

the **Rotarian**

ROTARY.ORG

JULY 2020

**Meet the new RI president,
Holger Knaack,
and his wife, Susanne**



#ROTARYRESPONDS
Clubs adapt to a new normal

BETTER TOGETHER
Connecting young and old

Rotary 



EVERY ROTARIAN EVERY YEAR



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President's message

Dear Rotarians, Rotaractors, and friends,

This does not seem like a time for great optimism, but it has to be. Long before Rotary was founded, the world dealt with great crises that tested humankind's ability to progress and endure. In the age of Rotary, the world has faced many more catastrophes; however, we have survived, and every step of the way, Rotary has helped the world heal.

Every great challenge is an opportunity for renewal and growth. I revealed the theme of *Rotary Opens Opportunities* at the International Assembly in San Diego just as the COVID-19 crisis was beginning, but these are words that I have believed for many years.

Rotary is not just a club that you join; it is an invitation to endless opportunities. We believe in creating opportunities for others and for ourselves. We believe that our acts of service, large and small, generate opportunities for people who need our help, and that Rotary opens opportunities for us to live a richer, more meaningful life, with friends around the world, based on our core values.

Governments and institutions are gaining a greater appreciation for the types of public health partnerships that are critical to our work. People stuck at home, eager for greater connections and hungry to help their communities, are now embracing the values we have promoted since our beginning.

All of this is positive news, but just because there are greater opportunities than ever for Rotary to thrive does not guarantee that we will succeed. The world is changing rapidly — and was doing so even before this crisis. People

were starting to move away from regular lunch meetings and toward online gatherings. Friendships were being cultivated and revived in social media relationships even before most of our meetings moved to Zoom and Skype. Younger generations have a strong desire to serve — but have questioned whether they could play a meaningful role in organizations like Rotary or whether they might make a bigger impact forming different types of connections. Now is the time to put everything on the table, test new approaches, and prepare Rotary for the future.

The COVID-19 crisis has forced all of us to adapt. This is good, and our new Action Plan specifically calls on us to improve our ability to adapt. But adaptation is not enough. We need to change, and change dramatically, if we are to face the challenges of this new age and provide the Rotary that the world so desperately needs.

This is our great challenge, not just in the next year but into the future. It is up to us to remake Rotary for these new times — to wholeheartedly embrace the ideas, energy, and commitment of young people eager to find an outlet for idealism. We must become an organization fully enmeshed in the digital age, not one that simply looks for online ways to keep doing what we have always done.

The world needs Rotary now more than ever. It is up to us to make sure that *Rotary Opens Opportunities* for generations to come.

HOLGER KNAACK

President, Rotary International



contents

JULY

features



COURTESY OF FOOD PLANT SOLUTIONS ROTARY ACTION GROUP

14

- 1** PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
- 6** INBOX
- 8** EDITOR'S NOTE

11 **our world**

- Nathan Thomas: Light source
- Q&A with Debra Fine
- People of action around the globe
- Adapt and connect
- Snapshot: Belize City, Belize

23 **viewpoints**

- The bright side

55 **our clubs**

- Being there in Aspen, Colorado
- 5 questions about environmental projects
- Club innovation: La Marsa Impact, Tunisia
- Convention countdown: Taipei energy
- Message from the trustee chair
- Apply yourself
- Crossword

64 LAST LOOK

28 **YOUNG AT HEART**

As RI's new president, Holger Knaack has a fresh vision for the Rotary of the future. With a little help from his friends, things should go swimmingly.

By Jenny Llakmani

Photography by Samuel Zuder

40 **BETTER TOGETHER**

A need to connect with different age groups is woven into our genes.

By Diana Schoberg

Photography by Frank Ishman

50 **THE ROTARIAN CONVERSATION**

Longevity expert Marc Freedman has found that both younger and older people thrive when they work together with a common purpose — something Rotarians know a lot about.

By Diana Schoberg

Illustration by Viktor Miller Gausa

“ He just wants to be one friend among friends. ”

— Barbara Hardkop on Holger Knaack



ON THE COVER Holger and Susanne Knaack with their late dachshund, Kalle, at a decorative gate on the shore of one of the four lakes surrounding their hometown of Ratzeburg, Germany.
Photography by Samuel Zuder

OPPOSITE Rotarian Nathan Thomas founded a nonprofit that has worked with Rotary clubs and districts to complete 32 solar installations in Uganda, including this one at Kitimba Primary School.
See page 11.
Photography by Arnold Mugasha/Shot by Mu

the Rotarian

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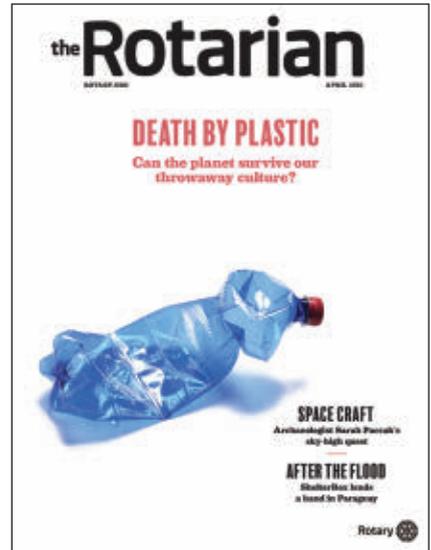
Waste not

I spent my entire career working in the plastics industry, beginning at Dow Chemical in 1972. I read with great interest Susan Freinkel’s “Welcome to Plasticville” in the April issue. She did an excellent job with a very complex and somewhat emotional subject. She captured the grand scheme of the entire plastics industry, both the benefits that plastics can provide and their negative impact, including the indiscriminate disposal of plastics by consumers and the real threat of ocean pollution.

I appreciated how Freinkel balanced science and efficacy with her legitimate concerns about where our use — or misuse — of plastic is leading us. And I liked the ways she and, as the issue pointed out, my fellow Rotarians are demonstrating how we can all do a better job of mitigating the damaging effects of plastics.

I hope we can accomplish that while recognizing their beneficial aspects. Breakthroughs in plastic have led to advances in medicine; to improvements in food packaging that diminish food waste; and to automobile designs that enhance performance and reduce gasoline consumption. By using plastics wisely and responsibly, we can improve our lives *and* protect our planet.

JEFFREY S. SIEBENALLER *Lake Mary, Florida*



I made a vow five years ago, when I turned 60, to eliminate plastic from my life. Little did I realize how near impossible that would be. I challenge anyone to try to quit using plastic; you will quickly understand how pervasive plastics are in our culture. The miracle of plastics is no longer miraculous. Thank you for a wonderful and timely article!

LYNNE PHILLIPS
Louisville, Kentucky

I read your suggestions to reduce plastic use. We can do better: Reject! Don’t even pick up a plastic bag; take reusable bags with you. Travel by plane with no plastic in mind. I recently was on a 13-hour flight with some 244 others. We received beverages, served at different times, in six single-use plastic cups. We received two packages of plastic utensils, each with three utensils wrapped in a plastic bag. That amounts to some 1,500 plastic cups and almost 1,500 plastic utensils for that flight — and the plane was only 70 percent full.

Carry a small, refillable water bottle. Carry

your own spork. Carry a cloth napkin. Reject the plastic.

At the grocery store, ask why those cookies, cakes, or muffins are packed in plastic. What’s wrong with a cardboard box that is made from recycled paper?

Just a few things to think about — and there are many more.

JEANINE PARKER
Ottawa

The feature “The Plastic Trap” did an outstanding job of explaining the serious crisis caused by single-use plastic and the need for all of us to do our part in solving the problem. I was happy to see that several clubs reported what they have done at meetings and events to help with the situation.

As members of the Rotary Club of Solana Beach Eco, our mission is to educate ourselves and our communities about environmental challenges and engage in implementing their solutions. We have been holding zero-waste meetings since our club was chartered seven years ago. At our evening meetings, we serve

light dinners and beverages provided by members. A club member is designated each week to take home the reusable plastic dishes, glass drinkware, and metal utensils to wash and bring back for the next meeting. This tableware can be purchased or donated by a club’s members. We also have helped make a local wine festival, which draws over 1,000 attendees, zero waste by working with the vendors and sponsors.

Each of us can work toward zero waste at meetings and at home. This should be a goal in all our Rotary efforts.

ANDI KOSNAR
Cardiff-by-the-Sea, California

The section on plastics was interesting. Our son was a navigator for NOAA’s Hurricane Hunters. They do research missions in the off-season. Several years ago, they worked on a “ghost nets” project. Trawlers in the northern Pacific Ocean sometimes lose their nets, and the nets start collecting debris and become floating islands. The Hurricane Hunters flew out of Honolulu looking for these floating islands. When they

found one, they dropped sonobuoys [waterborne sensors] on the nets so they could track them and pick them up before they reached Hawaiian shores.

PETE SIEGEL
San Antonio

Although it is an excerpt from a book called *Plastic: A Toxic Love Story* by Susan Freinkel, the piece "Welcome to Plasticville" contained some errors. The story states that Styrofoam was trademarked by DuPont. This is incorrect — it was trademarked by Dow Chemical. The article also states that the plastic peanuts, made for packing, are called Styrofoam. They are not; they are polystyrene. Styrofoam is the trade name for insulating material only.

JOHN KING
Western regional manager, DowBrands,
retired; Garden Bay, British Columbia

I'm sorry, but I couldn't help but chuckle as I read "Death by Plastic" on the cover of the April issue — through the single-use plastic sleeve it was delivered in.

FRANK MEIBOOM
Trenton, Ontario

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This is a problem the magazine industry at large is working to solve. The Rotarian's international mailers require that issues be mailed in polybags. Our domestic copies move without such protection, though they may be bundled with other titles to reduce overall mailing costs. As Matt Kopac noted in the April issue's "Round Trip," a complete life-cycle analysis is needed. Read MIT Technology Review's take on the issue at bit.ly/3bX3XPi.*

The editors welcome comments on items published in the magazine but reserve the right to edit for style and length. Published letters do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors or Rotary International leadership, nor do the editors take responsibility for errors of fact that may be expressed by the writers.

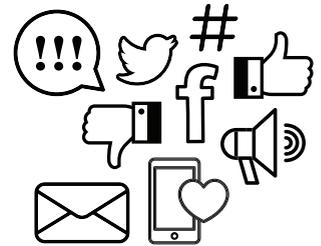
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Overheard on social media



Rotary members are doing their part in the fight against COVID-19. We sampled Twitter to see how #RotaryResponds.



Rotary Club of Glen Burnie, Maryland, @RotaryGB
Thanks to the support of Rotarians throughout Anne Arundel County, some \$30,000 has already been contributed to helping local first responders and small businesses navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic. Just yesterday, 394 meals from local restaurants were delivered to Baltimore Washington Medical Center! #RotaryResponds



Rotary Club of David, Panama, @rotariodavid
Today we donated 390 yards of fabric for the production of surgical gowns for the medical staff, nurses, and technicians of the José Domingo de Obaldía Maternity Hospital. #RotaryResponse #covid19 #Rotary #conectaemundo #saludmaternoinfantil
[translated from Spanish]



Revista Rotary Brasil, @revistarotarybr
The Rotary Club of Araçatuba donated five beds to the local hospital. With this donation, the entity now has two extra rooms to treat patients with COVID-19. The project was a partnership with the local Inner Wheel.
[translated from Portuguese]



Rotary Club of Chicago, @rotaryone
2020-21 President Erik Cempel delivered thanks and meals to #healthcareheroes at #Amita Health Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center. #mealstothe frontline #COVID19 #rotaryresponds #rotaryclubofchicago #AllInIllinois



Rotary Club of Bombay, India, @RCB1929
Superb: Proud of the Thane Civil Hospital team, the Thane Collector, Medikabazaar team, and our Rotary Club of Bombay team! 🙌 11 ventilators installed at the Thane Civil Hospital — all contributed by the Rotary Club of Bombay! #RotaryResponds #covid19 #rotary



Rotary International, @Rotary
The #Rotary Club of Makurdi Sunrise in Nigeria created and distributed hand-washing stations and soap to 30 classrooms to prevent the spread of #COVID19. Find out how other Rotary clubs are responding: on.rotary.org/rotaryresponds. #RotaryResponds

Check out Rotary International's Instagram story on **17 JULY** for an interactive poll about environmental projects.

SERVICE ABOVE SELF

The Object of Rotary

THE OBJECT of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster:

FIRST The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;

SECOND High ethical standards in business and professions, the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations, and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society;

THIRD The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business, and community life;

FOURTH The advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service

The Four-Way Test

OF THE THINGS we think, say, or do:

- 1) Is it the **TRUTH**?
- 2) Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
- 3) Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
- 4) Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?

Rotarian Code of Conduct

The following code of conduct has been adopted for the use of Rotarians:

AS A ROTARIAN, I will

- 1) Act with integrity and high ethical standards in my personal and professional life
- 2) Deal fairly with others and treat them and their occupations with respect
- 3) Use my professional skills through Rotary to: mentor young people, help those with special needs, and improve people's quality of life in my community and in the world
- 4) Avoid behavior that reflects adversely on Rotary or other Rotarians
- 5) Help maintain a harassment-free environment in Rotary meetings, events, and activities, report any suspected harassment, and help ensure non-retaliation to those individuals that report harassment.



**A message from the
editor in chief
JOHN REZEK**

Outside, as I write this, it is the middle of May. We who work on *The Rotarian* are mostly inside, spending way too much time in front of our screens.

But we do look up now and then, and what we notice seems reassuringly fresh. I see flowers and flowering trees. I don't know their names, but I'm really glad they showed up. My wife would love to see them, but we're social distancing — by about 70 miles. She works on the front line of pandemic response. In my free moments, I find ways to distract myself so as not to worry about her.

The window behind my laptop opens up to the woods. At night, in muted moonlight, it becomes dense with shapes that almost look like something. During the day, it looks like nature threw a disorderly party and no one bothered to clean up afterward. I bought a chain saw. When I get a moment, I intend to impose some modest order as an excuse to have fun with my new toy.

