

Rotary International



The "We Care" Program

A Guide for Building Strong, Effective and Fun
Rotary Clubs For the New Millennium

**Original Program Developed by
Past District Governor Stanton Allen**

Revised and Edited by **Gary Citti**

The We Care Program

PDG Stan Allen of Rotary District 5170 first developed the We Care program. Over the last few years Gary Citti a member of the Santa Clara Rotary club and general chairman of Rotary District 5170 “We Care Program” has modified this program. His objective was to enable Rotary clubs to better understand the philosophy and to fully utilize the potential of the program. Special thanks, to PDG Carolyn Schuetz and PDG Neal Hoffman for assisting Gary Citti in the completion of this program booklet.

This program is very successful once it is integrated within the club infrastructure. The program is a philosophy of how we should treat fellow Rotarians. Most Rotary club infrastructures change from year to year due to new administrations. Each new administration looks at problems or concerns based on past years and tries to change for the better, but may come into resistance. It has been said that we have two mottos in Rotary. The first is “Service Above Self” and the other is “God Forbid Change”. The latter is not unique just to Rotary. Most individuals do not like change. As we get older we seem to find a comfort zone and we do not want anyone or anything disturbing it. This feeling seems to be prevalent in Rotary due to the age of some of our members. Even though some change is healthy it doesn’t always sit well with everyone. We must understand that certain procedures and objectives will change occasionally. Unfortunately, many times our changes have lead to confusion from lack of communication and understanding. This causes uncertainty and sometimes even apathy.

In order for a Rotary club to be successful in integrating this philosophy, changes must be made with the support and understanding of your Rotary club. This is accomplished with much discussion, planning and education. As we initiate these changes we must keep the communication flowing so all of our Rotarians understand why procedures and expectations are changing. At the same time we must select certain club procedures and expectations that will rarely change from year to year. Consistency leads to better understanding and willingness to participate. It helps create an environment that is positive and enjoyable. One of the keys to a great Rotary club is involvement.

A Rotary club is like running a business; if your employees understand your expectations and direction they usually will respond in a positive and productive manner. But if they are confused and your company shows a lack of consistent direction, they become unproductive and then become a burden on the company. Generally, they will communicate their concerns to fellow workers, which in turn creates a negative environment. Productivity goes down and so does morale. Eventually, this negative attitude is communicated to your customers by the way your employees talk and act. This generally will result in the loss of the customer. How many times have we lost new members in Rotary because of this very problem?

We must understand that our members are ambassadors of Rotary. They must have a positive attitude towards the growth and goals of their organization. Through their interaction with the public they create the avenue for growth in membership and development.

What will happen within your club when you use the We Care program?

1. New membership growth
2. Strong retention of membership
3. A strong feeling of self accomplishment
4. Positive attitudes
5. Individuals become more receptive to new direction of club goals and procedures
6. Strong positive Ambassadors representing Rotary
7. A more productive Rotary club
8. Better camaraderie
9. Greater understanding of Rotary
10. A better club environment
11. More fun and enjoyment
12. Positive and clear direction

What Is Our Greatest Challenge?

Our greatest challenge in Rotary is to better understand what type of expectations new members of Rotary have. We need to take the time and analyze what attracts new members and what keeps them in Rotary. One of the foremost needs of new members is a strong desire to feel that they are spending their time wisely. If they feel someone is wasting their time they have a tendency to eliminate whatever they feel is causing it. They want to be able to see immediate productivity. They challenge us on a daily basis to teach them about Rotary at a quicker pace. We must prove to them that Rotary is an organization that they should be part of. Too many times we do not take the time to reach out and help new members become part of Rotary. New members must be educated quickly so they feel that they are part of the organization. The question is, are our Rotary Clubs attractive, interesting and do they give all individuals a feeling of accomplishment? We all need to review our club attitude, environment, posture and direction. This will help to insure that we meet the need of the new Rotarian of the 21st century. During this process we must never lose focus of our duty and goals of being Rotarians. Most importantly, we must never compromise our beliefs. Instead, we must modify our goals and expectations to be realistic and give our members the ability to reach the goals. They must have the opportunity to feel they have accomplished something special and important. Constant direction and understanding are the keys!

“How Do We Understand The Need and Fill It?”

