

WEEKLY RECAP | THU 27 AUG 2026

GoldenWagon

Surviving Cancer

**WHEN A
DEATH
SENTENCE
BECAME
A NEW
BEGINNING**



RCUpperKololo



rotaryclubofupperkololo



rotary club of upper kololo



rotary club of upper kololo

Rotary
Upper Kololo



Rotary Club Of Upper Kololo

Givers Appreciation



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Your giving has enabled many people out there to find meaning in life. There are countless improved lives behind the giving of Rotary.”

District Governor Obai

Pictorial



Surviving Cancer

When a Death Sentence Became a New Beginning

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When we raise funds and awareness for cancer, we're telling someone sitting in a hospital waiting room right now that they're not forgotten.

When we support the Uganda Cancer Institute, we're saying that quality cancer care needs to be accessible to our people here in Uganda.

When we encourage screening and early detection, we might be giving someone the chance to catch it before it progresses.

And when we share stories of survivors, we're reminding people currently going through treatment that cancer doesn't always get the final word."

— Marlene



Ten years ago, my family got the news no family wants to hear: my mother had breast cancer, and it was already Stage 4.

For a lot of people, that would sound like a death sentence. For us, it was the start of one of the most frightening, faith-testing, but honestly inspiring journeys we've been on as a family.

My mother went through surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy at the Uganda Cancer Institute. It wasn't easy. There were long days at the hospital, hard treatments, exhaustion, fear, and moments when none of us really knew what the future looked like. It was financially draining too, but friends came through for us and made things a little easier.

But something happened along the way that I still think about.

The woman we thought we'd be encouraging ended up being the one encouraging us.

My dad, my siblings and I were scared. We tried to be strong for her, but honestly, there were times we didn't know what to say or what the next day would bring. I remember sitting outside the theatre wondering how I'd even tell the rest of the family if she didn't make it. 🙏

My mother, though, seemed to have a completely different understanding of the assignment.

She encouraged us. She encouraged other patients at the Cancer Institute. She made friends with people she met during treatment, and somehow, even while fighting her own battle, she found the strength to comfort other people too.

We watched her lose her hair. We watched treatment wear her body down, and at times it crushed her confidence and self-esteem too. The mother we knew looked physically different to us for a while.

But we also watched her fight her way back. Slowly, one day at a time, she recovered. Her hair grew back, her body came back to her, and her confidence and strength came back stronger than before. And maybe most importantly, her joy for life came back too.

"I will beat this thing. I will overcome." She'd say it to herself, over and over, until it just became true.

And then she did what my mother does best – she got on with life. Cancer didn't stop her from farming. It definitely didn't stop her from golfing. If anything, I think she decided cancer had already taken enough of her time, and it wasn't getting any more.

Today she's still an ardent golfer and a passionate farmer, still enjoying the things she loves; some red dry wine, surrounded by

the people who love her. Looking at her now, it's honestly hard to believe that ten years ago we were staring down a Stage 4 diagnosis and bracing for the worst. My mother isn't just a cancer survivor to me. She's a testimony.

She's a reminder that a diagnosis isn't always the end of the story. That treatment matters. That early detection matters. That access to cancer care matters. That family and friends matter. That hope matters. And that sometimes, even when the medical journey is really hard, there's life on the other side of it.

This is why, every year when Rotary comes together to run, walk, fundraise and raise awareness for cancer, it feels different to me. It's not just a Rotary activity. It's personal.

When we raise funds and awareness for cancer, we're telling someone sitting in a hospital waiting room right now that they're not forgotten. When we support the Uganda Cancer Institute, we're saying that quality cancer care needs to be accessible to our people here in Uganda. When we encourage screening and early detection, we might be giving someone the chance to catch it before it progresses. And when we share stories of survivors, we're reminding people currently going through treatment that cancer doesn't always get the final word.

My mother's story is also a tribute to everyone who walked with her; our immediate family, relatives, friends, doctors, nurses, fellow patients, and everyone who offered a word of encouragement, a prayer, a visit, or just their presence. Cancer can be a lonely journey, but it doesn't have to be walked alone.