Several of my colleagues are giving books they've liked a slower, second read. We hope to find only pleasant surprises. There's renewed interest in the letters of Seneca, and I'm being stoic about my inability to find my copy, which is littered with my undergraduate insights. No one I know is retackling Dostoyevsky.

Along with the rest of the Rotary International staff, we just learned that we will not return to the office before July — and then only if it's safe. We're not surprised. We would prefer to put the magazine together in person, but we're still working on and planning issues of *The Rotarian* well into 2021.

Our jobs haven't evaporated. We are privileged to be able to work from home — and to have homes to work from. We are not refugees, nor are we chronically ill, imprisoned, or destitute. We have some control over the level of our infection risk. We are not essential workers who must travel by public transportation or who are required to do business with people who might be less rigorous in their own precautions.

We get to stay at home and still work for Rotary. We're able to do so because the Rotary world is going about its business despite the swirl of the pandemic. We get to keep telling stories of ordinary people exceeding their own expectations, people who are generous and kind in unforgiving times, people who have oceanic regard for their fellow humans. People such as you.

**We hope
to find only
pleasant
surprises.**

PEOPLE OF ACTION NOW SHOWING



Rotary's public service announcement campaign has launched, bringing People of Action to life on TV, radio, and in print across the U.S. Expand our reach by featuring People of Action ads on your club website and social media channels. Learn more about our PSA 2020 Campaign at rotary.org/brandcenter.





TOGETHER, WE

EMPOWER

Potential shines brightest when it's inspired. That's why Rotary clubs invest time and expertise in encouraging others to be the best they can be. Empowering those who have big dreams to achieve great things — that's what people of action do. [Learn more at Rotary.org](http://Rotary.org).

Rotary



PEOPLE OF ACTION

our world



Light source

NATHAN THOMAS
Rotary Club of Raleigh Midtown,
North Carolina

Whether in a primary school in a rural village near Kampala, Uganda, where students used to study by candlelight, or a medical clinic that lacked refrigeration to store medicine and vaccines, there is nothing like the celebration that takes place when solar-powered electricity is turned on for the first time.

continued from page 11

Nathan Thomas, who was president of the Rotary Club of Raleigh Midtown at age 23 and will be a district governor in 2022-23, has witnessed the joy firsthand. “It’s absolutely incredible,” he says. “It’s a huge celebration. These communities are going from kerosene lamps or candles directly to renewable energy.”

Thomas, now 27, founded the non-profit All We Are, which oversees the Solarize Uganda Now (SUN) Project. In the past five years, SUN has completed 32 LED solar installations at 26 Ugandan schools, two medical clinics, and a women’s center, and has installed three solar-powered wells. The work was done in partnership with the Raleigh Midtown club; the Rotary Club of Cincinnati; the Rotary Club of Nateete-Kampala; Districts 7710, 9211, and 6670; and others.

Thomas got involved with Rotary in high school in Findlay, Ohio, where he had the idea to repair computers and ship them to schools in a country that needed them. To find a partner, he emailed about 100 organizations across Africa. He received a response from a Pittsburgh-based group working in Uganda. He also connected with the Rotary Club of Findlay, which provided him with \$1,500 in funding and helped him

“These communities are going from candles directly to renewable energy.”

learn about organizing an international project. “Growing up in Ohio, I didn’t have many avenues to work on an international level,” he says. “I wanted to go out and change the world, but there was no book that said, ‘Here’s how you do it.’”

His first project taught Thomas that shipping is expensive. He visited Uganda for the first time when he was 18 and discovered there were more immediate concerns than refurbished computers. “I



Engineers prepare the roof of Kitimba Primary School in Uganda for the installation of solar panels. During this project, a solar installation was also done at the adjacent Kitimba Health Centre III, one of the only health facilities in the area.

saw firsthand the challenges to provide basic needs,” he says.

While attending the University of Cincinnati, Thomas visited the Rotary Club of Cincinnati and began meeting regularly with club member Deborah Schultz, who became his mentor. Working together, they received a \$2,000 grant from the club’s world affairs committee to install LED lights at a school and at a shelter for disadvantaged young women in Uganda.

Thomas earned a degree in mechanical engineering in 2015, landed a job in the Raleigh-Durham area, and joined the Raleigh Midtown Rotary club. He credits Rotary with guiding his efforts to help others on an international level. “I learned the best practices of international development through Rotary: buying local, training a local workforce, putting money into the local economy, and asking communities how we might be helpful,” he says.

The solar projects always start with a community needs assessment and with a strong partnership with Rotarians in

Uganda. “It’s extremely important to build local trust,” Thomas says. “They’re there to help us with the needs assessment and to be culturally sensitive in our project design and implementation.”

Each partner institution pays a 5 to 10 percent share of the total capital expenditure, to be used for repairs and future maintenance of the systems. The installations cost about \$7,500 apiece. Thomas plans to secure funding for 18 more solar installations by the end of 2020.

He has earned the respect of Schultz, who has been involved with Rotary overseas projects for most of her 30 years in Rotary. “He has endless drive and energy, but never rushes others,” she says. “He’s a natural leader and motivator.”

Thomas was born in Canada, the son of immigrants from India. He believes his background influenced his global approach to helping others in need. “Like many of us who are passionate about international projects, I believe that global DNA was really intertwined in my upbringing,” he says.

—ANNEMARIE MANNION

“ If you want to create fellowship, then you have to give people something real to talk about. ”

Debra Fine



Words with friends

Among the many reasons to join Rotary, one of the most important is social: We like being part of something bigger than ourselves. We like to work with others toward common goals. We like to belong to a community. This need for fellowship has come into sharp relief with the COVID-19 pandemic, with many of us “socially distanced” not only from our Rotary clubs, but from everyone.

Debra Fine, a member of the Rotary Club of Denver Southeast, Colorado, and the author of *The Fine Art of Small Talk*, has made a career of studying how we connect with others and how we can strengthen those connections. We spoke with Fine about keeping in touch with our families and fellow Rotarians via video, as well as about how to reconnect once we start meeting in person again.

THE ROTARIAN: Why is “small talk” a big deal?

FINE: If you don’t start with small talk, then you don’t make a connection. I’ve been in Rotary 27 years, and wherever I travel as a public speaker, I go to a Rotary club. If you don’t in-

vest in having a real conversation with that person sitting next to you, there is no connection.

TR: Where do you begin when you don’t know what to say?

FINE: If I met you at a Rotary meeting, I would say, “Frank, good to meet you. What keeps you busy outside of Rotary meetings?” That’s my favorite way to get to know somebody. These days, I might say, “What’s keeping you busy outside of being concerned about the coronavirus?” The key is to not ask questions like, “How are you?” or “How have you been?” If I’m speaking with a Rotarian I already know, I simply say, “What’s new since the last time I talked to you?”

TR: How are the conversations we’re holding via video different from those that take place in person?

FINE: A lot of the same rules apply, like using people’s names. We get lazy about using names in conversation. When you’re on a Zoom call with eight family members, you can say, “John, what’s going on in your world?” I’m constantly doing that on our family Zoom call. Or you can say, “What’s new that was different from last week?” or, “Bring me up to date on your week.” We have two Zoom calls a week

with our four adult kids, and I always hear myself saying, “OK, outside of this horribleness, what’s keeping you guys busy?”

TR: Any tips for talking about yourself?

FINE: Rotary is about Service Above Self, about fellowship. If you want to create fellowship, then you have to give people something real to talk about. Just a sentence, not a speech or a narrative. But if somebody says to me, “How’s it going?” I’ll say, “Great. I’m planting some seeds for my vegetable garden,” or, “I just read a great book.” It’s an investment of 20 or 30 seconds, whether it’s in a Zoom call or at a Rotary meeting.

TR: Any advice for how to reconnect once meetings start again?

FINE: Most of us are in Rotary for connections, whether for business or social reasons. So put the energy into cultivating those connections. Walk into your Rotary club meeting with two or three things to talk about. Don’t sit at the table and say, “How are you?” “Good.” Then we all start playing with our food. We’re Rotarians, for goodness’ sake! Look across the table. Say, “Debra, what’s new with you?” Include everyone at the table. Be a leader. Assume the burden of cultivating connections. Say, “What are everybody’s plans?” —FRANK BURES



People of action around the globe

More than 4 million Venezuelans lack access to safe drinking water.

United States

Since the 1930s, the Rotary Club of Kutztown, Pennsylvania, has served its local agriculture sector with a yearly soiree. On 19 February, 160 people packed the town's Grange hall for a Farmers' Night meal, piled up family style, featuring comfort food such as turkey, ham, carrots, peas, potatoes, "and always a dessert, pie a la mode," says Bob Hobaugh, District 7430 governor-elect and the event's chief organizer since 1995. "We celebrate all local people in agriculture," Hobaugh says, including high school students interested in becoming the next generation of farmers. In Pennsylvania, farming is a major driver of the state economy.

Venezuela

When Miguel Saviroff heard about a project to control parasite-borne diseases in his native Venezuela, he persuaded his club, the Rotary Club of Somerset, Pennsylvania, to host a visit from Isis Mejias of the Rotary E-Club of Houston and Alberto Paniz Mondolfi of the Rotary Club of Barquisimeto Valle Del Turbio, Venezuela. The Somerset Rotarians raised roughly \$3,000 for Incubadora Venezolana de la Ciencia (Venezuelan Science Incubator, or VSI), a nonprofit researching infectious diseases. VSI used the money and a Somerset Rotarian's donation of anti-parasitic drugs for a mission to La Pica, Venezuela, where children were administered the medicine in February.

Germany

In the early 2000s, Helmut Falter was dismayed to see subpar scores by German students in reading, mathematics, and science. Falter, a member of the Rotary Club of Aachen-Frankenburg and the longtime head of his family's bookstore chain and publishing house, decided to take action. In 2004, Falter and Monika Schröder, a primary school teacher, unveiled Lesen Lernen – Leben Lernen, or "Learn to Read – Learn to Live." To improve reading comprehension, the initiative provides books to students ages six to 13 and instruction manuals for the teachers. About half of all Rotary clubs in Germany participate, notes Falter. On 6 December, the millionth book in the flagship effort was delivered in a ceremony in Aachen.



Philippines

Taking a page from the illustrated guides of Audubon (birds) and Taylor (plants), a Rotary Action Group has developed its own field guides and partnered with aid providers in more than 30 countries to educate people about the benefits of better diets through locally available, nutritious plants. “Picture guides are ideal for those with low levels of literacy, both adults and children,” says Karalyn Hings-ton, executive officer of the Food Plant Solutions action group.

“Our materials focus on empowering people, particularly women, through education, so that they can then make informed choices on what to feed their children to enable them

to grow healthy and strong,” Hings-ton says. “Our work is underpinned by the Food Plants International database developed by Bruce French, an Australian agricultural scientist. This database contains information on over 31,000 edible plants for all countries of the world.”

The Rotary Club of Hobart, Australia, and District 9830, using District Designated Funds, recently contributed about \$7,000 to the group to take its message to people in the Philippines with the publication of a series of illustrated field guides. The booklets, highlighting 40 edible plants, were distributed by the Muravah Foundation.

Bulgaria

More than 400 primary and high school students took the field over five days of team contests sponsored by the Rotary Club of Vratza. “Nine years ago we started with the idea for a sports competition, which has turned into a tradition,” says club member Vesko Vasilev. The soccer, basketball, volleyball, and other events are organized by club members and overseen by professional judges to heighten the stakes. The club tapped about \$4,000 in club funds to stage the most recent event, in October. The local Interact club helped out with water distribution and awards ceremonies.

— BRAD WEBBER

Humans eat only 150 or so of the world’s estimated 10,000 available edible plant species.

Adapt and connect

ROTARIANS HAVE ALWAYS ADAPTED when confronting disasters, finding new ways to serve their communities. Faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, Rotarians are stepping up to the challenge, and clubs around the world are sharing their stories of the creative ways they are making a difference.

Rotary Club of Amersfoort Stad, The Netherlands



“A lot of attention has been paid to the medical and economic side of the story. However, the coronavirus is also keeping parents and caregivers at home with their school-age children, an unexpected situation that has forced many to improvise. *Our Kids CoronaKrant* is a digital newspaper that includes text, drawings, photographs, and videos produced by and for children [*krant* is the Dutch word for newspaper]. The website is a project of the My Book Buddy organization I started in Kenya 10 years ago with the support of Rotarians and other organizations.”

Cathy Spierenburg

Rotary Club of La Marsa Impact, Tunisia



“Many Tunisian Rotary clubs, instead of financing their flagship projects, have decided to donate the money to fight the coronavirus. We organized an online ‘coronathon’ to collect donations from Rotarians and their families and friends to finance the needs of hospitals, including for respirators and other supplies.”

Eya Chaouch

Rotary Club of Santa Rosa West, California



“Our club partnered with the Rotary Club of Santa Rosa East to come up with an initial \$2,000 to purchase 175 boxed lunches from a Rotarian-owned restaurant. We set up a safe drive-thru in Santa Rosa and invited hospitality and service workers to pick up a free lunch for themselves and their families. We also set up a GoFundMe for public donations and raised money, with four Santa Rosa Rotary clubs participating.”

Casey Williams, PRESIDENT

Rotary Club of Downtown Franklin, Tennessee



“For safety, we are trying to do our part in keeping face-to-face interactions limited, but we are still collecting food for One Generation Away, which helps feed many needy people in middle Tennessee. Club member Mike Alday delivered donation bins that were put on the front porches of some of our members, along with ones set outside local businesses. Besides the food, \$530 was raised for the organization.”

John Reynolds

Rotary Club of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, Mauritius



“As COVID-19 cases began to rise, our club partnered with a state-owned company, Airports of Mauritius, to provide medical equipment to support the government in this battle. We donated breathing assistance machines, electrocardiographs, vital sign monitors, and devices to detect infections and prevent sepsis and other conditions. The equipment was deployed to the New Souillac Hospital on 23 March.”

Rakesh Gaju

Rotary Club of Djursholm, Sweden



“In mid-March, our club started the project Djursholm Rotaryklubb Hjälp (Djursholm Rotary Club Helps) to assist residents who were in quarantine or isolated in Danderyd, a municipality outside Stockholm. We helped mostly elderly people by buying food and other supplies, and being available for advice and conversation. Rotary has always stepped up in crises and disasters. We see this as part of our work to serve our community.”

