

his pocket, it was rock hard. "I thought, this is really different," he recalls. "I said, OK, I can make stone out of this. I was just a curious kid trying to figure out, why did this happen?"

At this same time, in school, Binish was learning about how huge numbers of people were living in crowded and unhealthy slums. He formed a new ambition: One day he would build the world's least expensive house for those people — and he would build it with bricks made of chewing gum and waste paper.

Over the days and weeks and years that followed, Desai experimented with different ingredients and proportions, always trying to build a better brick. With each iteration he sought to understand what was lacking and what could be improved. He made small molds out of cardboard and began designing and processing small, durable bricks, with plans to build a dollhouse. "I had no idea how," he says. "I went to cybercafés and looked up stuff on the internet. That's how I learned the basics about how to construct a house."

When he was 15, Desai completed the dollhouse using his bricks. He had demonstrated to his own satisfaction that his plan to build the world's least expensive house was sound. "I started talking about my plan to my family and my friends," he recalls. "People started laughing about it. 'You have gone crazy. How can you make something out of paper and chewing gum? It's not going to work.'"

Finding confidence in Rotary Youth Exchange

At 15, Desai was a self-described introvert, and his self-esteem was low. With people laughing at his ideas, he had begun to doubt himself. But fate had another twist in store for the young inventor.

"In 2009 I got selected as a Rotary Youth Exchange student," he says. "That's why I owe a lot of who I am today to Rotary."

Desai had applied for a short-term exchange, but things headed in a different direction when he went in for his interview. He told the Rotarians about his plans to build the world's least expensive house, and he finally found the receptive audience he had been seeking. The Rotarians encouraged him to apply for a longer exchange, and he spent his junior year at Waukegan High School in Illinois, about 40 miles north of downtown Chicago.

One night, over a dinner of fried chicken, the floodgates opened. In an instant, the introvert had vanished, and he began telling his host parents, Patrick Jimerson and Theodora "Teddy" Anderson, about his bricks and his plans for the world's least expensive house. After listening attentively, Jimerson asked if Desai had a patent for his bricks. (He did not.) He also suggested that Desai might want to pursue this as a career.

By the end of his exchange year, Desai says, he had transformed into a different person. "I was friends with everyone, and everywhere I went, I would talk to people. I made new friends because I started sharing my inner thoughts about how I viewed the world." With Jimerson's help, Desai secured a patent for the formula behind his bricks. And when he returned home to India, he knew the exact direction he wanted his life to take.

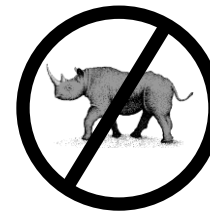
Jimerson died in 2016, but Desai returns to Waukegan each December to visit with Anderson, just as he promised Jimerson he would. "Rotary Youth Exchange changes you forever," he says. "Once an exchange student, always an exchange student. Now I have a family all around the world."

THE EARLY RISER

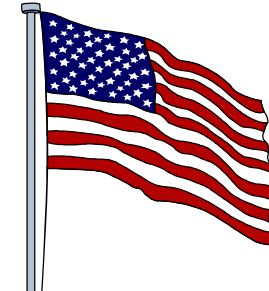
EVERY ROTARIAN
US \$100
EVERY YEAR



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DON'T BE A R.I.N.O.
(Rotarian In Name Only!)



ROTARY PRAYER

Oh Lord, and giver of all good, we
thank Thee for our daily food.

May Rotary friends and Rotary
ways, help to serve Thee all of our
days.

