

What Does Service Mean in Rotary? Simple Stories of Inspiring Rotarians

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FOREWORD TO THE SERIES

This ebook is published as part of the [Rotarian Economist Short Books](#) series. The books in the series are short, typically at 15,000 words or less. They provide rapid and practical introductions to topics related to volunteer work, service clubs, nonprofits, and the six areas of focus of the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International. These areas of focus are promoting peace, fighting disease, providing clean water, saving mothers and children, supporting education, and growing local economies. Other topics will be considered as well.

The book series is associated with the [Rotarian Economist Blog](#) launched in October 2014 on World Polio Day. The aim of the blog and its book series is to provide analysis that can help readers make a positive difference in the life of the less fortunate. If you would like to receive email alerts of new posts and resources made available on the blog, please provide your email through the widget at <https://rotarianeconomist.com/>.

The editor and main author for the book series works at the World Bank. Although some of the books in the series may relate to topics that the author and co-author(s) may occasionally work on at the World Bank, the opinions expressed in the books are solely those of the individual author(s) of each book in the series and do not represent the views of the World Bank, its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent. This book series is not associated in any formal or informal way with the World Bank.

If you would like to contact the author(s) of books in the series for a question or to provide feedback, please do not hesitate to send an email to the editor of the series through the “Contact Me” page of the [Rotarian Economist blog](#).

INTRODUCTION

As a reader of this ebook, you may be considering becoming a Rotarian, wondering what service really means in Rotary. Perhaps you are a new Rotarian, trying to find your niche within your club, and wondering how you can best contribute. Alternatively, you may be a seasoned Rotarian, well aware of what the organization has to offer and trying to help new members find their place, or aiming to recruit new members. Still as another possibility, you may be an external observer, or even a grant applicant, wondering what Rotarians actually do beyond meeting a few times per month often around a meal!

Rotary was founded by Paul Harris in Chicago more than a hundred years ago, in 1905. The name came from the fact that the members of the first Rotary club rotated the location of their meetings. Today, the organization has 1.2 million members worldwide in more than 35,000 clubs (on the history of Rotary International and its foundation, see Forward, 2003 and 2016; on membership in service clubs and Rotary, see Wodon et al., 2014, as well as other books in the Rotarian Economist Short Books series).

The object of Rotary is to “*encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise.*” The organization’s motto is “*Service above self.*” But what does service actually mean in Rotary in practice?

Clearly, one size does not fit all in such a large and diverse organization as Rotary has become. What Rotarians actually do in their service work differs between countries, districts, and clubs. It also differs within clubs, with different members engaged in different types of service projects in a single club.

The objective of this short book is to answer the question of what service means in Rotary by providing examples of the inspiring work that Rotarians actually do. Two dozen short stories of Rotarians at work are provided in the second chapter of the book. The stories were originally published in the newsletter of Rotary district 7620 between July 2013 and June 2014.

At times, when showcasing what an organization does, compilations of service stories emphasize the achievements or contributions of volunteers with extraordinary and almost unique accomplishments or commitments. Here, the focus is a bit different – the emphasis is on what “ordinary” Rotarians do on a regular basis - great service work, but also work that is replicable by others. The emphasis is on service work that inspires, but also work that we can all start to implement in communities, whether locally or internationally.

The main contribution of this book lies in those stories. Probably better than any conceptual analysis, the stories give a feel for the diversity of service projects that Rotarians engage in, and how this often affects them deeply for the better. Yet for those who are not familiar with Rotary, it may also be useful to also explain briefly how Rotary considers different “avenues of service.”

To that end, the first chapter describes five broad types of service activities in the Rotary world: service to one’s club, service to one’s vocation or profession, local community service, international service, and service related to

the programs of Rotary for youth. An understanding of these categories of service may be useful as background not only for the inspiring stories of Rotarians at work provided in chapter 2, but also for understanding the broader work that Rotarians engage in, including for empowering youth.

The stories in chapter 2 focus for the most part on community, international, and vocational service, simply because this is what many Rotarians naturally talk about when asked about their experience. But it should be clear that in Rotary, the other two types of service – club service and service to youth, are no less important, and indeed vital for the sustainability of the organization.

CHAPTER 1

AVENUES OF SERVICE IN ROTARY

As mentioned in the introduction, the main value of this short book resides in the inspiring stories of Rotarians at work provided in chapter 2. Yet for those who may not be familiar with Rotary, or for new Rotarians who may not yet know Rotary inside and out, it may be useful to first explain that five different avenues of service are typically distinguished in the organization: (1) club service; (2) vocational service; (3) community service; (4) international service; and finally (5) youth service, also referred to as “new generations.” This chapter briefly describes each of these five avenues of service in order to provide some background for the individual stories provided in the next chapter.

Club Service

Without clubs, Rotary could not be functioning the way it does. The clubs, more than 35,000 of them worldwide, are truly at the heart of the organization and they are also at the core of the Rotarian experience. Clubs have substantial autonomy on how they organize themselves – within some boundaries defined by Rotary’s Council of Legislation. Clubs decide on the service projects they want to implement locally or internationally. They also have broad latitude on whom they welcome as club members, and how they work in communities.

Club service is, simply stated, service performed by members for the benefit of their club, or sometimes district. In a way, all other avenues of service are to some extent a service to a club. But there are also a number of tasks that need to be performed specifically for clubs to remain strong. ‘Clubs have a leadership typically including a President, President-elect, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Sergeant at Arms, and other members of the club board. All these positions are in service to the club, and a similar but more complex structure is in place for Rotary districts which may have 50 to 70 clubs.

Clubs also typically have various committees, such as a membership committee, a fundraising committee, a public image committee, or a committee to recruit speakers for club meetings. Members of these committees as well as Committee Chairs also perform services for their club. Club service often involves many Rotarians in a typical club because operating a club requires substantial dedication and volunteer time.

Vocational Service

Members of service clubs such as Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions often talk about vocational service. But what does it mean? To help make the concept more precise, Rotary International has published a guide on vocational service. The idea is for Rotarians to promote (1) High ethical standards in business and professions; (2) The recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations; and

(3) The dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society. The guide suggests that this can be achieved among others by talking about one's vocation and learning about others' vocations, using professional skills to serve the community, practicing one's profession with integrity, and guiding others, especially youth, in their professional development.

Vocational service can take many forms, but it should be recognized that some of those forms are not specific to Rotary. Everyone should practice his or her profession with integrity. And many different people talk with passion about their vocation and enjoy learning from the vocations of others. What should probably be emphasized more in Rotary is the use of one's professional skills and experience to serve communities. Mentoring younger individuals in order to help them make good career choices is a classic example with many clubs involved in organizing career fairs in high schools. But vocational service can be broader than that, as the guide published by Rotary International indicates.

