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Rotary's lifeblood

How believing in the Foundation can turn good Rotarians into great ones.

by Anthony G. Craine

As a major gifts adviser for The Rotary Foundation of RI, Chuck Kurtzman urges others to give. But he admits that his own commitment to giving, and to Rotary, took time to grow.

"The first few years, I attended meetings with maybe 70 percent regularity," recalls Kurtzman, a member of the Rotary Club of Fort Worth-South, Texas, USA. Since then, his involvement has grown steadily, to say the least. He has served as club president and district governor. He has provided support to Texas blood centers and has pushed for worldwide cooperation among Rotary clubs that support blood drives. He has worked to maintain a steady flow of badly needed books to students in South Africa.

Today, he and his wife, Ellen, have embraced the organiza-



The Foundation means more to Chuck Kurtzman (left) since he got hands-on with pet projects.

tion. "We've decided that Rotary is our family," he says.

It all started with a little contest. About a year after Kurtzman became a Rotarian in 1984, his club held a raffle to raise money for polio eradication. For a donation of just US\$100, the winner would receive a chance to earn Paul Harris Fellow Recognition. Kurtzman won.

"I felt so guilty," he says. But that pang of guilt spurred something.

"We felt that getting involved in the polio campaign was the most meaningful thing we could do," he says. "We decided then that we'd help to the extent of our financial ability." And they did. By 1998, Kurtzman had become a Major Donor.

Meanwhile, Kurtzman took an increasingly active role in supporting blood drives. At the suggestion of the director of a local blood center, his club

Pinkies point the way to success

With their work on the highly successful Purple Pinkie Project, John Wheeler and Dave McKibbin have learned some valuable lessons about fundraising.

Wheeler, a member of the Rotary Club of Lake City, Fla., USA, originated the idea and raised US\$4,060 in schools in Columbia County, Fla. McKibbin's club, the Rotary Club of Brighton, Ont., Canada, was the first of many clubs to replicate the project in schools in their communities.

The idea is simple: Go to schools and paint children's fingers with the same purple dye used by vaccinators in the field to raise money for, and awareness of, polio eradication. Implementing the project however, requires plenty of planning and communication.

Wheeler and McKibbin offer these fundraising tips:

Do use the fundraiser as a teaching tool. "As Rotarians visit schools, they have an excellent opportunity to talk about Rotary and the fight against polio," Wheeler says.

Do make the most of all available human resources. This includes Interactors, Rotaractors, and veteran members of the club. "Our seasoned Rotarians just love to go to the schools on Purple Pinkie Day," Wheeler says. "The kids seem to energize them."

started challenging other clubs to get members to give blood. Kurtzman knew the perfect incentive: Paul Harris Fellow Recognition. The club with the highest level of donations per member received a Paul Harris Fellowship to bestow on a participating Rotarian. The money often came out of Kurtzman's own pocket, but he knew it was worth it.

Now known as the Governors' Challenge blood drives, the effort has gathered more than 35,000 units of blood in north Texas; 42 districts worldwide have joined the cause.

Kurtzman admits that even as the blood drive initiative gained momentum, he didn't fully grasp the Foundation's power. That changed at the RI Convention in 1998, where he chatted with Past RI Director Irving J. "Sonny" Brown about what the Foundation could do with gifts-in-kind to move valuable supplies around the world.

Kurtzman envisioned a new project: Blood centers in wealthy countries sending used equipment to poorer countries, enabling life-saving blood services. That led to the creation of the Rotary Blood Bank Technology Exchange, which has deployed \$1.8 million worth of equipment and training through-

out the world, making collection and storage of large amounts of blood a reality in places where it was once impossible.

"We didn't invent blood drives," he says. "But Rotarians around the world have saved millions of lives through blood drives."

"We see The Rotary Foundation as 'our' foundation, not somebody else's cause."

— Chuck Kurtzman



Kurtzman's involvement, and level of giving, continued to grow. In 2000, he became a charter member of the Bequest Society at Level VI, the society's highest commitment level. Then came a 2001 stewardship trip to South Africa, an event that he calls "a real nexus in our involvement."

Accompanied by Foundation staff and four other Rotarian couples, including Brown and his wife, Ann, the Kurtzmans toured Foundation-supported projects doing crucial humanitarian work, including a hospice for babies with HIV and AIDS. "Seeing the work of the Rotarians on the other side of the equation

put everything into a very different perspective," he says. "Prior to that, everything was abstract – the check went into the envelope, the stuff went into a box. Now we were meeting the people who were taking the stuff out of the boxes, using their personal resources to spread those bucks so very far. We were just amazed by what they had accomplished."

