

ROTARY CROSSROADS

16 Sep | Volume 63 Issue 12

HM Joseph Chia
**CHAMPIONING CULTURE,
IMPACTING COMMUNITIES**



Founded on 6 June 1930 Proud of our Heritage, Committed to our Future
Lifetime Achievement Award Winner for 'Best Bulletin In District 3310'

ROTARY CROSSROADS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Insight: Upclose & Personal

38 Years of Rotary--Championing Culture, and Impacting Communities. A Conversation with Honorary Member Joseph Chia	03
---	----

12th Weekly Meeting 16 September:

Building Inclusive Digital Economies in Southeast Asia by Lim May-Ann	07
---	----

People of Action: Last Week's Highlights:

VSC Third Meeting: VSC Shifts Up a Gear at Ferrari, 10 September	11
--	----

RCS Bowl & Bond: A Fun-Filled Day with Runninghour, 12 September	13
--	----

Cheng Hong Welfare Service Society Charity Gala Dinner, 12 September	15
--	----

A Meaningful Start to our "English for Everyone Journey", 13 September	16
--	----

TalentTrust Mentorship Program in Motion: Rotary Club of Singapore Pave a Stronger Future for Total Well-Being SG (TWBSG) Pte Ltd., 15 September	18
--	----

FACES of Rotary Club of Singapore:

Rtn Dr Hoh Sek Tien	20
---------------------	----

Rtn Filip Ivkovich	22
--------------------	----

INSIGHT: UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

38 Years of Rotary: Championing Culture and Impacting Communities. A Conversation with Honorary Member Joseph Chia

By Rtn Anson Dichaves



At 80, this veteran Rotarian reflects on nearly four decades of service that began in November 1987 and culminated in Honorary Membership, conferred in June 2022. He chaired the club's Speaker Programme for 15 years, and his landmark 1994 skills-training project in Vietnam earned him the Rotarian of the Year award. Beyond that milestone project, his story is one of quiet persistence and deep community commitment — from reconnecting a Singapore family with relatives lost to history for over a century, to his work in his clan association and the arts. In this candid conversation, he reflects on the milestones, the people, and the philosophy that have shaped a life devoted to "Doing Good."

How long have you been with Rotary?

I joined Rotary in November 1987. PP Stan and I were in the same electrical power industry, and he invited me to join. Just before that, I had seen an advertisement on the back of a bus about Rotary's "Four Way Test," and I was deeply impressed. That was what drew me in and I have had no regrets since.

Why did you join RCS?

Joining Rotary opened up a whole new world for me. I met professionals from every kind of industry, all united by a common goal: to make the world a better place.

I joined the Vocational Service Committee (VSC) mainly, as I felt that was where I could contribute most. I also joined the International Service Committee (ISC) to build friendships and gain a deeper understanding of people and circumstances beyond Singapore. I supported the Community Service Committee (CSC) as well, and was a regular volunteer on several of its projects.

What are some of your reflections on celebrating your 80th birthday with us at the meeting?

I was overwhelmed and a little embarrassed by the birthday celebration President Rajkumar organised for me at the club. I never expected it. President Raj is a truly caring leader, and I want to thank every member who celebrated with me and made that day so special.

What are some of the projects you are most proud of at Rotary?

I led a major project in 1994, during PP Dr. Peter Wyse's presidency, to set up two skills centres in partnership with the San Duc Minh training school in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, where we also donated computers. We raised \$120,000, one of the highest totals of that era, and I was honoured with the Rotarian of the Year award for that work.

I also single-handedly managed our club's Speaker Programme for about 15 years, from 2007 until Rtn Denis Hew formed a dedicated Speakers Committee in 2022. I remain a member of that committee today. For many years, I also chaired the Book of Humour Project.



HM Joseph Chia awarded Honorary Membership in 2022



HM Joseph Chia active member of VSC

In 2014, I received the District Award for Outstanding Rotarian, and in June 2022, under PP Louis Lim, I was honoured with Honorary Membership, and I thank the club and everyone who made that possible.

What do you do at work?

I have spent my career in the capital goods market, working with clients including Singapore Airlines (SIA), the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF), the Army, SMRT, and Singapore Power. Over the years, I have won some deals and lost others — but it has always been an exciting journey.

We heard that you have outstanding accomplishments in community work as well — could you share your community work?