- 1. We need to demonstrate that our volunteer time is spent wisely.**
 - a. Especially at our weekly meetings. (Remember, our club meetings are 1 ½ hours; this doesn't include traveling time to and from work)
 - b. Make sure special projects start on time with minimum cancellations

- 2. In order to make sure weekly meetings are worth attending, make sure that:**
 - a. The meeting environment is enjoyable and professional.
 - b. That clique groups do not dominate certain tables on a weekly basis.
 - c. The food is appetizing and served on time.
 - d. Weekly meetings have quality speakers.
 - e. The proper time is allotted to the speaker.
 - f. Special speakers are advertised to your membership in advance. This is a great opportunity for your club to have a guest day to entice new members.
 - g. A calendar is put together during the year that indicates when you will be educating your membership about Rotary.
 - h. Your meetings are fun and interesting by adding some levity.
 - i. Your club has greeters at the door to meet new and visiting Rotarians.
 - j. New Rotarians are introduced for a month (have them give short bios during one meeting). Make them feel welcomed. Not just once but many times.
 - k. Rotarians are recognized for completing special projects (A certificate of appreciation makes anyone feel great and appreciated).

- 3. We need to educate ourselves about the new Rotary.**
 - a. Remember all events need to have personal invitations. Phone calling is the best way. Trying to solicit participation during meetings generally results in minimum participation. Many times individuals that would like to attend are not at the meeting during signups.
 - b. Don't make fun of educational seminars and meetings at club meetings. We often talk Rotarians out of attending by the way we make the presentation. If we have negative feelings regarding the function, we should not be announcing or chairing the event.
 - c. Have someone report weekly on something special happening in Rotary worldwide. The Rotarian magazine has many articles from which to choose. You might even have some fun and ask a Rotarian to explain what he/she read in the magazine about an event. Make sure that you do not embarrass Rotarians by the way you do it. Remember; add levity and fun while trying to educate.
 - d. Have club discussions on what your Rotary District is doing and how individuals participate.

- e. Encourage Rotarians to attend training seminars (It's a must that the club president and directors are attending. If they are not, this communicates that the function is not important.)
- f. Encourage Rotarians to attend International conventions. Make it a group event.
- g. Discuss the Rotary Foundation and why each of us has an obligation as Rotarians to insure that it remains strong and well funded. Many Rotarians feel that after they become Paul Harris Fellows they have fulfilled their obligation to the Rotary Foundation. Encourage members to contribute more than the 1970's standard of \$100 annual sustainer. Many of us have the capability to give more to the Foundation, but many times we are talked out of it. Foundation giving should be a budgeted item. The amount that each club asks for as a goal should be the same or slightly more each year. Changing the dollar goal yearly creates confusion and generally will result in lower giving. If Rotarians understand the need, they are usually very generous. On-going education is very important.

4. We need to take time on a regular basis to inform our membership about what direction our club is heading and how they can become a part of it.

- a. If you understand what you are doing, you are always more productive.
- b. Rotarians need to buy into projects. Don't try to dictate to your club membership. It has been proven that if individuals feel that they are part of the decision and are educated regarding the subject, usually they are more willing to participate and productivity is higher.
- c. Always recognize Rotarians for participation and outstanding effort.
- d. Talk about club accomplishments and upcoming projects at weekly meetings.
- e. Mail information to the home so that spouses or significant others are aware of how they can participate or attend.

5. We need to get new members involved immediately.

- a. Most new Rotarians will make a decision about whether to stay in Rotary within the first few weeks or months of becoming a member. We must keep in mind that years ago the new Rotarian gave much more time for the club to prove its value.
- b. Make sure that they are introduced weekly and ask 3 or 4 Rotarians to be their mentor. The mentors must introduce the new member to other members at weekly meetings. They must also invite the new members to attend club events or projects. We need to have more individuals within the club that make an extra effort to introduce new members and give them a sense of belonging to the club
- c. It is important that new members attend Rotary information meetings to educate themselves about Rotary. These are generally provided throughout the year by your District Officers. Clubs should also have regular orientation meetings.
- d. Make sure that someone from the indoctrination committee or a club director is talking to the new member weekly to see if they are enjoying Rotary.

