

27 Ways to Light Up Rotary and Improve Your Rotary Club - DG's Speech to Rotary Clubs 2014

At the International assembly in January, 2014, International President Gary Huang introduced his theme of "Light Up Rotary" by sharing a quote of Confucius saying, "It is better to light a single candle than to sit and curse the darkness". I've suggested that the candle in this call to positive action is actually a symbol of "enlightenment", and enlightenment, in world religions and philosophies generally means being "on the right path" to "getting it all together". That set my mind to thinking about what it might mean to have "Rotary Enlightenment" or to be on the right path? Well, Gary illustrated his understanding of the theme by teaching us all a new Rotary song in Taiwanese, and he challenged us to teach the song in Chinese, to everyone in our District. So, today/tonight...we thought...we wouldn't do that, but to set the theme, we would get you to sing a song that Meryl wrote to a tune by a well-known Australian songwriter who lives across the passage from Meryl's cousin - so join us in the chorus which ends with, "I am, you are, we are Rotarian".

Sing "I Am Rotarian" song

**We join the leaders of the world from countries East to West
To all we think and say and do we add the 4 Way Test
Is it the truth and is it fair and will it build goodwill
And benefit all those concerned, this test we will fulfil
CHORUS**

**We are one but we are many and from all the lands on earth we
come
We share a dream, we sing with one voice
I am, you are, we are Rotarian**

**We value Service above Self and show the world we care
We educate, prevent disease, help children everywhere
We heal the sick and feed the poor, provide disaster aid
Develop new communities so dignity won't fade
REPEAT CHORUS**

We light a candle in the dark and pray the flame will glow

**So conflict is prevented and world peace begins to grow
 Exchange ideas and act on them until the work is done
 And hope the light of Rotary will shine on everyone
 REPEAT CHORUS
 Repeat last line**

Now, what we've just done is essentially the first of 27 key steps on the pathway towards "Rotary Enlightenment". You might ask why there are 27 - well, that's how many I discovered when I researched the Rotary experts! I did actually think about changing the number, but I Googled the number 27 on the internet, as you do, and discovered that 27 is actually a lunar symbol for "light in the darkness" - honestly - so 27 steps it is, and I want to share these possible steps on 4 levels - the personal level, the inter-personal or club level, the community level and the level of the Planet. As I said, we've just done the first.

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Step one - Engage our preferred skills and interests in enjoyable Rotary service

Meryl and I have just engaged our preferred skills and interests, my guitar playing, her song writing, and we've used them to share the good work of Rotary and had some fun at the same time. That's the essence of Rotary, and what enlightened Rotarians do - they join their skills and interests together to do good in the world whilst having some fun. Research shows that if we aren't getting some sense of personal satisfaction out of how we do good for others, we will soon lose interest and leave. So Enlightened Rotarians will work with their clubs to ensure that they do things they like to do as an integral part of their Rotary service.

Step two - Nurture our own spark of leadership.

Leadership experts say everyone can be a leader because leadership is essentially having a vision of how things could be better, sharing that vision, and living our lives in accordance with that vision. In other words, being true to ourselves. Rotary is about taking leaders in the community and our vocations, and making us better leaders, by giving us many opportunities to share our visions and improve our leadership skills. Enlightened Rotarians grab those opportunities as they arise, and put themselves forward for club

and district leadership roles they think they can grow into. This relates to the next step.

Step three - Learn more about Rotary.

Research shows that our interest level and motivation increases when we become more aware of what Rotary does in the world, and how and why it does it. So enlightened Rotarians will read stuff, attend conventions, district conferences, attend training events, join action groups and Rotary fellowships etc. just to keep learning. Two of the best ways to learn about Rotary are to visit other clubs, not just for makeups but to get ideas and realize our club is not the only way Rotary works, and also to sign up to do a Rotary Leadership Institute course.

Step four - Endeavour to live by the Four Way Test.