Beyond Rotary, I have been deeply involved with the Chinese community, serving as President of my clan association, the Singapore Hui Ann Association, for six years. The association's founder, Soh Mah Eng, a prominent figure in both Singapore and Hokkien Hui Ann in the 1920s, built the Cenotaph in 1922. Due to the civil war, the Japanese invasion, and years of disrupted communication, his descendants in China lost contact with the family here. I traced and visited his descendants and was able to reconnect the two branches of the family after they'd been apart for more than a century. I have also helped other Singaporeans in my clan trace their roots in China. Just last month, I was invited by the Genealogy Society of Singapore to deliver a talk at the National Library on Victoria Street.

I served on the Board of Directors of the Retired Senior Volunteers Programme, founded by Past District Governor Dr Philbert Chin, for almost twenty years. As Cyberguide Chairman, I helped organise IT classes for seniors from the early days of PCs through to today's mobile devices.



HM Joseph Chia was President of Singapore Hui Ann Association for six years



Recent talk at the National Library organized by Genealogy Society of Singapore

I am also Honorary Chairman of the Ding Yi Music Company. I joined its board in the company's fifth year, during a period when it faced major governance challenges and the task of professionalising its musicians into a full-time ensemble. I organised a landmark fundraising dinner at the Fullerton Hotel that gave the company's growth a crucial boost.

Could you introduce us to your family?

My late wife, Maria, worked in the reinsurance industry. She was a quiet woman who nonetheless enjoyed accompanying me to committee meetings and getting to know fellow Rotarians and their families. My elder son is a dental surgeon, and my second son is a Senior Consultant in Radiation Oncology at the National University Hospital. I am blessed with two grandchildren.

How do you recharge?

I recharge by meeting people and learning from the wide, wide world we live in.

Tell us something we don't know about you.

I play pickleball twice a week and try to walk 10,000 steps a day.

Closing message to readers?

Joining Rotary was like being brought to a new world where I met people of so many nationalities and backgrounds, people that I would never have met outside the Rotary Club. I see how dedicated they are in doing good and in helping others. That is one reason I have stayed on in Rotary till now--almost forty years.



HM Joseph Chia Honorary Chairman of Ding Yi Music Company



HM Joseph Chia celebrating his 80th birthday with his family (Rtn Hassan in the photo).

12TH WEEKLY , 16 SEPTEMBER

Building Inclusive Digital Economies in Southeast Asia by Lim May-Ann

By Rtn Anson Dichaves



At last night's Rotary Club of Singapore weekly meeting, we hosted Lim May-Ann, Director of Multilateral Relations at Access Partnership and Chair of Engineering Good, for a talk that went beyond the usual digital inclusion statistics.

Her core message: digital skills are not monolithic. She illustrated this with her own father - a PhD holder and pioneering COBOL and Fortran programmer who still struggles to operate his phone. Ranking countries on "digital skills" tells us little if we don't first ask what kind of skill, for what purpose, for whom.

A few stories that stayed with the room:

The "one laptop per family" gap. During COVID, Singapore's laptop-loan schemes assumed one device per household was enough until families with multiple children discovered otherwise, a blind spot even agencies hadn't anticipated.

The laptop too precious to use. A cleaner, fearful of the penalty attached to a loaned laptop, locked it away rather than risk her son damaging it - defeating the loan's purpose.

Redefining "inclusion." When Engineering Good asked a Muscular Dystrophy Association member what support he wanted, the answer wasn't mobility equipment, it was help posting photos to Instagram like his friends do. Inclusion is often about dignity, not just function.

Design for local context. Assistive chopping boards for stroke survivors exist, but nearly all are designed overseas for vegetables that aren't Singaporean. This shows a real gap in local assistive tech.

In Q&A, she was candid that the upcoming ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement will likely benefit businesses before it reaches everyday citizens, and framed AI inclusion around three factors: access to training, self-motivation to use it, and the tension between data sovereignty and borderless workloads.

A thoughtful, ground-truth-driven session: good intentions aren't enough, impact requires listening first.