One great example of vocational service that also ties in by design with community and especially international service is the work performed by Rotarians who lend their professional skills to Rotarian Action Groups (RAGs). The RAGs are led by Rotarians. They are approved by Rotary International and they report to the organization, but they function as independent entities and are in most cases registered as charitable organizations. They facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences in various thematic areas and they provide advice to clubs in order to help improve the projects implemented by clubs in each RAG's area of technical expertise.

As of 2016, there were more than two dozen RAGs operating in domains related to the areas of focus of the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International. These areas of focus are: 1) fighting disease, 2) providing clean water, 3) saving mothers and children, 4) supporting education, 5) growing local economies, and 6) promoting peace. One RAG has more than 20,000 members and a few others have more than 500 members, but most RAGs tend to be smaller, although many are growing. A list of RAGs is available on Rotary International's website.

Community Service

Community service in Rotary essentially relates to service performed in the local community of a Rotary club. Community service is often the most popular activity in a club, perhaps in part because it is easier for club members to have a personal connection with beneficiaries of projects through community service than is the case, say, through international service projects. Rotarians also see the needs in their communities, and often want to respond.

Rotary International has published a guide to help Rotarians in their community service (the title of the guide is *Communities in Action: A Guide to Effective Projects*). In practice, the types of activities implemented by clubs vary greatly from one club to the next, and even within clubs, especially large ones.

Just as one example, some of the community service activities of the Rotary Club of Washington, DC, can be mentioned (see Wodon et al., 2014, for more details). This is a large club founded more than century ago with close to

170 members. In part because members have a variety of interests, many different community service activities are proposed to the membership. Under the dictionary project, every third grader in public and charter schools receives a dictionary. Club members go to elementary schools to distribute the dictionaries. A second activity is the Grate Patrol, whereby members help distribute food to the homeless twice a month as part of a Salvation Army Homeless Outreach Program. A third project is the trees for the Capital, which consists in planting twice a year cherry trees in partnership near some of the monuments in DC and especially near the Jefferson Memorial with the National Park Service.

A fourth project that has been running for decades is the Walter Reed Bingo whereby club members organize bingo sessions with prizes for wounded veterans receiving care. Still another activity is the career fair held each year with a handful of local high schools. Separately, a group of club members regularly tutors elementary school students in mathematics at another school. And until recently, club members participated in the annual school beautification project held in August by the school district (the district since discontinued the event). The club also has a large foundation with an endowment of \$7 million. The foundation awards community service grants to local nonprofits every year, and quite a few members serve in the committee that decides on those awards.

In addition, every year the Rotary Club of Washington, DC, typically organizes other community service projects specific to that year. For example, for its Centennial, the club sponsored the construction of a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified passive energy house with the District of Columbia chapter of Habitat for Humanity. Several hands-on construction workshops at the site were held apart from providing funding for the house. And most recently, the club launched a new annual fundraiser in the form of a duck race. Families can purchase tickets for a race held in April on the Anacostia River with rubber ducks – providing great family fund.

While the community service offering of the Rotary Club of Washington, DC may be especially broad given the size of the club's membership, many clubs organize and/or participate in a wide range of community service activities. Many clubs also are known in their community for a flagship event that they organize every year. This is often a fundraiser that is held in order to be able to provide community grants to local nonprofits.

International Service

While community service focuses on the local community in which a club operates, international service consists in large part of funding and implementing service projects abroad. Many of these projects are related to the areas of focus of the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International. Apart from polio, as mentioned earlier when discussing the role of RAGs, these areas of focus are fighting disease, providing clean water, saving mothers and children, supporting education, growing local economies, and finally promoting peace.

When international service projects are well designed and when they have sufficient size, they can benefit from co-funding from the Rotary Foundation of

Rotary International under the global grant model. But many clubs and districts also implement smaller international projects without such support.

In a separate book in this series (Wodon, 2017), examples are provided of great international service projects that combined strong partnerships together with innovation and evaluation. For example, a half dozen years ago the Rotary Club of Capitol Hill, also located in Washington, DC, implemented a project on malaria in Mali together with the nonprofit Muso. Malaria kills more children than any other disease in Africa. Muso improves access to health care through networks of community health workers. The Rotary club helped fund bed nets to prevent malaria, and the broader intervention managed by Muso managed to reduce under five mortality by a factor of ten in the intervention area. This is a truly impressive achievement that led Muso to later receive international prizes.

Another example of a great project in the area of health is a large project led by clubs in Europe, and especially Germany, to provide training and resources to reduce the risk of complications from obstetric fistula in Nigerian hospitals. An evaluation suggests that the project helped generate a reduction in the maternal mortality rate in participating hospitals of 60 percent. Given its success, the project has now been scaled up to more hospitals in the country.

Apart from implementing service projects abroad, international service can also take other forms. One example – which relates to both international service and vocational service, is the Group Study Exchange program funded by the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International. This is an opportunity for young professionals between the ages of 25 and 40 to travel to a host country for four to six weeks in order to experience the country's culture and institutions, exchange ideas, and develop personal and professional relationships. Rotarians in the host country organize the program, which often includes visits to multiple clubs.

Youth Service/New Generations

The last avenue of service relates to youth, and is often referred to as new generations. The objective is to empower youth and young professionals through leadership development programs. Four main programs fall in this category: Interact, Rotaract, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, and Rotary Youth Exchange. Many Rotarians are actively engaged in supporting those programs.

Interact and Rotaract clubs are sponsored by Rotary clubs. Interact is the branch of Rotary for adolescents ages 12 to 18 (the Interactors). Most Interact clubs operate in a specific high school, but some clubs are community-based instead of being school-based. Globally, Rotary International estimates that Interact membership may be close to reaching 400,000.

Rotaract is the branch of Rotary for university students and professionals. Members are 18 to 30 years old. According to the latest annual report by Rotary International, the organization had 219,029 Rotaractors worldwide in 2015-16 in 9,523 Rotaract clubs.

Interact and Rotaract clubs operate under the supervision of Rotary clubs with designated Rotarian advisers, who provide advice and support. But the clubs are fairly independent, with their membership organizing their own service

projects, local or international. In the case of school-based Interact clubs, supervision is also maintained by a school adviser.

The Rotary Youth Leadership Awards is a leadership program typically for high school students. In my district for example, the program consists of an intense three day, two night leadership training program designed to recognize, encourage and further develop the leadership skills of 10th, 11th and 12th grade high school students selected by clubs to participate in the event. More than 150 high school students attend the event each year.

Finally, Rotary Youth Exchange is an exchange program for students ages 15 to 19. Long-term exchanges last for a full academic year with students attending a local school abroad and living with one or more host families. Most students in the program have completed high school in their home country. Short-term exchanges can last from several days to up to three months. They tend to take place in settings such as camps, tours, or homestays when schools are not in session. The various exchanges are sponsored by Rotary clubs.