Living by the four way test is Rotary enlightenment in a nutshell, and enlightened Rotarians will always strive to put it into practice. Not easy, but as psychologists tell us, if we can at least pretend to live by the test by acting with goodwill towards others, we'll eventually come to think like that as well, and our clubs will be wonderfully supportive places free of destructive conflict. Of course, enlightened Rotarians only apply the test to themselves, and don't use it to admonish or judge others.

Step five - Make the Foundation a personal charity of choice.

A couple of years ago, I was talking to a Rotarian at a conference and he said he never goes to the meeting when the DG attends, because all they do is ask members to give to the Foundation - then I told him I was going to be DG and he changed the subject! But I've included this point because the act of giving regularly to Rotary's own charity with whatever small amount we can afford, symbolizes and seals our commitment to Rotary. What we're doing is putting our money where our mouth is. Besides, the Rotary Foundation is one of best charities for Rotarians - it has been independently rated as one of the best charities in the world, and the big bonus is that money comes back to our district so our clubs can direct it to projects that excite us - we have a direct say in how our money is used.

That's what an enlightened Rotarian is like, let's look at what enlightened clubs do.

CLUB OR INTER-PERSONAL LEVEL

For starters, clubs will make it easy for those first 5 steps to happen.

Step six - Assist members to use their interests and skills in service.

Enlightened clubs will find out how their members like serving and try to make it happen. We can ask our members, or run simple surveys completed during a meeting. The good thing about anonymous surveys is that you get to hear the voices of the quieter members who may not speak up in club assemblies. We can also run surveys on the internet with free programs like Survey Gizmo or Survey Monkey. However we do it, we need to ensure all our members feel needed and useful and engaged.

Step seven - Have regular club assemblies.

As well as surveys, enlightened clubs will run assemblies where members can freely share their ideas about directions the club should be taking and feel ownership of the programs. The good thing about assemblies is that as certain members express their ideas and reasons, the process can assist other members to form *their* own opinions. So it's good to have both surveys and assemblies to engage members.

Step eight - Budget for leadership training.

If members are to grow as leaders, they must be trained. Enlightened clubs will budget to assist one or two members to go to Rotary Leadership Institute or some other leadership training each year. This will be one the greatest gifts a club can give itself. Members will come back more enthused, better leaders, more knowledgeable about Rotary, and better able to serve in Rotary in and beyond the club. We have a very skilled and active RLI in this District so let's make use of it.

Step nine - Educate members through the club program

Enlightened clubs realize that every member is an ambassador for Rotary and needs to be able to sell Rotary to others with the latest information on how Rotary is changing, so they will direct their program committee to include guest speakers that educate members about Rotary programs. We can get speakers on the monthly themes of Rotary from around the District. Enlightened clubs will also educate members about the skills needed by well-functioning groups such as good listening skills, dealing with conflict constructively, relating to different personality types, acceptance of others,

positive attitudes etc. They will find speakers on these topics in nearby Rotary clubs, or in the community e.g. teachers, personal counsellors, nurses, doctors, clergy etc. An interesting, skill-improving program can also be a major way of bringing in new members.

Step ten - Build a culture of supportive acceptance

Enlightened clubs will assist members to be a supportive network for each other. Members will be accepting of each other's level of involvement and attendance knowing we all have difference capacities to give depending on our life circumstances. Such clubs will engage some perceptive members to monitor the morale in the club, or pick up potential conflicts and deal with them constructively, and they will have regular welfare reports on those members who are doing it tough.

Step eleven - Develop ways to work smarter and share workloads.

Enlightened clubs recognize that all Rotarians are volunteers and have other lives to lead. They will develop ways to share workloads within clubs and make use of modern technology to work more efficiently without compromising effectiveness. Such clubs also make use of work already done by other Rotarians to save re-inventing the wheel e.g. using existing templates & PR materials etc. Healthy clubs will also explore ways to work with other clubs and organizations to share the workloads on large projects. There are ideas in the DG newsletter.

