

Philippine Rotary

THE MAGAZINE OF CHOICE

AUGUST 2024

LIVING LEGACY

Going city to city to ease fears,
this road warrior puts organ
donation on the Rotary map

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PH ROTARY'S
MOST OUTSTANDING
ENVIRONMENT
PROJECTS

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Rotary 



YOUR PROJECT PLANNING EXPERTS



WALLY GARDINER
Canada, District 5360

CADRE TITLE:

Cadre Adviser and Former Technical Coordinator for
Community Economic Development

OCCUPATION:

Retired CEO, Gardiner Computer Consulting Inc.



**WHAT ARE ROTARY
MEMBERS SAYING
ABOUT WALLY?**

“Wally Gardiner provided a tremendous amount of assistance for the design, implementation, and overall success of our two global grants. Wally’s support exceeded my expectations of what a Cadre member could do to help us. I strongly recommend that The Rotary Foundation continues to provide support through the Cadre system. Rotary clubs should be encouraged to reach out to the Cadre whenever possible to improve their projects.”

— Andrew Bronson, Rotary Club of Lethbridge East,
District 5360 (Canada)

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Stephanie Urchick (rear right) listens as a member of her club in McMurray, Pennsylvania, speaks at their weekly meeting.

From challenge to opportunity

If we are to truly change the world with *The Magic of Rotary*, it's up to all of us to foster a sense of belonging in our clubs. But every club should take its own path to get there, and the Action Plan can help you find your way. What does that look like?

Take for instance the Rotary Club of Beveren-Waas in Belgium. It was chartered in 1974 but has evolved with the times, developing both a strategic plan and a membership plan. To find new members, the club analyzes the city's professions to help focus its search, and all new members are quickly assigned tasks and roles.

The club also mixes up meeting times, alternating between evening and afternoon sessions, making them accessible for all members.

Sometimes, circumstances force clubs to make changes. But as people of action, we know that behind every obstacle is an opportunity.

The Rotary Club of Holyoke in Massachusetts was forced from its meeting place because of rising costs after the COVID-19 pandemic, but members took this setback and turned it into a strength. The club started meeting in a library community room that was available for no charge and catering lunch from a nearby deli. Lunch costs \$10 per person but it's optional, so no one has to spend money to attend a meeting. What a great way to work toward being "fair to all concerned."

Since making this change, the Holyoke club has gained 13 members. I suspect part of its membership

growth is due to the club's sense of inclusivity — the first step toward belonging.

If you ask members what they expect from the club experience, you might find that your club doesn't meet expectations. Think of this as an opportunity to reshape your club in exciting ways, as alternative club models are making a positive impact.

For example, a Rotary Fellowship called Beers Rotarians Enjoy Worldwide, or BREW, has worked closely with the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Rotary Action Group for the past eight years to assist with clean water projects. In that time, BREW has funneled 25 percent of its dues to those initiatives.

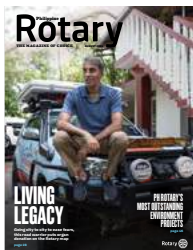
BREW is one of many examples of members pursuing belonging to improve the world.

I can't stress enough the importance of belonging. Clubs become simply irresistible when all members feel that they are exactly where they need to be. To me, belonging is the spark that ignites *The Magic of Rotary*.

As you receive feedback from club members and the community you serve, I urge you to pursue that spark. The Action Plan can help you find the path to success, and if you light your way with the spirit of belonging, that path will lead to a bright future for your club, your community, and the world.

STEPHANIE A. URCHICK
President, Rotary International

Learn about Rotary's Action Plan at rotary.org/actionplan.



▲ ON THE COVER:
Anil Srivatsa and other Rotary members encourage clubs to promote organ donation as the issue gets its strongest spotlight in years. Photo by Gayatri Ganju



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Boost Rotary's public image

This year, President Stephanie Urchick urges all Rotarians to celebrate The Magic of Rotary. Your Philippine Rotary Magazine (PRM) fully supports this thrust.

Last July 20, 2024, we held a webinar on Enhancing Public Image Thru the Philippine Rotary Magazine" with over 270 sustained participants in Zoom for the entire 3-hour event. We anticipate that this will enable the clubs to intensify their respective campaigns through unique People of Action stories.

Our first board meeting and strategic planning session last July 26, 2024. We approved the financial budget and discussed strategies for enhancing support for the magazine. We are deferring any consideration of an increase in subscription fee, hoping that we will garner more vigorous support from advertisers.

Thanks to the generous support of Past District Governor Edna Sutter and her spouse Martin who have pledged anew P1.5 million, the PRM Environmental Awards shall thrive on its second year

A new project on scholarship grants for journalism students with a budget of P1.0 million shall be implemented year. We seek to encourage and develop our youth — especially those from the countryside — by honing their writing skills that could inspire them to become journalists after graduating from college.

We shall also vigorously promote heightened awareness on our PRM digitalization project, and thereby increase viewership and readership of our magazine. Through the endorsement and support of our District Governors and their representatives, we hope to engage the Rotarians in their clubs to access and read the magazine by sharing the links of our website and social media platforms. Here are the links that you can share easily:

- Website: <https://www.philippinerotarymagazine.com/>
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/philrotarymagazine
- Instagram: bit.ly/PRM_Instagram
- LinkedIn: bit.ly/PRM_LinkedIn
- Twitter X: bit.ly/PRM_TwitterX
- Youtube: bit.ly/PRM_Youtube

Together with the members of our board of trustees, I invite the active participation of every Philippine Rotarian in each of our clubs throughout the land to extend their vigorous support.

EMILIANO D. JOVEN
Chairman, PRMFI



“A new project on scholarship grants for journalism students shall be implemented. We seek to encourage and develop our youth — especially those from the countryside — by honing their writing skills and inspiring them to become journalists.”

Philippine Rotary

THE MAGAZINE OF CHOICE

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Faith and enthusiasm in Rotary

Honor Rotary with Faith and Enthusiasm, was the theme of Rotary International President Paulo V. C. Costa when I served as club president in 1990-1991, serves as a guiding light in my continuing Rotary journey.

This was rekindled when I met with RI President-elect Mário César Martins de Camargo last August 17 when he sat for an interview with Philippine Rotary Magazine that we are featuring in this issue. Mario is the fourth Brazilian to serve at RI's helm, and is also from São Paulo like Costa, who pioneered the Preserve Planet Earth program that sparked Rotary's environmental sustainability initiatives.

Faith is what motivated me to join Rotary four decades ago, in September 1984. Rotary's motto, Service Above Self, echoes the second commandment, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

Enthusiasm is derived from the Greek *en theos*, which means God within.

Hence, to honor Rotary with faith and enthusiasm is akin to believing that God is within oneself, and as Les Miserables author Victor Hugo frames it appropriately, "To love another person is to see the face of God."

It is within this context that I reaffirm my Rotarian commitment.

Rotary has made me a better person by instilling in me the values of friendship and fellowship in the service of others. In three spheres — business, academe and government — I have endeavored to reach out and pitch in my modest efforts in helping build better organizations and communities.

For six full years, I was privileged to have served with President Benigno 'Noynoy' Aquino III, truly a dedicated servant-leader, from whom I learned many lessons in human relations and governance. For two years, it was the honor of my life, too, to have worked with his mother President Corazon 'Cory' Aquino, a gentle, dedicated and prayerful leader who led our nation in rebuilding democracy — a legacy we cherish today.

Writing on the ideal of service, our founder Paul Harris declared: "Even the air we breathe is invisible. And yet it sustains life. Beneath the good works of Rotary, there is an invisible power, it is the power of goodwill, and by virtue of the power of goodwill, Rotary exists."

Sonny Coloma
SONNY COLOMA
Editor-in-chief



“Rotary has made me a better person by instilling in me the values of friendship and fellowship in the service of others. In three spheres — business, academe and government — I have endeavored to reach out and pitch in my modest efforts in helping build better organizations and communities.”

OUR CLUBS

D3800 is indeed destined to reach even greater heights—led by a District Governor with exceptional qualifications, a heart and passion for service, a penchant for thorough preparation and a family that fully supports him.



D3800 FOCUS

Full speed towards goals

by Prisco S. Rivera, Jr.

Barely starting his term as Governor of RI District 3800 (D3800), DG Roberto “Bobby” B. Zamora is working at full throttle to achieve his goals in support of the annual targets of Rotary International (RI) and The Rotary Foundation (TRF). DG Bobby is bent on carrying out his plans based on RI’s strategic priorities, as follows:

Priority 1: Increasing our Impact

With a total Annual Giving target of US\$770,000, D3800 shall raise the level of participation of clubs to 100% in terms of fund contributions to The Rotary Foundation, polio eradication activities and the use of the District Designated Fund (DDF). It also aims to increase the involvement of clubs in EREY (Every Rotarian, Every Year) and add new contributors to the Endowment Fund.

D3800 shall also target at least one high-impact service project per club in any of the 7 areas of focus, and institutionalize the use of monitoring tools to measure the impact of service projects.

Priority 2: Expanding our Reach

D3800 shall endeavor to strengthen relationships, develop new strategic partnerships and collaborations with external partners such as LGUs, NGOs, foundations and private entities—regardless of age, ethnicity, race, color, abilities, religion, socio-economic status, culture, sex, sexual orientation or gender identify—to support the thrusts and programs of Rotary.

Innovation in club activities shall be encouraged and nurtured, ensuring that members are fully engaged. The district shall ensure that clubs

shall create an increased awareness and understanding of Rotary, especially among its new members.

The district targets a net growth of 5 percent in each club, with more female members and recruits who are below 40 years old, including Rotaractors. Four new clubs shall be chartered, using new club models. The number of clubs below charter strength shall be reduced. The clubs shall be encouraged to tell their Rotary stories through traditional and social media, with 65 percent of the clubs capable of keeping a media inventory of all their public image releases. The district shall actively cultivate the practice of DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) in all the clubs and the family of Rotary.

Priority 3: Enhancing Participants’ Engagement

D3800 shall increase collaboration and partnerships. The clubs are encouraged to apply innovative ways of increasing member engagement and increase membership retention, such as joint service projects, fellowship activities and classification talks.

The district shall promote Rotary’s core values through personal and professional growth activities, leadership development programs, and service and networking opportunities. The district’s targets are: 60 percent of club members shall actively participate in the club’s service projects and meetings; 80 percent of the clubs shall empower their new members by assigning important tasks and responsibilities; 80 percent of the clubs shall create leadership opportunities through substan-



← Top row: resized DG Bobby Zamora leads the Presidents-Elect Training Seminar (PETS) 2024, held on Mar. 2, 2024 at the Crowne Plaza Manila Galleria Hotel, Ortigas, Pasig City; A festive Pre-PETS II and Acquaintance Party was held on Oct. 28, 2023 at Club Filipino, San Juan City.



← Second row: DG Bobby (second from left) receives his certificate of attendance to the Pre-Governors-Elect Training Seminar/ Governor-Nominees Training Seminar (Pre GETS/GNTS) 2022 held on Oct. 15, 2022 at the Asian Institute of Management, Makati City; DG Bobby (fourth from right) attends the Pre-GETS/GNTS 2023 held on Nov. 11, 2023 at Club Filipino, San Juan City.



← Third row: DG Bobby co-signs a Friendship Agreement with RI District 3461 in Taichung, Taiwan on Mar. 16, 2024; The District Training Assembly (DISTAS) 2024 was held on May 18, 2024 at the Manila Hotel.



← Bottom row: DG Bobby and Spouse Raquel (3rd and 4th from left) are at the Governors-Elect Training Seminar held on Dec. 6-7, 2023 in Kaohsiung, Taiwan with then-RI President Gordon McNally, RI Past President Mark Maloney and PDGs from Taiwan; DG Bobby (extreme right) with his classmate-Governors at the Pre GETS/GNTS 2022.

OUR CLUBS

tial attendance in district trainings, events and fellowship; and clubs shall participate in zonal intercity meetings, service projects and activities. The district shall also send official welcome letters to all new members to make them feel valued and important, and to encourage them to actively participate in the projects and activities at the club, district and international levels.

Priority 4: Increasing Our Ability to Adapt

D3800 is bent on testing innovative approaches to foster greater collaboration and operational efficiencies. It shall uphold good governance and stewardship in the district and club levels with at least 80 percent compliance rate.

The district's strategies include:

- 1) Bring in five Rotaractors in district committees;
- 2) Review and reduce reporting requirements to only those that are necessary with at least 80% of clubs reporting on time;
- 3) Create a District Oversight Committee to review and streamline costs and processes of specific district events;
- 4) Encourage host clubs of major events to present to the District Executive Committee their plans and programs, including budget and logistics;
- 5) Require host clubs to submit a financial report within 30 days after the event with a 100 percent compliance rate; and
- 6) Encourage each club to appoint one Technical Officer to help create and implement an automated system of reporting to the district.

Weaving the Magic of Rotary

With these clear strategic thrusts, priorities and directions, D3800 is indeed destined to reach even greater heights in 2024-2025 — led by a District Governor with exceptional qualifications, a heart and passion for service, a penchant for thorough preparation and a family that fully supports him. With the district solidly behind him, DG Bobby faces a meaningful, inspiring and wonderful year of service and fellowship, weaving the Magic of Rotary into the hearts of Rotarians, Rotaractors, Rotary families and the clubs' beneficiaries.





← Top row: DG Bobby holds the First “Train the Trainers” Program on September 30, 2023 at Club Filipino, San Juan; DG Bobby and Spouse Raquel (2nd and 3rd from left, third row) join his classmate-Governors at the Multi District Pre-Presidents-Elect Training Seminar (Pre-PETS 1) on October 8, 2023 at the Okada Hotel Manila with RI President Stephanie Urchick (beside DG Bobby).



← Second row: Like a good team player, DG Bobby holds a consultation session with the Council of Governors and their spouses on January 28, 2024 at the EDSA Shangri-la Hotel; The District Strategic Planning session was held on January 26, 2024 at Club Filipino, San Juan City.



← Third row: DG Bobby’s Second “Train the Trainers” Program was held on October 14, 2023 at Club Filipino, San Juan City; DG Bobby administers the oath of office to his district officers at the District Handover held on July 8, 2024 at the Manila Hotel.



← Fourth row: Pre-PETS III and Christmas Party was held on November 25, 2023 at Club Filipino, San Juan City; DG Bobby is joined by his then-Presidents-Elect at the District Conference 2024 held on March 22-23, 2024 at EDSA Shangri-la Hotel.