Ten years later, my mother is still here. Still farming. Still golfing. Still encouraging people. Still making us laugh – her sense of humor is out of this world. Still the anchor of our family. Still the woman after my own heart.

So when Rotary runs for cancer, I'll be running with a little extra conviction. Because I've seen what's possible. I've seen a Stage 4 diagnosis become a story of survival. I've watched fear give way to hope, weakness give way to strength, and uncertainty give way to ten more years; and counting.

Cancer changes your life. It doesn't get to decide how your story ends.

Sometimes the chapter that starts with "you have cancer" ends up becoming a story that says "you survived." My mother is living proof.

— Marlene



Founder's Syndrome

Undermines the Legacy of Strong Leaders

Inspired by an article by Marcus Coetzee, with the Golden Wagon Editorial Team's reflections on Rotary International

What is founder's syndrome?

Founder's syndrome is a pattern of behaviour that afflicts some founders of organizations, sometimes nicknamed "founderitis." It occurs when a strong-minded founder who built an organization against the odds becomes its biggest obstacle to further growth. Rather than adapting as the organization matures, the founder clings to power, and the organization becomes poorly suited to its changing environment.

Not every founder suffers from this. Many run organizations that keep adapting, and many move on gracefully. The syndrome only applies when a founder struggles to change gear as the organization's needs evolve, and when that struggle genuinely constrains the organization. Research on nonprofits has found that founder-led organizations tend to stay smaller than those led by successors, suggesting founders can indeed become a ceiling on growth.

The syndrome can surface after one year or after twenty, depending on when the founder's capacity is outpaced by the organization's complexity or by a needed change in direction. It affects charities, businesses, government bodies, and even departments within larger institutions.

Two ways of seeing it

There are two common interpretations of a founder caught in this pattern. The first casts the founder as a dictator: someone knowingly clinging to power at the organization's expense, best resolved through a swift removal followed by a period of healing.

The second, more common in practice, sees the founder as a victim of their own mental models: sincere, often fearful that the organization will collapse without them, and unable to separate their identity from the institution they built. This founder needs support to hand over power gracefully, much as parents must adjust as a child grows toward independence.

Causes

The root cause lies in the founder's psychology rather than in external pressures. Founders typically have strong egos, which help them push through adversity and build something from nothing. That trait becomes a liability when founders stop listening to advice and trust only their own judgment, at their organization's expense. Founder's syndrome also requires a lack of self-awareness (an inability or unwillingness to see how one's own behaviour now limits the organization) combined with an autocratic style that

resists delegating power. The very traits that built the organization turn against it as circumstances change.

Common symptoms

- Treating the organization like a personal fiefdom
- Decision-making bottlenecks, as everything gets escalated for the founder's approval
- The founder's identity becoming fused with the organization's brand
- Factions forming for and against the founder
- Rising leaders being blocked, promised power they never receive, and eventually disengaging or leaving
- Outdated thinking and resistance to modernizing strategy
- No real succession plan, with succession talk constantly deferred
- Power, when shared, going only to loyal proxies rather than capable successors
- Token support for organizational systems that are quietly undermined when inconvenient

Treatment

Treatment is difficult but possible, and the right approach depends on context; it's nearly impossible to dislodge a founder who owns a majority stake and refuses to change, but nonprofits, public companies, and government bodies have more options.

A hard approach involves the board or shareholders taking assertive action: demoting or removing the founder, diluting their influence by bringing in independent staff and directors, and strengthening organizational systems so decisions no longer depend on the founder's personal say-so.

A soft approach applies when the founder is open to help: supporting them toward a graceful exit and a real successor, occasionally helping them shift into a different role (though this rarely succeeds, since it requires a self-awareness the syndrome itself tends to erode), or in owner-led businesses, shrinking the organization's scope so the founder can keep operating in the way they're comfortable with.

Prevention

Prevention beats cure. Founders should aim to work *on* their organizations rather than *in* them, building self-sufficient systems that don't depend on their constant presence. They should delegate deliberately, developing staff capable of real decision-making, and keep investing in their own leadership growth through courses, coaching, and mentoring.

