Return on your investment

A gift to The Rotary Foundation is an investment. Gifts to the Annual Fund enable Rotarians to change people’s lives and communities while creating lifelong relationships. Like financial investors, Annual Fund donors have the potential to receive returns far greater than their initial investment. Sometimes these returns occur immediately but often the returns occur over time.

I would like to share a story with you to demonstrate the global impact that results from your gifts to Annual Fund-SHARE. Of the many of students awarded scholarships from The Rotary Foundation to study abroad and expand cultural understanding there was one sent from the United States to South Africa. South Africa, a country characterized by a history of deprivation and impoverishment, changed his life forever. His scholarship experience reaffirmed his belief that making a difference in someone’s life can be life-changing for all people involved in the exchange – those receiving and those giving.

While serving as a Rotary Scholar, he became involved with Dr. Jane Goodall’s global youth organization, Roots & Shoots. They orchestrated AIDS workshops, tutored homeless youth, arranged township clean ups and home-stays. Additionally, they collected supplies for a home for the elderly, orphaned or disabled. Later Dr. Goodall arranged for him to volunteer with her community development project in Tanzania and selected him to join her delegation to a United Nations World Summit. These invaluable experiences led to global opportunities for him in Africa, North America, Asia and Europe.

Returns on your investment

This Rotary Scholar was later awarded a vocational scholarship from his sponsor Rotary club in recognition of his academic achievement and service to the community. He decided to study fundraising, because it aligned with the values he nurtured during his Rotary scholarship. He believes through fundraising you can educate and motivate people to improve the human condition globally. While earning his Masters of Science in Nonprofit Management he was recruited to The Rotary Foundation. Today, he is privileged to work for the Foundation as an Annual Giving Officer serving with Rotarians in the western region of North America.

As a Rotary Foundation employee he has been able to leverage his Rotary Scholar experiences and connections to further the mission of Rotary. Dr. Jane Goodall, celebrated scientist, travels 300+ days a year as a UN Messenger of Peace. Dr. Goodall’s former volunteer, our Rotary Scholar turned Rotary employee, orchestrated the opportunity for her to speak at the Rotary International Convention in Birmingham, attend a Bequest Society reception and an Arch C. Klump dinner to honor our Foundation donors. After all, without these Rotary Foundation supporters, his scholarship to South Africa would not have been possible.

Using his connections and networks developed during his Rotary Scholarship, he was also able to connect with Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Archbishop was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in fighting the injustices of the apartheid regime and later appointed by Nelson Mandela to lead the Truth & Reconciliation Commission. This Rotary Scholar arranged for the Archbishop to speak at the Rotary World Peace Symposium in Birmingham which explored world peace and understanding with our Rotary Peace Fellows and Rotarians.

Archbishop Tutu, a polio survivor, joined our “This Close” public service campaign to bring awareness to Rotary’s polio eradication efforts and signed the soccer ball that traveled to more than 20 African nations prior to its arrival at our Rotary Convention in Montreal as part of our “Kick Polio Out of Africa” campaign.

The Archbishop later spoke to more than 15,000 people at the Tacoma, Washington Dome to address some of the rising concerns about youth and violence in their community. The Archbishop’s youngest daughter (and head of his legacy foundation) spoke at a district conference in Alaska, and Peace Fellows have been contributing to blogs on the Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation website.

The initial investment in this Rotary Scholar is quite small when compared to all the good that has resulted from his scholarship for him, Rotary and communities throughout the world. I can’t think of another fund like the Annual Fund that produces these kinds of global returns. Today this Rotary Scholar continues to support The Rotary Foundation’s Annual Fund-SHARE with recurring contributions through Rotary Direct. And, that Rotary Scholar is me. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Yours in Rotary,
Steven Solomon

2008 to Present Annual Giving Officer at The Rotary Foundation (steven.solomon@rotary.org)
2001 Rotary Scholar to the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa
Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Buffalo Grove, Illinois, USA (District 6440)
Hosted by the Rotary Club of Chatsworth, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (District 9270)
1994 to 1998 Interact Club Member at Stevenson High School
Sponsored by the Rotary Clubs of Buffalo Grove, Lincolnshire (Morning Star), Long Grove/Kildeer/Hawthorne Woods, IL (District 6440)
Photos with Dr. Jane Goodall


Rotary International Convention, Birmingham, UK (2009)
Photos with Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Illinois, USA (2008)
Washington, USA (2011)
Alaska, USA (2011)

Rotary World Peace Symposium, Birmingham, UK (2010)
New York, USA (2014)