← Bottom row: On February 17, 2024, DG Bobby gathered his district officers for the District Team Training Seminar held at the First Pacific Leadership Academy, Antipolo City; The Spouses Executive Committee Training Seminar, led by Spouse Raquel Zamora, was held at Club Filipino, San Juan City.

D3800 FOCUS

Irresistible Governor

by Prisco S. Rivera, Jr.

RI District 3800, one of the premier Rotary districts in the Philippines, is comprised of 107 clubs scattered in eight cities of Metro Manila (Navotas, Malabon, Caloocan, Valenzuela, Marikina, Pasig, San Juan, and Mandaluyong) and all the municipalities and cities of Rizal province. Through the years, D3800 has been home to Rotarians and Rotary leaders who truly embody the tenets of the 4-Way test and Rotary’s motto, Service Above Self.

The leader destined to harness The Magic of Rotary in Rotary Year 2024-2025 is Roberto “Bobby” B. Zamora, the Irresistible District Governor (DG) of District.3800.

Family of Rotarians

Rotary runs in the veins of DG Bobby. His father is RI District 3800’s Action Governor Teodorico “Teddy” E. Zamora. His mother, Amelia or “Mely”, was a very active spouse who served as National

President of the Inner Wheel Clubs of the Philippines.

DG Bobby’s exposure to the wonderful world of Rotary started in his early years. His parents involved him and his siblings in the various community projects and fellowship activities of the Rotary Club of Kalookan (RCK), his father’s home club, and in various multi-district events in the Philippines. After graduating from college where he showed his mettle as a student leader, he initially worked for the family business. Inevitably, DG Bobby was drawn to Rotary. He and his friends chartered the Rotary Club of Kalookan North (RCKN) on April 29, 1991. He was elected as the club’s Charter Vice President.

Club leadership

In 1998-1999 he served as Club President, under the theme “Follow Your Rotary Dream.” Among his most notable projects was the Job Fair Cum Liveli-

hood which generated more than 1,000 local and international jobs. He sponsored 103 scholars for 4-year and 2-year courses and various vocational and technical studies. RCKN was recognized as the Most Outstanding NGO in Caloocan City, an award that was presented to him by then Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Mayor Rey Malonzo during the city’s Foundation Day celebration.

Untiring service

After his club presidency, DG Bobby continued to serve in various capacities in his club and extended his service to the district, which earned for him the Four Avenues of Service Citation which was conferred to him by then-RI President Carlo Ravizza in 1999-2000. An ardent supporter of TRF, he is a continuing Major Donor (Level 2), a Benefactor, a Paul Harris Society member, and a charter member of the Polio Plus Society of District 3800.

A Rotarian for 33 years, and counting, DG Bobby served as Assistant Governor thrice,; Senior Assistant Governor and Lieutenant Governor twice before he was elected in the District Governor.

Civic involvement

Currently, DG Bobby is the Executive Vice President of Philippine Chamber of Commerce Caloocan Chapter. He served as Board Member and Assistant Treasurer of Red Cross Caloocan City Chapter, Secretary General of the Council of Community Elders of PNP Caloocan City, and Overall Chairperson of NAMFREL Caloocan Chapter for two national elections and several local elections. He is also a 3rd Degree Knight of Columbus and Deputy Grand Knight of San Gabriel Parish in Morning Breeze, Caloocan City and served as the National and Founding Chairperson of the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industry Organization of the Philippines, Inc., the industry arm of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA). DG Bobby received several awards and commendations from PDEA. He also served as Vice President for External Affairs of SPIK or the Chemical Industry Association of the Philippines.

Youth leader

DG Bobby’s love and passion for service can be traced back to his student years. He was President of the San Beda Marketing Association when it was awarded as the Most Outstanding Professional Organi-

← Left: DG Bobby Zamora and Spouse Raquel excitedly witness the unveiling of the new Rotary Presidential theme for 2024-2025, “The Magic of Rotary” at the 2024 Rotary International Assembly in Orlando, Florida. Below: DG Bobby and Spouse Raquel pose with RI President Stephanie Urchick at the International Assembly in Orlando, Florida in January 2024.



zation in San Beda College. Upon his graduation, he received the Philippine Association for Collegiate School - Business Award for Excellence in Academics and Leadership. In July 2007, he received the Outstanding Alumnus Award from his alma mater.

A believer in continuous learning, DG Bobby took several postgraduate professional and business courses here and abroad. He earned a Master's degree in Entrepreneurship at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM).

Family

DG Bobby is happily married to the beautiful Raquel Neis Zamora, an English and Psychology graduate from the College of the Holy Spirit and a former bank officer. They are blessed with two daughters. Roselle Isabella, 27, is a registered Physical Therapist currently taking her residency training at the Orthopedic Surgery Department of Philippine Veterans Hospital. Risa Emerald, 17, is a high school graduate of Ateneo de Manila University and is currently taking business economics at the University of the Philippines-Diliman.



↑ Clockwise from bottom left: DG Bobby recalls the words of RI President Stephanie Urchick, "It's up to us Rotarians to create that magic in every project completed, in every dollar donated, and every new member inducted."; DG Bobby takes a break from the training sessions in Kaoshiung, Taiwan; DG Bobby takes his oath of office on July 8, 2024 at the Manila Hotel with Spouse Raquel and daughters Roselle Isabella and Risa Emerald as witnesses.

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PROUD MEMBER
Rotary

by Sue Villa-Sta. Maria

Mário César Martins de Camargo of Sao Paolo, Brazil, owns a printing company founded by his father, Gráfica Bandeirantes. In his youth he was sent to St. Paul, Minnesota, USA, to join a Rotary Youth Exchange program. He speaks perfect English with very little South American accent. He has degrees in Business Administration and Law. A member of the Rotary Club of Santo André, Brazil, he served in various RI committees and was finally elected as RI President for RY 2025-2026. He and his wife, Denise, are Major Donors and Benefactors of The Rotary Foundation.

On August 18, 2024, de Camargo agreed to an interview with the Philippine Rotary Magazine's Managing Editor Sue Villa Sta. Maria, accompanied by Editor-in-Chief Sonny Coloma. The interview was witnessed by Past RI Director Guiller Tumangan, and former PRMFI Chairs Chito Borromeo and Sam Pagdilao.

Following is a verbatim transcript of the interview:

PRESIDENT-ELECT MARIO DE CAMARGO:
When I was district governor in 1999, I had 970 employees. I had a big printing business. I printed magazines, newspapers and books, manuals for the automotive industries. I printed 70 percent of the manuals in the country. I printed for Motorola, Nokia, Samsung, Whirlpool. But manuals disappeared. Everything now is digital.

Being in the print business, you're a public image man in many ways. One of the five points in your plan for your presidency is to boost the public image of Rotary. Are you concerned that Rotary has a public image problem?

The press was my customer, so I understand the communications challenge in Rotary. Rotary doesn't have a public image. Rotary has an internal image. "Public" for me means people outside of Rotary. Who, outside of Rotary, knows about Rotary? Not many people. Americans say, we preach to the choir. But the choir knows the mass. So they don't need the preaching. We keep talking among ourselves about Rotary. But we have to talk to people outside of Rotary. Our future Rotarians are not within Rotary, they are outside. We have to search for them.

You said the Rotary image needs to be given a boost by Rotarians from the top down. What do you mean by this?

Public image starts with the (RI) President. The President should want to speak out of Rotary. The Directors have to speak out of Rotary. The governors have to speak out of Rotary. We have to talk to the outside public from the top down.

'GROW ROTARY SUSTAINABLY'

AN INTERVIEW WITH RI PRESIDENT-ELECT MARIO DE CAMARGO



It means I'll have to lead by example. I have to be the first spokesperson of Rotary to the people outside of Rotary.

Judging from the jovial mood as I came into the room, you seem to have done a good public image job with our HOC here.

It's easy to be good. If you want to be good or look good, you agree to everything. It's easy to be bad. If you want to be bad, you accuse (others) and you don't agree with anything. You know what's hard to be? It's hard to be fair. In life, when you're a leader, to be fair, you have to know the two sides of the equation.

Are you referring to the due process that was lacking in the decision of RI with regard to the HOC?

I'm not referring to anything in particular. I'm talking about life in general. I mean, in life it's hard to be fair. "*Is it fair to all concerned?*" is a very difficult goal. It's hard to define what is fair.

That's one of the tenets of the Four-Way-Test. It's very basic to Rotary.

Yes, it's basic to Rotary but it's very difficult to reach. Because people personalize things.

When I became a Rotarian in 1984, what was really drilled into my consciousness was Service Above Self, the Object of Rotary and the Four Way Test. This was the basis for orienting new members and "Rotarizing" them, making them imbibe the spirit of Rotary. In the recent years it seems to have been sidelined in favor of the Areas of Focus. We don't see people talking too much now about the Four Way Test; the Areas of Focus are given more emphasis.

The Areas of Focus are pragmatic, practical things. But above the Areas of Focus are the values. *Service Above Self* is a value. Integrity is a value. Diversity is a value. They're above the Areas of Focus.

I learned when I was a young Rotarian that what Rotary gives importance to is your vocation. But right now, it's not even emphasized in the membership orientation. Rotarians are now told about numbers in Rotary. In membership, "numbers" is the name of the game. Rotarians are told about the TRF, membership, and that they have to project public image and "People of Action". But there's very little discussion about how important classification is. Or why it is that you have to interact with other clubs. What is International Service? What is Club Service, which is strengthening the club?



Rotary is a political institution. People say no, Rotary is non-political. I say yes, we are political. We are not partisan. We are political because if we are not political, we won't be able to relate to the government. We have to relate to the Minister of Health, We have to relate to WHO. We have to relate to the United Nations. So, aren't we political? Of course we are.



Yeah, to me, if you are not a professional or business leader, I'm not interested.

That's what I learned. You won't be invited into Rotary if you're not a leader in your classification, or if you're not the best in your vocation.

For me, that still holds true. I've never given up on that.

How about the idea of clubs being the most important element in Rotary? Because membership in Rotary is by clubs.

Rotary is like ourselves. If our cells die, we die. The clubs are the cells of Rotary. If the clubs die, Rotary dies. It's as simple as that. It's kind of an organic thing. What we have to do is, I think, we have to have more club formats.

I was saying this morning to my District Governors, you know, the satellite clubs only have 9,000 members worldwide. Why? Satellite clubs are a different form of expressing Rotary.

I use the example of my club and my wife's club. My wife's club is a satellite to my club. I had to win the resistance of my club because they would not admit to have a satellite club. And why? Because we're still attached to the old ways of doing Rotary work. They only chartered a satellite club because I insisted and I was a Director (in RI). So they said, "Mario, you're a Director, you must know what you're talking about. We're going to do it for you."

I said, "But do you know what a satellite club is?" They said, "Yeah, it's a second-grade club." My wife's satellite club has a judge, a businesswoman, the girl who owns a women's store. They have the doctors, the lawyers, the professors at the university, the psychiatrists, the dentists, the real estate agents. They have everything! They have 57 in the satellite club, the biggest in the world. They do not have the same attitude as the Rotarians. They just want to do Rotary work in a different way.

My wife was invited to my club. She never was interested because my club is a traditional club. My wife's satellite club does more work than my club. I love my club. But my wife doesn't like it. She wants something more flexible, to do a project for one to two years with a purpose, and then move to the next one. She wants to have fun. She says, "Your club is too formal. You meet in a restaurant twice a month, go to dinner, and pay your dues. That's all you do." The kids say, "Oh we don't want Rotary. Rotarians drink whiskey, have a glass of wine, and eat average food." But we in my club eat, you know, the famous Paul Harris chicken. My kids say, "Dad, why should I join your club? I want to do a different thing." So should I

kick them out of Rotary? No. There are Rotarians who want to do Rotary in a different way.

You said that you want to develop long-term partnerships with political, community and business leaders. How will you make this a reality?

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You mentioned partnerships. Partnerships for me is not only with government. It's with business associations, with lawyers, with dentists, with doctors, with different vocational groups. How many lawyers do you have in your Bar Association that are Rotarians? Not many. How many printers are Rotarians? Not many. How many doctors are Rotarians? Not many. They're all leaders. Why don't we talk to them and present Rotary to them? They are a pool of talents that we need.

People say if you want more members, you're going to lower the quality of Rotary. No, no, no, no. I want to talk to leaders like myself because they understand what I'm saying. I don't want to talk— with all due respect— to the garbage collector; he doesn't understand. I want to talk to people who understand what I want and are willing and able to give something else to the community. So you are not just after the numbers, you're after the quality of membership in Rotary. That is what I want, the numbers to be sustainable, and healthy.

If we lower the quality of our membership, we're going to destroy Rotary. That's very clear.

You said something on being transparent about the appointment of certain people in significant positions in the organization. Can you tell us more about this? What levels are you referring to?

I'm referring to all. Starting with me.

But you were not appointed. You were selected by a nominating committee and you had to undergo a screening process. So that's different from appointing people to other offices.

We have a template of the qualifications for the different positions. I just picked the coordinators for Rotary. Okay, there are people who sent a resume of five lines. I said I won't pick anybody with five lines. They don't know well enough. Some say, "Oh, but this one was recommended by past president blah, blah, blah, blah." I said I don't care.

They suggested to me a coordinator for a certain part of the world for Rotary. The first thing I asked was, when he or she was district governor, how many people joined the district? Did the membership grow? What's the history of that district in terms of membership, not only for his or her year, but the preceding years, the following years? Is he or she part of a successful district or just a once-a-year-kind? They wanted me to pick a Rotary Regional Coordinator whose district membership had dropped. I said I won't do this. Oh, but she was recommended by somebody. I said, even if she would be recommended by Paul Harris himself. You know, if we don't have certain guidelines, we're going to make a lot of mistakes. I prefer guidelines, results, merit. He or she doesn't have to be my friend. I picked people I've never seen before, but their resume, their CVs must impress. I have a business mind. If the results are good, I'll hire you.

You don't have to be my friend. We are not in the friendship business here. We're in the results business. If he or she happens to be my friend, that's a bonus. It's incidental, but it's not key. I don't prefer women to men. I don't consider sex orientation, gay, lesbian, I don't care. The focus is on merit and results. Are you going to deliver the results or not? That's what I'm looking for.

How do you feel about the Rotaractors being elevated to regular membership in Rotary Clubs?

Rotaractors? I think we rushed the process without having a plan. We have to write the guidelines of relationship between the two bodies, the Rotary Club and the Rotaractors — because we elevated Rotaractors without a plan. And nothing has happened between 2019 and today. Tell me something that happened. Nothing.

Well, numbers were added to the roster. But there are real problems about the capability of Rotaractors to pay the usual club dues. That is a reality in the Philippines anyway.