Step twelve - Maintain effective communication processes

Enlightened clubs realize how important effective communication is to the club and will work out efficient ways to receive and promptly pass on information to members so they always feel like they know what is going on. This need also applies to communication with the District and to Rotary International.

Step thirteen - Make meetings and club events fun & contemporary

At a workshop on Fun at the Convention, we were reminded that our Rotary meetings are competing with good TV shows, time with our kids or our spouse or partner. So, our members need to *want* to go to our meetings. Enlightened clubs will get serious about fun and celebrations. They will ensure there are lots of different types of fun activities that get included in

the total set of club programs. Some clubs like Portland Bay have installed a Director of Fun to make sure this happens. The diet of fun needs to cater for all tastes, and part of the process will be to find out what fun things your members like to do. At the convention, they asked us to share the best fun times we had in our clubs and this Korean guy in a nice grey suit said through an interpreter that for him, it was the time when the doctor came - we wondered where this was going and then he said, through his interpreter that the doctor gave everyone Viagra - that club really increased its membership after that, and even neighbours wanted to join! Rituals in our meetings also need to be contemporary and faith neutral to not put people off, so enlightened clubs will write their own. Look for the fun corner in the DG Newsletter.

Step fourteen - Celebrate what is special & unique about the Club.

Enlightened clubs realize that members are bound together when they celebrate what is special about their group, so they will exploit this whenever the group is in public. They might use a special signature colour like Alfredton's purple scarves and ties, or they might have a symbol or a mascot, or build an identity around their location or signature projects. They will share these ideas on their web page, Facebook and through other social media so everyone can join the celebration.

Step fifteen - Develop a longer term vision and strategy plan

Enlightened clubs develop a vision of how they'd like their club to be in three to five years' time. Then they develop annual goals based on that vision. This process enables the club to develop more substantial projects that run from year to year, make better use of resources, and reduces the work of club leaders and makes the club less President-centric. It gives the club an ongoing direction and helps to inspire members and bind them together. There are many people in our district who can help a club develop a vision and goals.

Step sixteen - Develop a membership strategy based on the club's vision

Every one of these steps is a membership strategy, but enlightened clubs use their strategic plan to target new members they need to achieve that plan. They remind all members that they are ambassadors, and tell them to invite members with a purpose e.g. In San Diego, they asked a younger person to

join - "We need you to be our IT and Facebook specialist?" They loved him - he felt needed and useful. We could ask a recent migrant, "Could you come and join us to give us a more balanced perspective on multi-culturalism" Or we might ask a partner or spouse, "Can you join us because we want our club to better reflect the family of Rotary." The strategy will also remind potential members of the real benefits in being a member: an opportunity to do good in the world, to develop leadership and personal skills, to enjoy a support community, learn from guest speakers, acceptance and potential friendships at 34000 clubs around the world and have fun at the same time. Enlightened clubs will also have their Membership chair or director on their Board.

Step seventeen - Budget for promotion to suit their location

Enlightened clubs provide a budget for promotion and PR and use it wisely and effectively to get the message out to people that Rotary is lighting up the world with its good work. The Maryborough club paid for full page ads once a month highlighting the Rotary themes and successfully changed the image of Rotary in that small community. Each club needs to look at what is possible in their area. We also need to learn how to make best use of our PR tools. Recently, a small amount was paid to boost or extend the coverage of a facebook entry, and an extra 3500 read about Maryborough's family violence program.

Step eighteen - Become less President-centric.

An enlightened club will have a President who is a figurehead and an encourager. Apart from maybe a small signature project for the President, club programs and committees will not be tied to a particular year and will continue from year to year with minor changes in committees. The President role will be an enjoyable one where the president is able to develop their leadership skills with effective training and complete support and encouragement from all members. An enlightened club will survey members asking them when they will be ready to take on the job again and everyone will look forward to the role.

So they are steps to an enlightened club - what about enlightening the community?