- 6. We need to have more social events that give our membership the capability to make friends.**
 - a. Have BBQ's at homes of members and invite all Rotarians that have been members for a period of two years or less. Insist that they attend and bring their partner. Make sure that you make a personal phone call and explain the object of the event.
 - b. Wine tasting, horse racing, cruises and stage shows are just a few of the events that can be held to create better friendships. The events are important because they will include the spouse or the partner.
 - c. Make an International Convention a club social event.
 - d. Make club projects fun and self-gratifying by completing the project and then having a lunch or dinner following the project. Celebrate your success!

- 7. We need to consistently educate ourselves on new ways of motivation.**
 - a. Motivation is one of the key factors in all Rotary clubs.
 - b. When we speak we must always be positive. (If we are unhappy or have concerns about club procedures or events we must speak to the Club President privately.) Also, Rotarians should be able to question or state concerns at pre-designated club assemblies.
 - c. When talking about upcoming events and functions, use expressive positive words with a lot of emotion. Make it sound fun and interesting.

- 8. We must always have a door greeter.**
 - a. Door greeters make a club atmosphere warm and friendly.
 - b. When new members or visiting Rotarians come in greeters can direct club individuals to talk to them and invite them to sit at their table.

- 9. We must involve our membership in establishing club goals and direction.**
 - a. This makes them feel like they are part of the discussion and decision.
 - b. It is important that they don't have a feeling of being dictated to.
 - c. Education leads to better understanding.

- 10. We must be sensitive and never assume things.**
 - a. We need to take feelings into account. It's not always what we say, it's how we say it.
 - b. The way individuals are treated determines whether they will remain members.
 - c. When Rotarians fail to attend two meetings, they should be called and asked how they are doing and told the club missed them. This should be done in a caring manner so as not to communicate a feeling of being reprimanded.
 - d. The most important message to be communicated: "Is there something our club can do to assist you?"

11. We must always act and think in a positive manner.

- a. This is one of the foremost problems in Rotary. There are too many negative thoughts.
- b. Too many times we make jest of District events or Club events. We think we are being funny, but what we are really doing is minimizing the importance of the event or function.
- c. Positive attitudes help a club grow and mature. They add a comfortable level to the atmosphere.
- d. We must find solutions to problems and not be the problem.

12. We must be willing to listen to new ideas

- a. We all have a tendency to not listen. Actually, we often listen, but we don't hear.
- b. We become too complacent and unwilling to change.
- c. Stagnation is the number one problem in many Rotary clubs today.
- d. Most individuals do not like change. They have a tendency to squash good ideas because they are comfortable with the status quo.
- e. If a new idea is presented, appoint an ad hoc committee to investigate its feasibility. Make sure the committee reports back to the club on a timely basis. Remember, it's important to be receptive and not to squash new thought.

13. We must be better organized.

- a. Clubs that are well organized create a professional atmosphere.
- b. Most individuals today do not want to waste their time or effort. Time is a very precious commodity.
- c. Speakers must take the appropriate time to prepare their presentations. They must be informative and interesting. Too often their presentations are poor and have a negative effect on the membership.

14. Leadership must demonstrate that they are willing to do something that they are expecting others to do.

- a. Often we ask Rotarians to participate or do things that we have no intention of ever doing ourselves.
- b. Good leadership always leads by example.
- c. We need to participate in club projects, District Events, and especially all events in which we solicit participation. If club leadership fails to attend, this minimizes the importance of the function. Think about how the individual feels that you solicited to attend when you are not in attendance.

15. We must all become ambassadors of Rotary.

- a. We must always talk about Rotary in a positive manner. To many times we have a tendency to joke about or criticize Rotary.
- b. If we consistently educate ourselves about current events happening in Rotary, we are able to represent the organization in a friendly and professional manner.
- c. We need to take the time to speak about Rotary to friends. We often pass up great opportunities to invite possible new members to a club meeting.
- d. How many times have we complained to our friends about what happened at Rotary? Without even knowing, it we are turning them off to Rotary.

16. Getting older Rotarians involved:

- a. Older Rotarians have a tendency to not attend meetings or events when they become senior active attendance exempt.
- b. Even though they are generally willing to do something for the club, they feel that because of their age they cannot relate to new members. Eventually they often either resign or “fade into the sunset”.
- c. If an individual misses enough meetings, the desire to attend future meetings or events will diminish.
- d. Be creative in having tasks in projects that appeal to seniors and that they feel they can do.