Many Ways to Serve, All Worthy

It should be clear from the above description of avenues of service in Rotary that one size does not fit all. Rotarians are involved in a wide range of service projects and activities, both locally and internationally. In order to illustrate this diversity, two dozen short stories that were originally published in the newsletter of Rotary District 7620 between July 2013 and June 2014 are reproduced in the next chapter of this book (the stories were also previously reproduced in an annex for Wodon et al., 2014).

Consider the first two stories. The first story is that of Maria Nelly, a Bolivian now living in Washington, DC. When Maria Nelly was asked what she remembers most fondly of her Rotary experiences over the years, she told the story of a group of young girls from her native Bolivia who went on a journey from poverty to winning the country's national rhythmic gymnastics competition with a "little help" from her and fellow Rotarians. The second story is about tutoring disadvantaged students at an elementary school. Don, a scientist by training, launched the project a decade years ago and he designed it in an innovative way, focusing on mathematics and science. The project has succeeded in raising test scores for participating students. But for Don, there was no better reward than having a fifth-grader tell him *"You know Dr. Messer, you're my grandpa."*

These two stories and the others included in the next chapter illustrate the variety of service work that Rotarians engage in. Some of the stories are about support to those in need in the communities in which Rotarians live. Other stories are about international projects. Some stories are about seasoned Rotarians. Others are about new members. In some cases, Rotarians talked about service work they conduct outside of Rotary itself, as part of their vocational work.

Because opportunities to serve are diverse, Rotarians often find an area of service that they are passionate about, and they bring this passion to their club. It seems fair to say that all these avenues of services are equally worthy, and that there is plenty of space within Rotary clubs for Rotarians to pursue their passion.

CHAPTER 2

STORIES FROM DISTRICT 7620 ROTARIANS

In order to illustrate the diversity of service projects in which Rotarians are involved, this chapter reproduces 23 stories about Rotarian service published between July 2013 and June 2014 in the monthly newsletter of District 7620.

From Poverty to Winning a National Gymnastics Competition Maria Nelly Pavisich from the Washington DC club

Maria Nelly has been a Rotarian for more than two decades and she has led successful international projects since living in Washington, DC. But when asked what she remembers most fondly from her Rotary years, she told us the story of a group of young girls from her native Bolivia who went on a journey from poverty to winning the country's national rhythmic gymnastics competition. As she puts it, she and other Rotarians were of a "little help" in this amazing journey.

One day one of Maria Nelly's Rotarian friend told her that she had to see a new gymnastics project-school run by a Spanish volunteer and gymnast working for the non-profit Hombres Nuevos in one of the poorest part of her city. The "school" provided free lessons to girls in dire poverty, but it consisted only of a simple patio with a hard floor surface surrounded by a grass garden used for training. How could the girls perform crazy stunts with no mattress! What would happen if a girl fell and broke her bones?

Maria Nelly persuaded her club members to support a fundraising effort to provide the school with proper gymnastics equipment. Her club could afford only US\$300, but by contacting Rotary clubs in the United States and with matching funds from the Rotary International Foundation, they raised US\$10,000. The school grew, and a few years later, the girls ended up winning Bolivia's rhythmic gymnastics competition three years in a row.

When we asked Maria Nelly what she felt most rewarding in this project, she told us that watching these young girls bloom into self-confident young women was amazing. She recalls how the first time these girls won the nationals, they were so surprised and shy that they kept their face down. Their teacher Cristina had to tip all of their chins for them to look up. But the second time the girls won, they watched the crowd and smiled radiantly with new confidence.

If you visit Maria Nelly at her home, you will see many different pieces of art from a Senegal butterfly wing collage to a window painting done by her daughter Daniella depicting Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity together in harmony.

Maria Nelly's conviction is that everybody should be valued, and that every Rotarian has something to offer. We just need to help people open up and give, whether this is money for gymnastics equipment, or a truckload of soybeans as was provided by a farmer Rotarian to help provide nutritious meals for the young gymnasts, their siblings, and their families.

***“How come you know so much, what kind of a doctor are you?”
Don Messer from the Washington DC club.***

The child who asked this question to (Dr.) Don Messer is from the Stanton Elementary School in Washington, DC. The school is located in Anacostia, one of the poorest parts of the city. Until recently, few children passed the mathematics and reading tests, but things have improved, in part because of a tutoring program run by Don.

Six years ago [at the time of writing this story], with the help of the school's principal, teachers, and a half dozen other Rotarians, Don designed the tutoring program in an innovative way. He focused on mathematics and reading, and on the types of questions asked in standardized tests. This was not to “teach to the test”, but to ensure that the children understood those questions well. He decided to tutor students by small groups of three or four to generate interactions and more learning. The groups meet once or twice a week for the entire school year and classes are held during the school day.

The goal is not only to help the students learn, but also to help them understand that there is a future for them that often they didn't know existed. When a child asked Don what kind of Doctor he was, it was because she knew only of medical doctors, and not of all of the other types of doctors that exist. Don believes that he and the other tutors are in a small way opening up a new window to the world for the students. The latest figures show that while only about 20 percent of non-tutored students are proficient in mathematics, 40 percent of Rotary-tutored students are proficient.

Over the years, Don and his fellow Rotarian tutors have learned how to connect with the students, how to keep their attention and interact with them, and how to be role models and tutors. At times, the children are noisy, sometimes misbehaving and arguing. But they do value the sessions, and they want to come. There is perhaps no better reward than having a fifth grader tell Don, “*You know Dr. Messer, you're my grandpa.*”

Helping Others to Serve Rebecca Tingle from the Annapolis club.

Rebecca is Executive Director of Anne Arundel County CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), a nonprofit that advocates for and supports abused and neglected children involved in juvenile court proceedings. The organization is made up in a large part by qualified and trained community volunteers who are called CASAs. CASAs are considered “Officers of the Court” and ensure that needed services are delivered to families and children in a timely and effective manner. Volunteer child advocates keep children from “falling through the cracks” and work to ensure that each child has a safe, stable, permanent home.

CASA volunteers make a long-term commitment to conduct an independent, comprehensive study of a child’s situation; maintain contact with parents, foster parents, attorneys, teachers, therapists and social workers; monitor the child’s situation by visiting regularly; write formal court reports with recommendations and provide direct testimony to the Court; and advocate for the child’s developmental, educational, and psychological needs.

When asked what she found was most inspiring in her work, Rebecca told stories about volunteers who have created deep connections with the child to whom they are assigned. One volunteer assigned to a teenager who was completing high school and wanted to go to the Prom bought him a suit and chauffeured him and his date to the event. They both continue to have a close relationship and to visit each other.