Carrom & Scrabble before the meeting



The Rotary Bell is rung by President Raj Kumar



Meeting Emcee Honorary Secretary Liesa Desisca



Welcome of Guest by Rtn Thomas Adaemmer



**Rotary Toast to Rotary International
by Rtn Rekha Nair**



**Happy Anniversary to President
Rajkumar & First Lady Selena**



**Step Up Challenge by Rtn Subash
Pritmani**



**Vote of Thanks by Rtn Varun
Gulati**



Lim May-Ann talk



Token of Appreciation



Photo with Speaker Committee





PEOPLE OF ACTION: LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

VSC Third Meeting: VSC Shifts Up a Gear at Ferrari, 10 September

By Rtn Ong Ting Yong



The Vocational Services Committee held its 3rd meeting of RY2026/27 on Thursday 10 September at Ital Auto's Ferrari showroom on Leng Kee Road. We had an evening of project updates, fellowship and good food, with a strong attendance of close to 30 members who joined us for the evening.

Wang Meng Meng from Ital Auto did a Vocation Sharing and walked members through Ferrari's history, the different ranges and series in today's line-up, and the events the marque hosts for its community in Singapore. The talk held the room's attention from start to finish!

Every project director had the floor, and the committee heard a full sweep of our work past, present and future. Rtn Vineet presented the final report on Global Grant GG2573765, Skills Training for Ex-Offenders, delivered with ISCOS (now part of Yellow Ribbon Singapore) and international partner RC Belur, D3291.

The project subsidised Class 3, 4 and 5 driving licence training as a route to better-paying work. Of the 32 enrolled, 27 completed their training, and 24 of those have already secured a better job, role or added responsibilities with higher pay - an 89% success rate against an original target of 70%. A GrabFood rider now drives a 10-foot lorry; a warehouse hand has become an assistant supervisor overseeing other drivers; a general worker now trains new staff. Just as telling, the 10% drop-out rate was well below what ISCOS had seen in past cohorts, helped by members turning up at the beneficiaries' support-group meetings. Looking ahead, PP James presented a proposal for a potential new Global Grant in the mental health space, currently at the exploratory stage.

We spent the evening having fellowship, a sumptuous buffet from Purple Sage, and mooncakes baked by inmates and sent to us by Yellow Ribbon, a reminder of what the vocational work we support looks like in practice.



PEOPLE OF ACTION: LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

RCS Bowl & Bond: A Fun-Filled Day with Runninghour, 12 September

By Rtn Rekha Nair



Last Saturday, Rotary Club of Singapore, Singapore Swimming Club and Runninghour hosted our latest Bowl & Bond event, bringing beneficiaries with special needs, support staff, volunteers and Rotarians together for an afternoon of bowling, food and friendship.

Joining us was Wesley, who showed up with his own mic! Not a speaker, not a phone, but an actual microphone set brought from home, because he had a plan. Within minutes, he'd taken charge of the lane, calling out turns, leading warmups, and cheering on his friends like he's been doing it for years. Then he spotted Immediate Past President Sonali and greeted her by name. She was overjoyed that he remembered her from the last event. That's the thing about impact: sometimes you don't see it until someone comes back and shows you.

Wesley wasn't the only one who remembered. Several beneficiaries walked in recognising faces from before, greeting volunteers like old friends. The excitement wasn't just for the game - it was for the people, and that doesn't happen by accident; it's built one event at a time.

As with our last edition, we ran a before-and-after survey. The result: 100% of beneficiaries felt "very happy" afterward, and every one enjoyed interacting with our volunteers, a room full of people who felt seen, included and genuinely happy to be there.

None of this runs itself. Special mention to Komala from the Singapore Swimming Club, who shows up at every event and goes well beyond what's expected from resetting lanes, sorting shoes, quietly making sure every beneficiary has what they need. Events like this depend on people like her just as much as the volunteers in the spotlight.

What stays with us isn't the strikes or scores... It's that Wesley came back ready to lead, that faces lit up in recognition, and that "very happy" was something you could feel in the room. Bowl & Bond was never just about bowling. It's about a space where beneficiaries are seen year after year, where familiar faces become friendships, and one afternoon becomes something people carry with them. Here's to Wesley picking up that mic again, and to many more games ahead.



PEOPLE OF ACTION: LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Cheng Hong Welfare Service Society Charity Gala Dinner, 12 September

By President Rajkumar



PEOPLE OF ACTION: LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

A Meaningful Start to our English for Everyone Journey, 13 September

By Rtn Shawn Tan



This inaugural session welcomed more than 25 enthusiastic migrant worker participants eager to build their English vocabulary and communication skills. Supported by a dedicated team of volunteers, including Rotarians' friends and family, the session fostered a warm and encouraging learning environment. Participants closed the session by recording short videos using their newly learned words, a practical and confidence-building way to reinforce their progress. The afternoon concluded with refreshments, capping off a meaningful first gathering.