THE ROTARY CLUB OF WICHITA FALLS NORTH



2020-21 R.I. Officers - D5790

President of Rotary International: Holger Knaack

District Governor: Roger Paschal

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Tom Cale ~ Tom Sheriff & Troy Secord (PDG Ex-Officios)

Website: www.wichitafallsnorthrotaryclub.org

FUTURE PROGRAM ASSIGNMENTS

August 28 ----- Fellowship in Rotary
September 4----- Dwayne Lee – Visiting the D-Day Beaches
September 7----- Rotary Flag Display date
September 11 ----- Howard Berg ~ “The World’s Fastest Reader”
September 18 ----- Phil Waggoner
September 25 ----- Tom Cale
October 2-----David Collins
October 9-----Mike Crocker
October 16 ----- Larry Gunnell
October 23 ----- Ajay Kumar
October 30 ----- Ann Lucas
November 6----- Bill Neale
November 13 ----- Rob Noble
November 20 ----- Jeani Secord
November 27 ----- No Meeting (Thanksgiving)
December 4 ----- Troy Secord
December 11 -----Tom Sheriff

NEWS FROM OUR LAST VIRTUAL E-MEETING:

Thanks to President Clint, the meeting was held live and in living color at the Vantage Point Condomenia.

President Clint led us in the Rotary Prayer and our Pledges..

The brag bucket was fed by Troy (2) and Ann.

Troy reported that Jeani is doing well after her recent knee replacement.

A club anniversary was reported for Ann and a birthday was announced for Jeani. Congratulations to both!

Don’t forget that September 7th is Labor Day which is a flag display date!

A wedding anniversary was announced for Gary and Phil. Not to each other, but to their respective brides!

Troy introduced David Leezer, the V.P. of Business attraction for the W.F. Chamber of Commerce. **David was our first live program since March.**

He presented a very interesting program about what the C of C is doing for Wichita Falls.

There was no raffle, so it is still carrying over at \$91.00.

NEWS FROM ROTARY INTERNATIONAL:

BINISH DESAI BEGAN WORKING ON AN ECO-FRIENDLY BRICK MADE OUT OF RECYCLING AND WASTE, WHEN HE WAS 11. THE FORMER ROTARY YOUTH EXCHANGE STUDENT, INVENTOR, AND ENTREPRENEUR CREDITS ROTARY WITH GIVING HIM THE SUPPORT TO PURSUE HIS DREAMS. NOW HE’S GIVING BACK THROUGH A NEW ROTARY CLUB.

Every hero has an origin story. “I was 10 years old when the entire journey started,” explains Binish Desai. It began with a cartoon called *Captain Planet*, an animated TV series from the 1990s about an environmentalist with superpowers. Desai can still recite the show’s refrain: *Captain Planet, he’s our hero / Gonna take pollution down to zero!* “That tagline stuck in my mind,” he says. “I wanted to do something to help Captain Planet.”

Growing up in Valsad, a city on the Arabian Sea in west-central India, Desai was also a fan of *Dexter’s Laboratory*, another animated TV show, this one about a boy scientist. “So I created my own lab in the corner of our living room in a TV cabinet. And I would always carry something called a ‘bag of ideas,’ where I would jot down different innovations of mine.”

For instance, having learned about evaporation and condensation in school, he noticed the steam that escaped from the pressure cooker when his mother prepared dinner. He created a device to capture that steam, which would then return to its liquid state — water that could be used for gardening. “That was my first invention ever,” he says.

“There is nothing that is useless in this world,” Desai insists. “The concept of waste does not exist in nature. It’s human consumption that creates it, so it’s our responsibility to get rid of it. And in the process of converting trash into treasure, we can also generate a lot of employment.”

In the nearly two decades since his Captain Planet days — Desai turns 27 this month — he has come up with more inventions; built and lost a company; founded, with his wife, several women’s empowerment centers; and generally concocted ways to improve the lives of everyone in his very broadly defined community. Central to his success has been his involvement with Rotary, a relationship that was sparked by a family connection and nurtured by a year in the United States as a Rotary Youth Exchange student. Now, as a charter member of the Rotary Club of Vibrant Valsad, his life in Rotary has taken flight.

Somebody hand that young man a cape.

A lifetime of inventing

As Binish continued his scientific explorations, he kept inventing. “The one that led me to the person that I am today,” he says, “was the brick. That happened when I was 11 years old.”

One day in school, his best friend stuck a wad of chewed gum beneath a desk — and as fate would have it, the gum ended up getting stuck to Binish’s pants. He peeled it off as best he could and wrapped it in a piece of paper, intending to throw it away when class was over. Then he forgot about it. At the end of the day, when he finally retrieved it from