Founder's syndrome is unlikely when a leader keeps growing faster than their organization. Finally, good governance matters: a diverse, competent, largely independent board protects the organization's long-term interests and ensures it can continue if the founder is suddenly gone.

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A diverse, competent, largely independent board protects the organization's long-term interests and ensures it can continue if the founder is suddenly gone.





A Rotarian who has internalized “Service Above Self” has less psychological need to cling to a title or role, because the point was never personal power in the first place.

Relating this to Rotary International's principles

Rotary International's own structure reads almost like a deliberate defence against founder's syndrome, and its core principles map onto the article's prevention advice with unusual precision.

Service Above Self, not power above service. Rotary's guiding motto asks members to place service to others ahead of personal gain or status. This is the direct antidote to the fiefdom mentality the article describes, where the organization becomes an extension of one person's identity and ego. A Rotarian who has internalized “Service Above Self” has less psychological need to cling to a title or role, because the point was never personal power in the first place.

Mandatory rotation of leadership. Rotary club presidents and district governors serve strictly limited terms (typically one year), by design. This built-in rotation is essentially a structural prevention plan for founder's syndrome, forcing exactly the kind of succession planning the article says most afflicted organizations avoid. No single Rotarian, however capable or however long they've been involved, can accumulate the kind of unbroken personal control the article identifies as the seedbed of the syndrome.

The Four-Way Test as a shared, external standard. Rotary's Four-Way Test; asking of anything members think, say, or do whether it is the truth, fair to all concerned, builds goodwill, and is beneficial to all; gives every member, including founders and long-serving leaders, an external yardstick that exists independent of any one person's authority. This mirrors the article's point about “organizational systems”: codified standards make decisions less vulnerable to any single leader's interference, precisely because the standard belongs to the whole membership rather than to an individual.

Distributed avenues of service. Rotary organizes its work across multiple avenues; club, vocational, community, international, and youth service which spreads ownership, expertise, and initiative across many members and committees rather than concentrating

it in one founding figure. This distribution naturally counters the decision-bottleneck symptom the article describes, where every choice gets escalated to a single person.

Governance and diversity by design. Rotary's structure of clubs, districts, and a global board, combined with a strong emphasis on diverse membership and broad participation, reflects the article's prevention advice almost exactly: a diverse, competent, largely independent group overseeing the organization's direction, rather than one person's judgment substituting for that oversight.

A caution even for well-designed systems.

None of this makes Rotary immune. A long-serving club officer, a founding member of a new club, or a dominant figure on a Rotary Foundation committee can still develop the milder symptoms the article describes; resisting new ideas, treating “how we've always done it” as doctrine, or quietly discouraging emerging leaders. Rotary's structures make founder's syndrome less likely and less severe, but the article's underlying insight still applies: **healthy organizations depend on individuals who keep developing their own self-awareness and leadership, not only on good rules.** Rotary members and club leaders can draw on the article's prevention advice directly – treat every leadership term as an opportunity to build capacity in successors, invest personally in leadership growth, and welcome external accountability rather than resisting it.

Conclusion

Founder's syndrome is a failure to let go of power once an organization's needs outgrow the founder's ability to lead it, and it undermines the very thing the founder sacrificed so much to build. Prevention requires founder self-awareness, ongoing leadership development, and strong governance; when those fail, it falls to boards and members to act decisively.

**CANCER
RUN 2026**

Rotary
Clubs of Uganda



GGWANGA MUJJE

LET'S RUN TO RESTORE HOPE



SUN 30TH AUG 2026



6:00AM



**KOLOLO INDEPENDENCE GROUNDS AND
MAJOR TOWNS ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

All proceeds go towards the completion of
the Cancer Centre at **Nsambya Hospital**



WE CANCER'S ONE RACE
STARTING POINT

Registration Fees

UGX 30,000

Comes with a vest



**PARLIAMENT
OF UGANDA**



**Centenary
Bank**



**KRYSTAL
Natural Mineral WATER**



nbs



Sumz
Taste The Difference



AfroMobile

MAVD McCANN



**N
VISION**

care



**St. Francis Hospital
Nsambya**



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MARKETPLACE