I know. But if you can't pay \$8 a year, you shouldn't be a Rotaractor. Let's make that clear.

Let's not disguise the problem. The problem is, if the problem is paying dues, the challenge is bigger. Do they recognize the value of Rotary? If they don't recognize value, \$8 is too much. If they recognize value, \$8 is nothing. It's not a matter of cost, it's a matter of priority, of appreciation. I was inducted into Rotary when I was 23, not through a Rotaract Club. Because I recognized the value of Rotary, I decided that I would have to pay back Rotary for what I had acquired as an exchange student in Minnesota 50 years ago. That changed my life. So I recognize the value of Rotary, and I don't mind the cost.

Are you in favoring of eliminating the Rotary theme every year?

I am not in favor of this. I would like to have a theme in my Rotary Year.

Has there been a study on the effects of the Rotary Action Plan in the districts?

No, none so far. The Action Plan is recent. We're still understanding the impact. I think it has a positive impact. But there has been no study yet. Stephanie (RI President Urchick) is the mother of the Action Plan. She's publicizing it very heavily. So I think we should be able to respond to your question in the next years moving forward.

Just one last question. How do you want to be remembered as an RI President?

I want to be remembered as the president that helped Rotary grow sustainably and healthy. Yes, to grow in terms of membership. Because this is the most difficult task in Rotary and nobody wants to face it. I'm going straight to the wound. The wound of Rotary is stagnant membership. We have been having this problem for 30 years and we have been evading that problem. We talk about membership, but we don't focus on it.

I brought membership to the center of the stage of our concerns and if I can leave a legacy, that would be membership. It has to become our number one priority not only by talking about it but by implementing programs in different parts of the world.

If I think like a business person, if I have a company with the same revenue for 30 years, wouldn't I be concerned?

We've had the same number of people in Rotary for 30 years. That's right. We haven't moved up one point. We are not 1.4 million, not 1.3. No, we're even lower, 1.1, lower than 1.2. You'll never see me use this number 1.4, but it's heavily touted in the website. They can say whatever they want. I speak the truth.

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PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Sink it and they will come

Formed from submerged ships, artificial reefs become hot spots for marine life

Marine biologist Carlos Sánchez has spent much of his 40-year career plying the placid blues

of the Sea of Cortez on census expeditions, counting the rich biodiversity that has lured explorers from the Spanish conquistadors to oceanographer Jacques Cousteau.

Beneath this 750-mile-long inlet of the Pacific Ocean along Mexico swarms an array of life that Cousteau is said to have called “the world’s aquarium.” Rocky and coral reefs sustain a food chain starting with microscopic phytoplankton and topping out with the largest mammal on Earth, the blue whale.

However, scientists like Sánchez and the people who depend on the region for their livelihood know that the sea isn’t all it once was.

The loss of reefs is a source of eco-anxiety globally — from subsistence fishers with empty nets to people far from shorelines touched by heartbreaking documentaries about the death of brilliant reef life. But the problem, in turn, does inspire hopeful environmental and economic innovation.

The contagiousness of that innovative impulse has taken shape in an ambitious artificial reef project in the port city of Guaymas in northwest Mexico.

A coalition of city, state, and Mexican navy officials — supported by far-flung Rotary clubs and a Rotary Foundation global grant — are sinking an armada of decommissioned Mexican military ships, helicopters, an airplane, an amphibious

vehicle, and artillery to form reefs.

Intentionally submerging vessels and other structures, including bridges and lighthouses, has been used around the world to form reef-like habitats for corals, fish, and other marine life. Behind the Guaymas project’s sink-it-and-they-will-come approach is the hope that the hard surfaces of these structures will quickly draw flora and fauna, and in turn tourists, local subsistence fishers, and conservation education and research opportunities. The idea is not to replace but to supplement and take pressure off natural reefs, and to capture carbon that contributes to global warming.

To illustrate how dire habitat loss has become, Sánchez offers a bit of nostalgic show-and-tell: a 1982 episode of the TV show *Wild Kingdom* featuring scientists as they free dive in a roiling school of dozens of hammerhead sharks at an underwater ridge off Espíritu Santo Island. Today, he says, divers at that spot near the entrance to the Sea of Cortez are wowed if they encounter a single hammerhead.

The health of a reef, he says, can be measured by how many sharks and other top predators, like big grouper and snapper, it hosts: “Around Espíritu Santo you see small fish [today] but no big predators.” Their absence, explains Sánchez, a professor at the Autonomous University of Baja California Sur in La Paz, is evidence of the collapse of links in the food chain.

A census that Sánchez helped conduct last fall in partnership with the Scripps Institution of Oceanog-

Visit rotary.org/grants to learn how The Rotary Foundation can support your projects.



raphy at the University of California San Diego examined about 100 reefs throughout the sea. Ninety percent were found to be suffering significant degradation. One obvious cause is the industrial fishing trawlers that haul away vast amounts of sardines, groupers, and shrimp. Less understood, but well-documented, are the warmer water temperatures caused by climate change.

In the attempt to reverse the declines, the first ship was sunk to the sandy bottom, 100 feet deep, less than a mile off the rocky shore in 2022 and has grown a thriving reef system. But “nobody knew how to do the next step,” says Juan Dworak, the Guaymas marine consultant who conducted the environmental impact study for the project.

Then, he says, The Rotary Foundation’s \$176,000 global grant provided a “miracle” boost and became “a crucial factor for a cascade of events that are happening now.” It paid for the cleanup and sinking of



a second decommissioned ship, the 190-foot Suchiate, a 1940s-era U.S. Navy water barge inherited by the Mexican navy as a research vessel. But possibly more crucial, the grant funded the environmental impact study, which was written to cover all future sinkings in the project.

“There was the first sinking without Rotary. But there wouldn’t be a second vessel sunk without Rotary, and there wouldn’t be an environmental impact assessment already approved for the other arti-

facts to be sunk,” explains Dworak.

Avery Paxton, a research marine biologist with the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, says there was a 2,000 percent increase in the seafloor “footprint” of artificial reefs in the past 50 years in the United States. But growth has slowed significantly due to costs, challenging logistics, and a lack of materials permitted for use in artificial reefs.

Paxton’s studies suggest artificial reefs are “hot spots” for large pred-

The 190-foot Suchiate, a decommissioned Mexican navy research vessel, is prepared for sinking. Rotary members joined government and navy officials to watch from a frigate last March.

atory fish, likely because they create such tall underwater habitats.

Some illegal dumping to create habitat, however, has also caused environmental problems in sensitive ecosystems.

Sánchez, the marine census taker, says that the natural reef nearest Guaymas he has visited is so degraded that he deems the prospect of artificial reefs nearby a good idea for drawing fishing pressure away if done well.

Standing in the warm gulf breeze aboard a Mexican navy frigate last March was Kikis López de Arbesú, a member of the Rotary Club of Puebla Gente de Acción, 1,000 miles to the south. López, a driving force behind the global grant, recalls shivering with goose bumps as she watched the Suchiate barge descend gently — her dream of making a difference as a Rotary district governor reaching its climax. (The sinking was gentle because only small explosives could be detonated in the hull to prevent damage to the reef forming on the first ship nearby.)

This all started in 2020, she says, when she saw a documentary about the loss of coral. A year later, as she was trying to decide on a project for her 2022-23 year as governor of District 4185, she focused on the idea of protecting reef ecosystems. A conversation with her brother, a Mexican navy officer, led to a plan to sink a ship for an artificial reef in Veracruz, on the Gulf of Mexico. But that project was scuttled when local officials who had supported it were voted out of office.

López's project partner Kevin Pitts, an Arizona Rotarian who served as 2023-24 governor of District 5495, admits the loss of Veracruz felt like the end. But he and Salvador Rico, a member of the Rotary Club of South Ukiah, Cali-



fornia, who is a member of The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers, both point to López's description of herself as a "restless spirit" who won't take no for an answer. Soon, through her brother, she found the Guaymas project.

Rico considers the Guaymas project one of the most complex he's ever seen, with difficult layers of state, local, and environmental requirements to meet and a significant fundraising burden. But keys to successful Rotary grants, says Rico, are walking the talk and channeling volunteer passion impactfully. And López was serious about those

points as she stepped in to help the Guaymas project, which was already showing signs of its sustainability with a nascent reef and tourists eager to visit.

Within months — record time, says Dworak — the project was approved, all parties were cooperating, and the barge was ready to sink.

López, who plans to dive on the reef this month, still chokes up when she repeats a line from her speech at the sinking as a way to encourage club members to fulfill their service to help the world: "If we can dream it, we can live it."

— CLARA GERMANI

BY THE NUMBERS

7.4
SQUARE MILES
Artificial reef footprint in U.S. waters

14%
Global loss of corals from 2009 to 2018, primarily from rising ocean temperatures

900
Species of fish in the Sea of Cortez

Top: To sink the Suchiate, small explosives were detonated in the vessel's hull. Bottom: Marine life is drawn to the submerged skeleton of the first of two ships sunk in a planned chain of artificial reefs at Guaymas.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (TOP) COURTESY OF KIKIS LÓPEZ DE ARBESÚ; (BOTTOM) COURTESY OF JUAN DWORAK

Short takes

Rotary members including 2023-24 President Gordon McInally took part in an online discussion in May about mental health awareness. Watch at on.rotary.org/1may-yt.



French President Emmanuel Macron was honored with Rotary's Polio Eradication Champion Award at Rotary Day at UNESCO in Paris in May.



PROFILE

Olympic spirit

A perennial Olympics volunteer finds togetherness at the Games and in Rotary

Ernie Peterson
Rotary Club
of Deland
(Breakfast),
Florida

As a child in the 1950s, Ernie Peterson remembers watching the Olympics on TV. “I sat there absolutely fascinated and thought, ‘You know, it would be nice to attend one day.’”

This summer in Paris, Peterson is attending his sixth Olympic Games as a volunteer. He’s part of a select group of devotees who volunteer at the Games over and over to do everything from taking tickets to helping spectators find their seats.

Since 2002, Peterson, a retired property appraiser from DeLand, Florida, has helped at the Games in Salt Lake City, Torino, Vancouver, Sochi, and Rio, mostly as a media assistant accompanying athletes to post-event interviews. He’s met gold medalists including skier Lindsey Vonn, swimmer Michael Phelps, and snowboarder Shaun White, marveling at “their focus, their intensity.”

One of his most memorable moments, though, was seeing two skiers in Sochi, Russia, embrace their mothers after downhill runs, one finishing with a gold medal and the other coming in fourth or fifth, their parents equally proud. “You could not tell from the reaction of the parent which one won gold,” he says. “It was just incredibly moving.”

This year, Peterson has what might be his sweetest gig yet: working the opening ceremony and at the outdoor beach volleyball matches beside the Eiffel Tower. Another bit of luck — when he couldn’t find a place to stay, a fellow Rotarian offered to host him. And this isn’t the first time; he’s stayed with Rotarians at other Olympics and, in return, has hosted them in Florida.

The Olympics and Rotary, Peterson says, have a lot in common: cultural exchange, internationality, and a “desire to do something good for the world.” — JASON KEYSER

The country with the highest level of Positive Peace is Finland, according to a recent report by Rotary partner the Institute for Economics and Peace.



The Rotary alumni association in District 2072 (Italy) won the 2023-24 Alumni Association of the Year Award.

Look back at Rotary’s 2023-24 achievements in General Secretary John Hewko’s Report to Convention at [rotary.org/conventionreport](https://www.rotary.org/conventionreport).

People of action around the globe

By Brad Webber



Belize

The Rotaract Club of Belize City is renovating a rural school and a Rotary club-sponsored park as part of its youth-focused agenda. In April, club members met at the Hattieville Government Preschool to paint restrooms and complete other beautification work. A later phase will include new toilets. "We've been able to replace chalkboards in 10 classrooms with whiteboards and to donate a printer and other school and hygiene materials," says Kristoff Nicholson, immediate past president. The club partnered with a telecom provider and raffled off smartphones to help pay for the project. It also received a District 4250 grant of \$1,000. In March, club members replaced basketball and goal nets and painted benches and a playset at Love Park in Balama, another element of the project, Nicholson says.



35.6%
Share of Belize's population younger than 15

Colombia

In January, the Rotary Club of Cúcuta-Ciudad de Arboles purchased about \$600 of school supplies and delivered 100 sets of notebooks, pencils, pens, erasers, sharpeners, and more to students in the city. It's about 350 miles northeast of Bogotá. Club members also visited with students in the neighborhood of Las Delicias, says Dora Patricia Lobo, a past president of the club. "The hustle and bustle and joy of these students when they receive their school package warms our souls and encourages us to continue," Lobo says. More than 1,400 students have benefited since the project began.



96%
Literacy rate in Colombia

1828

Belfast Botanic Gardens and Palm House founded

Northern Ireland

Volunteers led by the Rotary Club of Belfast made improvements to the courtyard garden of a senior home in January. The team of Rotarians, community members, and people in transitional employment through the judicial system cleared weeds, constructed raised garden platforms, and filled them with soil. Cold temperatures scaled back their plans, but it was still a “rather back-breaking” effort, says club member Jenny Boyd. A District 1160 grant of about \$1,250 was used to underwrite the expense. Karen Blair, a past president and project leader, recruited colleagues from her law firm to get a little dirt under their fingernails. “This project allows all members to be involved in a very hands-on activity,” Blair says. “And even those with no gardening ability can participate by chatting with the residents over coffee.”



Thailand

About 1,500 drowning deaths occur each year in Thailand, one of the highest rates per capita in the world. While the Thai government is working to prevent fatalities, drowning remains the leading cause of death for those 15 and younger in the country, which has thousands of miles of coastline. On the island of Samui, a popular tourist destination, there are no public swimming pools, says Adam Preston, immediate past president of the Rotary Club of Samui-Phangan. Club members received training from the Rotary Club of Global Water Safety and Drowning Prevention and in 2019 started Swim4Life, a series of lessons for children ages 10 to 12 at an international school's pool. Three Samui-Phangan club members offer basic instruction alongside 15 community members who serve as assistant teachers. Nearly 100 children had completed the course as of April. The children, from public schools, “have gone from being scared of the water to being able to swim 25 meters,” Preston says.