Margit Svenson

District 3521 (Taiwan)



“Using food donated by wholesale markets, our district has prepared and delivered meal boxes to the medical professionals at hospitals that are treating COVID-19 patients. The assistance of the minister of health and welfare and the mayors of Taipei and New Taipei City were instrumental to our building a central kitchen to efficiently prepare the meals.”

Sara Ma, PAST DISTRICT GOVERNOR

Rotary Club of Berlin Platz der Republik, Germany



“The Rotary Club of Berlin Platz der Republik and the Rotaract Club of Berlin International introduced a joint effort to support people who are especially vulnerable to the virus as well as professionals in the health and civil protection sectors by offering a shopping service. Those needing grocery shopping or to have other errands run contact us via phone or email. At the beginning of the project, six Rotarians and 17 Rotaractors delivered everything, contactless, to their door. To raise awareness, we have posted leaflets in our neighborhoods and used social media.”

Jörg Haas

Rotary Club of Westhoughton, England



“We helped organize and promote a teddy bear hunt. People with children at home, and grandparents who could not visit with their grandchildren, have been putting teddy bears in their windows. It is just a small way to spread a little joy and brightness in the present constrained times.”

Phil Wood

Rotary Club of Naperville Sunrise, Illinois



“Using social media, our club held a drive-by drop-off — with members standing the appropriate minimum of 6 feet apart, of course — and collected food for a local pantry. We got to talk to some potential new members, too, and it generated a good feeling between us at a difficult time.”

Deborah Newman

Rotary Club of Oswestry Cambrian, England



“Because of the lockdown, more people than ever are getting their prescriptions delivered as they are self-isolating. Pharmacies were getting backed up, so Oswestry Cambrian Rotary members were pleased to step in to help the Old Chapel Pharmacy make deliveries.”

Ron Pugh

Rotary Club of Sanam Chan, Thailand



“After receiving a request from a hospital in Nakhon Pathom province, we raised about \$600 from members, purchased materials, and assembled face shields with the assistance of the Rotaract Club of Sanam Chan Community, which we sponsor. Thirty of us made 3,580 shields, which were given to 22 hospitals and health care centers.”

Rattapanorn Laorujiralai

Rotary Club of Panaji Mid-Town, India



“Amid a shortage of proper medical gear, our club designed, manufactured, and distributed face shields to protect doctors, nurses, and health care workers. In the early days of the pandemic, we delivered 100 thermoformed 2-millimeter acrylic shields and construction worker helmet harnesses to the local directorate of health services at no cost.”

Siddha Sardessai

Rotaract Club of Madras Central, India



“With people confined to their homes, our club wanted to boost people’s spirits and distract them from the negativity. We sought an inclusive idea of putting the lockdown to its fullest use, where people could be creative while spending time with their families. We introduced a simple challenge to cook your favorite dish or try out a new one, take pictures of the process and the finished dish, and post the recipe and pictures on social media, including our club Facebook page. With the hashtag #Quarantine CookingChallenge, we got a remarkable response. Nothing brings people together like good food.”

Meera Devi

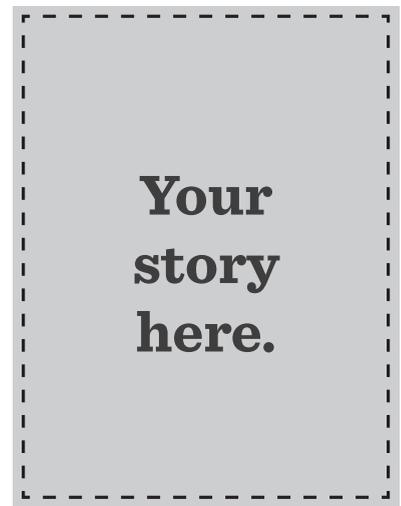
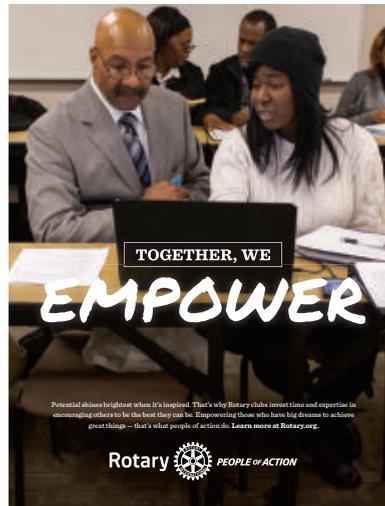




SNAPSHOT **Belize City, Belize**

In 2019, first responders in Canada displayed a spirit of international cooperation by donating a firetruck and four ambulances for use in Belize.

The Rotary Club of Edmonton Riverview, Alberta, which has been coordinating donations of ambulances and medical supplies to Belize for a number of years, helped with logistics. To deliver the firetruck and ambulances, the club applied for the Denton Program, a joint effort of various U.S. government departments and agencies, which provides transportation of humanitarian assistance using military aircraft. The truck, destined for the city of Corozal, came off the U.S. Air Force transport plane at Philip S.W. Goldson International Airport in Belize City.



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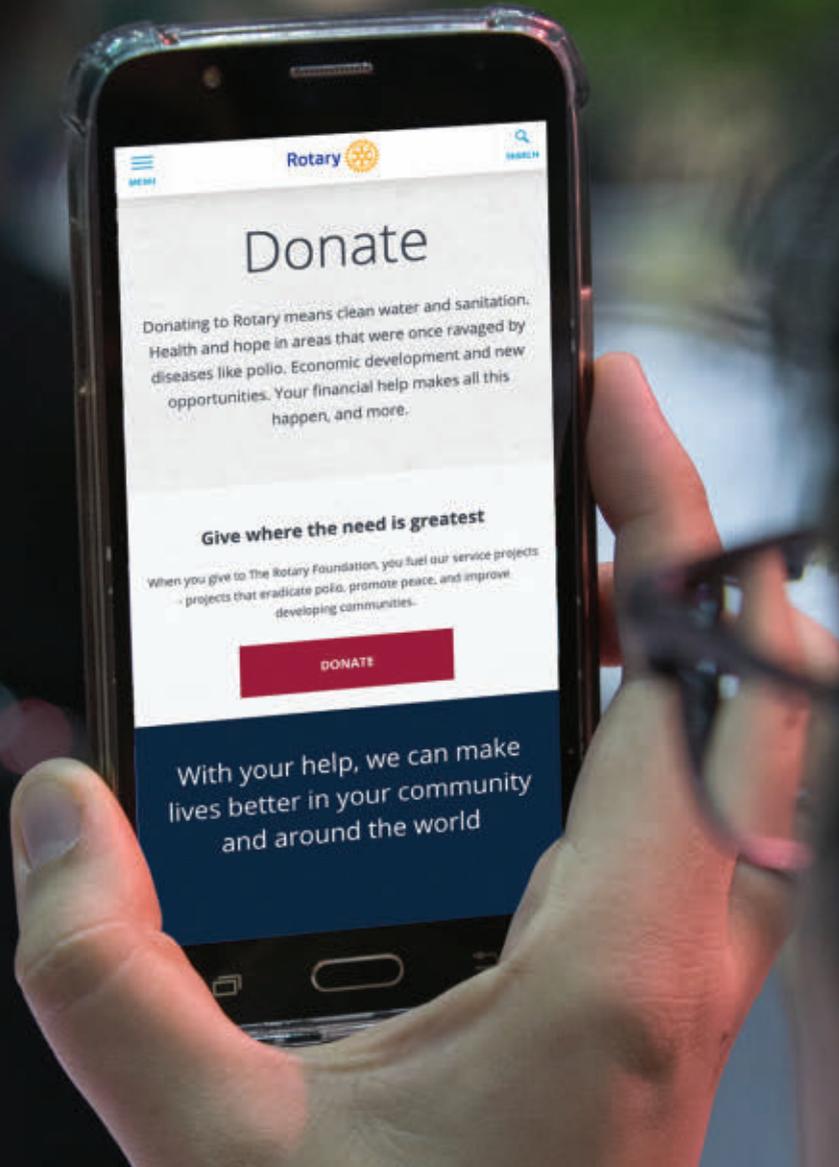
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The bright side

Finding the silver lining can light your way to taking action

by NANCY SHEPHERDSON

Last fall, I was helping with a voter registration drive at a high school. Although the first hour was slow, we managed to sign up two students. After the second student was done, I said: “Well, two is better than none, right?” And then I waited for it.

I always know when “the comment” is coming. People who are about to say it look either awestruck or skeptical bordering on disbelief. “You can find a silver lining in anything,” they say. In these difficult times, though, the proportion of disbelievers seems to be increasing. I understand their reaction: Sometimes my positivity seems extreme even to me.

There are troubles and tragedies all over, and many of us are experiencing more extreme difficulties than we used to: illness, economic woes, family problems. But I discovered some time ago that I was happier, more productive, healthier, and more at peace by practicing something I call “conscious positivity.” In other words, I could choose



to “always look on the bright side of life,” as the Monty Python song goes.

Research has shown that people with generalized anxiety disorder can learn to worry less by adopting positive ideation and that stress can be reduced among medical workers by teaching them positive thinking skills. And a Yale School of Public Health study of more than 4,000 people age 50 and older recently found that having a positive view of aging can actually help you live longer.

If you can change your outlook through conscious effort, why don’t more people do it? Michael Scheier, a professor of psychology at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, has found that people have a general tendency to be positive or negative about life. But that characteristic, he says, “is less stable when people go through some kind of life transition.” Bad times, in other words, prompt people to “learn to cope in more or less adaptive ways to stress. They can become more optimistic or more pessimistic.”

Stress was a way of life for me by the time I was in my 20s. I developed panic attacks in graduate school, my dad died at age 53 after a 20-year battle with cancer, and, despite a first-class education, I was struggling with a dead-end job. Complaining became a way of life — and that did nothing to help my outlook or endear me to people. When I ended up sobbing in a job interview, I knew I had to change my life. A friend recommended that I read Norman Vin-

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Based on 2018 GfK MRI reader survey data

cent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking*. That book was ancient even then, published years before I was born, but what did I have to lose?

Peale, a pastor, drew from stories he had heard from troubled people and recommended techniques such as visualization, affirmative statements, and prayer. Among the notes I wrote in my journal at the time was, "Change your thoughts and you change your world."

It all struck me as a little corny, but I was open to it. I also learned about more modern tips to increase positive thinking, like starting a gratitude journal, listing your personal strengths, and practicing small acts of kindness every day. A documentary, *Inner Worlds, Outer Worlds*, says that meditating can strengthen the physiological changes that our thoughts create in the brain, a concept called neuroplasticity. They're all great ideas but, like many good habits, tough to stick with over the long haul.

Instead, I started small. Whenever I found myself having a negative thought (all the time, at first), I tried to focus on something positive about the situation in front of me. Whenever I was nervous about a work deadline, I imagined how I would feel if it came out well. If I was procrastinating, I would promise myself a reward for just getting started. Did it work every time? Heck, no. But it worked often enough. It even shaped my life choices: I found the courage to start my own business, to run for political office, to champion a successful Rotary satellite club.

Later, I found out that I had stumbled upon the Buddhist concept of mindfulness. Specifically, I learned to focus on what my unconscious was delivering under the surface of my mind. If your mind is always nattering that you're going to fail, you're halfway to

accomplishing that. The trick is to hear that negative voice and consciously tell it to hit the road. Then take a deep breath and concentrate on one positive thing about the situation. It doesn't matter what you come up with. Simply interrupting the flow of negative thoughts is often enough to move you closer to positivity.

When you feel stressed, concentrate briefly on what you are thinking and feeling in the moment — and on what is causing those emotions. Then determine whether you can do anything about whatever is bothering you. If you know that nothing you can do will help, you can, with practice, simply put the situation out of your mind. My mother used to call that "water off a duck's back," by which she meant having the mental fortitude not to worry about things you can't control.

On the other hand, if you can move toward a solution by taking action, that's the signal to do something besides worry. Make a plan and do something. Accomplishing something — anything! — is its own reward, especially if you (mindfully) congratulate yourself for taking action. I have begun to believe that the people who comment on my sunny attitude are simply recognizing my action-oriented way of thinking. Even if we can't solve the world's problems, we can almost always do something to make it a better place.

Being optimistic has allowed me to roll with life's punches — and to jump in where others fear to tread. One example: My club was facing the challenge of losing one of our most active members to a time conflict. Rotary International had recently started promoting satellite clubs, and though other clubs had had varying degrees of success with their efforts, I said, "Why not try it? It might succeed."



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Even if we can't solve the world's problems, we can almost always do something to make it a better place.

After we launched our satellite club, we struggled with attendance; one time, only three people turned up. Two of them were members of the parent club. But when others wanted to quit, I was the nut who pointed out, optimistically, that three people were better than none (do you sense a pattern here?) and that we were making progress toward the eight members we needed to become official. With constant encouragement, we persisted and successfully launched the first satellite club in our district.

Call me a cockeyed optimist, but I know I am calmer, happier, and, most of the time, more successful than I was before. Berating myself when something goes wrong is something I still do, but it no longer leads to the downward spiral of blame and recrimination that used to smash my self-esteem. I take responsibility, move on, and try to do better next time. In the face of big problems, it might seem like a modest goal, but we'll never know how much we can accomplish until we try. ■

Nancy Shepherdson is a freelance journalist and a member of the Rotary Club of Lake Zurich, Illinois.

The Rotary Learning Center offers resources on everything from managing stress to starting a satellite club. Explore at learn.rotary.org.

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Rotary  PEOPLE OF ACTION

Young at heart

Holger Knaack has a fresh vision for the Rotary of the future. With a little help from his friends, things should go swimmingly

Holger Knaack is vacuuming. The Rotary Club of Herzogtum Lauenburg-Möln has wrapped up its annual Christmas bazaar in the cloister of the 12th-century Ratzeburg Cathedral. Two days of selling handicrafts, mistletoe, and homemade cakes and cookies have netted the club some 8,000 euros, which this year will go to a German nonprofit that supports children who are critically ill. As the club members break down booths and put away tables and chairs, Knaack grabs the vacuum cleaner and, head down in concentration, tackles the crumbs, dirt, and bits of tinsel that litter the floor.