“The volunteers develop a relationship with these children, and almost take on a [parental] role, teaching them life skills the children have not yet learned [...]. Everything about this organization inspires me. It’s amazing what our volunteers do for these children. The CASA role is such a unique volunteer role; it’s a role that carries with it a high level of responsibility and credibility. Every experience, to me, is amazing.” Rebecca has dedicated the last eight years to CASA. As she puts it, *“there isn’t a day that goes by when I’m not talking about CASA, it’s my life.”*

Serving around the World

Mike Smith from the Clarksville club

Last year, one of Mike's friends suggested that he attend a Rotary meeting. Mike discovered that Rotary was not just another social club. The club had a congenial atmosphere and interesting people, but more importantly, passionate voices expressed a commitment to community service, including the need to eradicate polio in Nigeria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Mike ended up joining Rotary six months ago, and he has attended every single weekly meeting since.

Although Mike has been a Rotarian for only six months, he has been an active volunteer for decades. The project he is most proud of is a school in Haiti. For the past 15 years, Mike and St. Louis Church in Clarksville have donated money and provided other support to an elementary school for underprivileged boys and girls in Haiti. The school goes up to 6th grade which is enough for basic literacy, but does not enable graduates to find good jobs that can sustain a family later in life. For this reason, Mike is now working on providing the children with access to a trade or vocational school where they could learn specific skills.

When Mike was asked about what inspired him to serve as a volunteer, he had two answers. His first inspiration was his mother and his father, who was a Rotarian in Richmond, Indiana. They taught Mike that in order to be a good person (and a good Catholic) you must help those around you. His second inspiration was President Kennedy, who was elected when Mike was just a boy and who inspired him saying *"Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country"* and creating the Peace Corps.

Mike is not your usual corporate lawyer. Taking the path less followed, he recently spent a year serving as the General Counsel for the American University of Afghanistan in Kabul. When he meets up with his old law school friends, he is always surprised that, even though they have found great financial success in life, they look to him with a tiny bit of envy because he has been able to travel all around the world and experience different cultures, while helping people along the way. Mike realizes that those experiences as a volunteer in the community service tradition of Rotary have made his life rich in a way that cannot be measured in dollars. He is trying to add to those riches by getting actively involved in the Polio Plus project. What has he learned? Sometimes, as Mike said, just one little act of kindness can flip a person's world upside down for the better.

The Victim's Rights Foundation

Greg Wims from the Bethesda-Chevy Chase club

Some 17 years ago, Greg created VRF – the Victim's Right Foundation, after three young women were kidnapped and murdered with their bodies dropped on the side of a Maryland road. VRF is an all-volunteer non-profit foundation that helps those who have suffered from abuse and families who have lost a loved one due to violence. The first volunteers helped with the burial of these three women and held prayer vigils. Since then the foundation has grown to count over 800 volunteers.

The foundation holds prayer vigils to comfort family members of slain or injured victims following violent attacks. It raises reward funds to assist law enforcement in apprehending culprits of violent crimes. It provides comfort to families throughout drawn-out legal proceedings that often take place months or years after an alleged culprit is apprehended. And it provides burial assistance for victims and their families as well as funds for professional medical care. In 2002, when the Washington area was terrorized by two snipers, VRF raised half a million dollars for the victims.

What has kept Greg and others inspired for all those years are truly special moments, such as when *"about 100 kids from a local elementary and middle school came and prayed"* for a young boy who was recently killed. *"These kids have also been taught to report to the police if they witness any abuse or violence, even within their own family"*, Greg explains. As a result, *"the community as a whole is now focused on domestic violence and sees it as a problem, and everyone tries to see that there is no violence in their homes."*

Volunteering for the foundation is no easy task: *"The emotional toll on me and the volunteers is very challenging; we see the violence occurring in these families and have to keep our composure and stay professional to help and support the victims."*

Another challenge is when victims go back to an abusive home and the opportunities to help them are limited. *"When we do the support, in a few cases the member of the family that has been abused may not show up in court, and that is challenging because they go back to that same situation, where the violence usually continues."*

But over the last 17 years, Greg has learned that when children at risk have an opportunity to learn from his foundation and other similar groups, they are much more likely to dial 911 when in danger, and this can make all the difference in the world.

Bountiful Backpack

Cort Vitty from the South Anne Arundel County club

County statistics for South Anne Arundel suggest that more than a thousand students are homeless with 51 percent of the students being enrolled in elementary school. While many of these children receive free subsidized lunches from their school on weekdays, the children and their family are very likely to go hungry on weekends. This is why the South Anne Arundel County Rotary club created a few years ago its Bountiful Backpacks project which provides meals as well as snacks to children in need. Rotarians, friends and volunteers meet on Friday mornings at a designated school to prepare backpacks filled with food either purchased by the club or donated. The children identified as beneficiaries in their school pick up their backpack as they leave school for the weekend, and they return it on Monday morning at the school.

Cort did not found this project, but he participates fairly regularly and was immediately on board when the project was first introduced in 2005. Cort insists that this is a team effort with many Rotarians involved. Special credit is due to Susan O'Rourke, a former teacher, who alerted the club to the growing problem of homelessness in Anne Arundel County and started the project. Rick Derrick manages the scheduling of packing assignments. Becca Derrick and her son Hank volunteer their time almost every week. Rick and Kathy Sood volunteer to shop for the food and make sure club dollars go a long way toward keeping shelves filled. These people are according to Cort the unsung heroes and they volunteer countless hours to sustain the program.

When we asked Cort what he felt was most rewarding in participating in this project, he simply replied that knowing that the children would be able to eat good, healthy food and not feel hungry was enough reward. Cort's advice for Rotarians whether seasoned or new, is that no matter how you help, in big or small ways, you are still helping. Nobody should ever lose hope even if they may not be able to eradicate a problem with their project. As Cort puts it, no matter what or how hard and complex an issue may be to solve, there will always be people who will put service above self.

Soccer and HIV-AIDS in South Africa

Mary Nagle from the Carroll Creek club

"The first trip changed my life, seeing how happy these young children were despite how little they have inspired me to be more involved." Mary has gone twice to South Africa to visit and help out with the Hope in South Africa (HISA) project that her Rotary club is supporting. HISA is a community development partnership that aims to address critical needs in the Karoo region. Efforts focus on key areas such as nutrition, health, sanitation, and employment.

The hub for the program is the Richmond Community Center, which houses a soup kitchen, a children's library, recreational facilities, and health and education offices. From this hub, HISA's staffs orchestrate outreach efforts to youth in the local community and neighboring areas.

While HISA runs several programs, one of their initiatives that the Rotary club of Carroll Creek helped launch in the community is Grass Roots Soccer. This is a global program that helps in fighting HIV by using soccer as a vehicle to engage children, and at the same time teach life skills and provide education on healthy behavior. Mary's club has also supported other programs, including an initiative to deal with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, a health issue that affects 15 percent of children entering elementary school in the area and may lead to permanent brain damage. Mary's club support has been used among others to build awareness among youth about the dangers of drinking during pregnancy.