We extend our sincere appreciation to Rtn. Shawn Tan, who spearheaded this initiative as his first project as a Rotarian, and to Rtn. Kah Howe Seah for his invaluable support in bringing this program to life.

A big thank you as well to Westlite Dormitory for generously hosting the session and providing a welcoming and conducive space for the migrant brothers to learn, interact and connect with our volunteers.

Our heartfelt thanks go to our partners, Grow Studio and MWC, and to all the volunteers whose commitment made this first session possible. We look forward to continuing this initiative and creating lasting impact in the community it serves.



PEOPLE OF ACTION: LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

TalentTrust Mentorship Program in Motion: Rotary Club of Singapore Pave a Stronger Future for Total Well-Being SG Pte Ltd, 15 September

By Rtn Anson Dichaves



Some of the most powerful giving isn't written on a cheque, it's given in time, expertise, and belief. From March to September, the Rotary Club of Singapore's Vocational Service Committee partnered with Total Well-Being SG (TWBSG), a Singapore charity helping seniors stay active, healthy, and connected through community-based preventive care.

TWBSG's ambitions were clear but so were its challenges: a business model in need of sharpening, fundraising that had to be stabilised, and a brand and marketing voice not yet matching the heart of its work. That's where our mentors stepped in.

Organised by Rtn Grace Roache, Rtn Anson Dichaves and Rtn Divika Jethmal led on branding and marketing, while Rtn Irene Chong, Rtn Ronald Wong, and Rtn Xavier Lee guided finance and fundraising strategy: six sessions, 100% pro bono, entirely in service of impact:

1. **Discovery (Mar 26):** Understanding TWBSG's mission and programmes.
2. **Discovery (Apr 28):** Digging into its challenges and goals.
3. **Brand Key Workshop (May 12):** Defining TWBSG's target market, competitive landscape, and brand essence.
4. **Financial Strategy (Jun 30):** Reviewing finances and staffing; prioritising donor stewardship and grants as core revenue streams.
5. **4Ps Marketing Workshop (Jul 28):** Shaping product, price, place, and promotion — plus a storytelling approach to sharpen TWBSG's voice.
6. **Project Wrap-Up (Sep 15):** Handing over a clear roadmap for TWBSG to carry forward.

The result: a charity walking away not just with advice, but with a business model, fundraising priorities, and a brand ready to face the future. This is Vocational Service at its best. Not funding a cause from a distance, but standing beside it, sleeves rolled up, until it can stand stronger on its own.





RTN DR HOH SEK TIEN

Medicine: Eye Surgery

FACES of Rotary Club of Singapore

RTN DR HOH SEK TIEN

1. How long have you been in Rotary?

I joined the Rotary Club of Singapore in 2015

2. What do you love about being a Rotarian?

It's a great platform on which one gets to work with like-minded people on youth development. At RCS, we have youth champions like PDG Dr Philbert Chin, the late Rtn Paul Phua, PP Mohandas, PP JK Ong, HM Uttam and the list goes on.

3. What do you do at work?

I am a medical doctor and a Specialist in Ophthalmology. Simply put, an eye surgeon.

4. What is your proudest achievement at work and in Rotary?

After a career spanning more than 30 years in Ophthalmology, I will say that my proudest achievement is that I still maintain a passion to learn and improve myself, and to adapt to changes in the field. I firmly believe that a career also includes the home front; I will add that my proudest achievement at home is having a closely knit family and having brought up (together with my wife, of course) two independent but grounded children.

In Rotary, it's getting our youths to conceive and crystallize their own projects. "Paving the way" might be the phrase but realistically, it is more about providing some raw materials and letting the youths do the rest. One notable project was the Interact Coordinating Committee's Grey Can Still Play project in 2018 and again in 2019. More recently, the Rotaract Club of Singapore City's MSF Probationers - Beyond Social Services Sports programme. Briefly, for this project, our Rotaractors teamed up with Probationers under supervision of the MSF (Ministry of Social and Family Development) to conduct weekly sports sessions for underprivileged children in the Whampoa estate. These children attend tuition classes provided by Beyond Social Services, a VWO.

5. Could you introduce your family?

My son, K, recently graduated with a Law degree from Oxford University; daughter, L, is currently an undergraduate at LKC Medicine. My dearest wife, J is an Academic, teaching Law at NUS Business School.

6. How do you recharge or what are your hobbies?

For now, I enjoy a good meal in the company of family and close friends.

