

ROTARY

# BASICS



[www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org)



Rotary International, the world's first service club organization, is made up of over 32,000 clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas. 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.

**“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 local 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 532 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 emphases 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 office for RI in Great Britain and Ireland (RIBI), located in England, serves clubs and districts in that region. The Secretariat’s chief operating officer is the RI general secretary, who heads a 650-member staff working to serve Rotarians worldwide.



**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 convention.

**1911-13**  
Clubs formed in Canada, Great Britain, and Ireland; organization name changes to International Association of Rotary Clubs.

**1915-16**  
Club chartered in Cuba, the first non-English-speaking Rotary country.

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

— Deanna Ann Duguid, Indonesia

## 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, enrich their professional and personal knowledge, and meet other business leaders in their community. Many larger communities offer clubs with different meeting times, including early morning, the lunch hour, after work, and evening.

If members miss their own club’s meeting, they’re 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. Find meeting places and times in the *Official Directory* or through the Club Locator at [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org).

In some cases, Rotarians can make up meetings by participating in a club service project or attending a club board meeting or a Rotaract or Interact club meeting. Members can also make up online at one of several Rotary e-clubs.

**Service** All Rotary clubs share a key mission: to serve their community and those in need throughout the world. 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.

The ideal composition of a Rotary club reflects the community’s demographics, including professions, gender, age, and ethnicity. Such diversity enriches every aspect of the club’s fellowship and service.

**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.

**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.

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

**— Raj Ghuman, India**

## 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 through 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.

**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 and is used by organizations and individuals throughout the world.

**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?



**Classification principle** By assigning each member a classification based on his or her business or profession, this system ensures that the club's membership reflects the business and professional composition of its community. The number of members holding a particular classification is limited according to the size of the club. The goal is professional diversity, which enlivens the club's social atmosphere 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 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 to promote world understanding and peace.

**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.

**1968-69**  
Rotaract program launched.

**1978-79**  
Health, Hunger and Humanity (3-H) Grants begin.

**1979-80**  
Foundation grant to immunize six million Philippine children against polio sets stage for PolioPlus.

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

— *Fernando Aguirre Palacios, Ecuador*

## 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; more than 10,900 clubs in 121 countries.

**Rotaract** Rotary clubs organize and sponsor this leadership, professional development, and service organization for young adults ages 18-30; more than 7,000 clubs in 162 countries.

**Rotary Community Corps (RCC)** Rotary clubs organize and sponsor these groups of non-Rotarians who work to improve their communities; more than 6,400 RCCs in 76 countries.

**Global Networking Groups** Rotary Fellowships (groups geared to vocational and recreational interests) and Rotarian Action Groups (groups focused on service activities) compose Global Networking Groups, which are open to all Rotarians, spouses of Rotarians, and Rotaractors; more than 90 groups.

**Rotary Friendship Exchange** Rotarians and their families make reciprocal visits to other countries, staying in each other’s homes and learning about different cultures 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 send and host students ages 15-19 who travel abroad for cultural exchanges of one week to a full year; about 9,000 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. The WCS Projects Exchange at [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org) features descriptions of projects seeking an international partner.

**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.



**1984-85**  
Rotary launches PolioPlus program and campaigns to raise US\$120 million to immunize all the children of the world.

**1987-88**  
Through the PolioPlus campaign, Rotarians raise US\$247 million. First women join Rotary.

**1988-89**  
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 is the cement that binds every one of us together.”**

**— Calum Thomson, Scotland**

## The Rotary Foundation

The Rotary Foundation of RI is a not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to enable Rotarians to advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through the improvement of health, the support of education, and the alleviation of poverty.

### Financial Support

In 2005-06, The Rotary Foundation received contributions totaling US\$111.9 million and spent \$108 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. The Every Rotarian, Every Year initiative, designed to encourage worldwide annual per capita giving of \$100 or more, supports vital Foundation programs.

### Educational Programs

These programs promote international understanding by bringing together people from different countries and cultures.

**Ambassadorial Scholarships**, an international program for university-level studies, sends about 800 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 Studies 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 short-term cultural and vocational exchange program between districts in different countries for non-Rotarian 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.

### 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.

**Matching Grants** assist Rotary clubs and districts in carrying out humanitarian projects with clubs in other countries.

**2000-01**  
Western Pacific region  
declared polio-free.

**2001-02**  
Europe declared polio-free.

**2002-03**  
Rotary launches a second  
polio eradication fundrais-  
ing 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 community  
projects and contributing  
thousands of volunteer  
hours.

**2006-07**  
The Rotary Foundation  
recognizes the millionth  
Paul Harris Fellow.

## “The way Rotary reacts when calamity strikes demonstrates the huge power of Rotary.”

— *Ravi Ravindran, Sri Lanka*

**District Simplified Grants** enable districts to support service activities or humanitarian endeavors that benefit local or international communities.

**Volunteer Service Grants** support the travel of qualified Rotarians and their spouses as they plan needed projects or provide essential services in a community.

**Health, Hunger and Humanity (3-H) Grants** fund long-term, self-help, and grassroots development projects that use a sustainable, integrative approach to address humanitarian needs.

### 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. Rotarians have raised funds that will amount to more than \$650 million in support and provided hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours. Rotary 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. As a result of their efforts, two billion children under age five have received the polio vaccine, five million people who might otherwise be paralyzed are walking today, 500,000 new cases of polio are prevented each year, and the number of polio cases has declined by 99 percent worldwide.

### Did you know?

- Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarships is the world’s largest privately funded scholarship program.
- The Rotary Foundation has contributed more than \$420 million in grants for development and humanitarian aid in the developing world.
- Rotarians have established a host of organizations dedicated to various humanitarian causes, including ShelterBox, HungerPlus, Gift of Life, and Rotary Doctor Bank.
- Providing vitamin A supplements during polio National Immunization Days has averted an estimated 1.5 million childhood deaths since 1998 — testimony to the “plus” in PolioPlus.
- RI representatives work with many major international organizations, including the UN and several of its agencies, the Organization of American States, the Council of Europe, and the African Union.

## 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.

“I am a Rotarian and belong to one big Rotary family.”

— *Maureen Bond, Zimbabwe*

**“It has made each move a bit easier for me and my family, knowing there were Rotary friends waiting for us in the next city. Today, our Rotary friends circle the globe.”**

*Russ M. Miller, China*



**“The job that brought me to Rotary has long since come and gone, but I am a Rotarian for life.”**

*Talee Crowe, USA*

**“Thanks to one persistent Rotarian who did not know the meaning of ‘thank you, but no,’ I am now a member of the Rotary family.”**

*Sylvia Byers, Australia*



**“I find a quiet satisfaction in lighting up someone else’s life, in being part of building a park, funding a medical clinic, or helping reforest thousands of acres with trees.”**

*George M. Yeiter, USA*



Find out more about Rotary and its service work at [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org). You can read the latest news, order publications, register for the international convention, contribute to The Rotary Foundation, and conduct other Rotary business.