236,000

Drowning deaths worldwide each year

Liberia

The Rotary Club of Monrovia is helping train young women to establish microenterprises to make and sell reusable sanitary pads and address “period poverty.” With financial support from the Rotary Club of Loveland, Colorado, the Liberian Rotarians paired with the nonprofit Dignity:Liberia and held two training sessions for 200 women earlier this year in Monrovia, the capital, and in Kakata, a semirural community. “The high, recurring cost of pads makes them out of reach for many families that struggle to make ends meet,” says Monique Cooper-Liverpool, a past president of the Monrovia club. “This leads thousands of girls to miss classes so often that they eventually drop out of school.” The initiative grew out of a partnership between the two clubs to advance reproductive care and treatment for fistulas, an injury often caused by prolonged labor during childbirth.



\$24.4 billion

Global sanitary napkin market in 2021



GOODWILL

6 tips to elevate your elevator pitch

Attract members and supporters with a 60-second speech

The world moves quickly and you may have less than 60 seconds to make an impression that lasts. Enter the elevator pitch, so named to reflect the short period of time it takes to travel between floors. It's a short and impactful summary that you can use to communicate the most important details about your Rotary club or project and capture the attention of a potential member, supporter, or partner. To ensure you're making the most of every opportunity, check out these six tips from Toastmasters to create and deliver a perfect powerful pitch.

1 Present your club as an opportunity.

An elevator pitch is not intended as an advertisement, nor is it a call for help. Instead, hook your target by framing your pitch as an opportunity. If you'd like someone to engage with you and your club, treat them as a potential partner and offer a compelling case that working together can be mutually beneficial.

2 Keep it simple.

Perhaps more than anything else, the key to a great elevator pitch is ruthless efficiency. Don't get bogged down with extraneous details and technical jargon. Carefully consider every word that you add to your pitch and ensure that it serves a direct purpose. Remember that the end goal is to quickly communicate your vision in less than one minute and inspire a desire to find out more. If they seem interested in your pitch, ask if they

would like a "What's Rotary" wallet card (available at on.rotary.org/wallet-card) to learn more about Rotary and connect with you later.

3 Remember your enthusiasm.

Your words are essential, but they only represent a small portion of your pitch. A beautifully worded pitch delivered without joy is bound to land with a thud, but kindling enthusiasm and anticipation is a surefire way to keep your message lodged in the front of a potential supporter's mind. Use your pitch as a chance to share your passion. Practice delivering it in a way that conveys your excitement and conviction.

4 Cut the keywords.

The business world is rife with banal buzzwords and overused "execuspeak." Scrap these canned clichés and set yourself apart by crafting a wholly original speech that highlights what makes you and your club unique. To ensure that your speech flows naturally and doesn't sound like a soulless infomercial, have someone read it aloud to you and keep an ear out for any words or phrases that sound overly trite or formal.

5 Build the hype.

Assuming you've managed to hook your listeners effectively, the next step is to demonstrate legitimacy and build some real excitement. Work details about other outstanding accomplishments that speak to your club's bona fides into your brief message. If you're

pitching a project, inform your listeners that you've identified a monetary target and you're working to secure the funding you need. If it's relevant, you may also wish to work in a mention of your follower count on social media.

6 Find common ground.

After you've done the dirty work of making your pitch, be sure to close with some conversation. Remember that the goal of an effective pitch is to create a connection, and the quickest way to do that is to find common ground with your audience upon which to begin building a relationship. Let others talk and take a genuine interest in what they have to say, paying particular attention to shared interests and aspirations. Follow up by asking insightful questions, and remember — you can never go amiss with a few kind words!

Summarizing your Rotary experience and capturing the interest of your audience in the span of 30 to 60 seconds is no small task, but it doesn't have to be a complicated affair. Armed with the tips above, and some confidence, you can craft a perfect pitch that's sure to drum up interest and leave an impression on your listeners.

— BETH KOTZ

This column is adapted from an article in the August 2021 issue of Toastmaster magazine. Rotary and Toastmasters International are working together to provide members of both organizations opportunities for personal and professional growth. Learn more at rotary.org/toastmasters.



THE SPECIALIST

By the power vested in me

A marriage solemnizer has presided over 500 weddings and counting

I became a licensed marriage solemnizer, as officiants are called in Singapore, nearly a decade ago. Since then, I have married more than 500 couples. In my country, marriage solemnizers are volunteers authorized by the government to officiate weddings, verify couples' legal documents, and ensure unions are formed willingly before facilitating the registration of marriage. Solemnizers can be clerics or community and professional leaders representing various ethnic groups.

As a Singaporean of Chinese descent, I mostly conduct solemnizations in English and Mandarin. Once I accept an invitation, I arrange with couples to discuss their wedding proceedings. Some couples want a ring warming ceremony, in which rings are passed around among friends and relatives who express their good wishes. Others want to exchange personalized vows. I always try to accommodate their special requests.

On the wedding day, I first check their IDs and registration. Then I ask the couple if they are here

of their own free will because forced marriages are illegal in Singapore. Upon reminding them of the sanctity of marriage, I'll do the usual exchange of vows and declare them married. The solemnization has to be conducted in front of two witnesses. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the solemnizer can register the marriage online, rather than signing the certificate at the end of the ceremony.

I normally limit the process to 15 minutes. A good solemnizer needs to be concise. The ceremony is a solemn affair, but a bit of humor at times helps put the couple at ease and enliven the atmosphere.

Wedding seasons vary. The Chinese lunar calendar's eighth month, which begins in late August or September, is especially busy because it is considered an auspicious month — the number eight is associated with prosperity due to a phonetic similarity in the two words in Mandarin. Lunar New Year and Valentine's Day are also busy times. Once, I officiated three weddings at different locations in two hours. People avoid the seventh lunar month because it coincides with the Chinese Ghost Festival. Dates with interesting number combinations, such as 22 February 2022, are also popular (the word for "two" sounds similar to the word for "love"). Often, couples consult with a fortuneteller to pick a lucky day.

A couple once asked for my Chinese zodiac sign and my birth year to make sure that our astrological paths did not clash. Regardless, there is nothing more professionally satisfying than seeing them happily married and their families grow. ■

Ghim Bok Chew
Rotary Club of
Bugis Junction,
Singapore

Marriage
solemnizer

ESSAY

Where everybody knows your name

In a society fragmented by technology, a “third place” can be somewhere to reconnect with old friends — and make some new ones

By Richard Kyte



I first heard the phrase “third place” in a coffee shop in Waco, Texas. I was in town for a conference and having coffee with my friend Beau, a sociology professor. We were discussing the history of coffee shops (as wonky academics are inclined to do) when he dropped the phrase “third place.”

“Wait a minute,” I said. “What is a third place?”

Beau mentioned Ray Oldenburg’s books *The Great Good Place* and *Celebrating the Third Place*, which were published more than 30 years ago. In them, he classifies home as one’s first place, work as one’s second place, and the third place as where one goes to socialize, to make friends.

Social media and smartphones have taken over our lives in ways nobody could have imagined at that time. Work has also changed, with many more people working from home or, at least, taking work with them wherever they go. The distinction between home and work that defined first and second places has been blurred, and that makes third places even harder to define. Does it even make sense to define types of places by their function when technology has made it possible to do almost anything anywhere?

One thing hasn’t changed in the last 30 years, however, and that is the need for human connection. These days there is more appreciation for the depth of that need, and many more social scientists are studying the ways in which that need is expressed, satisfied, or frustrated.

But we also have more than 2,000 years of literature addressing the topic. The centrality of love and friendship to our lives has always been a concern of philosophers, poets, novelists, and dramatists. The need that underlies our longing for third places isn’t new; what is new is the challenge technology has presented to us as we try to satisfy that need. Third places — such as churches,

sporting events, cafes, and libraries — are a key to cultivating friendship in a world that is increasingly socially fragmented.

Third places are not remnants of a bygone age. They are just rarer than they used to be, and that is why it is important to look more closely at them. The first step is simply recognizing what a third place is, and for this there is no better source than Oldenburg himself, a sociologist who studied urban life and described their characteristics in his books.

The first characteristic is that third places are neutral ground. People are free to come and go, and nobody has the responsibilities of the host or the obligations of the guest. This creates conditions in which people can meet as equals, which is the second characteristic of third places. People who occupy very different social or professional roles find it quite natural to come together in third places. This makes it very different from the workplace, which is generally hierarchical in structure. Whereas the workplace tends to emphasize status, it is irrelevant in third places. What matters more is personality.

The lack of status means third places tend to be inclusive. Anybody can speak up. Anybody can direct the flow of conversation. The agenda is always in the room; that is, what people talk about are the things that are on their minds, not just what one person thinks is important. As a result, such places are animated by lively conversation, which is the third characteristic. Storytelling, joking, and playful banter are the norm.

Another characteristic of third places is their accessibility. They are easy to get to and one can count on them being open. They are the type of place one is free to drop in at any time. They don’t require planning or appointments or a great deal of travel.

The fifth characteristic is that there are “regulars” who show up consistently and give a place its unique personality.

This personality comes from the people who inhabit the place and from their friendly relations with one another. A coffee shop inhabited by individuals silently engrossed in their phones or laptops is no more a third place than a large public restroom with several stalls.

Another, perhaps incidental, characteristic is that third places tend to be rather ordinary. They are not unusually expensive or fashionable but have a predictably low profile. What draws people to third places is not their aesthetic but rather another characteristic — their playful mood. Hearing regular, genuine laughter is one of the surest signs you have stepped into a third place.

The final characteristic is that the place feels like a home away from home. It is a place one goes, not to see and be seen, but to relax and feel welcome. A third place is comfortable.

It is important to keep in mind that characteristics are not necessarily essential features. Identifying several characteristics might help us determine whether a particular place is an example of a third place, but the absence of one or more of those characteristics does not mean a particular place does not fit into the category. A set of characteristics, in other words, does not function as a checklist. This is important to remember when considering whether venues that lack some of Oldenburg’s characteristics — an online discussion forum or a neighbor’s deck, for instance — might serve as a third place.

The great challenge of our time is learning how to make use of the many technological advances that improve the quality of life without allowing those same advances to undermine our connection to one another, connections that are every bit as essential to human flourishing as food, water, shelter, and security. Aristotle expressed it with this sentiment: “Society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god.”

Society precedes the individual because it is only in society that we can learn the virtues, the character traits that allow us to flourish. It is in society that we learn patience, courage, generosity, justice, and love. It is in society — that is,

The centrality of love and friendship to our lives has always been a concern of philosophers, poets, novelists, and dramatists.



in a robust network of mutual accountability — that we learn to be human.

But can we meet that challenge? Can we develop new social structures that allow us to form deep and meaningful connections to others even when we do not need to in order to survive? Can we reinvent forms of life that allow us to flourish together? I do not know the answer to those questions, but I know we must try. We must try to do something deliberately and intentionally that previous generations of human beings did out of necessity. We must create places for the purpose of deepening our connections to others: not private places set aside from the rest of humanity, not workplaces where we go to earn a living, but a different kind of place. A third place.

People everywhere are experiencing what many experts term an epidemic of loneliness, isolation, and depression. At the same time, we have service clubs in many communities — not just Rotary, but Kiwanis, Lions, Optimist, and other organizations — that have been in gradual decline since their peak in the 1960s. That’s unfortunate, because historically, service clubs have been one of the chief

means by which communities organize teams of volunteers to meet a variety of social needs. They also function as places where members can broaden their circle of acquaintances and form lasting friendships.

Recently I was attending a meeting of my club, the Rotary Club of La Crosse in Wisconsin. As a fellow member announced that the club needed volunteers for an upcoming event, I looked at all the people in the room and wondered how many of them I had volunteered with over the years. I soon gave up. At every table there were several people whom I had worked alongside, and the sight of each one of them brought up distinct and pleasant memories. It was a room full of friends and acquaintances.

It is understandable that in a world where we have a vast number of options for spending our free time, we would be hesitant to make a commitment to join an organization where we are expected to show up every week. It is understandable but unfortunate, because showing up is what it takes. You can’t have an organization without members; you can’t have a third place without regulars —

and you can’t have friendships without spending time together.

In *The Land Remembers*, his memoir about growing up on a farm in Wisconsin during the Great Depression, the writer Ben Logan recalls a winter evening when his father brought home a new kerosene lantern. The bright light illuminated the entire room, and the kids soon spread out, each reading their books in separate corners. They no longer had to crowd around the dim light of the old Ray-O-Vac lantern at the dining room table.

Logan’s mother, seeing what was happening, wasn’t sure she liked the new lamp. His father looked at the empty chairs around the table and wondered if they should go back to the old lamp.

“I don’t think it’s the lamp,” Logan’s mother said. “I think it’s us. Does a new lamp have to change where we sit at night?”

Logan explained what happened next: “Father’s eyes found us one by one. Then he made a little motion with his head. We came out of our corners and slid into our old places at the table, smiling at each other, a little embarrassed to be hearing such talk.”

The world has changed a great deal in recent decades, and it will continue to change as new technology shapes our cities, our organizations, our workplaces, and our homes. That doesn’t mean we can’t choose to sit together anymore. Friendship does not just happen accidentally. It takes time for relationships to mature, and the best way to nurture relationships is by participating in shared activities on a regular basis. What if the solution to many of today’s most pressing social concerns is right in front of us? We just need to seek out opportunities to spend regular time in the company of others, establishing a robust self-identity through growing and deepening our relationships. The third place is a way of life. ■

A member of the Rotary Club of La Crosse, Wisconsin, Richard Kyte is a professor and the director of the D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership at Viterbo University. This essay is adapted from his book, Finding Your Third Place: Building Happier Communities (and Making Great Friends Along the Way), published in June by Fulcrum Publishing and available online, in independent bookstores, and at fulcrumbooks.com.



↑ President Bing Dacudao presents a club jacket as memento to Pres. Gordon McNally. They are joined by Past Director Raffy Garcia, and Past Governors Evett Oliven (extreme left), Gina Sy and Ernie Choa.

RC CAGAYAN DE ORO EAST URBAN

Top-level recognition

by Ella Yu

The Rotary Club of Cagayan de Oro East Urban (D3870) was recognized as one of four clubs with the highest number of registrants to the Rotary International Convention held in Singapore on May 25-29, 2024.

RC CDO East Urban had the third highest registration, achieving double digit members. Then RI President Gordon McNally presented the recognition at the Manila Polo Club last March 4, 2024, to President Lilitusa “Bing” Dacudao, and Past President Rachaille “Ching” Ferrer. Past RI Director Raffy Garcia, witnessed the recognition, accompanied by spouse Minda Garcia.



↑ Past RI Director Raffy Garcia and spouse Minda hosted a reception at the Manila Polo Club at which Pres McNally commended the RC CDO Urban East leaders for significant participation in the 2024 RI convention in Singapore.