Kurtzman used the trip, which he and the other Rotarians financed themselves, to bring District 9300 in South Africa on board with the Governors' Challenge Blood Drives. A chance encounter with a shipment of books just arriving in the country from districts in his home state of Texas led him to start a long-term relationship with the Bedfordview Book Project, which supplies books to underfunded schools in District 9300.

It all began with \$100 and the luck of the draw. But now, Chuck and Ellen Kurtzman can't imagine a better place for their money.

"We see The Rotary Foundation as 'our' foundation, not somebody else's cause that we give money to," Kurtzman says. "We know the people administering it, and we know that the people who are working on the projects, even if we've never met them personally, are motivated by the same things that motivate us." ■

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Do collect money in round numbers. "Although 60 cents is the estimated cost of one polio vaccination, we now ask for \$1," Wheeler says. "Participation is just as high, and the counting is easier."

Do get local businesses to match donations. "We went to our local pharmacy for a matching donation," Wheeler says. "Dave was successful getting matches from banks and other businesses."

Don't exclude other community organizations. "A Girl Scout did the Purple Pinkie Project at a hospital in Houston," Wheeler says. "She raised several hundred dollars."

Don't schedule too far in advance – or not far enough. "Too far in advance, you lose any excitement and initiative," McKibbon says. "Not enough in advance, people will be frustrated in getting things done."

Don't assume your volunteer helpers will know their roles. "Students sent to assist us had problems following instructions," McKibbon says. Give instructions ahead of time.

Don't be discouraged if you don't see immediate results. The success of the Purple Pinkie Project didn't just happen, McKibbon says. "It takes time, preparation, dedication, and belief in what you are doing."

Districts' creativity boosts annual giving

About 55 districts offer a new, local form of recognition for supporters of The Rotary Foundation: the Paul Harris Society, an idea pioneered by Past District 5340 Governor Wayne Cusick. When donors from those districts contribute US\$1,000 or more annually, they're eligible for Paul Harris Society recognition. Districts are finding that the societies can increase giving.

"There's no doubt in my mind that we're securing additional funds because of the Paul Harris Society," says Anne L. Matthews, 2004-05 Foundation chair of District 7770 (South Carolina, USA). Her district ranked No. 1 in the world in giving to the Annual Programs Fund in 2004-05 – with contributions of about \$821,000. At least \$125,000 of that came from the 125 charter members of the Paul Harris Society.

How did the district go about putting together such an effective means of raising funds for the Foundation? Matthews saw Rotary's centennial year as an ideal time to try. The first step was to establish a membership goal. At Matthews' suggestion, the committee chose 100, to mark the centennial. "I always set the bar high," she says. "You have to reach."

Next came choosing an emphasis, a way to convince people to come on board. Again, the centennial made for easy motivation. But Matthews found an additional appeal. "If you join this year, you'll be a charter member," she said. "You'll be a part of making history in District 7770."

Matthews developed a flyer and a form and mailed them to club presidents and foundation chairs on 1 July to give them early notice of the campaign. Then some serious homework began. Matthews studied

the Paul Harris Fellow recognition levels of every member in the district to determine the best candidates. She chose more than 200 and wrote to each personally. Then she spoke to clubs, making it clear that members can stop giving if they are no longer financially able to do so.

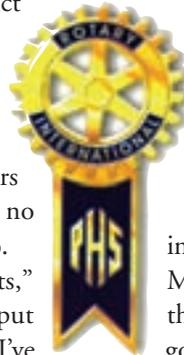
"You give Rotarians the facts," she says. "But you've got to put your heart and soul into it. I've been to the developing world. I've seen where the money goes. So I can share

personal information and back up anything I say with Rotary facts."

In the end, though, Rotarians decide for themselves whether giving at the Paul Harris Society level is important to them.

"People do what they want to do in life, they set their own priorities," Matthews says. "If I want to help those who are less fortunate, I'm going to find a way to accomplish that desire of mine."

– A.G.C.



Start a Paul Harris Society in your district:

- 1 } Develop a marketing plan and set membership goals.
- 2 } Educate incoming club presidents about the plan.
- 3 } Introduce the campaign at the district Foundation seminar.
- 4 } Study giving records to determine qualified candidates.
- 5 } Contact qualified candidates personally and share stories of Foundation projects.
- 6 } Thank new members with an appropriate form of recognition.