At this moment, Knaack is president-elect of Rotary International, preparing to take office on 1 July 2020. But at the same time he's a regular Rotarian, a 27-year

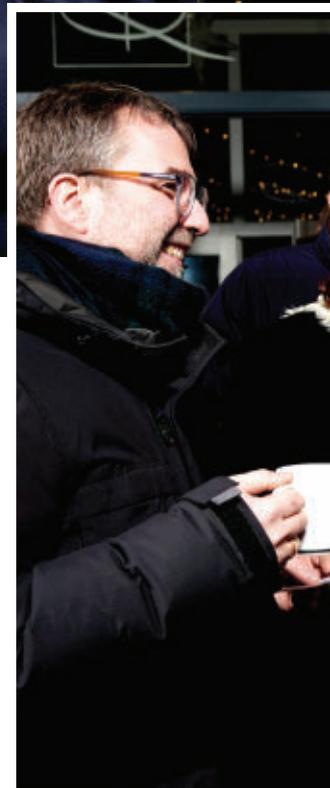
member of his club, pitching in like everybody else. "He just wants to be one friend among friends," says club member Barbara Hardkop.

There's a German phrase: *man holt die Leute ins Boot*. It means getting people on board to work together toward a common goal. In the coming year, Rotarians will find that Holger Knaack is not one to stand on the sidelines while others do the work. But equally important for Knaack is the philosophy that working hard doesn't mean you can't also have a good time. As he spends this year getting people on board — especially to carry out his highest priority, investing in young people — he will also be doing his best to make sure everyone is enjoying themselves.

"It's a basic principle with Holger," says his longtime friend Hubertus Eichblatt, a fellow club member. "When we get together, it has to be fun."

Holger Knaack, Rotary International's 2020–21 president. "He looks youthful," says a friend. "He is youthful!"





Holger Knaack is an atypical Rotary president, and not just because he wears jeans and eschews ties much of the time. He's the organization's first German president, and he came to that position in untraditional fashion. Unlike many of his predecessors, he didn't rise step by step through the ranks of Rotary offices. He served as club president and district governor, but he had held only one Rotary International post, that of training leader, before becoming director. And he remembers being at a Rotary institute where people asked him what other district offices he had held before becoming governor. "I said, 'None. None.' All of them were very surprised," he recalls.

What Knaack is most known for is his involvement in Rotary's Youth Exchange program. That experience is deep, broad, and extraordinarily meaningful to him and his wife, Susanne. They have no children of their own, but they have opened their home — and their hearts — to dozens of students. "The Knaack house is always full of guests, especially young people," says Helmut

Above: Over hot punch at the Rotary Club of Herzogtum Lauenburg-Mölln's Christmas party in December, Knaack chats with fellow club member Barbara Hardkop and her husband, Gerrit (with Jan Schmedes in the background).

Right: Enjoying club friendships are (from left) Karsten Lessing, Susanne Lessing, Andrea "Sunny" Schulz, and Harro-Meinert Petersen.

Knoth, another friend and member of Holger's club. "They've had hundreds of guests over the years."

Shortly after joining his Rotary club in 1992, Knaack helped out with a camp for short-term Youth Exchange students in northern Germany. He was immediately hooked. "I thought it was a really great program," he says. "This is something, you'd say in German, *wo dein Herz aufgeht*: Your heart opens. Whenever you talk to the young people, they'll tell you, 'It was the best time in my life.' Sometimes I think they are surprised about themselves, about what they are able to do, and about the possibilities that are open to them through Rotary."

The opportunities opened for Knaack, as well. He became Youth Exchange chair for his club, and after

serving as governor of District 1940 in 2006-07, he was asked to chair the German Multi-District Youth Exchange, a position he held until the day before he started his term on Rotary's Board of Directors in 2013. Along the way, he notes, he always relied on other people. "You develop a vision together, and then let's go ahead," he says. "Everybody's going a little different way; there's never just one road. But the goal should be the same."

Young people seem to intuitively understand Knaack's way of doing things. "Holger has a vision, and he is executing on that vision," says Brittany Arthur, a member of the Rotaract Club of Berlin and the Rotary Club of Berlin International. "And you recognize that this vision is not new for him. Holger and Susanne have had dozens of Youth Exchange students. Do you think they did all that so that in 2020 he could say, 'We need to invest in youth'? This is who they are."

Arthur also sees Knaack as unusual in his willingness

now putting together a Rotary institute, had other ideas. "I had just finished speaking to hundreds of Rotarians," she recalls. "I was feeling so great, and he said, 'Do you want to help with the institute?' and I said, 'Yes!'"

Like other Rotarians, Arthur perceives the depth of Knaack's persuasive personality. "He's super funny and nice, but he's dead serious when it comes to certain things. Which is why he's such an interesting leader: He can show up on so many different levels when you need him."

H

olger and Susanne Knaack love to travel, but they have lived their entire lives not far from where they were born: she in Ratzeburg and he in the nearby village of Groß Grönau, about 40 miles northeast

of Hamburg. Their upbringings were remarkably similar. Each was born in 1952 and lived over the shop of the family business: Susanne's father and grandfather were sausage makers, and Holger's family bakery was founded by his great-great-great-grandfather in 1868. "We were very loved," Holger remembers. "Everybody took care of you; everybody always knew where you were."

Hubertus Eichblatt also grew up in Ratzeburg, where his sister and Susanne, whose maiden name was Horst, were childhood friends. "The Horst family had a very open house, and it's exactly the same with Holger," he says. "Friends are always coming in and out."

Holger and Susanne live in the home that once belonged to Susanne's grandmother; next door, Susanne's sister, Sabine Riebensahm, lives in the house where the two grew up. About a

decade ago, after her husband died, Holger's sister, Barbara Staats, moved into an apartment on the top floor of that house. The two homes have a total of nine guest rooms, and what with Barbara's 12 grandchildren, dozens of current and former Youth Exchange students, and various other friends, at least one of those rooms is usually occupied.

“He’s super funny and nice, but he’s dead serious when it comes to certain things, which is why he’s such an interesting leader.”



to invest in "potential, not experience." In 2012, as an Australian Ambassadorial Scholar in Germany, she had a brief exchange with him at a club meeting. That led to her speaking about her "Rotary moment" at a Berlin peace forum sponsored by 2012-13 RI President Sakuji Tanaka. After her presentation, she thought she was done. But Knaack, who had organized the forum and was

“I think this is the perfect way to live: together. The secret to anything is to ask: What’s our goal? This is exactly our goal, how we live right now.”

Every morning, everyone meets for coffee in a cozy nook off Holger and Susanne’s living room, where floor-to-ceiling windows offer views of the KÜchensee, one of four lakes that surround Ratzeburg. They often lunch together as well, followed by more coffee. Then Holger has a ritual: He folds his long frame onto a little

sofa for a nap while Susanne, Barbara, and Sabine continue their chat. “He likes to hear us talking while he’s napping,” Sabine says.

The four share duties, including shopping and cooking. “When someone needs something, you just shout,” Holger says. “I think this is the perfect way to live: together. The secret to anything is to ask: What’s our goal? This is exactly our goal, how we live right now.”

One Saturday in December, Holger, Susanne, Barbara, and Sabine are preparing boeuf bourguignon to serve at a dinner party for 23 close friends the Knaacks will be hosting the next day. They’re simultaneously planning the menu for Christmas, when they’ll have 15 people — 16 if a young Egyptian woman who is studying in Germany, the daughter of some Rotarians they met at a Rotary institute in Sharm el-Sheikh, takes them up on their invitation.

Helmut Knoth calls the Knaacks’ hospitality “a stroke of luck for Rotary. At least once a year we have a party there, in their beautiful garden,” he says. “When the weather is nice, we go swimming. In winter, there’s a traditional event for Holger’s birthday. We meet at the rowing club and hike around the lake.” All the birthday gifts are donations to the Karl Adam Foundation, which Knaack founded to support the rowing club. (Ratzeburg is world-famous for its rowing club, whose members formed the core of the German teams that won gold at the 1960, 1968, 2000, 2004, and 2012 Olympics. The club’s co-founder and longtime trainer, a local high school teacher named Karl Adam, is considered one of the best rowing coaches of all time and developed what’s known as the “Ratzeburg style.”)

Looking through family photo albums, the Knaacks talk about childhood vacations to the seaside — Holger and his family to the island of Sylt on the North Sea,



and Susanne and her family to the Baltic Sea coast. A few kilometers from their home, Holger’s family also had a small summer house with a large garden where they would spend weekends. The forests and meadows were his to explore. “It was a perfect childhood,” he says.

Holger’s boyhood home was situated about 500 meters from a small river, the Wakenitz, that formed the border with East Germany. “For me, that was really the end of the world,” he remembers. In the summer, he and his friends would test their courage by swimming across the river. On the other side was a swamp, a minefield, and watchtowers manned by East German guards. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, he says, “the first thing we did was to explore the other side by bicycle. All the watchtowers were open. I had never seen our own village, or our own house, from that perspective.”

As a young man, on holidays and weekends, Holger worked as a driver for his family bakery. After finishing secondary school he learned the trade, working in another bakery for two years for his *Ausbildung*, or apprenticeship. “So I can bake a lot of things,” he says cheerfully. “And I still like to bake. You have to love what you do in order to be very good. Whatever marketing techniques you may use, it’s all about the





quality. Quality is about loving the product and trying to make it the best you can. But you have to take your time. That's the secret to many things."

After completing his *Ausbildung* and another year of internship in a large bread factory in Stuttgart, he went to the city of Kiel to study business administration. At the first student assembly, he caught sight of his future wife. "I saw Susanne on the 20th of September 1972," he says. "I remember that quite well."

Holger didn't make the same impression on Susanne, perhaps because there were 94 men and only three women in their class. But they soon got acquainted, and on weekends, they would drive home together to each work in their family's business. Before returning

Above: Holger and Susanne Knaack love to cook for themselves and their friends; here, they assemble a meal in Holger's sister's kitchen.

Inset: The Küchensee, one of Ratzeburg's four lakes, provides a scenic backdrop for lunch with Holger's sister, Barbara (left), and Susanne's sister, Sabine (right).

to Kiel on Sunday evenings, they would load up the car with bread from the Knaack bakery and sausage from the Horst shop. "Our friends always knew to come over on Mondays," Susanne says with a laugh.

They graduated in 1975 and got married the next year. Each of them continued to work in their own family's business. At the time, the Knaack bakery had several shops and about 50 employees. After taking over from his father in the late 1970s, Knaack decided to expand the company. He also decided that he wanted to know exactly where the grain used to bake his bread was coming from. So he turned to his friend Hubertus Eichblatt, a farmer, who started a cooperative with other farmers. Knaack also worked with





Knaack dives into the KÜchensee. Is there an analogy to his leadership style? Sure — it's got to be fun.



Günther Fielmann, Europe’s largest optician, who invested in cultivating organic grain on his own farm, Hof Lütjensee. Together Knaack and Fielmann built their own mill and marketed organic baked goods — something new 30 years ago. “Holger was always very innovative,” Eichblatt says, “very forward-thinking about those kinds of things.”

Another of Knaack’s innovations was to move the baking of the bread into the shops. Before that, bread was baked in the factory and the loaves were trucked to the shops. Knaack’s idea was to continue to make the dough in the factory, but then to freeze it in portions that were distributed to the shops to be baked. His motto was *Der frische Bäcker* – “the fresh baker.” Today, almost every bakery in Germany does it that way.

Knaack kept expanding the business; eventually there were about 50 shops and the factory with hundreds of employees. He received an offer to buy his company from an internationally active firm that was investing in bakeries. It was a very good offer, and Knaack took it. Still a young man in his 40s, he pursued other business ventures and took up golf (and was quickly tapped to be president of his golf club).

Above: Ratzeburg with its 12th-century cathedral and its glacial lakes. **Inset:** Knaack greets members of the famed local rowing club as they come back from a training run. **Following pages:** An active couple who enjoy the outdoors, Holger and Susanne take a break from bicycling in front of the regional history museum in Ratzeburg.

He had been an active member of Round Table, an organization for people under age 40; at 39, he joined the Rotary club in the nearby town of Mölln (remaining a member there even when a new club was chartered shortly afterward in Ratzeburg with many of his friends as members). And before long, he found his calling with Rotary Youth Exchange.

Medieval Ratzeburg, with its ancient cathedral and half-timbered burghers’ houses, is situated on an island surrounded by four glacial lakes. The northern German state of Schleswig-Holstein is dotted with such lakes; winding roads lead through rolling green countryside past farms and villages built in the characteristic regional style of brick architecture. But the students who have stayed with Holger and Susanne have found something much deeper than a picture-postcard experience of Germany.

Juraj Dvořák was one of the first students the Knaacks hosted, in 1996. After returning home to Slo-



vakia, the 16-year-old sent a card to Holger and Susanne, who invited him back for another visit. But when Dvořák's father died of a heart attack, the young man told the Knaacks he couldn't come after all. Holger and Susanne, along with Dvořák's mother, insisted the visit go on as planned.

"I stayed one month with them, and they did everything to help me," Dvořák recalls.

"Since then we have been close friends. If I had not met Holger and Susanne, and if they had not mentored me in many aspects of my life, I would not have achieved what I have." Dvořák now heads a private equity company in Vienna, but he's not talking about material success. "I went from zero to somebody, not in terms of money, but in terms of a healthy personality."

He and Holger "always had deep discussions," says Dvořák, who still visits every year. "He told me that money is not the most important thing, that I have to enjoy my work and I should also enjoy life. He told me I should travel and see the world. And he took me to many meetings with his friends, Rotarians. I didn't understand why at the time, but when I got older, I realized it was an absolutely unique chance to learn how to behave with people you don't know. He grew me up."

About Holger and Susanne, he says: "They have a big heart and a strong responsibility for the people they are mentoring. They are different from other people. They are championship league people."