Mary focuses on fundraising, but she has also visited and volunteered with the project. She has seen HISA grow and its impact on children. She believes that *"just showing up is important, to see how we can make a difference"*, but for this it is also necessary to *"understand that Africans have their culture and that we need to respect their cultures while also providing guidance."* Her advice to fellow Rotarians interested in service work is to *"choose a certain area where they have a passion, and understand the needs of the people."*

A School for Orphans in Tanzania

Dawn Wittfelt from the Sykesville club

Dawn, the immediate past president of the Sykesville Rotary club, has been a member of her club since 2007. Recently, she has been actively involved with fellow Rotarians in supporting the Good Samaritan Orphanage in Mbeya, Tanzania. Some 200 children live in the orphanage, and many have lost their parents to AIDS. The orphanage provides the children with a home and they attend the area public school. The Sykesville club is planning to equip a new trade school at the orphanage that would provide secondary education in a trade. The club is applying for a global grant to fund the trade school, and it is running a fundraiser to supply desks and books to the public school.

In order to be able to provide financial support to the orphanage as well as other projects, the Skysville club has also partnered with three other Rotary clubs - Mount Airy, Bonds Meadow, and Westminster, to organize their annual October Fest. This year's fest just took place at the end of September and Dawn served as the event's chair. This was a fun-filled day with German foods, beers, and music. Festivities included a "Roll out the Barrel" ceremony performed by local dignitaries, a Lederhosen and Dirndl Contest, a Polka Dance contest, and a Chicken Dance Contest. Children's activities included face painting, pumpkin painting, scarecrow making, magic shows, balloon sculptors, and many games.

When visiting the Good Samaritan Orphanage, Dawn and fellow Rotarians Christine Hughes and Mark Milby interviewed several of the children. Dawn was inspired by their goals and dreams. It was like everything was possible for them, and there is always hope, even in an orphanage for children in poverty in Tanzania. Dawn believes that *"any project starts with one idea, and you are always going to find people who want to help, if you just spread the word."*

Care for Burned Children

Mark Wilson from the Washington DC club

Every year over seven million children suffer from burn injuries in South America, due in part to the widespread use of open fires for cooking. After joining Rotary in 2006, Mark joined with his wife a Rotary exchange program to Santiago, Chile. There he visited the COANIQUEM nonprofit center for burned children that was partially funded through a Rotary 3H grant. Impressed by the quality of their work, he became an active supporter, ultimately joining the center's Board of Directors a few years ago.

COANIQUEM treats burned children for free. Treatment proceeds in four steps. The first part of the treatment focuses on the physical aspect of healing which includes plastic surgery, scar compression, and rehabilitation. The second part focuses on psychological damage, with psychologists and occupational therapists helping the child as well as their family. The third part is dedicated to education during the period when the child is receiving treatment, so that when they reenter school, they do not fall behind. The last part of the four step treatment plan is the provision of spiritual support to the child so that she/he can overcome all her scars, whether internal or external, and as a result become a stronger person. This is also important for parents who feel a great sense of guilt over these accidents. The average age of the children when they first come into the hospital is six, which means that the serious cases will need regular care for another ten to twelve years until they stop growing.

COANIQUEM has three facilities to treat burned children mainly from Chile, but also from around Latin America. The Center also trains medical professionals on burn prevention and provides training literature. The cost of treatment per child with serious burns is typically around \$1000 per year, of which \$700 is for medical treatment and \$300 for therapeutic treatment. Over the years Mark and the Washington DC Rotary club have helped secure \$340,000 in funding for COANIQUEM's activities.

When asked about the rewards of working on this project, Mark explained that *"the children themselves are amazingly resilient and it makes you feel humbled when you are in the presence of kids who have been disfigured, and yet are cheery and happy around their doctors... It makes you appreciate what you have in your own life and it's about time we all start to give something back."*

When asked about the obstacles he has faced, his demeanor changed as he shared that *"fundamentally it's the frustration of not being able to do as much as you would like...the frustration is of wanting to do much more, to be able to generate the resources and the money to help COANIQUEM treat more kids."* Mark's advice to Rotarians is that there are many forms of service. Just find one area that you are passionate about, and then you can step by step start to change the world.

Street Law

Ed O'Brien from the Washington DC club

"Why do you teach the children to jump up at our throat?" This question was once asked by an unhappy South African High School principal to Ed O'Brien, a long-time Rotarian and the founder of Street Law, a nonprofit that strives to teach individuals and communities, especially in underserved areas, about the law. In forty years, Street Law has grown from a pilot program to a recognized institution active throughout the US and in 40 other countries. As the South Africa quote illustrates, the road has not always been easy, but it has been successful and rewarding.

Ed founded Street Law in 1972 when he was awarded a Robert F. Kennedy fellowship which helped him launch the organization. Together with other Georgetown University Law students, he developed an experimental curriculum to teach high school students in the District of Columbia about the law. Having been a law student and a high school teacher, Ed knew that while young people needed to know about the law, they did not. Because the curriculum Ed and his friends developed was very practical, it was called "Street Law."

Over the years, materials were developed, including on crime prevention, conflict resolution, youth advocacy, and democracy. Today the program focuses on training others to become effective "Street Law" educators. The organization's flagship textbook, *Street Law: A Course in Practical Law*, is in its eighth edition, and hundreds of "lessons" have been developed which can be used by teachers, principals, and school administrators, as well as lawyers, law students, and the legal community. Street Law also works with NGOs to reach and educate underserved populations, such as pregnant and parenting teens, youth emerging from foster care, and those in the juvenile justice system. Law enforcement officers are also a key partner.

Ed retired as executive director of Street Law, Inc. in November 2008, but he still serves today as honorary member of the board of directors and executive director emeritus [Ed sadly passed away after two years after this story was published]. When asked what was most rewarding about his experience, he responded that it was *"the satisfaction that something that you have started was liked and used by people all over the world."* As Ed put it, *"the law should belong to the people, not the lawyers."*

World Citizen

France Pruitt from the Bethesda-Chevy Chase club

France has been an active member of Rotary for many years. She joined Rotary in 1989 in Bethesda— one of the first women to do so, and is as past President of her club. Every year, she contributes hundreds of hours to various service activities, including her club's fundraisers – the annual Turkey Chase on Thanksgiving morning (a 10K race) and Strut Your Mutt in the spring. For the past 25 years, she has been involved with her club's Children's Shopping Spree that provides warm clothes, shoes and other essentials for impoverished children in the Bethesda area, a co-sponsored event with Sears.

France is a true world citizen. Born in Belgium, she spent several years of her childhood in the south of France with her family hiding from the Germans during the Second World War. She wrote a book on her experiences entitled Faith and Courage in a Time of Trouble, where she explains how French families in remote areas of the mountains called Cévennes risked their lives to provide shelter to her family. She later came to the United States, but she returned to France as an adult to complete a Ph.D. at the Sorbonne in Paris on the adaptation of African Students studying in the US.

International education has been her passion, and this is what she talked to us about when we asked her about her service work. As President of International Education Associates, a consulting firm placing international students in US universities, and US students abroad, she has helped many youths find their ways in the developing world. She has also recruited US faculty members for overseas institutions.