↑ Pres. Gordon McNally is flanked by Past President Ching Ferrer (left) and President Bing Dacudao (right).

Solution from page 56







It's time to consider organ donation

With transplant changes afoot, Rotary members push to end global organ shortages. One kidney donor crisscrosses continents in his SUV to dispel fears about giving.

By Neil Steinberg

Photography by Gayatri Ganju

Anil Srivatsa drives an SUV plastered with stickers and slogans across India on a quixotic mission: to teach as many of the country's 1.4 billion people as he can about the importance of organ donation.

He's one man in his truck, often accompanied by his wife, driving from town to town for several weeks each year to try to increase India's organ donation rate, because it ranks among the world's worst. The task is vast, to say the least, to persuade any significant portion of a population that, for comparison, is four times that of the U.S. "There is a deep cultural bias against organ donation in India," says Srivatsa, a media entrepreneur who helped found the Rotary Club of Organ Donation in 2022. "There is much work to be done in this space, to counter misinformation and fear."

For Srivatsa, the mission is intensely personal. Ten years ago, he donated his left kidney to his brother, Arjun Srivatsa, a neurosurgeon and a member of the Rotary Club of Bangalore, who had chronic renal failure. On his driving tours, Srivatsa sleeps in a rooftop pop-up tent on his SUV. One of its decals says "Kidney donors are sexy!" He speaks to a Rotary club if there is one in town — there are more than 4,000 in the country — or he assembles what residents he can when there's not.

India trails most of the world in organ donation for varied, sometimes complicated reasons, including a simple lack of information, inadequate transplant care hospitals in rural areas, and distrust among families of potential donors about how organs will be used. But major shifts are happening with donation regulations and initiatives in India and other countries. With a 2023 U.S. law that will overhaul the national donation system to try to break up an inefficient monopoly, organ donation is getting its strongest spotlight in years. That includes attention affixed on early experiments in the U.S. with transplanting

gene-modified pig organs into humans as one potential solution for shortages.

For years, Rotary members have taken a lead position in expanding access to kidney and liver surgeries and coordinating transplant training for medical staffs. That includes a project led by clubs in District 3640 (Korea) to teach surgeons in Myanmar and Mongolia advanced skills to transplant organs from deceased people, a source of organs that is growing but lagging its potential to save lives.

With walkathons, social media campaigns, and more recently a chatbot that answers organ donation questions, Rotary members contribute to a movement to educate people about how important the gift of their organs and tissues can be — whether after death or in life with a kidney or part of a liver. In the U.S., that type of advocacy will become all the more important in the coming years as the government tries to build faith in its organ collection system, run for nearly 40 years by the same nonprofit, United Network for Organ Sharing. An overhaul will address intense scrutiny about long wait times,

Rotary members say the time is right to expand promotion of organ donation, as barriers to giving are removed and the issue gets its strongest spotlight in years.

failure to gather enough organs, and mismanagement accusations by some lawmakers and activists.

In India, the laws pose their own challenges. Until recently, citizens in some states could only register to receive a deceased-donor organ transplant in their home state. It was as if a resident of New Jersey couldn't get a heart transplant across the river at a hospital in New York City. With the help of other Rotarians, Srivatsa successfully challenged the requirement through the nongovernmental organization he formed to coordinate international support of his work, the Gift of Life Adventure Foundation.

In Britain, instead of relying on people to sign up, under recent laws most adults are considered potential organ donors when they die unless they opt out. In 2021 the Rotary Club of Leicester Novus, England, hosted a speaker to explain the law.

For more than 20 years in Mexico, people have received help paying for kidney transplants through an initiative of the Rotary Club of Cuajimalpa. The project is supported by a nonprofit in the country, other Mexican clubs in District 4170, and U.S. clubs in zones 30 and 31, a slice of Middle America. Like many parts of the world, Mexico is experiencing increases in chronic kidney disease as two main causes, diabetes and high blood pressure, rise too. While kidney transplants are increasing, their high cost keeps them out of reach for a large portion of Mexicans. Rotarians have used multiple global grants for the project, guiding donors and recipients through the process leading up to the surgery and quelling fears about donors' health afterward, similar to how Srivatsa counsels people in his travels across India.



Anil Srivatsa, who tells his kidney donor story to make people feel more comfortable about giving, is pushing Rotary members to new levels of advocacy for organ donation.

Clubs in India have been particularly active promoting the issue, with education sessions for factory workers and college students, rallies of people with banners and flags who walk city streets, and events to encourage people to pledge to donate their organs when they die.

Srivatsa, who divides his time living in Bengaluru (formerly called Bangalore) and New Jersey, has also done drives to counter transplant myths across Asia, Australia, Europe, and North and South America. He circles the globe to address business groups — in December he went to Bali to talk to Pepsi executives. He estimates he has spoken to more than 270,000 people

in 58 countries on over 1,000 occasions, many of those at Rotary clubs. “Love gets thwarted by fear, and I believe fear comes from unanswered questions,” Srivatsa says. “What I’m trying to do is answer those questions. I don’t go out and tell people to become organ donors. That’s a decision they can make once they learn that the fear is misplaced.”

He helped start the Interact Club of Venky Yoda, which stands for youth organ donation awareness, at the Venkateshwar International School in Delhi. The Interactors worked with his club to launch a chatbot recently that teaches people about organ donation. Srivatsa, who has helped form two other clubs, also worked with

the Rotary Action Group for Blood Donation to add organ donation to the group’s mission (and its name) to increase Rotary members’ focus on the issue. The group already has hundreds of members dedicated to supporting blood drives, so the expansion to include organ donation advocates will be a powerful force.

Srivatsa uses his experience of giving his brother a kidney to show that donors live normal, healthy lives. “When people say I sacrificed a lot to give a kidney to my brother, I don’t believe that was sacrifice,” he says. To demonstrate how active post-transplant life can be, the brothers took a grueling mountain bike tour in 2015, six months after their operations. They com-

Srivatsa’s SUV is his home on the road for weeklong treks to reach Rotary clubs and anyone else he can gather to address hesitancy about organ donation.



peted in the World Transplant Games in England in 2019 and in Australia in 2023, with medals for Arjun in golf and Anil in cricket ball throwing and race walking.

Despite grassroots efforts by Rotary members, shortages leave about 100,000 people in the U.S. waiting for an organ, mostly kidneys. Every day 17 of those people die. Worldwide, the need is even greater: The World Health Organization estimates that transplants cover only about 10 percent of need. Many people waiting for kidneys survive only through the debilitating process of dialysis, where their blood is cycled through a machine and washed of toxins that are usually removed by healthy kidneys. (See the

author’s essay on the next page about helping his cousin on dialysis and trying to give him a kidney.)

In India and many countries, the use of organs donated from people who died is minuscule, and transplants are limited mostly to kidneys from living donors.

One common way Rotary members help people feel more comfortable about donating their organs is through a club meeting staple: talks by transplant recipients and other organ donation experts. Lana Stevens, community educator at the Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency, has visited many Rotary clubs over the years. She praises members’ work to spread knowl-

edge and banish fear. “Rotary really offers us a great, well-rounded way to educate a group of people and led us to a lot of partnerships and contacts, particularly corporate contacts, who want to get their organizations involved,” she says.

Kidney disease, in particular, touches so many lives, and Stevens has noticed that at every Rotary club she visits, some members have a personal connection to the issue. “Someone received a kidney, or their spouse has — someone in their family, or in the club,” she says. “Then everybody in that room can understand that this is happening in our backyard, not just to somebody unconnected to us far away.”

Among those Rotary members with a personal link to the issue are Prashant and Hemali Ajmera, a couple in India who hit the legal hurdle requiring a residency certificate in Gujarat state, where Hemali Ajmera was getting dialysis treatments and needed a kidney transplant.

The two, who are both Canadian citizens, learned about the requirement in spring 2022 when Prashant Ajmera went to a Gujarat hospital to register his wife to receive a transplant from a deceased donor, he says. “I made the application, and in four days I heard back from the police department: Your wife is a Canadian citizen so is not entitled to a domicile certificate in the state of Gujarat. So the hospital will not take her as a patient.”

“As a lawyer, it didn’t make sense to me,” says Ajmera, a member of the Rotary Club of Ahmedabad Metro. He did his research and discovered that such residency requirements were a significant drag on the transplant rate nationwide. “It was not only a problem for me, but it was affecting people across India,” Ajmera says. A judicial petition by Hemali Ajmera succeeded, and Gujarat’s residency requirement was ruled unconstitutional in late 2022. Srivatsa’s NGO advanced a challenge to the highest court in India. “We used Anil’s foundation to file a class action,” Prashant Ajmera says. “It all happened because of Rotary.”

The federal government adopted a policy in March 2023 that forbids domicile

Rotary and Interact clubs in India, where members helped eliminate some restrictions on organ donation, are particularly active in promoting the cause. They educate people using expert speakers at club meetings, support from well-known Rotarians like RI Past President Jennifer Jones (center right), and a walkathon that included many high schoolers.



requirements for those seeking deceased-donor organ transplants, along with lifting a ban on people older than 65 receiving such transplants. “The law very clearly provides any citizen of India can go to any other state and register,” says Ajmera, who speaks to Rotary clubs about the complexities of India’s organ donation rules. “Doctors came to me and told me this was the big hurdle, and it has been removed, making one less complication in the process.”

Before the legal battle could be resolved, however, Hemali Ajmera’s condition deteriorated, forcing her to get a kidney transplant from a living donor — her sister. The operation was performed in February 2023 at a hospital recommended by a Rotarian doctor, and Hemali Ajmera later moved her membership to the Rotary Club of Organ Donation. “Rotary has helped me in all my life, connection after connection, doctor after doctor, all because of wonderful Rotary,” Prashant Ajmera says.

Srivatsa helps any way he can to ease the worries of potential donors like Sanketh Arvapally, a product manager in Seattle for Facebook parent Meta, who was preparing in 2021 to donate a kidney to one of his brothers. “My family needed me,” remembers Arvapally. “My brother was suffering from kidney disease. I stepped forward because it was very painful to see my brother go through this.”

But Arvapally’s wife felt reservations about what could happen to him. Krishna Arvapally, an advertising technology specialist who had been diagnosed with chronic kidney disease, says he could see that his brother was anxious and “his wife was even more nervous, anxious, scared.” He knew Srivatsa and asked him to talk with his brother. The conversation lasted two hours. “He just ran me through all the challenges he’d faced, how it’s no big deal,” Sanketh Arvapally says. “He made

Despite grassroots efforts by Rotary members, **shortages leave about 100,000 people in the U.S. waiting for an organ, mostly kidneys. Every day 17 of those people die.**

Another day at the blood laundromat

Dialysis keeps people with kidney failure alive, but at a cost

By Neil Steinberg • Illustration by Weston Wei

Dawn along a charmless stretch of Mystic Avenue in Medford, a suburb of Boston. Past a used car lot, a nail salon, a laundromat, a Jiffy Lube, and warehouses stocking electrical, roofing, and plumbing supplies. Finally, a low, freestanding building, Fresenius Kidney Care’s Medford dialysis center. We arrive just before 7 a.m. after an hour’s drive from Boxborough in the autumn predawn darkness.

“There are closer medical clinics, but they’re worse,” my cousin Harry Roberts explains as we pull into the parking lot. “They’re a cross between a medical clinic and a bus station.”

Harry is here for dialysis, the three-hour, five-times-a-week blood filtration and cleansing that keeps him alive by doing the job of his faltering kidneys. And I’m here visiting from Chicago because ... well, it’s complicated. We’re *mishpocha*, as our people say. Family. He’s in a tough situation or, rather, he and his wife are in a tough situation. So I’m helping. By driving, for instance. Dialysis wipes you out. The last thing you want to do when it’s done is fight your way through Boston’s nightmare traffic for an hour, with its madness-inducing roundabouts.

A dozen signs scattered around the facility encourage home dialysis, reminding patients of the comforts of home. Harry had been doing his treatments at home, but that still requires jamming yourself with needles before running a complex medical device. For three hours at a time. Five days a week.

Plus, conducting dialysis at home puts pressure on spouses or other loved ones, who are not usually trained medical professionals. Harry’s wife actually is a trained medical professional — a hospital pharmacist. But years of caring for Harry had started to grind her down. That’s why Harry started to go back to Fresenius — to give her a respite, the relief that all caregivers must have. And why I’m here, the cavalry, helping out.

Harry settles into a beige faux leather recliner designed for durability rather than comfort, while a nurse in blue scrubs contemplates Harry’s left arm. “OK, so we’re going in here, and here. We need two dull needles.” At first I think he’s joking. Dull needles? Counterintuitively, dull needles hurt less, sliding into the scar tissue “buttonholes” created by years of dialysis, while sharp needles have a way of carving a new, painful path. Though the dull ones still hurt. The nurse helps with what Harry sometimes calls “the stabby-stab part.”

“Eh, eh, eh,” Harry says, voice rising in pain as the dull needle is pushed in. “No pain, no gain,” says the nurse, brightly, clipping the clear tubing together. The lines go red with Harry’s blood. “Good job!”

“Pain is just weakness leaving the body,” says Harry, playing along.

To his left, a NxStage hemodialysis machine. A beige cube about a foot wide, it’s a glorified filter that takes his blood and removes the toxins — molecules of uric acid, for instance, are much smaller than red or white blood cells, so that waste passes through a membrane while the blood cells don’t and return to the body. The machine thrums.