The Knaacks take that responsibility to mentor students seriously. "The major goal of Youth Exchange is to dive into another culture, to learn everything you can about that culture," Holger says. "And the amazing thing about Youth Exchange is that parents send their kids around the globe and trust that Rotarians will treat them like their own children. It's something that makes us unique. No other service organization does it this way."

Paula Miranda spent three months with the Knaacks, who were her first hosts during her exchange year in 2008. She arrived in Ratzeburg from her home

in Argentina in January: "I remember it was 4 p.m. It was already dark in Germany, and I was like, oh, my God, where am I? And they welcomed me with a German meal."

When Miranda turned 19 a month later, Holger and Susanne organized a birthday party with some of her new friends from school. "They made barbecue asado like we do in Argentina," she recalls. "They wanted to make me feel at home, and I really appreciated that. My year wouldn't have been the same without them. I really love them."

Alois Serwaty, a past governor of District 1870, first met the Knaacks 25 years ago at a German Multi-District Youth Exchange conference. "Both Holger and Susanne have an uncomplicated and open manner that appeals to and motivates young people," he says. "When you meet them, you recognize right away that they like young people. Holger's attitude is that Rotary must remain young and that working for and with young people keeps you young."

Dvořák agrees: "I was with Holger in December, and he has not changed in 24 years. He's still the same, maybe just some wrinkles. This Youth Exchange program gives him energy."

A phrase you hear often among German Rotaractors is *auf Augenhöhe begegnen* — to meet someone at eye level. "That means everyone is equal, on a level playing field," Susanne says. "It doesn't make any difference if someone is a director or a driver. You discuss something and come up with a solution without the other person feeling like he's received an order."

According to his friends and family, Holger has a real flair for this. "If he can't do something himself, he can delegate really well," Susanne laughs. "He can recognize who would be good at something. It's a talent of his."

One example, she says, is the success he had working with Rotaractors on the Rotary institute in Berlin. "They said, 'We'll do the breakout sessions,' and in-

“Holger told me that money is not the most important thing, that I have to enjoy my work and I should also enjoy life.”

stead of saying, ‘You can’t do that,’ he said, ‘Go ahead.’ He trusts people to succeed. But he’s still in the background keeping an eye on things. It was the same for the convention in Hamburg,” where Knaack and Andreas von Möller were co-chairs of the 2019 Host Organization Committee. “There were lots of Rotaractors involved there too.”

One of her husband’s main goals, Susanne says, is to continue to bring Rotary and Rotaract closer together. “He’s excited about what he wants to accomplish.” And when he’s excited about something, “he’s able to get others excited as well,” adds Susanne’s sister, Sabine. As Brittany Arthur noted, “You feel like you’re investing in his vision.”

Over cappuccinos in the sunny cafe of Ratzeburg’s Hotel Seehof, with its views of the sparkling KÜchensee, Knaack’s friends Hubertus Eichblatt, Helmut Knoth, Jens-Uwe Janssen, and Andreas-Peter Ehlers — like Holger, all members of the Rotary Club of Herzogtum Lauenburg-Mölln — agree that he possesses a certain genius for marshaling volunteers. Ehlers remembers how it was when he served as district secretary during Knaack’s year as district governor. “Before that time,” he says, “under

other governors, it was always ‘somebody should do this’ or ‘who is going to do this?’ But Holger would say, very specifically, ‘Hubertus, I’ve been thinking about it, and you’re the perfect person to do this. Here’s how I envision it. This is just right for you, Hubertus, I would really love it if you did this. It’s great that you’re going to do this!’ The way he puts it to you, you can’t say no. And

you do it gladly, because he doesn’t hand it to you and then walk away. He comes back in a month and asks, ‘Hubertus, everything going OK? Can I help with anything?’”

Eichblatt laughs at this depiction, but stresses that Knaack is successful because his enthusiasm is infectious — and because he sets the example: “He exemplifies these positive characteristics, so it’s relatively easy for him to convince people to do things.”

As they chat about Knaack’s good qualities, they echo what many people say — that he’s never in a bad mood. But close friends that they are, they insist he’s not perfect. “We have to find a weakness,” muses Eichblatt,

before settling on a benign character flaw. “He’s very fashion-conscious. His glasses!”

The mention of Knaack’s signature eyewear elicits an immediate reaction from the group. “He’s the only one who wears glasses like that,” Ehlers says. “And if they break, no problem: He has another pair!”

“They’re his trademark,” Knoth adds. “I’ve only ever known him to wear these glasses. And he seldom wears a tie. Jeans, always. He looks youthful. He is youthful!” The old friends nod and laugh as they finish their cappuccinos.

K

naack’s philosophy — that no matter how hard you work, you should also have fun — applies especially to Rotary. “Traveling around, talking with people, is really fun for him,” says Susanne, a charter member of the

Rotary E-Club Hamburg Connect. “Rotary is fun for him — and it’s just as much fun for me.”

Knaack wants everyone to enjoy Rotary — and to be proud to be part of it. “All of us love this organization, and all of us should feel we ought to do something to make Rotary stronger,” he insists. “It’s not hard to do more: be more involved in your club, more interested in your friends, more involved in projects and programs. Ask yourself: Is our club involved in youth service? Can we come up with better ideas for fundraising? And the club also has a responsibility to make people feel good, feel welcome, feel proud. It has to feel special to be a Rotarian.”

As he thinks about the year ahead, he notes that a Rotary president gets invited to lots of events, including district conferences, and sends a representative to most of them. But Knaack plans to attend — if only virtually — the conference in District 1940, whose governor this year, Edgar Friedrich, is a member of the Rotary Club of Herzogtum Lauenburg-Mölln. “I think you’re allowed to make an exception for your own district, especially if the district governor is from your own club,” Knaack says. “Your Rotary club is really important. Whatever office you have had in Rotary, and however important you were, at the very end, you’re always a member of your own Rotary club and happy to be among your friends.

“That’s why we need to take care of our Rotary clubs, and our friends in our clubs. It doesn’t matter if you were president. At the end, it’s important that you’re among friends.” ■

“We need to take care of our Rotary clubs, and our friends in our clubs.”





by **Diana Schoberg**
photography by **Frank Ishman**



BETTER TOGETHER

A need to connect with different age groups is woven into our genes

It's nearly Valentine's Day. Seated around a table are five older adults and four children under age four, the decades between them bridged by the heart-filled sheets they're coloring together. One boy holds up his creation. "Look at mine!" he says. Everyone at the table claps, and Bob Husslein offers some grandfatherly words of encouragement: "In the lines, too!" One by one, the kids show off their artwork. "I can't believe you did that all by yourself," Husslein says to a little girl. "Are you going to give it to your mommy?"



The art room at St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care on Milwaukee's south side is a homey hodgepodge of donated craft supplies: cups of paintbrushes, stacks of colored paper, and bins of beads organized by color. The room is open to participants in the center's adult care program who want to do crafts, and when the children who attend day care join them, the room buzzes with energy. "In the time I've been volunteering here, I can see the difference in how they feel and work with each other," Husslein says.

"I help them paint if they need help with painting," says George Murray, one of 200 adults who take part in the center's program. "Some of them get frustrated and upset. You just have to calm them down. You have to show them they matter to somebody. They look up to an older person." And, he adds, the benefits go both ways: "They show you stuff you don't know. Some of these kids are pretty smart."

Among the adults coloring valentines is Edna Lonergan. She's a member of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee, a Catholic nun, and the founder of St. Ann Center, which brings together young and old to spend their days under one roof. On one side of the center, the children's day care is furnished with pint-size tables and chairs and filled with artwork, including a mural of fairies. On the other side, adults — frail



elderly people as well as adults of all ages with disabilities — socialize, take part in activities, and receive therapy. In between, a sunlit atrium brims with cacti, ferns, and palm trees (a staff massage therapist doubles as the gardener). A fireplace burns cheerfully at the entrance, and the walls are painted to evoke a European village. "I wanted it to be colorful and nonclinical," Lonergan says, "a place where they could play together and dance together."

Lonergan is a gerontologist by training. In 1983, she opened an adult day center in the basement of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi convent in Milwaukee. As the program grew, she realized that many members of her staff were single mothers whose children often needed a place to go when they weren't in school. "So I said,

'Why not bring them?' And magic happened. The adults wanted to do things with the kids. They wanted to have tea parties and teach them how to fish," she says. "They had a sense of purpose."

As Lonergan observed the camaraderie between the groups, she began looking for other places that provided intergenerational care. She saw things like children singing for adults at a nursing home, but never found a program that matched the bonding she was witnessing. So she decided to create something new. St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care opened in 1999.

This page: The art room is a hub of activity for children and adults. **Opposite:** Bob Husslein gives children grandfatherly encouragement on their art projects. **Previous pages:** Milwaukee Rotarian Edna Lonergan founded St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care to bring together young and old under one roof.



"I wanted it to be colorful and nonclinical, a place where they could play together and dance together."

43%

American adults
over 60
who feel lonely

1 in 5

Americans
who live in
multigenerational
households



85%

Americans who
would prefer an
intergenerational
setting if they
needed care services

Since then, Lonergan's idea of an intergenerational model of care has been lauded by the White House, presented to the United Nations, and featured in the *New York Times*. "A lot of people say to me, 'You think outside of the box,'" she says. "I really don't. I bring other people's boxes into mine."

Scientists think that this need to connect across generations may be baked into humans' DNA — that grandparents, in particular grandmothers, played a critical role in our evolution. The reason women live so long beyond reproductive age, some anthropologists theorize, is that the care they provide for their daughters' children frees up their daughters to produce more children sooner. "You can argue that older people connecting with younger people

is something that goes back to the beginning of humanity," says Marc Freedman, author of *How to Live Forever: The Enduring Power of Connecting Generations*. (Read our interview with Freedman on page 50.)

But things changed as society became more industrialized. Today, kids go to day care or school, spending their days with classmates their own age. Young and middle-age adults go to work. And after retirement, many older adults live in age-restricted housing and spend their leisure time participating in activities geared specifically to them. "We have lost the extended family," Lonergan says.

The two groups that experience social isolation the most are older adults and

Below: Lonergan was honored as 2016 Rotary Member of the Year by the Milwaukee club, one of many accolades she and her work have received. **Right:** "I love the camaraderie and everything that goes with it. I love children," says John Thalman, a Vietnam War veteran and retired Milwaukee police officer.





“A lot of people say to me, ‘You think outside of the box.’ I really don’t. I bring other people’s boxes into mine.”



“You can’t just throw older and younger people together because it’s magic. Magic takes work.”

At intergenerational shared sites, young people and older adults participate in programs together at the same location, with planned and informal interactions between the groups.



CHILD/YOUTH PROGRAMS

- Child day care centers
- Preschools
- After-school programs
- Recreation centers
- Primary and secondary schools
- Summer programs
- Day programs for young adults with disabilities
- Colleges and universities
- Pediatric care units
- Housing for homeless and transitional youth
- Foster care support centers
- Career centers
- Museums and libraries
- Parks and playgrounds



OLDER ADULT PROGRAMS

- Senior centers
- Recreation centers
- Independent senior housing
- Adult day services
- Assisted living
- Short-term rehabilitation
- Nursing homes
- Hospice
- Museums and libraries
- Parks



benefits for both

teenagers, says Donna Butts, executive director of Generations United, a U.S. nonprofit founded in 1986 by leaders at the National Council on Aging, the Child Welfare League of America, the Children’s Defense Fund, and AARP. “Younger people may have 100 friends on whatever social media platform they’re using, but when it comes to actually touching somebody, or being able to share the trials and tribulations of growing up, they don’t have anybody they’re that close to,” Butts says.

A survey by Generations United and the Eisner Foundation — a nonprofit focused on intergenerational programs — found that 53 percent of American adults regularly spend time with few people who are much older or younger than they are, aside from family members. The figure is even higher for people ages 18 to 34, with 61 percent reporting few younger or older acquaintances. Grandparents often live hundreds of miles away from their grandchildren, and there

aren’t many places to go to meet people across the age spectrum.

This is where Rotary can help.

The Boys & Girls Club in Gig Harbor, Washington, was buzzing. Its tables were lined with people — older folks on one side, teens on the other, 52 participants in all. Cards on the tables listed potential conversation starters: “Do you have dogs?” or “Do you like to travel?” Each senior-teen pair had five minutes to get to know each other before the teen moved along to another older person and everything started again.

You may have heard of speed dating. This is the intergenerational equivalent.

“It turned out to be amazing,” says Kathi Melendez, who initiated the March 2019 event called InterGenFest, a partnership between the Rotary Club of Gig Harbor North and the Gig Harbor Interact clubs. Melendez and her husband, Louis (both have since transferred to the Rotary E-Club of District 5020 International), worked closely with two Interactors to

make it happen. After the speed-meeting part of the event, the young people answered questions that the seniors had about smartphones, and the older people advised the teens about job interviews.

While talk of a “generational divide” is perpetual — epitomized, most recently, by the catchphrase “OK boomer” — this sort of program helps people better understand each other and work together. “It’s kind of like Rotary Youth Exchange,” Melendez says. “The more you know about the other type of person, the better you understand them. The older people don’t just say, ‘Oh, that’s a teenager wearing torn pants.’ Now they know there’s more to the teen than what they wear. A lot of the young people don’t have a chance to be around seniors. The program gave them all an awareness of other people’s needs and feelings.”

In Vienna, Austria, Rotaractors felt ignored by Rotarians. Rather than complain, they examined their own behavior and realized they weren’t doing much to include Interactors — their clubs’ future members — in their activities. So in 2016, they launched a mentoring program between Rotaractors and Interactors that

Left: Seniors smile and chat with the children during a music class, one of several structured activities to bring the groups together at St. Ann Center.



Children who engage in activities led by adult care participants have higher personal and social development scores than children who do not.



has since expanded to include mentorship between Rotarians and Rotaractors. It has also taken on a humanitarian project: building housing for Bosnian families affected by the Bosnian War.

“At first we thought Rotary clubs would sponsor the project and Interactors and Rotaractors would build the houses,” says Albert Kafka, a member of the Rotary Club of Wien-Oper and the Rotaract Club of Wien-Stadtpark. Kafka was honored as one of six People of Action: Young Innovators during Rotary Day at the United Nations in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2018 for the program. “But in fact, Rotarians also joined the housebuilding. These kinds of projects are much more common now.”

