speeches by world and Rotary leaders, spectacular entertainment reflecting the local culture, and unparalleled opportunities to experience the true breadth of Rotary's international fellowship.



#### **DISTRICT CONFERENCES**

Rotarians are encouraged to attend their district conference, an annual motivational meeting that showcases club and district activities. A family event, the district conference mixes fellowship with learning and allows Rotarians to become more directly involved with charting their district's future.

#### TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR ROTARY MEMBERSHIP

### ERADICATING POLIO WORLDWIDE

Rotary's commitment to global polio eradication began in 1979 with a five-year project to immunize six million Philippine children against this devastating disease. In taking up polio eradication as its first corporate project in 1985, Rotary embarked on an ambitious fundraising campaign that garnered US\$247 million by 1988. Faced with a funding gap to finish the job of eradication, Rotarians raised over \$129 million in the second fundraising campaign, launched in 2002-03. By the time the world is certified polio-free, Rotary's contributions to the global polio eradication effort will exceed \$600 million.

But equally important is the volunteer army of Rotarians who promote National Immunization Days (NIDs), travel by camel and helicopter to bring the vaccine to children in remote areas, and negotiate cease-fires so that NIDs can take place in war-torn countries. Since 1985, more than two billion children have been immunized against polio, and polio cases have declined more than 99 percent.

**“Rotary is a completely new angle of friendship, one that’s not private and one that’s not strictly business.”**

– Susanne Prahl-Landzo, Bosnia-Herzegovina



## | The changing face of Rotary |

The genius of Rotary has been its ability to respond to the needs of the day, from child welfare to refugee relief to rural development to polio immunization. This cornucopia of projects is matched by the increasing diversity of Rotary’s membership in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity. Originally an all-male U.S. club, Rotary has expanded to include many female business and professional leaders. Two-thirds of today’s Rotarians live outside the United States and represent a multitude of cultures.

Rotary clubs are also changing their meeting times and places to make membership more convenient and relevant to today’s demanding professional and personal schedules and using technology to communicate, promote their activities, and engage in Rotary business. The RI Web site enables members to conduct Rotary business online as well as order publications, register for meetings, and learn about Rotary history, programs, and events. For the latest Rotary information, visit [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org) regularly.