7. What is something we don't know about you?

I am the one who bathes my daughter's dog!

RTN FILIP IVKOVICH

Contract Logistics

FACES of Rotary Club of Singapore

RTN FILIP IVKOVICH

1. How long have you been in Rotary?

I've officially been a Rotarian with the Rotary Club of Singapore for almost a month, but the connection goes back to 2009, when I joined the Rotary Youth Exchange Program and spent a year as a high school student in Geneva, Illinois. Joining Rotary in Singapore feels like coming full circle.

2. What do you love about being a Rotarian?

Giving back both to the organization that shaped me at 17, and to Singapore, home since 2023. I see Rotary as a chance to give something back to my new home too.

3. Who are you at work?

I work for DHL Supply Chain in the APAC IT organization, spanning IT Customer Solutions and Strategic Programs. Eight years at DHL have spanned consulting, robotics & automation in Germany, a move to Singapore in 2023, and growth consulting before my current IT role.

4. What is your proudest achievement at work and in Rotary?

My proudest achievement is probably not something I would describe as a traditional career achievement. In 2020, I founded Croatia's first high-school alumni scholarship foundation built from scratch to outlast my direct involvement. It has awarded over €70,000 in scholarships across five years, with both reach and funding growing yearly.

In Rotary, I am probably most proud simply of finally becoming a Rotarian after Rotary has been part of my life for so many years. I am looking forward to changing that answer over time.

5. Could you introduce your family?

My mother and younger siblings (19 and 16) are in Croatia, visiting Singapore yearly — including a recent US trip back to the Geneva, Illinois high school where it all began.

6. How do you recharge?

Sports, always — soccer, tennis, the gym, newly added Muay Thai, and a surprise love for pickleball. Cricket's next: a fairly obvious gap to fix while living in this part of the world!

7. Something we don't know about you?

Three student exchanges, three life stages: the US in high school, Germany in undergrad, and a year at Nanjing University studying Chinese. My Chinese is far from perfect, but I can hold a basic conversation — happy to be tested!

ROTARY CLUB OF SINGAPORE

October 2026

WED

7
OCT



Club Assembly

Exclusively for RCS Members.

WED

14
OCT



Dr Kaewkamol "Karen" Pitakdumrongkit

Executive Director,
Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC)

Business Confidence, Geopolitical Risks and the Future of Trade in the Asia-Pacific

How business confidence is being shaped by strategic rivalry, supply chain shifts and policy uncertainty — with findings from PECC's State of the Region 2025–2026.

WED

21
OCT



Lisa Gainer

Chief Executive Director,
Talent Trust

Skills-Based Volunteering: A Transformative Force for Non-Profits and Communities

How volunteers can contribute expertise — strategy, governance, finance, technology — and not just time, strengthening the long-term capacity of non-profits.

WED

28
OCT



Carrie Gill

Co-Head,
Family & Divorce Harry Elias Partnership LLP

What Everyone Should Know About Family Law

How Singapore's family law works when marriages break down — divorce, asset division, maintenance, custody and access — and how the system balances legal rights, financial fairness and children's welfare.

Wednesdays, 6.30pm – 9pm

Grand Hyatt Singapore · Grand Salon 1, Level 2
10 Scotts Road, Singapore 228211 · Free parking

REGISTER

Guest S\$74 per person
Spouse & immediate family S\$37

Garden By The Bay Park Clean Up

**WORLD
CLEANUP
DAY**



4 October 2026 (Sunday)



9:15am Assembly



9:30am - 10:30am Clean up



10:30am Fellowship



Meetup Location
World of Plants area,
Gardens by the Bay



OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

THE FOUR-WAY TEST

Of the things we think, say or do:

First: Is it the **TRUTH**?

Second: Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?

Third: Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?

Fourth: Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?

A GUIDE TO DAILY LIVING

Before doing the things we want to do, consider first the precept of the guide.

First: Have I spent some time in self examination?

Second: Have I spent quality time with my family?

Third: Have I given my best to my work?

Fourth: Have I given some time to someone near and far?

- The first question prompts us to evaluate ourselves and our ability to serve.
- The second reinforces our commitment to the family, our intimate community of life and love.
- The third question requests us to commit ourselves to work excellence and the practice of high ethical standards.
- The fourth question reminds us of our duty to lend a hand, rendering compassionate service and working for world peace.

ROTARY CLUB OF SINGAPORE BOARD 2026/2027



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