According to Generations United’s Donna Butts, “Almost anything can be stronger if you use an intergenerational lens.” But, she adds, you must keep in mind two key points. First, make sure that the programs are reciprocal. “It’s the connection that matters,” Butts says. “They’re both giving and receiving.” Second, it’s important to prepare. “You can’t just throw older and younger people together because it’s magic,” she insists. “Magic takes work.”

Generations United created a multi-generational workforce workbook that could help clubs that are grappling with how to better integrate members of different ages. Rotary clubs could apply those recommendations, Butts suggests. “Any committee a Rotary club might form should intentionally have younger and older people on it because of the different perspectives they bring,” she says. “We have a tendency to stereotype or box people in. That doesn’t help anybody.”

One of the keys to bringing generations together is proximity, and that’s where a place like St. Ann Center — with its balance of both formal intergenerational programs, such as dances and music classes, and informal moments

Left: Children learn to accept people with differences when they are part of their daily lives, another benefit of shared programming.

of laughter and greetings — fits in. “Sister Edna has been visionary,” Butts says.

Lonergan has worked with groups in Taiwan and China that are interested in learning more about the model. While she was giving a speech at an event in Singapore, a number of people got up to get their friends and bring them in to hear what she had to say. “This has really taken hold, and people want to hear more about it,” she says.

Rosemarie Alloway has been a nursing assistant for 20 years, the past five at St. Ann Center. She has seen the benefits of spending time together for adults and children alike. When the kids come up for stories and games, she observes how the mood of the adult participants changes: “They look forward to that time.”

Her daughter, three-year-old Alexis, is one of those children. “Now when we go to a restaurant, she’ll go up to an older couple and introduce herself,” Alloway says. “Her speech is clearer. I think the kids learn more.”

Research shows that children who engage in activities led by adult care participants improve their motor and cognitive skills; in addition, they have higher personal and social development scores than children who are not involved in intergenerational programs. Lonergan has also noted that children participating in the program are learning to trust people with disabilities. “A lot of bullying occurs in schools because children are afraid of that which is different,” she says.

In the St. Ann Center atrium, children and adults swat red balloons back and forth over a net. Kids shriek joyfully, and music, punctuated by the occasional sound of popping balloons, blasts from a boombox. Alexis is off to the side, sitting and stomping on her balloon, trying to pop it. Her mom is at work, but she is surrounded by a team of surrogate grandparents, coloring together, playing together, and enjoying one another’s company. Just as they were born to do. ■

Photos in this feature were taken before COVID-19 regulations on social distancing.

1/3

Proportion of older U.S. adults who actively contribute to the world beyond themselves



46%

Difference in likelihood of starting drug use between at-risk children who are in the Big Brothers & Big Sisters program and those who are not

\$7 billion

Medicare spending every year attributed to isolation among older adults



VIKTOR MILLER GAUSA

MARC FREEDMAN

This longevity expert has found that both younger and older people thrive when they work together with a common purpose — something Rotarians know a lot about

WHILE VISITING A ROTARY CLUB in Sacramento, California, Marc Freedman was struck by the diversity of the group — in age as well as ethnicity. “There were so many barriers being bridged around this common sense of purpose,” he says. “It’s one of the reasons I love Rotary. So much of society has sorted itself into highly age-segregated arrangements. Rotary and other like-minded groups are resisting that trend and creating spaces where people of all generations can work together for the greater good.”

Freedman is the kind of person who would notice that. Named a Social Entrepreneur of the Year by the World Economic Forum in 2014 and featured by *AARP the Magazine* in 2012 among its “50 over 50” influencers, he is one of the leading experts in the United States on the longevity revolution and the transformation of retirement.

Freedman is founder and CEO of Encore.org, a non-profit focused on bridging generational divides and mak-

ing “encore careers” for retirement-age workers a new social norm. He’s also co-founder of what is now AARP Experience Corps, a program that brings volunteer tutors age 50 and over together with students in kindergarten through third grade who are struggling to read. Researchers have found that the support of these volunteers has a beneficial effect on the children equivalent to a 40 percent reduction in class size; referrals for behavior problems have also gone down 30 to 50 percent. There are advantages for the adults as well; studies have found that the volunteers experienced physical benefits such as less arthritis pain and better blood sugar control. The program, a 2014 *Atlantic* article noted, “dusted off the cobwebs in their brains.”

Freedman, who lives in the San Francisco Bay area, spoke with senior staff writer Diana Schoberg about his most recent book, *How to Live Forever: The Enduring Power of Connecting the Generations*.

THE ROTARIAN: What do connections across generations provide that connections within your own age group don't?

FREEDMAN: There's a growing appreciation of connections in general these days, fostered by the awareness of how profound the problem of loneliness is in America and elsewhere. People need a variety of connections — with their peers as well as across generations.

A Harvard study found that relationships are the key to happiness throughout adulthood. It shows that older people who connect with younger people are three times as likely to be happy as those who fail to do so. Why is that bond so important? One reason is that as we reach the time in our lives when there are fewer years ahead of us than behind us, it's a great comfort to know that what we've learned is likely to live on in younger friends and family members.

TR: What are the benefits of these relationships for children?

FREEDMAN: On an emotional level, the needs of older and younger people fit together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. When I started my career, I spent years working on kids' issues. I didn't have any background in aging or gerontology. But I was struck by how important the presence of caring adults is for the well-being of young people, particularly young people who are growing up in economic hardship.

Urie Bronfenbrenner, who was one of the great child psychologists of the 20th century and who co-founded Head Start, was asked what he had learned from decades of studying children's development. He said that every child needs at least one adult to be irrationally crazy about them. I think he captured something fundamental. Young people need love and support from adults — not just from their own parents, but from other adults in the community. And as we get older, we also need to be irrationally crazy about young people. It's a key source of happiness, according to research, and it's something that we get

better at as we age. The skills that are required to build and sustain relationships blossom in later life, as do emotional regulation and even the drive to connect.

TR: In your book, you write about the physical benefits of these kinds of connections, such as decreased rates of diabetes and arthritis in older people. What are some other benefits that might be surprising?

FREEDMAN: I was involved in creating Experience Corps, a national service program that recruits older people to serve in low-income elementary schools, helping kids learn to read. One of the discoveries we've made along the way is that this intersection between purpose and connection is incredibly important for well-being, especially as we grow older.

We found with Experience Corps that having responsibility and a place to go several days a week forces older people to be more physically active — they have to get out of their homes and to the schools. And purposeful activity, particularly with young people, involves a lot of learning. Explaining and teaching things to younger people helps keep older people's minds active. There is now research from Johns Hopkins University that suggests being involved in programs like Experience Corps can offset some of the things that predispose people to dementia.

And then there's our spiritual health — the idea that we're living a life that still matters, rather than heeding signals from society that older people should head prematurely to the sidelines.

TR: How has our ability to connect with each other been affected by the social distancing that COVID-19 has required?

FREEDMAN: Social distancing has exacerbated the loneliness epidemic, which is also a public health crisis, contributing to millions of "deaths of despair" globally every year. But this period of sheltering at home helps us all develop a deeper empathy for those who are isolated most of the time. Suddenly, many millions of

people are experiencing the kind of loneliness that had been reserved for much smaller numbers.

When social distancing ends, I believe we'll have a newfound appreciation for face-to-face connection. Sure, we've learned to use tools like Zoom, FaceTime, and Google Hangouts — and they help. But we'll also see that virtual connection is no substitute for the real thing.

TR: Is our society more segregated by age than it used to be? If so, how did that come about?

FREEDMAN: It happened in waves. In the United States, the first wave came during the Progressive era, as we enacted child labor laws and universal schooling. All of a sudden, young people were grouped together in educational institutions entirely geared to them. Social Security had the effect of getting older people out of the workforce, which in turn helped create a whole set of institutions geared toward older people. It was all seen as being a more efficient way to organize society.

None of that happened for nefarious reasons. We just thought it was going to be more efficient to put children in schools and to get older people into settings where we felt we could more effectively address their needs, like senior centers and nursing homes and retirement communities. Then we were left with workplaces occupied by all the adults in the middle. And the twain stopped meeting. For all the benefits, something profound — an essential part of the human experience — was lost along the way.

In 1949, United Auto Workers President Walter Reuther got up in front of the union and described retirees as too old to work, too young to die. People were ashamed to be elderly. So real estate developers created places for them to go where they would be apart from the rest of society and wouldn't have to deal with that stigma. They could pretend they were young in a society that glorifies youth. In retirement communities like Sun City, Arizona, everybody was old, so

nobody was old. You could pretend you were a kid again. The weekend Sun City opened, 100,000 people showed up. There was a traffic jam for 2 miles.

What we're seeing now is a wave of social innovation that's essentially trying to find new ways to do old things. And that's terrific. But Rotary has been doing it all along. That's an extraordinary credit to the organization. It is among the few places in American society where older and younger people can come together to work for the common good. It's a place where people get a sense of the cycle of life and some relief from this radical age segregation that has been so prevalent for the past century.

TR: Is age segregation a problem in other parts of the world as well?

FREEDMAN: It's a global issue, and there is a global community of innovators who are working to bring generations together and to create societies where what's natural is once again normal.

Probably the most ambitious effort is in Singapore, where the government is spending over \$2 billion on an aging action plan, including creating a "Kampong for All Ages"—*kampong* being the Malay word for village. New senior centers and preschools are being situated together. New intergenerational housing is being designed. They're building playgrounds that are designed to bring older and younger people together. They've created a volunteer corps of older people focused on helping children. They are trying to reorganize society to demonstrate that the generations can not only get along; they can be invaluable to each other.

One of my favorite examples is happening in the United Kingdom. At age 57, Lucy Kellaway, a columnist at the *Financial Times*, announced that she was going to quit her job to become a math teacher in a low-income London school. She was inspired by her daughter, who was in the British equivalent of Teach for America. Kellaway challenged her readers of a certain age to quit their jobs and join her as math and science teachers, and 1,000

people signed up for what she calls Now Teach. It has really affected how older people in the UK think about their future.

In Finland, an effort to create "communal grandparents" came out of the realization that many grandparents and their grandchildren do not live near each other. And many older people don't have their own grandchildren. So they had the idea of creating grandparent/grandchild-like bonds among people who aren't related to each other.

These experiments are part of an attempt to rethink relationships between older and younger people in a world that is aging rapidly. In the United States, 2019 was the first year that we had more people over 60 than under 18, and that trend is going to continue. We need to think about how to organize society in ways that not only mitigate the challenges of these new demographics, but take advantage of some of the opportunities they present.

TR: What can Rotarians do to promote connections between the generations?

FREEDMAN: There are opportunities for older and younger people to come together around projects that benefit the future well-being of humanity. Young people have an interest in that, because that's the world they're going to inhabit. And as we get older and come face to face with our own mortality, one of the central ways to address the fact that we don't live on and on is to help create a better future.

I know from reading and seeing the projects that Rotary is working on — like climate change and water issues — that many of the priorities that are core to Rotary's social mission are ones that older and younger people can come together around and bring their unique skills to help address.

TR: How can we create programs that bring generations together to the greatest effect?

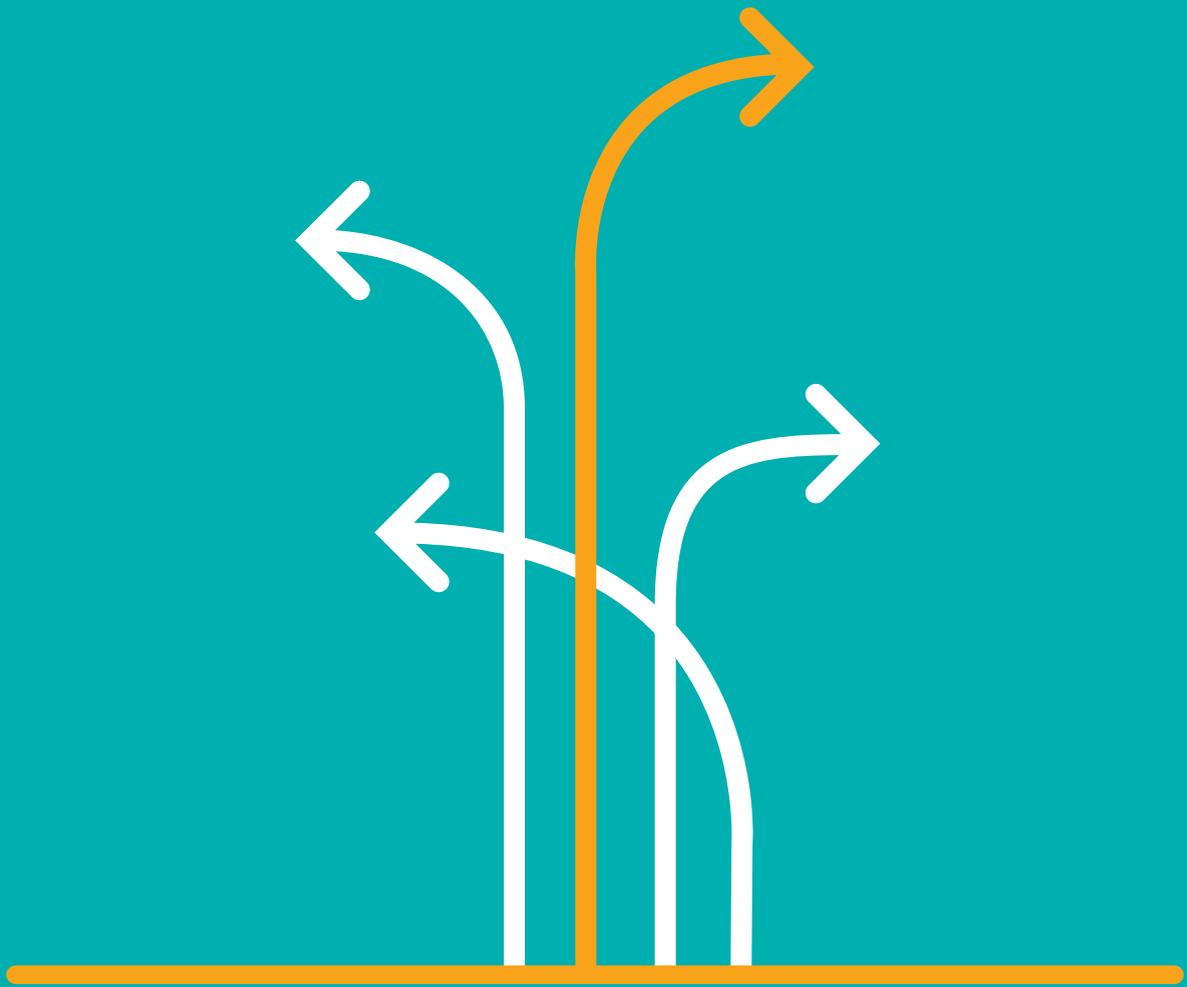
FREEDMAN: Establish programs that create the opportunity to build real relationships

through working together around a shared purpose. Ongoing, consistent, and mutual efforts are going to have the biggest payoff. Opportunities for older Rotarians to work with young people on issues of high priority to Rotary and its members will offer some of the deepest rewards.