THE COMMUNITY

Step nineteen - Ask your community what they need.

Enlightened Rotary clubs work with key, selected community leaders and groups to imagine how their community could be in 3 to 5 year's time. Then they explore ways the Rotary group could realistically do things to help bring about that vision. Maryborough did this and discovered the need was awareness of family violence. Whilst not all members were comfortable with the project, they started a small awareness program and it took off with Facebook and an article on the front page of the Age. This also helped to change the community's perception of Rotary to one of being relevant to our community and has led to new members.

Step twenty - Develop manageable projects in all avenues of service.

Enlightened clubs will have at least one project in each Rotary avenue of service to keep the range of projects broad and provide opportunities for members to find something that interests them. However, they will be careful not to take on too much which could burn their members out. Enlightened Boards will monitor service projects so they are manageable, and spread out over the year. They realize that being in Rotary is not a competition to get more money than last year or other clubs, but to enjoy the experience of doing good in the world.

Step twenty-one - Employ District Grant Money.

Lit up Rotary clubs realize that when they qualify for and apply for District Grant money, they are using the funds they gave to the Foundation (three years ago) to expand the scope of their chosen way of doing good somewhere in the world. It's also a great way to confirm member's personal commitment to give to the Foundation.

Step twenty two - Support Polio Plus.

Enlightened clubs will ensure that at some key time of the year, they run a polio plus fund raiser or publicize that they are giving money to this cause to not only help to achieve the goal of a polio free world, but also get promotional mileage out of this high profile Rotary program

Step twenty three - Run a fun day when Rotary is showcased in the community.

Gary Huang calls such an activity a Rotary Day, and his hope is that every club in the world can run such an event before the end of this year. If you already do something like this, just call it your Rotary Day. The event can be absolutely anything, as long as it is open to families in the community and highlights or advertises the work of Rotary. This is a great way to show Rotary is fun and is doing good in so many areas. There will be ideas in the DG Newsletter.

Step twenty-four - Involve non-members in Rotary projects.

Enlightened clubs realize that some people are not ready to join Rotary and only want to help out on occasions, and Rotary has a great tool that is booming in other parts of the world, but is not that well known in Australia. It's called Rotary Community Corps and it simply is a structured way of involving friends of local Rotary clubs in community projects. If you already have a "Friends of Rotary" program you might think about converting it to a Community Corps because there are many "Friends of..." groups in society that could confuse people. At least check it out on the internet because resources are available to help clubs organize and run such a program, and it will help with achieving a Presidential citation.

THE PLANET

Step twenty five - Do a project for the planet.

Enlightened clubs realize that humans are increasingly being challenged to look after the planet that sustains us, and will include somewhere in their repertoire of programs, something that not only does good in some way, but educates people and raises awareness of this challenge.

Step twenty six - Reduce the club's Carbon Footprint

Enlightened clubs explore ways the club might be able to reduce their carbon footprint in their day to day operations e.g. reducing printing, recycling, saving energy etc.

Step twenty seven - Continue to Promote Peace.

The final part of the object of Rotary is to advance international understanding and peace. Rotary helped to start the United Nations and still is the only organization with a special envoy there. So Clubs will include in their repertoire, projects such as youth exchange, (a great way to build world understanding), provision of funds for peace scholars or Rotary peace

centres where they train people to become conflict resolvers around the world - all great investments towards a better world.

So there are 27 steps to Rotary enlightenment - 27 ways to light up Rotary in ourselves, in our clubs, in our communities and for the planet. Thank you so much to the members of this club who are really making a difference to this world by putting so many of those 27 steps into practice. I look forward to working with you this year as you continue to bring about well-being, wholeness, peace and enlightenment in our world.

You can learn more about enlightenment on these four levels if you come to our Conference next year - March 20th to 22nd in Maryborough.

**Take the journey to the Central Goldfields
Maryborough will be unfurled
Be informed and be inspired
Discover ways to light up our world**