She told us that she sees her role as that of interviewing, training, and sending idealists around the world for them to change it. She has spent time with young college graduates to prepare them on how to immerse themselves in a new culture, how to respect its longstanding traditions, how not to feel homesick, and perhaps most importantly, how to make a difference for others. She has interviewed hundreds of students applying for scholarships or jobs and for going to studying overseas. In 2011, her tireless efforts on behalf of so many students and faculty members over a period of over 50 years were recognized through an award from NAFSA (the Association for International Educators) for her professional organization and her outstanding contributions to international education.

Her advice to Rotarians is to *“find your place in Rotary whether backstage or front and center, and use your specific skills set.”* This is advice she certainly has practiced herself.

Scholarships for the Hearing Impaired Pat Kasuda from the Catonsville club

Being deaf affects one's opportunities and one's ability to live and function in society. One of the most unique institutions in the United States serving the hearing impaired is Gallaudet University, an undergraduate and graduate school located in Washington, DC, that only accepts deaf students and whose staffs and teachers are also deaf.

Our Rotary district has been giving scholarships to students in need to facilitate their attendance at the university. Pat, a past District Governor from the Catonsville Club and a recipient of the Service above Self Award from Rotary International, has served on the Gallaudet University board for the last 15 years.

Together with other Rotarians, she has helped raise funds for the Rotary-Gallaudet scholarship fund. The aim has been to collect \$500,000 for scholarships, an objective that is close to being met. The first scholarship was presented in 1976 to Vera Confectiones from India, who is now a software designer and developer at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory operated by the University of California and the U.S. Department of Energy. Since then 147 more students have benefitted from the fund.

This year, on March 12, 2013 during the annual Rotary Day at Gallaudet, eight more scholarships were given to four American and four international students. Over 60 Rotarians attended and toured Gallaudet's Student Academic Center, including the Student Tutorial Center, to which the Rotary contributed over \$65,000, and saw an ASL (American Sign Language) and deaf culture presentation by Department of ASL and Deaf Studies Professor Benjamin Bahan.

Pat's commitment to the project is unwavering but when she first heard about the idea she thought that this might not be a good fit for her. When asked how she got involved, she laughed and explained that a Rotarian friend had recommended her to join the board and she got hooked. As she puts it, *"all cultures should be shared and heard and the deaf culture is no different."* Her advice to Rotarians is to serve but also to take risks and try out new avenues of service. Even though Pat wasn't sure that becoming a board member was right for her, she tried it and now she can't imagine a world without helping students experience the deaf culture.

Helping Orphans in Zambia

Mark Fuerst from the Greenbelt club

In Zambia, in large part because of the AIDS pandemic, one million out of the 12 million children in the country are orphans. A few years ago Mark's daughter decided to go to Zambia as a volunteer with a ministry to help orphans.

At the time Mark asked "*Where is Zambia?*" and "*Isn't it very hot there?*" When Mark's daughter returned she told him that Zambia was where she belonged. Eventually Mark attended a fund raiser in Dallas and realized that he had to go too. So together with his wife he trained at the gym so that they could keep up with the orphans and after a few weeks they took off. Mark arrived in Lusaka in June 2011 and bonded with the children, some of whom called him Uncle Mark!

Upon returning to the US, Mark raised \$80,000 with the help of his and other Rotary clubs to build an orphan home and he has since returned to Zambia every year to work with the children. The project has sent over 600 Americans to spend one week with the orphanage working and playing with the children. Mark is also lining up sponsors to enable the children to go to for \$40/month to a good private school where the children are well treated and protected from abuse.

At the school the children get books and uniforms, a meal every day, and medical attention if needed. Mark's advice to other Rotarians is that with commitment there is no telling what a tremendous difference one can make because "*One person is the start of a thousand.*"

Clean Water in India

Paul Mahata from the Mount Airy club

"I was moved when I saw the first two or three people carry the water units on the back of their bikes to the rest of their families and installing them, they were all very happy." Water-borne diseases, such as Cholera and Typhoid, kill hundreds of villagers every year in the area of West Bengal, India, where Paul started to work on an international Rotary project three years ago. The goal of this small project was to provide through water purifiers a source of clean drinking water to a village of 170 families who never had before a source of clean of water unless they went and purchased a bottle of water from a vendor, which was very expensive for them.

Paul was both the initiator and the director of the project, making sure that it was implemented well and achieved its goals. Paul actually grew up in the village, and when between the ages of eleven and thirteen he got typhoid twice and was very lucky to have survived. *"I decided that because I grew up in this village, I wanted to make sure that every person there would get access to clean drinking water."*

Throughout the implementation of the project Paul learned that beyond the initial idea, there needs to be a lot of effort put in to actually make sure that the project succeeds. As he convincingly puts it, *"if you do something, you need to make sure that it is sustainable at least for a few years."* For example the villagers need to independently be able to maintain the cleanliness of the water purifiers so that they last longer. To ensure sustainability he engaged the local Rotary Club of Purulia and a local non-profit Trust to act as partners on this project. Although the project was very gratifying, there were challenges.

The initial idea for the project was much bigger, but due to higher costs than anticipated, the project had to be narrowed down. But as Paul said, you simply need to *"keep pushing for a better idea; even if my first idea was a little different, I liked the fact that the second idea actually became reality."*

Friendship in Cyprus

Thomas McCarthy from the Olney club

"What was inspiring was that one year the teens went back to Cyprus and decided that they were going to conduct a joint memorial service for everybody that died in the war, which was the first time it was done on the island."

The Cyprus Friendship Program is a peace building initiative whereby volunteers bring together teenagers from the north of Cyprus, which is Turkish speaking and Muslim, and the south, which is Greek speaking and Christian. Cyprus has been divided since the war of 1974, and teenagers from both sides hardly ever meet. Through the program teenagers come to a host family in the United States for a month in July and get to know each other and have a chance of becoming friends. The teenagers learn that the hatred and animosity that they grew up with towards the other side is unfounded, and the program encourages them to influence their peers once back in Cyprus to join in peace building activities.

Thomas is on the steering committee of the program and its coordinator for Maryland and the District of Columbia. He recruits host families and provides help with programming contents on leadership, conflict resolution, and peace building for the teens who come. There have been great successes. *"One of the teens was quoted as saying that she grew up mourning the loss of her grandfather and great uncle and all those who died on her side in the war, but as the result of getting to know the teenagers of the other side, now she mourns the loss of everyone who died in the war."*

Thomas firmly believes and has learnt through the program, that *"the best way to build peace in an area of long standing conflict is to get the teenagers on each side of that conflict to get to know each other, and then they start to question the way it's been, and they realize it doesn't have to be that way in the future. That is a very powerful realization."*

Training for People with Disabilities through Horticulture Earl Copus from the Upper Marlboro club

In 1963-65 Earl served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Brazil. He has not forgotten this experience! Today, he co-leads Working with Green, a Rotary global grant and multi-tiered program similar to the Melwood model which through horticulture provides training for people with disabilities in Goiania, Brazil.

