Hi Everyone –

I’m so excited to be a member of the Rotary Passport Club and to have taken on the role of Foundation Director. As I’ve learned so far, there is a lot to learn. My job is to impart to you what the Rotary Foundation does and why it’s beneficial to contribute.

Each month I will try to highlight one of the many ways you as Rotarians can contribute to the Foundation. For those of you who are seasoned Rotarians, you probably know all this already, but it’s a good refresher. For all of us newbies, here’s a short lesson explaining the answer to the question, what is the Rotary Foundation?

**The Rotary Foundation**

In short, The Rotary Foundation is a not-for-profit corporation that supports the efforts of Rotary International to achieve world understanding and peace through international humanitarian, educational, and cultural exchange programs.

**Origin of The Rotary Foundation**

At the 1917 Rotary international convention, outgoing Rotary International President Arch C. Klumph proposed the creation of an endowment “for the purpose of doing good in the world.” In 1928, it was renamed The Rotary Foundation, and it became a distinct entity within Rotary International.

In 1929, the Foundation made its first gift of $500 to the International Society for Crippled Children. The organization, created by Rotarian Edgar F. “Daddy” Allen, later grew into Easter Seals.

**Paul Harris and the First Rotary Foundation Programs**

When Rotary founder Paul Harris died in 1947, contributions began pouring in to Rotary International, and the Paul Harris Memorial Fund was created to build the Foundation.

Also in1947, the Foundation established its first program, Fellowships for Advance Study, later known as Ambassadorial Scholarships.

During the years 1965 and 1966, three new programs were launched: Group Study Exchange, Awards for Technical Training, and Grants for Activities in Keeping with the Objective of The Rotary Foundation, which was later called Matching Grants.

Then in 1978 Rotary introduced the Health, Hunger and Humanity (3-H) Grants. The first 3-H Grant funded a project to immunize 6 million Philippine children against polio.

**Declaring War on Polio**

By 1985, the Polio Plus program was launched to eradicate polio worldwide. This program has become so successful that since 1988 polio cases have decreased by over 99%. Polio has nearly been eradicated from the entire world with the sole exceptions of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Rotary is continuing to work hard for the citizens of these countries to receive the polio vaccine and won’t stop until Polio has been eradicated from the entire world.

**World Peace and the Rotary Foundation**

Between the years 1987 and 1988, the first peace forums were held, leading to the establishment of the Rotary Peace Fellowships. This program provides an opportunity for bright and dedicated professionals to receive fully funded fellowships to study at our Rotary Peace Centers. In just over a decade, the Rotary Peace Centers have trained more than 900 fellows for careers in peace building. Many of them go on to serve as leaders in national governments, NGOs, the military, law enforcement, and international organizations like the United Nations and World Bank.

**The Future of The Rotary Foundation**

Lastly, in 2013 new district, global and grant packages were established and now Rotarians around the world have a greater opportunity to respond to the world’s most growing needs. Rotary is focusing its efforts in six areas, which reflect some of the most critical and widespread humanitarian needs:

* Peace and conflict prevention/resolution
* Disease prevention and treatment
* Water and sanitation
* Maternal and child health
* Basic education and literacy
* Economic and community Development

Since the first donation of $26.50 in 1917, the Foundation has received contributions totaling more than $1 billion.