About 3 million people worldwide are on dialysis for kidney failure. They are the lucky ones, because millions of other people need it, can’t

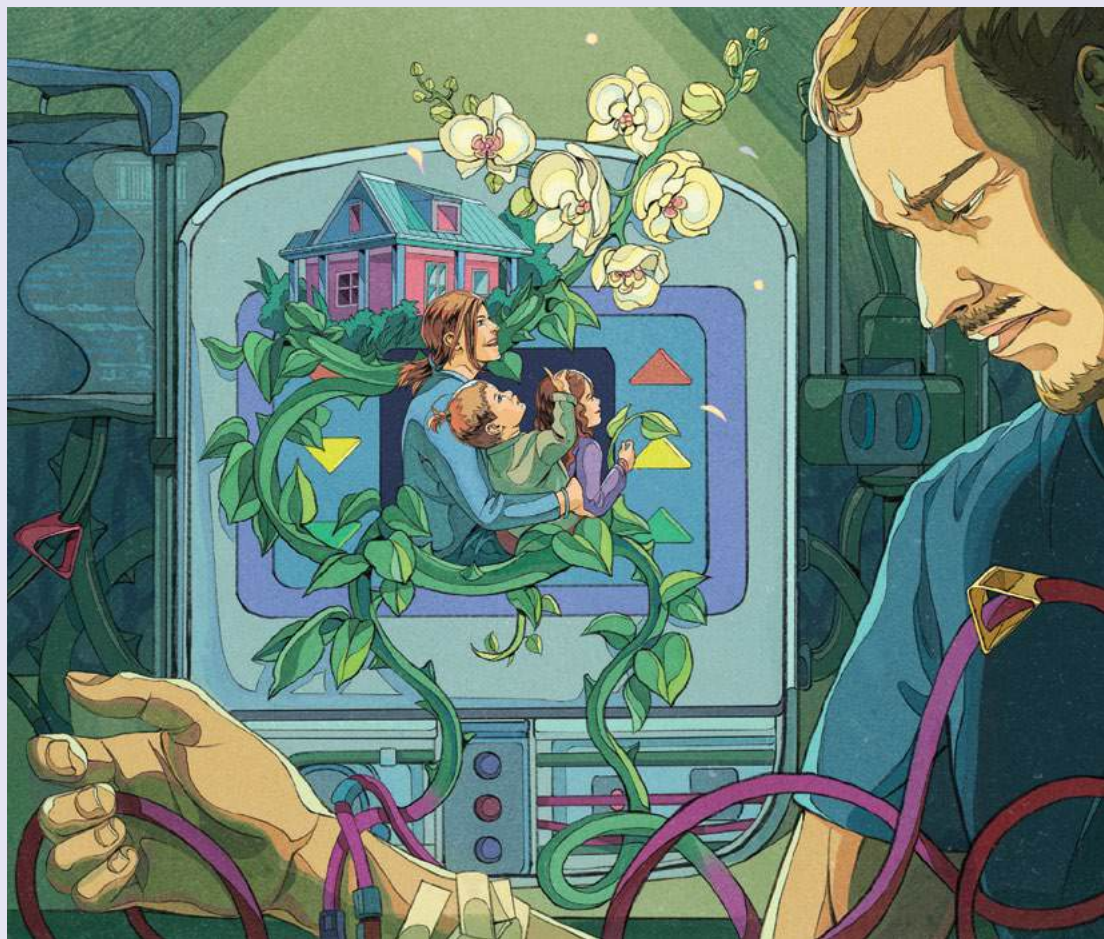
get it, and so die of the raft of medical problems that come with untreated kidney disease. If your kidneys can’t remove waste, it builds up in your body, poisoning you. If your kidneys can’t pass liquid efficiently, fluid also builds up — your lungs fill. You literally can drown, slowly. It’s a bad end.

But dialysis kills you too, only more slowly. The human body is not designed to have all its blood drawn out and then pumped back in on a regular basis. It puts strain on the heart. Low blood pressure can lead to agonizing muscle cramps. Blood clots form. After five years, more than half of patients on dialysis in the U.S. are dead. As of my visit, Harry has been on dialysis for three years and suffered a series of medical crises. The clock is ticking.

His kidneys were ruined 20 years ago after he was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer. The doctors told him to go home and get his affairs in order. His condition had a five-year survival rate of less than 10 percent.

Instead he fought it. He has a lot to live for: two fantastic daughters to watch grow up, a wife he adores, a career he’d like to get back to. So survive he did. But chemotherapy is notoriously hard on kidneys — the chemicals that destroy tumors take their revenge leaving the body. The cancer was gone but replaced by kidney failure. I thought of Indiana Jones in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. You escape being crushed by the giant boulder, only to come face-to-face with an Amazon tribe’s poison darts. Thanks, fate!

What he really needs is not a lift to Mystic Avenue, but a new kidney. Honestly, I wasn’t wild about stepping up to give one of



mine. Selflessness is not a defining characteristic in our family.

But someone had to, and if that someone was me, well, OK. I filled out the potential donor form. A year passed: Nothing. The donation network is notoriously inefficient. I reapplied. Massachusetts General Hospital spat me back. Nope, not you. They don’t say why. Mass General turned down at least six potential donors for Harry: myself, his wife, sister, daughters, friends.

If anybody reading this wants to give Harry a kidney, let me tell you, I’ve interviewed a number of kidney donors, and they uniformly insist it’s the best thing they ever did. Hands down. I asked one if she had any regrets, and she said her only regret was that she couldn’t give the other one too. If you ever wanted to be a hero and save a life, this is your chance.

Until then, dialysis. The machine thrums — thwip, thwip, thwip, thwip. The hours pass. Harry dozes.

Sometimes his left leg twitches — muscle spasms are common. We enter into the fourth hour. “The home stretch!” Harry enthuses. Finally it’s time to unhook and go home. “He did great, fantastic, not a single alarm,” says the nurse, fussing with the machine. I ask what he’s learned from years of administering dialysis to thousands of patients like Harry. He thinks. “Just like most things that suck, it’s your attitude toward it,” he says.

Can’t argue with that. Though if we want to argue, we can do so when we come back tomorrow at 7 a.m. ■

Neil Steinberg is a columnist for the Chicago Sun-Times.

my anxiousness ease. He comforted me. Anil was truly an inspiration for my decision. In seeing him, being healthy post-transplant, that definitely cemented my decision." A doctor transplanted one of his kidneys into his brother that summer, and he joined Rotary a few months later, now a member of the Rotary Club of Organ Donation.

No one expects progress toward ending organ shortages to be easy, but Rotary members are in it for the long haul.

To help others in that situation, Srivatsa's foundation published a book, *A Rotarian's Guide to Organ Donation*, edited by Hemali Ajmera. The 2023 book explains organ donation and offers need-to-know facts, Srivatsa says. "Wrong information can lead to wrong decisions. I would like to see every country have a book like this for Rotarians, specific to their situation."

Prashant Ajmera pushes for Rotary members to play a wider role in promoting organ donation. No one expects progress to be easy, but members are in it for the long haul. He credits Srivatsa for pushing Rotary members to take the issue more seriously and coordinate their efforts. "He is dedicated to it," Ajmera says. "He's the motive to bring Rotary together under one roof for organ donation."

Srivatsa says members sprinkled in communities across the globe are in a

strong position to push systemic changes that improve organ donation and get people's attention on how to prevent conditions that can lead to organ failure. In the U.S., for example, researchers warn that an under-acknowledged epidemic is brewing for chronic kidney disease, which people often don't realize they have in early stages.

"There is a pandemic silently happening with organ failure that nobody is willing to recognize until it happens to them," he says. "It is growing and coming into your own neighborhood, including your family." But members' relationships in their communities can bring about change, Srivatsa says. "Me passing through, making one passionate speech then walking away is not optimum. You need someone on the ground always there pushing the agenda." ■



Right: Anil Srivatsa says his kidney donation to his brother, Arjun Srivatsa, was not a sacrifice. The two Rotarians demonstrate healthy post-transplant life with grueling mountain biking and other physical challenges.



You've got a friend

In response to a
“friendship recession,”
Rotary members are
finding ways to make
connections they
cherish, starting
in their own clubs

By Kate Silver

Photograph by
Jovelle Tamayo





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When Phil Clarke was in his early 70s, he set a goal: to make new friends.

This was in 2021, and Clarke felt he'd drifted far from the days when he could turn to the next desk at work or school and find conversation and camaraderie. The writer and novelist does relish a bit of solitude for his creative work. But he's also gregarious when he wants to be. He grew up with 10 younger siblings, after all. Yet, like many people his age, he was frustrated.

Why does something that once felt easy now seem so hard?

He wrote about the quandary in an online community section of *The Denver Post*, reflecting on an uncomfortable reality of older adulthood: Close friends grow apart, or even die, and replacing them feels daunting. He mused to himself jokingly that reversing that trend would have the ancillary benefit of increasing the turnout at his funeral. And then he set out on a friend-finding mission.

He browsed studies on the importance of social networks, pondered where he could find a pool of possible friends, and decided on the ideal criteria: a group that met regularly, welcomed people of all backgrounds and interests, stimulated his mind, and inspired action. Then he found a place that checked all the boxes: the Rotary Club of Highlands Ranch, just outside Denver.

Since joining Rotary, Clarke, bespectacled with a slightly goofy grin, has worked with others to raise \$500,000 to fund an endowed

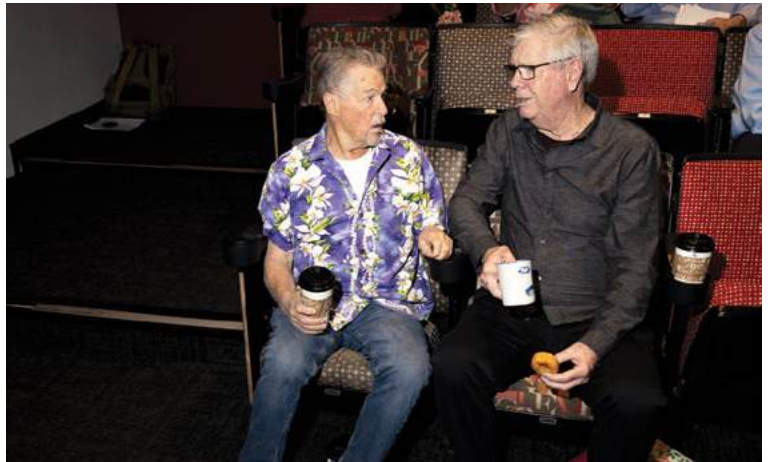
fellowship for pediatric mental health at a Colorado hospital system. He's launched a film club that hosts screenings at a library; he's formed a musical duo — called The Elderly Brothers — that performs at nursing homes and other venues; and at the weekly Rotary lunches, he feels a true sense of community. "I'm taking gradual steps to really get to know people on a deeper level," he says. "That was my goal in the first place. And I think it's working pretty well."

Research shows how important friendship is to a person's mental and physical health; it may even help you live longer. Scientists have found evidence suggesting that friends may influence our well-being as adults even more than family. And yet, in societies around the globe, things seem to be moving in the wrong direction. In what's been dubbed a "friendship recession," the number of close friends that adults have in the U.S. has declined over recent decades, affecting some groups — like men — more than others. The pandemic further aggravated our social isolation.

On the brighter side, scientists studying this phenomenon say that with some effort, individuals can turn the friendship recession into their own friendship boom. And, for many people, Rotary is just what the therapist ordered.

Phil Clarke, who joined Rotary on a quest for friendship, launched a film club that hosts screenings at a library. "I'm taking gradual steps to really get to know people on a deeper level," he says. "That was my goal in the first place. And I think it's working pretty well."







Kris Cameron was approaching retirement. After nearly 30 years as a teacher and teachers union leader, she was ready for it, but she knew she needed a plan. “I didn’t want to be one of those retirees who just sat around twiddling my thumbs and lost my social group,” Cameron says. Much like Clarke, she joined a Rotary club (Wenatchee Confluence in Washington state) in hopes of meeting new people and participating in projects to benefit her community.

Cindy Volyn was looking for a way to get more involved with community service projects. She decided to attend a Rotary meeting in hopes of connecting with like-minded people. There, she met Cameron and they quickly realized they shared a rather esoteric passion: a love of backyard chickens. Cameron has four and Volyn has 11. Both consider the birds pets, even family members. “They’re like our kids or our grandkids,” says Cameron. “It was so nice to meet some-

one else who had the same love and respect for her birds as we do.”

It didn’t take long to realize they had other shared interests, including the environment: Volyn works as an environmental program manager at the Washington State Department of Transportation, and Cameron is the chair of the club’s environmental committee. Volyn decided to join Rotary and threw herself into different activities, working side-by-side with Cameron within the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group and its plant-rich diet task force. Together, they’ve participated in highway cleanups and pollinator garden plantings, hosted film screenings themed around the environment, and coordinated monthly plant-based potlucks.

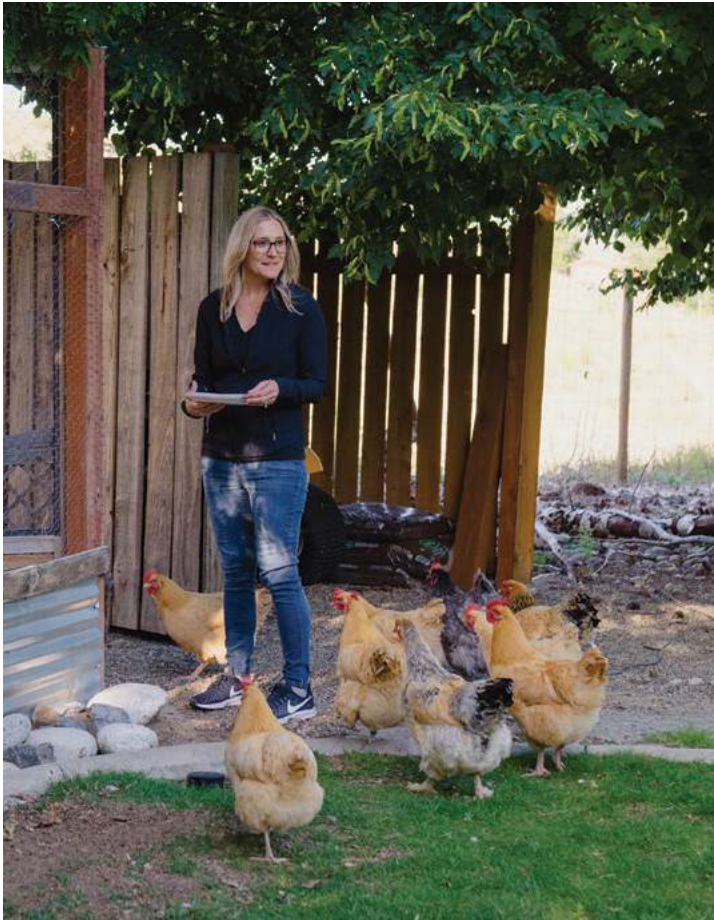
But their connection extends beyond Rotary activities: They’ve become best friends. It’s a status that neither expected to find, and both cherish. “I’m a bit of a loner,” says Cameron. “I don’t have a lot of close girlfriends. So to find a good friend

like Cindy, that I actually enjoy talking to and feel a lot of kinship with, has been such a gift.” Volyn is quick to return the love. “I feel I’m always slightly guarded with people. But I’m never that way with Kris,” she says. “And it was that way immediately.”

The two are constantly texting and emailing, updating each other on themselves and their families and, of course, on their backyard birds. Recently, Cameron had an obligation away from home and couldn’t keep up her usual nighttime chicken ritual. She knew just who to call. “Cindy came and tucked them into bed,” she says.