The project is located in a 10-acre nursery facility and the funding provides therapy for those with the most severe disabilities, skills training for those with milder disabilities, and vocational instruction for those with employment prospects. The project's partners include Rotary clubs in Brazil, Japan, and the US, as well as the State of Goiania Agricultural Department and other agencies.

Apart from helping its direct beneficiaries, the project also helps the environment by saving Brazilian endangered trees and it contributes to improving the health of families through better diets and the availability of medicinal plants while advising residents on their proper use. Brazilian project members recently visited Japan to study their rehabilitation programs, and a team of Japanese rehabilitation professionals is scheduled to visit the Brazilian project site. The construction of a work pavilion with accessible restroom accommodations is also under way.

Working with Green has been a successful project, but this required planning. According to Earl *"the project's greatest strength relates to having committed partners. I would encourage other Rotarians having, or considering having, international projects to build project partnerships consisting of local, national and international supports."*

Throughout the preparation of the grant, there have been challenges. One of the biggest was to understand and appreciate a different culture. As Earl puts it – and this is his advice for fellow Rotarians: *"This brings into focus the challenge of capacity building for the project's staff and the need to be able financially to employ a capable social/business person as the project's full time director. This is especially important for a project that is combining a social mission (helping those in need) within an entrepreneurial framework (creating project income and jobs) as our project does."*

Rebuilding Together Sue Weber from the Annapolis club

"The families are thrilled with what we do, we walk away feeling so much gratification knowing that we have just turned this person's life around by helping them keep their independence and improved their lifestyle which they'll never forget, and that's what Rotary is all about."

As liaison between her club and Rebuilding Together Sue puts together once a year a team of volunteers to help renovate the home of a low income local family or individual in need. Whatever needs repairs is done, whether it is about fixing the plumbing, painting the walls, or replacing windows. Once *"a veteran was disabled and we needed to build a ramp so he could get out of his house."* Sue explains that *"all materials are donated by local stores or sponsors, and it's a wonderful project to be a part of because the whole community comes together to revitalize neighborhoods."*

Sue started to be involved in this project for a few reasons. *"You feel good before, during and after you meet and help the family in need. In one day, you give some sweat and tears all for a good cause and you see the immediate results and impact before you go home."* Although the project helps the families and the volunteers are great, there are challenges: *"Finding the qualified people who have the skills mastered can be difficult. For example if there is a problem with plumbing, we need to find a volunteer who is a master plumber, although they do get many helpful hands."*

Oftentimes challenges arise on the rebuilding day itself: *"Usually it happens that you pull something a part, and then you see that it's ten times worse than what you were originally anticipating."* But although there are challenges, there are great rewards as well: *"The Rotary has touched the lives of a local family by stabilizing their home and positively impacting the local community permanently."*

Prosthetics for Amputees in Iraq

Linda Smythe from the Montgomery Village club

Linda joined Rotary in 1996 in Bahrain to have the opportunity to volunteer in that part of the world. She has! A few years ago she created the Basra Project, a nonprofit organization that helps amputees by training doctors and purchasing equipment so that local medical personnel can provide free or very low cost treatment and prosthetics to the amputees.

The project started just after 911. She started thinking about projects because *“there seemed to be some misconception about the Arab people and how they were different, while they were just like everybody else.”* After the Iraqi ambassador set up an embassy in the U.S. she asked to friends what the needs were in Iraq. She discovered that many amputees had lost limbs to land mines. Many were not properly cared for and as a result were wheel-chair bound. But Iraq is not a particularly wheelchair friendly environment. With an initial grant and in kind donations, she launched the project. On the support from Rotary, she explained that *“It wasn’t just cash and it wasn’t just a check; instead the Rotarians were like, let’s do this!”*

The project is now a success, but problems had to be overcome. The Iraq war was ongoing and this created chaos. Some of the medical professionals received death threats. One of the project directors had to flee the country and work in a Syrian refugee camp for about a year to escape threats. For safety doctors had to be trained in Jordan and in Florida. The violence even forced the project to pause until the country became stable enough to restart.

But eventually things worked out. The project succeeded in part because instead of trying to build a prosthetics center independently, the team worked with the government: *“working with the Ministry made the program stronger and better which was key.”* Linda’s advice to Rotarians is to *“roll up your sleeves a little more and get involved... While there are many check writers, which is wonderful, it is also important to be hands on in a project that you care about.”*

Experiencing the Wilderness

Peter Kyle from the Capitol Hill club

Peter has been a Rotarian for almost 40 years and a member of clubs in the Philippines, New Zealand, and the US. As District Governor (DG), he spends most of his time running the District and supporting clubs. But as his DG bio suggests, his third love (after Margaret and Rotary) has been Outward Bound, a nonprofit founded in 1941 that serves 70,000 students and teachers annually.

The organization sends students on tough expeditions into the wilderness, immersing them in unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable situations so that they can push their own limits. Students form teams and learn about individuality, strength, and character. They also learn about how to use these traits to make a difference and serve their community as well as the larger world. Apart from its expeditions, Outward Bound also offers courses for teenagers and other groups who have health complications or social, financial or other specific educational needs.

Peter first became involved with Outward Bound in New Zealand in 1967 when he participated on one of its programs. He subsequently became very involved on the administrative side rising to the position of Senior Vice President. Following his move to the US in 1992 he helped found Outward Bound International and still serves as its Chairman Emeritus.

As Peter put it *“Outward Bound is a cross between Boy Scouts and boot camp.”* He described its mission as *“to expose young people to a variety of physical and mental challenges to prove to them that if they try a little harder, then they can do a lot better—they can run faster, swim for longer and climb higher thereby proving that there is more in you than you think.”*

Peter would love for Rotarians, Rotaractors and Interactors to experience Outward Bound by participating on one of its expeditions. And if Rotarians are lost in the wilderness of the implementation of service projects, his advice, in typical Outward Bound fashion, is simply *“to commit and do what you can (however hard it may be) to help alleviate poverty and promote peace, international understanding and goodwill.”*

Literacy in Ecuador
Rachael Blair, Rotarian from the Annapolis club

"When you work on a future vision grant, you confront the issues faced by fellow Rotarians overseas. You form a bond. You learn what matters in life and the balanced approach needed to have an impact. You learn to appreciate the beautiful work that comes to fruition when everyone is working together with respect and trust." Rachael knows what she is talking about. She has led several international projects, including a recent Ecuador literacy project that produced a book of stories from its beneficiaries.

This was Rotary's first collaboration with the Organization of American States. The OAS requested a project for early grade reading. With the help of a former Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar, Amber Gove, the team found a willing partner in the University of Andina Simon Bolivar. The Rotary Club of Quito Occidente was also an ideal partner since a previous project – a water grant for three schools - had worked very well.