17. We must insure that our club has good speakers on a weekly basis.

- a. Speakers are often solicited at the last minute. This generally results in a poor program that is boring.
- b. This results in Rotarians feeling that they have wasted time and gives them a negative feeling about Rotary.
- c. It increases the feeling of not wanting to attend future meetings.
- d. How many times have you heard a member of your club say “Not that Speaker again”? How many times can an individual listen to a talk about a boring fuel cell or government projects? Programs must be scrutinized carefully, planned for enough in advance, and advertised to the membership ahead of time.

Presentation Outline for the We Care Program (To be used for training seminars)

You must always keep in mind that “We Care” is a philosophy. It’s the way we live and treat each other, and most importantly, it’s the way we operate our Rotary Clubs. The philosophy will help create better attitudes, camaraderie, spirit, and integrity and instills that special respect for Rotary to all your members. This philosophy will create a new healthy and productive environment within your Rotary Club. The following categories are areas that you need to look at in order to achieve the best results. Remember, Rotary Clubs are like businesses, they must have clear direction and they must be consistent. They must be friendly to their members, informative and professional. Change should be minimal, for too much change creates confusion, which eventually leads to apathy. This philosophy will help insure a good, positive direction for Rotary.

1. New Members

- a. On the very day or before a new member is indoctrinated the club should assign him/her two or three Rotarians that will be mentors. The mentors must understand that they are the key to insuring that the new member enjoys Rotary.
- b. A mentor’s job will consist of inviting new members to sit with them at meeting. Make sure that the new member is introduced to each member at the table. By involving new members in conversation at the table they will feel more like they are part of the club. We must always remember that most individuals are shy and they need help meeting new friends. Remember, the quicker we can make our new members comfortable the more receptive they are, which will result in making a happier and more productive future Rotarian.
- c. A mentor must take the initiative to invite new members to all District and Club events. A personal invitation by phone always gives a feeling of caring and warmth. Take time during the phone conversation to explain what the event is about. This helps create interest from the new member. At the actual event follow up with more information so the new member understands more completely why it’s important to attend the event and what is the objective of the event is.
- d. Immediately assign the new member to a committee that gives interaction with other club members. The committee should give them a sense of accomplishment but shouldn’t be so difficult that it leaves a feeling of being a burden that in turn leaves a negative attitude about Rotary. The committee should also help build camaraderie.
- e. Always give the new Rotarians avenues to meet members quickly. The quickest way is to ask them to be club greeter. Make sure that another Rotarians who are familiar with the entire membership are assigned to work by their side. You must direct the Rotarian to make a conscious effort to introduce the new member to all Rotarians attending the meeting.
- f. If members miss two meetings make sure that a club representative calls them to find out why they missed. Make sure that they are told that the club missed them and be sure not to create a feeling of reprimand.
- g. Each month new Rotarians should be met with and casually talked to regarding their feelings about Rotary. Ask them what would they change

or modify if they had the opportunity. As our clubs age we seem to get tunnel vision. This is a great opportunity to get new ideas and input. It will also provide an indication whether the new member is enjoying Rotary and if they want to remain a member. All negative feelings must be reported to your membership committee and your club Board of Directors, so that remedial action can be considered.