Friendships like the one between Volyn and Cameron are special. And, sadly, they’re becoming less common. In 1990, 33 percent of Americans surveyed by Gallup reported having 10 or more close friends, and just 3 percent said they had none. Compare that with 2021, when the

↑
Cindy Volyn (left) and Kris Cameron snap a selfie. The two became friends in Rotary and bonded over their shared love of raising backyard chickens.



“ I don’t have a lot of close girlfriends. So to find a good friend that I actually enjoy talking to and feel a lot of kinship with has been such a gift.

number of people with 10 or more close friends had fallen to 13 percent and those with none rose to 12 percent, according to a poll by the Survey Center on American Life.

Even before the pandemic, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy declared that the world was suffering from a “loneliness epidemic.” (Read an interview with Murthy on the topic in this magazine’s August 2020 issue.) A 2023 advisory from Murthy’s office points to several contributing trends in the U.S.: declining social networks and social participation, a decrease in family size and marriage rates, less participation in community groups (such as religious groups, clubs, and labor unions), and technologies that replace in-person interactions.

The report also sheds light on the mental and physical impacts of loneliness, which is associated with an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, anxiety, depression, dementia, and premature death.

While loneliness has been on the rise, it’s certainly nothing new. In fact, it’s an emotion that’s hard-wired into our biology for survival, says Megan Bruneau, a therapist and executive coach in Nashville, Tennessee. She says loneliness makes us feel uncomfortable, and that’s meant to motivate us to seek out other humans for relief. “We wouldn’t be able to mate, obviously, if we were totally by ourselves,” says Bruneau. “And we also wouldn’t be able to get in on the kill, or ward off packs of wild animals, or stay warm at night.”

In modern times, however, finding a remedy to loneliness requires more than simply opting in to the nearest group. Often, people who feel lonely also feel ashamed, as though they’ve done something wrong to feel that way, says Bruneau, author of *How To Be Alone (and Together): 72 Lessons on Being at Peace With Yourself*. “Especially in the age of Instagram, when you look around and it seems like everyone else has a great group and is always being social, except for you,” she says.

When Bruneau talks to patients who feel lonely, she validates their emotions and emphasizes how common this emotion is. Then she works to understand what’s getting in the way of that person connect-



Sheds allow men to talk with, work with, and learn from other self-motivated men.

— Ron Bowden, Rotary Club of Toowoomba East, Australia

ing with others. For some people, it could be related to past trauma that’s causing them to shut down and avoid intimacy or closeness. For others, it could be circumstantial, and they just need a little encouragement to make more of a social effort. For the latter, she recommends that they put themselves in situations where people have shared interests and interact consistently, an approach known as social prescribing.

“Sign up for an eight-week cooking or art class,” she says. “Join a book club or team. Volunteer. Bring a gift to your neighbor and see if they’d be up for a walk or coffee sometime. Join [an app like] Bumble BFF and go on ‘friend dates.’”

Friendship, it turns out, is the second most common reason people join Rotary clubs, according to a 2022 member survey. (Community service is number one.) For members who are 60 and older, friendship is the top reason they stay. In a follow-up to his community blog post, Clarke suggests readers consider joining Rotary too. With a touch of humor, he writes, “My sense of it is that this will not only beef up the attendance at your memorial service, but that your life will be improved by serving others in ways that, at present, you may only vaguely imagine.”

Loneliness isn’t just an American phenomenon. A few years ago, the United Kingdom launched its first government loneliness strategy, encouraging doctors to write patients “prescriptions” to participate in social activities, and across the country, “chatty benches” are popping up to encourage strangers to talk to each other. In Australia, the “men’s shed movement” has been growing since the 1990s, with more than 1,200 tool-filled sheds doubling as community centers where men can work side-by-side and connect with one another in a low-stakes setting (some sheds are also open to women).

For Ron Bowden, a member of the Rotary Club of Toowoomba East in Australia, a shed offered community following the loss of his wife, who died from brain cancer. There, he could throw himself into projects and repairs or just tinker while standing shoulder-to-shoulder with other tinkerers, as he processed his grief. “It replaced the backyard shed where, as a kid, I was taught to use my father’s tools,” says Bowden, who went on to help set up two men’s sheds in hopes of helping others. “Sheds allow men to talk with, work with, and learn from other self-motivated men,” he says. In recent years, the movement has expanded beyond Australia, and

there are now an estimated 3,000 sheds worldwide, including in New Zealand, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Kenya, South Africa, Canada, and the United States.

While loneliness knows no gender, men often experience it differently than women, and research shows that they’re struggling even more as they age. The Survey Center on American Life found that men tend to have fewer close friends than women, and between 1990 and 2021, men who reported having no close friends grew from 3 percent to 15 percent.

Bruneau says that could be because men tend to struggle more with feeling connected than women. “In order for us to really connect, we need to be vulnerable,” she says. “Men struggle with vulnerability because our society tells them to be strong and independent, not ‘needy’ or ‘emotional,’ and thus they feel shame when exhibiting the very behaviors required for the type of connection that relieves loneliness.” Plus, she adds, there are simply fewer opportunities to meet people as we get older and leave behind our regular routines like school, team sports, and work.

For David Cochran, the Rotary Club of Alpharetta, Georgia, helped fill a void after spending his career working in leadership po-

Know someone who could use a friend? August is Membership and New Club Development Month for Rotary. Invite someone to experience Rotary at one of your club’s upcoming service projects. And visit rotary.org/membership for other tips and resources to help clubs build and sustain membership.

sitions in global corporations. In 2017, Cochran was at a crossroads as he approached retirement age. He attended a symposium held in conjunction with the Rotary International Convention in Atlanta, at which Rotarian entrepreneur Jim Marggraff gave a speech about using technology to solve problems and connect for social good. Cochran introduced himself, and that sparked a friendship, as well as a partnership. After attending the screening of a virtual reality film from the convention that Marggraff helped develop, Cochran was inspired to join Rotary. Along with other Rotary members, they launched a nonprofit called the Global Impact Group to make a positive societal and humanitarian impact using technology.

Through this work, Cochran is finding fulfillment in ways he never expected. And he's learned that satisfaction doesn't just come from the output. "Not everything needs to be work," he says. "It's finding these crucial moments to enjoy one another, to open yourself up to different possibilities."

When Tom Gump joined the Rotary Club of Edina/Morningside, Minnesota, in 2013, he, too, wanted to meet friends. What he found — in the midst of a tragedy

that affected his household — was something even more profound.

Gump and his family hosted a Rotary Youth Exchange student from Spain, Paco Tebar Gomez, at their home in 2017-18. During his stay, Paco's dad died by suicide, and the family's church in Spain wouldn't perform a funeral service. Tom and his wife, Catherine, now a member of the Rotary Club of Edina, flew Paco's mom and two siblings to Minnesota so that the family could grieve together.

When the Gumps put out a call for help, their Rotary friends answered. One had lost his own father to suicide and showed up to support Paco and to listen. Another brought his dog over to spend time with the grieving teenager. And, together, Rotarians helped plan a heartfelt memorial service for Paco's dad.

The service was held at the Gump family's church on the rainiest of nights. Nearly 300 Rotarians filed in, smiling at videos showing Paco's dad — a juggler — tossing balls in the air. Eyes welled up as stories unfolded about a man who was, to most attendees, a stranger.

Gump looked around in awe. He'd joined Rotary to meet friends. But the love and support he felt in this moment were beyond anything he could have imagined. "That's when I realized Rotary is more than a club," he says. "It's a family." ■



Tom Gump with his son, Andrew, (right) and Rotary Youth Exchange student Paco Tebar Gomez. Gump found connections in Rotary far deeper than he imagined.

THE ART OF MAKING FRIENDS

Hope Kelaher thinks a lot about the art of making friends. As a therapist, she's observed the challenges her patients have encountered. So she decided to write a book on the topic called *Here to Make Friends: How to Make Friends as an Adult*. She shared these tips with Rotary.

Become a regular. "Anchor institutions" (like places of worship or schools) have become less prominent in many people's lives, but that doesn't mean you can't designate your own anchor institution, like a cafe, a gym, or a Rotary club. "Sit at a cafe for a couple of hours on the same day at the same time, and you will start to become a regular," Kelaher says. "Put yourself out there by starting up conversations and see where it takes you."

Examine your social network. You don't have to start from scratch. Think about the people you already know you like, and reach out. Send a birthday message to a long-lost friend. Talk to a neighbor and try to foster a kinship. Host a dinner and ask guests to bring one or two friends you've never met.

Watch your body language and try a little small talk. If you're smiling, relaxed, and willing to banter it will come across as more welcoming than, say, frowning and staring into your phone. Kelaher advises practicing small talk with someone you run into frequently — like a barista or a grocery clerk — so you're more comfortable in a social situation. "Find something that you like about this person and use that as a bid to get them to engage with you: 'Oh, I really like that book you're reading,' or 'Where'd you get your sneakers?'"

While none of these steps is difficult, it's important to remember that making new friends takes time, dedication, and effort. Kelaher compares it to investing in your retirement account: "You have to start early," she says, "and you have to keep working at it."

Coral reef protection, sustainable farming, river clean-up win top prizes

by **Sue Villa Sta. Maria**

Philippine Rotary Magazine honored three clubs from Districts 3800, 3830, and 3810 for promoting the most outstanding environment protection projects in 2023-2024. Two more clubs from Districts 3770 and 3820 received honorable mention recognition. Cash prizes and trophies were awarded to the Rotary Club of San Juan del Monte, Rotary Club of Makati and Rotary Club of Manila, the grand prize and runner-up winners. Also cited with Special Recognition awards were the Rotary Club of Tuguegarao Citadel and Rotary Club of Infanta.





The Rotary Club of San Juan del Monte represented by its President Teresita Mariposa (center, in blue gown) with some club members and past District Governors of D3800 receiving the cash prize and a trophy for its “Buoyanihan: Hook on Rotary Buoys/Protecting Our Coral Reefs” project as the Grand Champion of PRMFI’s Search for the Most Outstanding Environmental Projects 2023-2024.

GRAND CHAMPION > RC SAN JUAN DEL MONTE, D3800

‘Buoyanihan’ in Anilao

The Rotary Club of San Juan Del Monte in District 3800, in partnership with the Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary (PCGA) and the National Marine and Environmental Protection Support Group of PCGA, addressed the severe damage to the coral reef ecosystem in Anilao, Mabini, Batangas, a renowned dive spot in Asia.

The damage is caused by increased tourist activity and careless diving practices. To mitigate further destruction and protect the marine life in the coral reefs, Rotary buoys were strategically installed. The buoys also serve as secure anchoring points for vessels to prevent drifting and collisions, and as markers to ensure to reduce the risk of diving accidents or getting lost underwater.

Aptly named Buoyonihan, the name reflects the Filipino value of communal unity. Local businesses, including dive shops, restaurants, and tour operators, stand to gain from increased tourist traffic attracted by safer and more sustainable dive sites. The project provides opportunities for institutions to teach marine conservation and responsible diving practices, while serving as reference points for scientific research.

Ultimately, the project promotes the long-term sustainability of marine habitats, ensures the safety and enjoyment of divers, stimulates local economies, and facilitates educational and research endeavors. By involving various stakeholders and fostering a sense of shared responsibility, Buoyanihan exemplifies the power of collective action in preserving precious marine ecosystems for future generations.



PRMFI's Most Outstanding Environmental Project 2023-2024



Rotary Club of Makati President Senen Matoto and District Governor Jay Tambunting (first row, 7th and 6th from left, respectively) of D3830 received the cash prize and a trophy as first runner-up for its “ARK Feed Back” project in the recently concluded PRMFI’s Search for the Most Outstanding Environmental Projects 2023-2024 gala night.

FIRST RUNNER-UP > RC MAKATI, D3830

ARK Feed Back

The Rotary Club of Makati of District 3830 has partnered with the Advancement for Rural Kids Foundation Inc., and the municipal governments of Bay in Laguna, La Libertad in Negros Oriental, and Inabanga in Bohol to implement the ARK Feedback Program

This program addresses the food and economic needs of indigent fisherfolk and farmers who rely on familiar methods that are disruptive to ecosystems and endanger human health – such as dynamite-fishing by the fisherfolk, and kaingin, mono-cropping and the use of synthetic fertilizers by farmers.

It is a 16-week innovative behavior change, market-based program that inspires families to farm in backyards, idle lands and dump sites to produce vegetables in excess of their normal healthy dietary needs. Where spaces are tight, the families are taught vertical farming. The excess would be shared with neighbors or sold in *talipapas* and village vegetable exchanges, enabling families to earn additional income.

The families are taught environmentally sustainable ways of farming, recycling and repurposing of equipment and supplies, reducing food waste and preparing cost-effective nutrition-rich diets. Plastic containers and old items were repurposed to create container gardens.

ARK Feedback has proven to be highly successful in several areas where farm communities have been created using environment-friendly farming methods that eliminate carbon, regenerate lands and restore biodiversity. Malnutrition has been markedly reduced. The families are now able to eat a full, balanced diet every day. ARK Feed Back uses methods that are low-cost, replicable, and sustainable.





The “Pasig River Clean-Up and Rehabilitation Project” of the Rotary Club of Manila of D3810 was announced as the second runner-up of PRMFI’s Search for the Most Outstanding Environmental Projects 2023-2024 during the awards night held last June 29, 2024. Past President Hermie Esguerra, the project proponent, District 3810 Governor Lai de la Cruz (center) and some club members received the cash prize and a trophy.

SECOND RUNNER-UP > RC MANILA, D3810

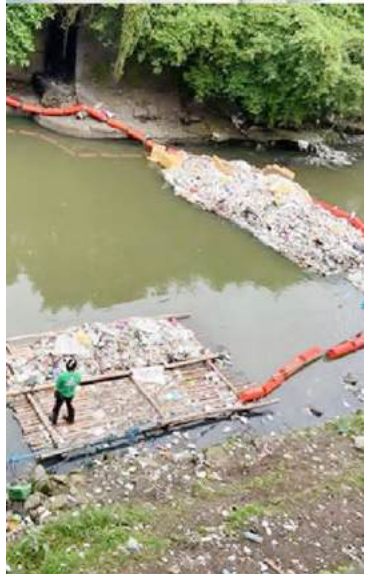
Pasig River clean-up

The Rotary Club of Manila in District 3810 partnered with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), NGOs, and the local communities who are the ultimate beneficiaries in a massive clean-up project in Pasig River, a vital waterway that runs through several key cities in Metro Manila.

The river’s rehabilitation is crucial to restore biodiversity, create a healthy environment for humans and marine life, and promote river tourism, public water transportation, and fishing. More than just a body of water, Pasig River is part of the country’s cultural heritage.

