

I recently returned from a river cruise through Europe. Almost everywhere, we saw reminders of the horrors of war, particularly WWII. There is a poignant Holocaust memorial in Budapest, where 64 pairs of bronze shoes - men, women and children - on the edge of the Danube river memorializes Jews who were arrow-shot into the river by Hungarian Nazis.

In Nuremburg, we saw the massive stone podium and stage, overlooking a vast parade ground, where the Nazi party held their huge pre-war rallies. During the war, the grounds became a staging area for Jews and others, before being shipped to the death camps.

In Amsterdam, we toured the Anne Frank House, where she and her family and two other families hid in a small cramped annex for 25 months, before being discovered by the Nazis. Like countless other Jews, they were shipped off to the death camps, where only Anne's father survived.

All of this got me thinking: What is Rotary doing to foster the cause of peace, so that such atrocities never happen again? It turns out Rotary is doing a lot for world peace. Thank you to our past District Governor Sue for suggesting the topic of my remarks today.

Rotary was instrumental in the founding of the United Nations after WWII. As our RI President Mark Maloney wrote in this month's Rotarian Magazine, Rotary played a critical leadership role in the conference that formed the UN in 1945. Throughout WWII, Rotary published materials about the importance of forming the UN to preserve world peace. When the UN charter was written, Rotary was one of 42 organizations invited to serve as consultants. RI had 11 representatives serving in rotation in these consultations. Many Rotarians from many other nations served as members of, or consultants to, their own nation's delegations.

June 2020 will be the 75th anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter. To recognize its deep relationship with the UN, Rotary will host five special events between now and next June, that started with Rotary Day at the UN

in New York on November 9th and will end with a celebration just before the RI convention in Honolulu. The events will include 3 Presidential Peace Conferences, in Santiago Chile, Paris and Rome.

November is Rotary Foundation month. Each year, our Foundation spends millions of dollars on Rotary's six areas of focus. They were recently modified and three were re-named. They are: basic education and literacy, community economic development, disease prevention and treatment, maternal and child health, water, sanitation, and hygiene, and peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

The largest amount of money is spent in the fight against polio. The second highest amount is spent on global and district grants that include humanitarian projects and scholarships.

In the past five years (2014-15 to 2018-19), over \$18 million has been spent on peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

In addition to this, last year (2018-19), the Foundation spent \$5 million on Rotary Peace Centres. Rotary supports the training of peace fellows at six Peace Centres around the world, where they earn masters degrees or professional development certificates. Since 2002-03, 1,245 fellows from over 120 countries have participated. In 2017-18, 94 fellows from 44 countries began their studies at the six Rotary Peace Centres. 100 Peace Fellowships are offered each year at our Peace Centres.

The over 1,200 students that have graduated from our Rotary Peace Centres have found work in a variety of key positions around the world, such as: 36% work at non-governmental organizations, 15% work in government agencies, 8% are teachers, 8% work in research and academics, 6% work at United Nations agencies, 3% work in law, and 3% in law enforcement.

One Rotary Peace Fellow at the University of Queensland, Australia, wrote: "I wanted to do something to help prevent war, rather than addressing its consequences."

Our many humanitarian projects around the world, funded through global

and district grants and individual clubs, are a vital force for peace by reducing poverty and alleviating suffering.

Rotary refuses to accept conflict as a way of life. Conflict and violence displaced over 68 million people last year, and half of those were children. Rotary projects provide training that fosters understanding, and provide communities with the skills to resolve conflicts. This is done through our service projects, peace fellowships, and scholarships.

Individual clubs are a key part of this. For example, many Rotary Clubs in Canada have sponsored refugees from Syria to start new lives here. Our sister club, Peterborough Kawartha, is one such club.

Rotary members founded the People For People Foundation, which has helped 10 thousand families afford food, clothing, rent, utilities, medications and other necessities.

Another example of Rotary working for peace: Many clubs worldwide conduct anti-bullying campaigns in schools to teach children how to handle conflict peacefully from an early age. This month's Rotarian magazine has a story about an anti-bullying basketball program in Yonkers, New York, funded by that city's Rotary club.

Rotary also works to protect domestic violence survivors and their families. For example, in Louisiana, which has the fourth highest incidence of death caused by domestic violence, local Rotarians helped a shelter provide food, clothing, legal advocacy and counseling to over 500 women in one year. Many other Rotary clubs have also helped women's shelters, including here in Peterborough.

Rotary has partnered with the Institute for Economics and Peace, an independent think tank and leader in the study of peace and conflict, to help address the root causes of conflict and create conditions that foster peace.

Other examples of Rotary clubs promoting peace and resolving conflict

include: Rotary programs in Tanzania for people with albinism to find safe futures in a culture where albinos are hunted for body parts and isolated by fear.

A university president with assistance from a Rotary club fights the influence of the Boko Haram terrorist group. In Brazil, a Rotary club's sponsorship of Judo programs offers youth an escape from slums.

There is a Rotarian Action Group for Peace, which gives Rotary members resources and support to advance world peace and turn ambitious ideas into life-changing realities.

In total, \$142 million has been raised by Rotary to support peace.

Today, as we honour those who gave their lives in wars so that we may enjoy peace, it is comforting to know that Rotary is working hard to foster peace world wide through countless projects and initiatives, including many from this club.

Thank you.

Stop now

Bruce Gravel
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