Rachael visited the literacy project sites three times: *"I was very moved by the response of the teachers. They could not believe that Rotary clubs would take such an interest in their professional development, especially clubs from overseas. I was humbled by their discipline and motivation. They reminded me that when you nurture and support others, they shine and bring their very best skills and talents to the table. They do this because of their support network. That's what Rotary is, a support network of like-minded people who want to have a positive impact based on mutual and creative collaboration."*

What is Rachael's advice to Rotarians? *"You need to understand the project scope and Rotary rules and regulations. You need to be patient. You need to persevere. You need to be culturally sensitive. You need to accept the fact that one person will have to move things along with diplomacy and understanding."* As to her advice to the Rotary Foundation: *"These projects require many people in the Rotary hierarchy to be on board for their approval. I spent a lot of time getting people on board for signatures. Raising funds was a big issue and very time consuming. I would want to see Rotary restructure the funding aspect of global grants."*

Peace in Uganda

Phil Reynolds from the Annapolis club

"I have been a mediator for the past 15 years so the concept of reducing conflict through mediation appealed to me." Phil took over from a fellow Rotarian as lead international club contact for the Uganda peace project about six months before it started. When he heard about the project and that someone new was needed, he volunteered right away: *"The project was natural for me (...) I helped the United Nations Development Program set up an electoral assistance program, so the Uganda project, which focused on electoral hot spots, drew my attention."* With his years of experience in UN projects, Phil was able to refine the grant application and the activity plan.

The goals of the project are to create an early conflict warning system and mediation tools that can be used by local communities to facilitate conversations within youth groups and bring children from different tribal backgrounds together. The project will also help create a truth and reconciliation program initially in four of districts, with the possibility of an expansion later.

The project has had many successes thanks in part to the efforts of the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) in executing it. Phil was inspired by *"the courageous and effective evaluation carried out by the UJCC on its own nine months into the project."* He was excited when results of the projects came back and there were encouraging examples of conflicts in the four pilot districts that had been resolved by the local project personnel. Phil hopes that in the future the peace project will be able to expand to other districts in Uganda.

There were of course challenges. For example the communication was not always as reliable as it should have been between the US and Uganda teams. Phil is convinced that *"project plans must be specific and time-bound,"* but he quickly adds *"with a human face."* And *"as a French colleague once said, you must leave room for some unanticipated successes."*

Water Conservation in two Indian Villages Chenguttai Dheenan ("CK") from the Rockville club

"How can the water be conserved sustainably and in the long term?"

Every year the summer monsoons in India bring much needed rain to inundate rice fields so that rice can be planted. As the river fills, water reaches into particularly arid parts of India. In Maharashtra the Monsoon season starts in June and tapers off in September, but it is often followed by droughts and much of the water from the monsoon flows into the Arabian Sea leaving the farmers with virtually no water (the water left is stored in wells but even those dry up rather quickly). The farmers then not only lack water to cultivate their fields, but they also lack drinking water especially in remote villages.

The Rotary club of Mumbai Cuff Parade realized the severity of the situation and partnered with the Rotary club of Rockville to help alleviate water scarcity in the villages of Shilonda and Naroli. CK had visited Maharashtra and knew about the monsoon and subsequent droughts. He was the ideal person to help launch a much needed water conservation project.

Two small dams were built so that the villages would have access to water through most of the year. The dams were made of a concrete wall stretching across the stream to create a small reservoir connected to wells. The reservoir can hold up to 15,000 cubic meters of water. As CK explained *"Thanks to a pump and conduits the water reaches the villages directly; that way the girls from the village don't have to spend time fetching the water and they are able to go to school and concentrate on studies."* Another added benefit of the reservoir is that the farmers can now grow two crops instead of one.

Implementing international projects takes time and effort, but the rewards are great and the projects truly make a difference. So *"to the Rotarians who are shying away from international projects because they are not able to connect with other clubs in the world,"* CK's advice is simply to *"connect with other clubs so that international projects can be achieved and the money from the Rotary Foundation can be used well. DO more international projects!"*

An Ambulance for a Nepalese Community

Neil Young from the Towsontowne club

In 2009, after several years of efforts, Neil and other Rotarians traveled to Nepal on the occasion of the donation of an ambulance to the Setiganga Community Hospital which serves over 100,000 people in the foothills of the Annapurna Range. The donation was made feasible through fundraising by several clubs (Towsontowne, Hunt Valley, Downtown Towson, and Damauli in Nepal) as well as matching funds from the district and the Rotary Foundation.

The project started when Prem Mahat, also a Rotarian from the Towsontowne club who had grown up in the Setiganga Community, suggested to build a bridge for the community. Although the Rotarian team was initially going to help build this bridge, they realized when doing more research that the Setiganga Community really needed an ambulance first.

The ambulance has done a lot of good for the community. But as Neil told the story, it also led to something none of the members of the team could have anticipated. One of the Rotarians who traveled to Nepal was Lauren, a doctor who had come to work with two other pediatric surgeons to help provide care to children in the community. She had arrived a few weeks earlier in order to take the opportunity to hike the beautiful Annapurna Range.

Towards the end of her hike, Lauren saw a little girl sleeping on rags in a rundown hostel. Lauren approached the owner of the hostel and asked him about the girl. The owner told her that the girl's mother had not been able to afford to keep her and hence had sold her to him to serve as a kitchen aid. But as the girl was not of much use, the owner intended to get rid of her. Lauren immediately offered some money to take the girl with her. She brought her down to Kathmandu where she found a boarding school that accepted the girl.

The message of this last story in this series of stories about district Rotarians engaged in service work is that you never really know what a service project can lead to. Prem's initial idea of a bridge led to the donation of an ambulance under Neil's leadership, but it also led to this girl being saved by Lauren from a life of hardship. The ambulance project probably saved many lives, but it also transformed the life of that girl. As to Neil's advice to Rotarians, it is to *"learn how to work as a team in Rotary because together you can make a much larger difference together."*

CONCLUSION

Hopefully, through simple stories of Rotarians at work, this short book has been helpful for you as a reader to better understand what service in Rotary is all about. Some stories may have inspired you for your own volunteer work.

If you are not part of the Rotary family, the stories may have encouraged you to become a Rotarian – or maybe an Interactor or a Rotaractor. But if for any reason you decide to join another service club organization, that's great as well.

There are of course multiple ways to volunteer and be engaged in local and international service work without joining a service club. But one of the benefits – and indeed according to membership surveys the main benefit of joining a service club, is the opportunity to engage in service work together with other members and friends who are similarly inclined and share the same values.

If you are already a Rotarian, or a member of Lions, Kiwanis, or another service organization, the hope is again that this book will have provided you with additional inspiration in your service work or that of your club. Perhaps your club may also find the book to be a useful resource to share with potential new members, or with new members at information sessions and training events.

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