TR: If you could create a world where relationships between people of different generations are the best they could be, what would that look like?

FREEDMAN: We would have to reorganize our daily life in ways that prize cross-generational proximity and purpose. One example is to create age-integrated housing. Another is to bring together institutions currently aimed at separate age groups into mutually beneficial collaboration, such as preschools combined with senior centers. We would need to encourage people of different ages to be in the workplace together, and we would have to reassess the nature of education. There is a movement on university campuses where people in their 60s and 70s are coming back to school in programs designed to help them launch the next phase of their lives. One of the great side benefits is that they generate interaction between older people and the young people they take classes with.

One of the stories I told in the book still has a grip on me. It's an example from Judson Manor in Cleveland, an upscale retirement community in a beautiful 1920s building near the Case Western Reserve University campus. Judson started housing graduate students in music and art for free in return for the students' performing concerts and doing art projects with the residents. The exchange ended up producing extraordinary cross-generational relationships. When a young violist who spent time living at Judson got married, for example, she asked her 90-something neighbor to be in their wedding party. They had formed a deep bond. Proximity and purpose yet again! When you create those kinds of opportunities, very powerful things start happening. ■



TAKE YOUR CLUB IN A NEW DIRECTION

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our clubs



Being there **Rotary Club of Aspen, Colorado**

Attendance was thin at the meeting of the Aspen Rotary club: about half of the usual 50-some. The conference room at the Mountain Chalet Aspen felt empty, and the buffet, set up on a terrace overlooking the city and the Rocky Mountains, had lots of leftovers.

continued from page 55

It was early March, the term “social distancing” had already entered our lexicon, and many members had decided not to attend this week. Soon after, Pitkin County issued a prohibition on meetings of more than 50 people.

The club members knew they had to come up with a new way of doing things. “We didn’t want to go even a week without having a meeting. Everyone was in agreement that it was important for us to connect,” says Jeanette Darnauer, a member of the club since 1989. “One of the great things about Rotary is the in-person fellowship,” says longtime member Steve Wickes.

So the board quickly set up a meeting – a virtual one, using a service few people in the club had yet heard of: Zoom. On 13 March, club officers clicked a link sent to them by Jon Kelly, the club’s sergeant-at-arms (and, as of this month, president). Their faces appeared together on the screen and they began to

“We didn’t want to go even a week without having a meeting.”

discuss how to move forward with meetings in an era without meetings. Kelly suggested the club use Zoom for regular meetings as well. As sergeant-at-arms, he ran the in-person club meetings, so he said he would also host the Zoom meetings. “I think of it as being the host of a talk show,” he says.

Before the board meeting ended, someone suggested letting the hotel know that the club wouldn’t be needing the conference room for a while. That’s

Previous page: Rotary Club of Aspen members (from left) Jeanette Darnauer, Jon Kelly, Heather Kendrick, and Steve Wickes.

when Wickes brought up The Four-Way Test. “I said: ‘Our hotel is going to be suffering because ski season [skiing is a major driver of Aspen’s economy] just got canceled. Is it really fair to all concerned for us, with no notice, to say the owner is losing the Rotary business?’ So the board voted that we would continue to pay for our breakfasts, even though no one’s coming and he’s not serving any food. We thought that was the right thing to do.”

The Aspen club has had a strong presence in the city since it was chartered in 1971. Its Ducky Derby, launched in 1992, has evolved into a full-fledged summer festival. Over the first 20 years of the event, the club raised \$2.4 million for local and international groups.

And although membership has dropped from a high of 120 in the 1990s to around 100 today, the club remains dynamic. “We make a concerted effort to engage people right after they get into the club,” Darnauer says. “We tell them, ‘You’ll get out of this club what you put into it. It will be really rewarding, but not if you sit back and wait for someone to come to you. You’ve got to be active.’”

A flexible attendance policy allows members time to take their children to school – or they can bring the kids to meetings. And in 2019, the club instituted a corporate membership category, which allows up to four people from one company to share a membership. Those efforts have led to a renewed energy in the club, with about 40 percent of members age 49 or younger, including 15 under 40.

At 7:30 a.m. on 19 March, Rotarians started clicking their Zoom link. One after another, their faces appeared on the screen. It was a bit rocky at first: Not everyone knew how to mute themselves, and one member had his camera pointed at the ceiling. No one was sure who it was until another member, a contractor, recognized the ceiling, which he had in-

stalled. “It took some getting used to,” Kelly says. “We didn’t have a speaker the first week. People didn’t know how to use Zoom. But now people have it pretty well dialed in.”

Attendance has kept going up. People like the format. The club has even started to hold its “First Friday” cocktail hour – which is normally at a bar or restaurant – via Zoom. It has gone so well that second, third, and fourth Fridays have been added. “Going through this, we’ve learned that old dogs can learn new tricks,” says Wickes.

On 9 April, the club’s fourth virtual meeting got underway. Guests were introduced. Members stood for the Pledge of Allegiance, which resulted, momentarily, in a screen full of torsos. The Four-Way Test got a bit garbled as words collided. “Did we pass?” someone asked afterward.

Next came Happy Bucks, which were donated through a link in the chat room. Then came the speaker, Brian Lazar from the Colorado Avalanche Information Center. On the screen, members could be seen sitting at desks and on couches. In some rooms, hearth fires crackled in the background. A few people managed to project themselves onto digital backgrounds of the northern lights or a birch forest. Other views offered peeks at members’ bookshelves, wall art, and kitchen cabinets – windows into their lives.

As the meeting ended, 2019-20 President Shaun Hathaway wished everyone a great weekend. “Stay safe,” he said, “and we’ll see you next Thursday.”

“Thanks, Shaun!”

“Bye, everybody!”

“See you!”

“Bye!” “Bye!” “Bye!”

Silence. A few people remained on the screen.

“Are we still on?”

“I can’t get out of here.”

“Oh, there we go.”

[click]

— FRANK BURES

5 QUESTIONS ABOUT

Environmental projects

with Karen Kendrick-Hands

Communications director, Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (ESRAG)



1 How does the environment fit into Rotary's areas of focus?

Any project in any area of focus will benefit from having environmental sustainability as one of its watchwords. It's a lot harder to supply clean water to people if your watershed is compromised — if your river is full of industrial, human, and animal waste. Basic education and literacy is a challenge when kids are sick because the school well is contaminated. Health is affected when insects carrying diseases expand their geographic range due to changing climate patterns. Water wars and climate refugees will make achieving peace and conflict resolution more complicated. Economic development is slowed when there's not adequate energy. Rotary would do a huge service to the world if it moved every water project from a diesel pump to wind or solar. That's a project that's scalable.

2 Why did ESRAG publish a handbook with environmental project ideas?

A lot of people say they'd like to do an environmental project, but they don't know where to start. Or they may already be doing something in their community that they didn't even realize was an environmental project — like adopting a high-way or organizing an electronic waste recycling drive — and the handbook, which we worked with the United Nations Environment Programme

(UNEP) to create in 2019, helps educate them about the broad range of projects that help the environment. Other people say they need an idea that will inspire their clubs. I was astonished at the wide variety of project ideas we were able to gather and present in the handbook.

3 Can you describe some of the project suggestions?

We looked to address topics that we thought were important, topics that fit well with existing areas of focus, and topics that expanded Rotary clubs' reach into the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Six of the 17 goals don't currently fit under one of Rotary's areas of focus — things like affordable and clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, and responsible consumption and production. The back cover is a sample press release. It's a reminder that sharing our story builds the brand and creates momentum for more service.

4 What inspired ESRAG's collaboration with UNEP?

In 2018, Rotary Day at the United Nations was celebrated in Nairobi, Kenya, and UNEP, which is based there, helped host the event. Rotary and UNEP decided to work together to create a handbook for Rotary clubs that want to participate in World Environment Day, which is 5 June. ESRAG worked with UNEP on the handbook. It starts with a joint statement from former

RI Presidents Barry Rassin and Mark Daniel Maloney. We were thrilled to have that endorsement and hope this can be the start of more collaboration between Rotary and UNEP.

5 Are Rotarians getting more involved in environmental projects?

I was invited by Rotary staff earlier this year to help put together a survey to gauge interest in environmental projects throughout the Rotary world. We had some input from the Climate Solutions Coalition, which is a youth movement within ESRAG. We sent out the survey link in a newsletter on 23 January. We had to get all the results in by 31 January. In that brief time, we got over 5,000 completed surveys back. I think that shows there is a lot of pent-up demand.

People interested in environmental solutions could go out and work with other groups, and many Rotarians do. But what we're seeing is a real desire to do their environmental work within the Rotary framework. That's a valuable future asset for Rotary. We have no idea of the members it will attract, the purse strings that will be loosened. With the people who will be the next generation of Rotary, the future is clear.

— DIANA SCHOBERG

Download your copy of the
ESRAG-UNEP handbook at
esrag.org/esrag-unep-handbook.



High connectivity

Rotary Club of La Marsa Impact, Tunisia

Chartered: 2018
Original membership: 28
Membership: 24

SOLID FOOTING:

In the two years since its founding, this club has already matured into a high-profile member of the Tunisian Rotary family by focusing on the development of young professionals. Data-driven could be a byword for a club that taps the technological proficiency of its members. The club tracks member involvement by Excel spreadsheet, and it developed an internet platform and database shared by clubs across the country. But it's not all analytics and geekiness; a reputation for hands-on work and cultural outings is what really computes.

Picking a name with a punch helped set the tone for the Rotary Club of La Marsa Impact, says member Eya Chaouch. “In the meetings to plan the club, our idea was to work on long-term projects that had an actual impact on improving people’s situations,” hence the appellation for the French-language club.

“During the creation of our club, we thought of integrating students in community life to let them benefit from the experience of the other professional members,” says Khaled ben Hafaiedh, the club’s charter president. “Our student members are highly motivated and dedicated to learning, especially when it comes to volunteering.” But all benefit from the interplay among students, financiers, marketers, engineers, lawyers, art managers, event managers, accountants, and other young professionals.

Karim ben Ammar appreciates the opportunity to enhance his leadership, public speaking, planning, team-building, and fundraising acumen. “As a student, being part of the club has brought me a lot of experience and know-how,” says Ammar.

All members are expected to serve on two club committees. For students, this is a chance to learn from more experienced members. In addition, five members are professionally certified job coaches. “They focus on soft and hard skills, budgeting,

CLUB INNOVATION:

The founders contacted acquaintances, mostly young professionals, to join them in a new club that would meet two evenings a month. A major appeal was its attention to skills development and service, an emphasis that broadened its appeal to collegians. The club keeps annual dues very low (about \$135) and gives students a discount.

personal development, ‘elevator pitches,’ practical philosophy,” says Mohamed Mehdi Nafti, the club’s president.

The abundance of talent helps other clubs as well. Hafaiedh, Ammar, and fellow club member Selim Bousbih created a database and web platform, dubbed Raconnect, which is already being used by several clubs.

The club boasts a robust lineup of projects that address community needs and cultural interests: La Marsa Impact Rotarians have held an autism awareness seminar, hosted a “supermom” class that delivered expert advice on the care of newborns, and helped coordinate a blood drive that involved more than 20 Rotary clubs.

The club, two-thirds of whose members are women, sponsored a screening of *Papicha*, a controversial film focused on religious fundamentalism and women’s rights in 1990s Algeria. The event’s box office proceeds have been donated to equip and refurbish the pediatric surgery department of the Institute of Neurology. More recently, 10 club members joined members of the organization Tunisian Campers to plant 4,000 pine and eucalyptus trees in the Dar Chichou forest near El Haouaria.

The club also puts an emphasis on nurturing friendships, with outings to musical events and Moorish and Roman sites. “Through brainstorming sessions, our members come up with new activities,” Hafaiedh says. “The most important thing is to frequently meet, whether it is for a coffee or an evening out.”

—BRAD WEBBER



From top: Club members enjoy a trip to Harqalah, where they visited religious sites and zip lined; the club gets a hands-on lesson in Japanese cooking.



CONVENTION COUNTDOWN *Taipei energy*

The iconic Taipei 101 tower, one of the tallest buildings in the world, is designed to evoke a stalk of bamboo, a staple of traditional Taiwanese building techniques. It's one example of the way that in this city, innovation springs from tradition. When you're in Taipei for the 2021 Rotary International Convention from 12 to 16 June, you'll find historic and modern architecture, urban and natural settings, lively nightlife and serene spirituality. You can visit tea houses that honor centuries-old customs and enjoy fusion cuisine that embraces the influences of China, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain. And everywhere you go, you will be sure of a friendly welcome.

For some Rotarians, this will be a chance to revisit Taipei, which played host to the 1994 convention. Whether this is a return visit or your first time here, you will find much to explore: Awe-inspiring palaces and temples, engaging museums, and lively shopping districts are all within easy reach of the city center.

Beyond the city limits, Taiwan has even more to offer, from the pastoral splendor of a ride on the Alishan Forest Railway to the ornate beauty of the Tianliao Stone Temple, built of seashells, corals, and stones.