2. Speakers

- a. Always make sure that your club has the best speakers possible. Quality programs give members the feeling that their time was well spent. Speakers are often recruited at the last minute. Those talks are commonly boring and Rotarians feel they are wasting precious time. Today's Rotarians are very busy and do not take it lightly when they feel their time has been wasted.
- b. Make sure that the speaker feels welcome and appreciated at the meeting. Always make an effort to introduce the speaker to other Rotarians and guests prior to the beginning of the meeting.
- c. Always provide a free meal for speakers and make sure they are served early enough to enjoy the meal prior to speaking. Unfortunately, speakers have often been forced to eat cold meals due to poor timing.
- d. Always make sure that the speaker receives the full time allotment that was discussed at the time of soliciting the talk. It is rude and unprofessional to reduce the speaker's time because of poor club preparation.
- e. Prior to the meeting, check the microphone to insure that it is working properly and it is set at the correct volume. If you have a sensitive microphone, instruct the speaker how close to the microphone to stand.
- f. Before a speaker is introduced to speak, make sure that the podium is clear and that nothing is obstructing the speaker's view of the entire audience.
- g. Make sure the audience shows respect to the speaker by not talking or getting up during the talk.
- h. Always applaud after the talk.
- i. The speaker should be given a gift to show the club's thanks and appreciation. The speaker always appreciates a follow up note by the Club President.
- j. After the meeting is adjourned it is important for Rotarians to approach the speaker and thank him/her personally. A simple "Thank You!" or "Great Talk!" will do. A mass exit without anyone saying anything to the speaker can be interpreted as an insult.
- k. Remember, speakers are potential members. First impressions of clubs are determining factors on how an individual perceives a club. Speakers should leave your meeting feeling positive enough about your club so that they will be proponents of Rotary and always have a feeling that Rotary is a professional and respectful organization.
- l. Rotary Clubs should have "Zero Tolerance" for early leavers. This policy might seem a little hard, but if you put yourself in the speaker's place and you see a mass exit just before you speak, one can understand why it is important. If your club allows early leaving, have them leave prior to introducing the speaker. Set an actual time (10 minutes to the hour), and if a member fails to leave by that time they must stay for the entire meeting.

3. Club and District Events

- a. A club calendar should be prepared 4 to 6 months in advance.
- b. Distribute up-dated copies on a monthly basis. It's important to keep Rotarians informed. If your club budget permits, mail an event calendar monthly.
- c. How to inform members about special events:
 - i. Prepare a written flyer at least two months in advance.
 - ii. Place flyers on the lunch tables each week until the event.
 - iii. Mail the flyers to all club members at least twice prior to the event.
 - iv. Place a special article in the weekly bulletin.
 - v. Talk about the event at meetings and explain the importance of attending. Never assume that the membership knows why the event is held.
 - vi. Create a telephone tree and call your membership and give personal invitations. Make sure that the individual calling knows all about the event and can answer all questions.
- d. How to insure good attendance at club or district events:
 - i. For the very special events, prepare and mail formal invitations with a return card and envelope.
 - ii. For general events, have the club chairperson prepare a signup sheet and personally take it around to each table at the weekly meeting. Just have the Rotarian sign up and the club will collect the money later.
 - iii. Publish an article in the club bulletin or web site.
 - iv. Have members of the event committee make phone calls and give personal invitations. All new members that have joined with in the last two years must be persuaded to attend. This helps build camaraderie and gives you the opportunity to explain why they should attend.
 - v. All members that are senior active or attendance exempt must be contacted. Tell them that the club members miss their fellowship and would like them to consider attending the event.
 - vi. Many clubs will invite widows and widowers to special social events.
 - vii. Many clubs call all the membership for every event.
 - viii. Some clubs will set up car-pooling for members that are unable to drive or who cannot drive at nighttime.

4. The Watch List

- a. Some Rotarians leave early all the time. Take the time to find out why.
- b. If a member has a serious problem, such as health, financial, business or family, check to see how the club can assist him/her.
- c. Rotarians who consistently talk during the speaker's presentation need to be told how impolite it is to the speaker and asked to stop. This should be done privately.
- d. All visitors must be made to feel as if they are at their home club. Greet them when they arrive and always ask them to sit at your table.

- e. Be aware of Rotarians that always sit together and dominate certain tables. Get them to consider moving around. Ask others to sit among them. This prohibits cliques and creates a better atmosphere in the club.
- f. Watch for Rotarians that always seem to sit at empty tables. Invite them to sit at your table.

5. **“We Care” Should Have Its Own Budget For**

- a. Communications
- b. Cards
- c. Flowers
- d. Stationary
- e. Gas for cars
- f. Complimentary meals
- g. Special gifts for members with special occasions
- h. Special Invitations

6. **Tracking Attendance**

This is an important aspect in club health. If Rotarians are not attending functions, they are missing out on the full flavor of Rotary. Don't take a hard line stance, but be aware. The following items will give you an indication of what type of Rotarian an individual is. These records should be reviewed quarterly. If a pattern is seen, the club president should be informed and steps should be taken to discuss the matter with the Rotarian.

- a. Attendance at weekly meetings
- b. Making up missed meetings
- c. Attendance at club events and projects
- d. Attendance at District events
- e. Attendance at International events

For more information on this valuable and important program, please contact Gary Citti at citti007@aol.com or 408-371-9600.