

WEEK 49 FOUNDATION MINUTE – ROTARY FELLOWSHIPS

This week, Rotarians around the world are participating in Rotary’s 2021 International Convention. When conventions are in person, attendees spend time together in a House of Friendship – where Rotarians gather to see what other Rotarians around the world are doing – learning about projects and connecting with those having similar vocations or interests. Rotary Fellowships are international, independently organized groups of Rotarians, Rotarian spouses, and Rotaractors who share a common vocation or recreational interest. Rotary Fellowships give their members the opportunity to have fun, make new friends around the world, and enhance their experience in Rotary.

Rotary Fellowships began informally in 1928 when Rotarians with a shared interest in the international language Esperanto joined together. In 1947, a group of Rotarian boating enthusiasts began flying the Rotary flag from their crafts, calling themselves the International Yachting Fellowship of Rotarians — which now holds the distinction of being the oldest continuing fellowship. The scope of fellowships has changed significantly over the years, but their purpose remains the same: to unite Rotarians in friendship and provide opportunities to enjoy favorite recreational or professional activities.

Rotary International has established specific policies for forming a Rotary Fellowship. The RI Board of Directors evaluates each prospective group before deciding whether to formally recognize it. However, each fellowship operates independently of RI, with its own rules, dues requirements, and administrative structure. Membership is open to all Rotarians, Rotarian spouses, and Rotaractors.