—HANK SARTIN



Learn more and register at
convention.rotary.org.



A message from **Foundation Trustee Chair** **K. R. Ravindran**

I believe that RI President Holger Knaack's theme, *Rotary Opens Opportunities*, fits the times so well. You might ask how that can be, given all of the turmoil happening around us today. The following story, paraphrased from British author Alan Watts' telling of a Taoist parable, helps explain why.

Once there was a farmer whose horse ran away. That evening, all of his neighbors came around to commiserate. They said, "We are so sorry to hear your horse has run away. This is most unfortunate." The farmer said, "Maybe."

The next day, the horse came back, bringing seven wild horses. In the evening, everybody said, "Isn't that lucky. What a great turn of events. You now have eight horses!" The farmer again said, "Maybe."

The following day, his son tried to break one of the horses, and while riding it, he was thrown and broke his leg. The neighbors said, "Oh dear, that's too bad." The farmer responded, "Maybe."

The next day, officers came around to conscript people into the army, and they rejected his son because he had a broken leg. Again all the neighbors said, "Isn't that great!" Again, the farmer said, "Maybe."

What we learn from this is that nature is immensely complex. It's impossible to tell whether anything that happens is good or bad, because you never know what the consequences will be. All we can know is that with every action and reaction, there is an opportunity — a chance to live our values, express our desires, and take action to make the world a bit closer to the way we want it to be.

The Rotary Foundation is our conduit to make those meaningful changes. Through the Foundation, we do our part to help rid the world of polio. In addition, we can help support important COVID-19 projects and prepare the world for the massive vaccination effort that will be needed soon. And we can help keep some continuity in service to people in need when so many regular services are being disrupted.

Will this be Rotary's great moment to become an even stronger organization in the 21st century? Maybe. Is this your great opportunity to live your values? Maybe! It's up to you and me.

K. R. RAVINDRAN

Foundation trustee chair

Apply yourself

Would you like to contribute further to Rotary by serving on a committee? Each of Rotary’s committees, made up of Rotarians and Rotaractors from around the world, works with the organization’s leadership to ensure efficiency and promote the goals and priorities laid out in the strategic plan.

The following committees are searching for qualified candidates for limited openings in 2021-22. All committees correspond via email, teleconference, or webinars as needed, and some also involve at least one mandatory in-person meeting per year. Most committee business is conducted in English.

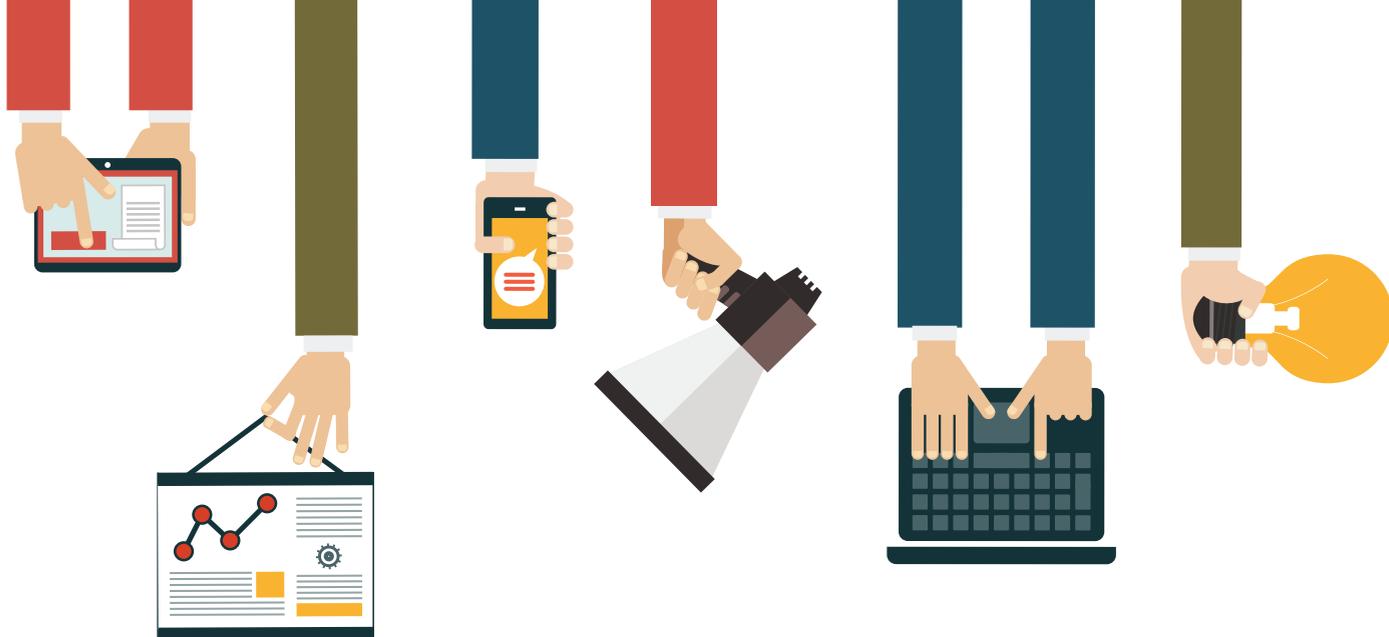
To be considered for committee membership or to recommend someone for an appointment, visit on.rotary.org/application2020.

Applicants must be registered on My Rotary at rotary.org/myrotary and should make sure their My Rotary profile includes current contact information.

Candidates may apply for only one committee.

The application deadline is 15 August.

COMMITTEE	FUNCTION	PREREQUISITES	COMMITMENT
Audit	Advises the Board of Directors on financial reports, internal and external auditing, and the system of internal control	Independence, appropriate business experience, and demonstrated financial literacy in accounting, auditing, banking, insurance, investment, risk management, executive management, or audit governance	One position for a six-year term; two meetings in Evanston per year and two teleconference / webinar meetings per year
Communications	Advises the Board on communication with key audiences	Professional background and experience in a communications-related field	Three positions for three-year terms; multiple conference calls; annual meeting in Evanston
Finance	Advises the Board on Rotary’s finances, including budgets, investment policy, and sustainability measures	Professional background in a finance-related field; nonprofit experience preferred. Candidates should have experience in financial matters at the club and district levels.	Two positions for three-year terms; two meetings per year in Evanston
Joint Committee on Partnerships	Advises the Board and The Rotary Foundation Trustees on partnership and sponsorship matters	Knowledge of Rotary grant-making and international service portfolios; extensive experience in cultivating and developing partnerships with corporations, the NGO sector, and government; experience in cause marketing, sponsorship, and resource-generating relationships as well as international strategic partnerships; and clear understanding of the capacity and club-based projects of Rotary	Two positions for three-year terms; annual meeting in Evanston



COMMITTEE FUNCTION

Leadership Development and Training

Advises the Board on Rotary’s leadership training program for Rotarians, clubs, and districts, with a special emphasis on training for district governors

PREREQUISITES COMMITMENT

Must have significant training or education experience with a preference for leadership development

Two positions for three-year terms; annual meeting in Evanston

Operations Review

Monitors the effectiveness, efficiency, and implementation of operations and all internal systems; advises the Executive Committee on compensation matters; and performs other oversight functions as requested by the Board

Experience in management, leadership development, or financial management, and a thorough knowledge of Rotary’s operations. Appointments will be limited to past RI directors.

One position for a six-year term; two meetings per year in Evanston

Rotaract

Advises the Board on Rotaract; develops the Rotaract Preconvention program

Rotarians: Experience working with Rotaract; direct experience as a mentor or Rotaract adviser or district chair. Rotaract alumni are strong candidates.

Rotarians: One position for a three-year term; annual meeting in Evanston

Rotaractors: Leadership at the club, district, or international level. Strong candidates have served as a district Rotaract representative, organized projects, or attended a Rotaract Preconvention.

Rotaractors: Three positions for one-year terms; one meeting in Evanston

Strategic Planning

Reviews Rotary’s strategic plan and associated measures; advises leadership on other matters of long-term significance

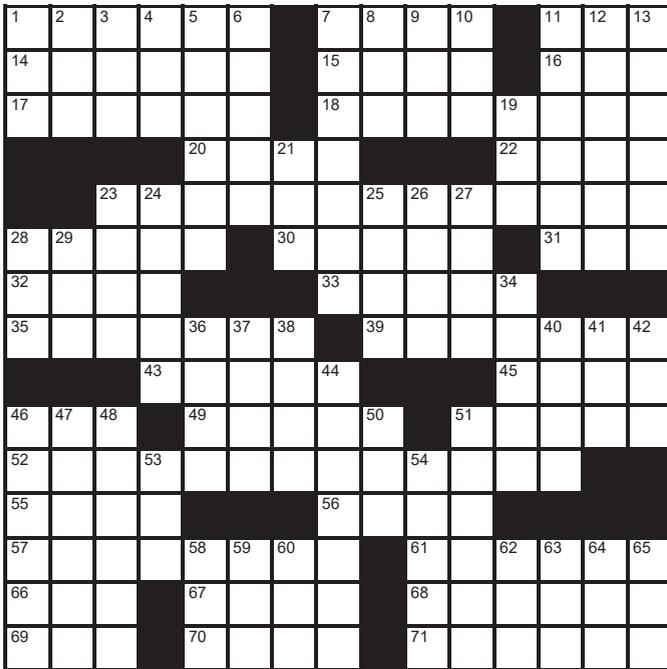
10+ years of experience in strategy development, monitoring, and implementation, and strong understanding of RI and Foundation

One position with a four-year term; two meetings per year in Evanston

NEW PREZ

by Victor Fleming

Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas



Across

- 1 Dispossess, as of property rights
- 7 ___ in *Show* (2000 mockumentary)
- 11 Baseball legend Williams
- 14 1960s and '70s moon program
- 15 Jazzy home?
- 16 Cell "messenger"
- 17 With 61-Across, new RI prez
- 18 New prez says "creating unique clubs for younger people is just part of the ___"
- 20 Those in Havana?
- 22 Start to play?
- 23 *Rotary Opens* ___ (new prez's theme)
- 28 With a heavy heart
- 30 Hafiz's study
- 31 Fireplace fleck
- 32 Matty, Felipe, or Moisés
- 33 Recipe amount
- 35 Herzogtum Lauenburg-Mölln, ___ (site of new prez's home club)
- 39 New prez's spouse
- 43 Werner von ___ (rocket scientist)
- 45 Sound of belly laughter
- 46 "Rumor ___ it ..."
- 49 Author Gardner and director Kenton

- 51 Milker's squeeze?
- 52 New prez urges Rotarians to ___
- 55 Golfer Aoki
- 56 Olin and Berry
- 57 New prez wants to "grow Rotary, making it ___"
- 61 See 17-Across
- 66 Thrice, to pharmacists
- 67 Boyfriend
- 68 Collie of old TV
- 69 Caution sign
- 70 "Join the ___"
- 71 Afterword

- 19 Bit of body art, for short
- 21 Genesis vessel
- 23 Limburger cheese feature
- 24 Measure depth, in a way
- 25 *Topaz* novelist
- 26 Doubled, Mork's farewell phrase
- 27 Abbrs. in company names
- 28 Give in to gravity
- 29 Pub draught
- 34 Godzilla feature?
- 36 Domain
- 37 Anti-drug cop
- 38 Carol time
- 40 Anatomical bulge
- 41 "Uh-uh," in Edinburgh
- 42 Hit the wrong button, say
- 44 Masseur's specialty, perhaps
- 46 Bank robberies
- 47 Beer brand
- 48 Italian eatery chain
- 50 Mother or daughter
- 51 Open, as a coin purse
- 53 Friend of Pooh
- 54 Spot for a bracelet
- 58 Network with a peacock logo
- 59 Salon selection
- 60 *Agua*, in Arles
- 62 "___ was going to St. Ives ..."
- 63 Handy way to speak? (abbr.)
- 64 AFL-___
- 65 Bar barrel

Down

- 1 Dit's counterpart
- 2 Wall St. premiere
- 3 Encyclopedia unit (abbr.)
- 4 Dancer Taina ___
- 5 Bashful companion?
- 6 Common sculpture unit
- 7 Where to board a city transit vehicle
- 8 1940s military command, briefly
- 9 *Tanka* star Mineo
- 10 Appointment book abbr.
- 11 A Nixon daughter
- 12 Online jottings
- 13 Sweet buttery pastry

Solution on page 26

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FIGHT HUNGER

Hunger hides in every community. That's why Rotary clubs support programs to provide healthy food and develop sustainable solutions to food insecurity. Fighting hunger to build stronger communities — that's what people of action do. **Learn more at [Rotary.org](https://www.rotary.org).**

Rotary



PEOPLE OF ACTION

last look



BOTTOM LEFT: MARCO LONGARI; ALL OTHERS: NURPHOTO

DONATE

Rotary and its partners in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) are drawing on their experience fighting polio outbreaks to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Rotarians helped build the polio eradication infrastructure used for detecting the poliovirus and delivering vaccinations, and that infrastructure is enabling a strong response to COVID-19, especially in polio-endemic countries.

Polio staff in those countries who track the spread of the poliovirus support surveillance for COVID-19 through contact tracing, improving lab testing, providing technical support, and training additional surveillance officers. Health workers provide information on hand washing and staff a national help hotline in Pakistan that was originally used for polio-related calls and has been adapted to provide information related to COVID-19.

GPEI has advised countries that were planning polio immunization campaigns to pause them until the second half of 2020 to inhibit further spread of COVID-19. You can help ensure that when activities resume, we can hit the ground running: Make a contribution at endpolio.org/donate.

WATCH

When health workers who usually work on the polio campaign shifted gears to help with COVID-19, they put their health at risk. The members of GPEI's Polio Oversight Board made a video to thank them; watch it at on.rotary.org/pobmessage.

The polio eradication program is helping respond to the COVID-19 pandemic through activities such as (clockwise from top left) handwashing training, improving lab testing, distributing information about COVID-19, and training surveillance officers.



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others to view,
CREATE
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Register at convention.rotary.org

*Registration must be paid in full between
20 and 26 June 2020 to receive the \$315 rate.

