

What Is Your Club Known For?

One of my most favorite Rotary activities is to visit clubs that are new to me. I frequently walk in, introduce myself to a member, and ask them to tell me about one of their club's projects.

All too frequently, what follows is a description of the club's Auction or Golf Tourney or Pizza Bowl — a fundraiser, but not a service project — which is, after all, the reason Rotary exists.

If club members, when asked to share something about their club, immediately focus on how the club raises money and ignore the service aspects of what we do, how is Rotary to share the good word of our successes? How are we to engage potential members if we stress the *how* of what we do, but not the *why* or the *what*?

Rotary leadership training programs often describe the importance of the "elevator speech," the opportunity to condense the essence of our Rotary experience into a few sound bites when we have an opportunity to explain Rotary to a stranger.

As leaders in this movement, it is critical that we spread the word to club members that, when given the opportunity to talk about Rotary, they should be sure to include how their local club supports a scholarship fund or food pantry or home heating oil fund. How Rotary is ridding the world of a crippling disease. How Rotary is making a difference on the ground through our humanitarian grants.

And only when the follow-up question comes, "how do Rotary members find the money to do all this?" should we talk about the Wine Auction or the Polar Bear Plunge.

—Marty Helman

Public Image



Signature Projects Deliver Significant Benefits

By Rotary Zone Coordinator Gayle Knepper

Many clubs are looking for ways to become involved in a new area of service — in other words, a new project — to meet changing needs of their communities, re-motivate members and stimulate involvement from non-Rotarians. If this describes your club, now may be the time to consider a signature project.

A signature project is a significant service initiative, one for which a club is clearly recognized in the community and that differentiates it from other organizations.

Small projects, while worthwhile, are difficult to leverage into lasting community impact and awareness. A major project, on the other hand, creates a "signature" for the club, one which establishes public recognition that Rotary is a dynamic, action-oriented service organization and one in which others want to get involved.

Signature projects can range from the purchase and staffing of a Rotary bookmobile traveling throughout the city to an annual regional marathon that raises funds to support homeless teens.

Attributes of a signature project include substantial size, scope and duration: it continues or repeats regularly for a number of years. It integrates most functional areas of a club, all or nearly of its members (many clubs have a goal of 100% member involvement) and engages outside partners and community members. It usually addresses a significant and recognized need.

The benefits? In addition to providing service in response to an important community concern, it increases visibility of the club, attracts new funding sources, increases hands-on service by members, motivates non-Rotarians to become engaged and often provides an opportunity for a Foundation grant. All accomplished by a single project.

A signature project requires careful advance planning due to its size and impact, but the results of a signature project for the community and the club are well worth the commitment.

One remarkable example of a significant signature project in Zone 24 is "Rotary Park," developed by the Novosibirsk Initiative club (District 2225). Although still under construction, the nearly \$500,000 project to serve handicapped children is already delivering benefits to the community and to Rotary, and supported an increase in club size of nearly 90% since 2012.

[Read the full story.](#)

If your club is considering a signature project, contact the Rotary Coordinator in your region to discuss steps to get started or check the Signature Project resources page at www.GreatIdeasToShare.com.