The first phase included the installation of heavy-duty floating barriers at the portals of 18 estuaries to prevent trash and solid waste from flowing downstream. The barriers have proven to save humans from drowning. Tree-planting along the riverbanks were implemented to prevent flooding.

Communities are taught to gather water hyacinths from the river to use as materials for handicrafts, to generate income for the locals. The dried water hyacinths can be used as fuel, as they are rich in methane biogas. Training and education programs on waste segregation and proper waste disposal were taught to communities living in the riverbanks.



PRMFI's Most Outstanding Environmental Project 2023-2024

SPECIAL RECOGNITION > RC TUGUEGARAO CITADEL, D3770

Bamboo eases poverty, protects environment

Bamboo and Silage Production for Poverty Alleviation is a project of *Timbuyog Dagiti Naballigi Nga Mannalon* (Association of Successful Farmers) Producers Cooperative from the upland areas of Dadda, Amulung, Cagayan, in cooperation with the Rotary Club of Tuguegarao Citadel of District 3770 and its overseas partner, the Rotary Club of Han Ulsan of District 3721, South Korea.

With funding support from The Rotary Foundation (TRF), a 50-hectare area was developed to farm bamboo and hybrid corn, resulting in increased income for farmers and providing tremendous benefits to the environment. The farmers were taught to plant bamboo as a contour belt to trap soil and prevent erosion, while corn was planted between the bamboo contours for use as the raw material for silage production. Technical assistance was extended to develop engineered bamboo products and silage and grain production.

A market chain has been established, enabling village-based investments. The upland farmers benefitted by earning wages for labor during the planting season, using the bamboo shoots as food, and harvesting bamboo poles for processing into engineered products.



PDG Art Que (3rd from left), Club Adviser of the Rotary Club of Tuguegarao Citadel of D3770, received the PRMFI's Search for the Most Outstanding Environmental Projects 2023-2024 honorable mention award for the club's "Bamboo and Silage Production for Poverty Alleviation and Environmental Protection Project" during the gala night held last June 29, 2024.



SPECIAL RECOGNITION > RC INFANTA, D3820

Nurturing trees mitigates typhoon, flood damage

A *Tree Nurturing Project* was implemented by the Rotary Club of Infanta of District 3820 in REINA (Real, Infanta and Nakar), Quezon, three typhoon-inundated towns that frequently suffer from the overflow of Agos River and landslides from the Sierra Mountain ranges.

In cooperation with DENR's Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau and Southern Luzon State University, a 32-hectare model site was developed to plant and nurture around 3,000 indigenous trees using scientific strategies for planting the correct tree species based on elevation, soil, climate, temperature and other parameters.

The project team signed up with Northern Quezon College volunteers to care for the trees to ensure an 80%-90% survival rate. RC Infanta also signed up Quezelco II, Philippine Navy Southern Luzon Command, Astoveza Gravel & Sand Trading, and Haribon and Kalipi volunteers to participate in the program.

The club's Lakbay Aralan sa Kalikasan installed billboards and signages to promote awareness on tree nurturing and caring for the forests. The local community is being taught how to raise seedlings and plant trees intercropped to provide them livelihood.



Rotary Club of Infanta of D3820 receiving a special recognition award for its "Tree Nurturing Project" represented by Club Secretary Marie Vie Velasco.





Rotary focuses on environment protection

IN 2020, environment protection was adopted as Rotary’s seventh area of focus. In support of this new area of focus, the Philippine Rotary Media Foundation, Inc. (PRMFI) launched the Most Outstanding Environment Projects Awards. The need to support the environment has become urgent amid the grave perils posed by global warming, changes in weather patterns and natural disasters.

Initiated by last year’s PRMFI Board chaired by Past District Governor (PDG) Mike Lirio, the search is a brainchild of then-Trustee PDG Sid Garcia. PRMFI organized a committee headed by Past PRMFI Chair PDG Chito Borromeo, with PDG Sid as the vice-chair.

Nominations were sourced from the ten Philippine Rotary districts. From the ten projects submitted to PRMFI, the best three projects were chosen by a team of five judges who are all involved in environment protection.

Prizes

THE BEST three projects received cash prizes as follows: The Grand Champion was awarded P300,000; the First Runner-up received P200,000, and the Second Runner-up was granted P150,000.

The winners were recognized during PRMFI’s Induction and Handover ceremonies held at the Palms Country Club in Muntinlupa in July 2024.

The cash prizes were generously provided by Past District Governor Edna Sutter and her company, DDC Land, Inc.

The new Board of Trustees of PRMFI headed by Past District Governor Emil Joven has decided to continue the Awards in Rotary Year 2004-2005. There is indeed a need to continually support environment protection activities. Otherwise, the degradation of the environment shall continue to harm the balance of ecosystems, societal functions, and the well-being of humans.

Panel of judges: Members’ profiles



PDG Edna Sutter, chair of the panel, is TRF Major Gift Initiative Adviser on Environment for Rotary Years 2023-2026. She is the CEO and President of DDC Land, Inc. which has undertaken the task of creating giant bamboo forests in open areas nationwide, including the domains of indigenous peoples, to mitigate the effects of global warming. DDC’s multi-million project is called BIG PH (Bamboo Initiative for Growth Philippines).



Atty. Juan Miguel ‘Mitch’ Cuna is the DENR Undersecretary for Field Operations

for Luzon, Visayas and Environment. He represented DENR Secretary Maria Antonia ‘Toni’ Yulo-Loyzaga.



Atty. Alexander ‘Alex’ B. Cabrera is Chairman Emeritus of Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) where he is Leader for Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues. He is also the Chairman of Integrity Initiative Inc.



Emmanuel ‘Manny’ M. de Guzman is a former Commissioner and concurrent Vice-Chairperson and Executive Director of the Philippine Climate Change

Commission. He served as Senior Advisor for Disaster Risk Reduction at the World Meteorological Organization and consultant at the UNDRR in Geneva, Switzerland and as Senior Regional Expert for Disaster Risk Management at the ASEAN Secretariat in 2006 and 2013.



Past District Governor Dwight M. Ramos is a Commissioner of the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC) and Spokesperson of the Coalition of Solid Waste Management Providers. He is the Senior Vice President of Basic Environmental Systems & Technologies, Inc. or BEST. He also serves as Director of the Metro Clark Waste Management Corporation, and Executive Director of the Solid Waste Contractors Association of the Philippines.

PROGRAMS OF SCALE

Rotary awards \$2 million grant for sustainable farming in India

Groundwater storage and climate-resilient agriculture will benefit 60,000 farmers



Rotary has awarded its fourth annual Programs of Scale grant to Partners for Water Access and Better Harvests in India. The program will use rainwater collection systems such as check dams and ponds to increase groundwater tables by 10-15 percent each year, improving the livelihoods of more than 60,000 farmers in four states. The \$2 million grant was announced in May at the Rotary International Convention in Singapore.

By increasing the availability of water, the five-year program will extend areas of cultivation by 20-30 percent. It will introduce drip irrigation and plant native species and fruit trees to reduce soil erosion on 4,113 hectares (more than 10,000 acres) of land. By helping offset the effects of climate change, it will lay the groundwork for generations of sustainable farming.

“Congratulations to the Rotary Club of Delhi Premier and their partners for taking action to empower rural communities in India,” said 2023-24 Rotary President Gordon McNally.

Each year, The Rotary Foundation awards a \$2 million Programs of Scale grant to an evidence-based, sustainable program that targets at least one of Rotary’s areas of focus and can be expanded to create far-reaching change. Rotary members work with local communities and knowledgeable partner organizations to design and implement the initiatives.

“The grant will help the club advance environmental sustainability and ensure a brighter future for rural communities in India,” said Bharat Pandya, a trustee of The Rotary Foundation.

Throughout India, crop yields have drastically diminished due to erratic rainfall and drought worsened by climate change. In drought-prone areas, depleting groundwater threatens to make farming unsustainable. One study projects that India’s wheat yields will fall by as much as 23 percent by 2050.

“In a country where only 50 percent of the arable land is irrigated, I have seen the plight of farmers who pray fervently to the rain gods so that they may have a bountiful harvest and enough income to survive until the next crop,” said Sudhanshu Pachisia, 2023-24 president of the Delhi Premier club. “I have seen the distress in families of the marginalized farmers in years of failed monsoons. Making more water available is the solution for the more than half of the population that subsists on agriculture.”

Rotary clubs all over India have previously worked with partners to construct rainwater-harvesting check dams. This initiative will build on this work, and what is learned will help improve future projects.

Rotary members, experts, and technical advisers will collaborate with local governments to enhance farmers’ knowledge and resources related to water storage, agricultural subsidies, and crop diversification. The program also provides training in alternative agricultural practices to help farmers increase their long-term economic security.

There’s a great deal of cultural and geographical variance in the program’s target areas, the states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. To address this, the Delhi Premier club is collaborating with three experienced organizations: Global Vikas Trust, PHD Rural Development Foundation, and Self-Reliant Initiatives Through Joint Action (SRIJAN). These partners have regional expertise in rainwater-harvesting methods, drip irrigation, crop selection, and community organizing.

“Through our combined efforts in water conservation, climate-smart agriculture, and livelihood initiatives, we aim to benefit 1,500 women farmers and facilitate the planting of 7,000 trees,” said SRIJAN CEO Prasanna Khemariya. “This project will create 8 crore liters [21 million gallons] of

water potential, transforming 700 acres of agricultural land.”

Forty-five percent of the farmers targeted by the program are women, noted Sharad Jaipuria, the chairman of PHD Rural Development Foundation.

“The partnership will focus on climate-resilient agricultural practices, including diversifying to high-value crops like fruit plantations and multilayer vegetable farming,” Jaipuria said.

Harvesting rain and planting climate-smart crops in arid environments are not new ideas. In fact, they have already proved successful in India. Evidence shows that adjusting agricultural practices and planting different crops can create more stable incomes for farmers.

“We know that it is the poorest of the poor that bear the greatest brunt of the climate crisis,” said Mayank Gandhi, managing trustee at Global Vikas Trust. “The only way to transform their lives is through sustainable agriculture at scale.”

The other Programs of Scale finalist this year is One Million Healthy Mothers and Newborns. This Ugandan initiative aims to reduce both maternal and newborn deaths by 35 percent each in at least 200 public health centers. The program provides medical equipment, training in newborn and maternity care, and a community awareness campaign. — ETELKA LEHOCZKY

Recent Programs of Scale award recipients

2021-22: Together for Healthy Families in Nigeria aims to reduce maternal and infant mortality by increasing access to high-quality health care in several areas of Nigeria. The program improves supply of health services by equipping health facilities and training health care workers and strengthens demand for health services through community dialogues and home visits.

- In its first year, the program trained 514 health care workers in emergency obstetrics and neonatal care.
- Health workers conducted over 11,800 home visits to encourage use of health services, more than doubling the program’s initial goal.
- 140 community dialogue sessions reached more than 14,000 people.
- Partnerships with the Federal Ministry of Health and eight other institutions ensure the initiative’s sustainability.
- Rates of births at health facilities supported by the program increased.

2022-23: United to End Cervical Cancer in Egypt works to reduce the number of cervical cancer cases while improving women’s access to preventive care in and around Cairo. The four-year program includes a vaccination campaign, cancer screenings, and public awareness.

- The initiative will vaccinate more than 30,000 girls ages 12-15 and provide cancer screenings for 10,000 women.
- A public awareness effort will reach 4 million people.
- Health care workers, school administrators, and staff will be trained to understand cervical cancer and its causes so they can provide appropriate care and counseling.



Watch videos about these programs and learn more about Programs of Scale grants at my.rotary.org/programs-scale-grants.



POLIO ERADICATION

A \$1 billion partnership

UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell reflects on progress toward a polio-free world

Since Rotary and UNICEF began their partnership in 1988 as two of the founding organizations of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, the world has gone from 125 polio-endemic countries to two, Afghanistan and Pakistan. There were an estimated 350,000 cases of paralytic polio in 1988 and only 12 in 2023. And since the partnership’s inception, The Rotary Foundation has donated \$1 billion to UNICEF — a milestone celebrated at an event in New York City in January. To mark the occasion, *Rotary* magazine interviewed UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell about what that partnership supports and why Rotary and UNICEF make great partners.

What role does UNICEF play in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative?

UNICEF focuses on providing timely, safe, and adequate quantities of the polio vaccines to countries all over the world. But vaccines work only if children receive them. And that’s where our other area of work is critical: engaging with local communities to build trust and confidence in the polio vaccine among mothers, fathers, and caregivers. This entails mobilizing nationwide networks of community health workers, influencers,

and volunteers — the majority of them women — in polio-affected countries. We cannot do it alone, however, and this is where Rotary members play a leading and critical role.

In some of the communities in Afghanistan and Pakistan that are at highest risk for polio, we work with national authorities and civil society partners like Rotary in combining polio vaccination with the delivery of a suite of health, immunization, and other basic services. This is not only helping increase vaccination coverage but also contributing to the overall health of disadvantaged children. Our work together has laid the blueprint for tackling other pressing diseases and strengthening health emergency response systems.

Rotary has given \$1 billion in grants to UNICEF since the inception of the program. How do those grants support UNICEF’s work?

Rotary is one of our strongest partners, and we are grateful for the steadfast support to UNICEF’s polio eradication efforts. Contributions from Rotary and its members over the past three decades have contributed significantly toward UNICEF’s procurement and distribution

of over 1 billion doses of polio vaccines annually, accounting for more than 50 percent of global oral polio vaccines. In addition, Rotary funds enable us to build the capacity of health workers in managing the “cold chain,” to keep vaccines safe during transportation and storage, and invest in vaccine supply chain infrastructure such as freezer rooms, refrigerators, cold boxes, vaccine carriers, and temperature monitoring devices.

Funds from Rotary and the partnership with local Rotary clubs in many countries have helped us recruit, train, and establish nationwide networks of locally based community mobilizers and volunteers in polio-affected countries. They are leading the charge against the disease, working with local communities in reaching children with lifesaving vaccines in the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

The best partnerships always support more than just funding. Rotarians help with community mobilization and outreach, building trust in vaccines, combating misinformation, and motivating caregivers to vaccinate their children. Rotarians have also played an invaluable role in relentlessly advocating to make polio eradication and childhood vaccination a top priority with local and national governments.

What gives you hope that polio eradication is possible?

It’s simple for me: The dedication and heroic efforts of frontline workers globally and the unwavering commitment of donors and partners like Rotary, who will not stop until we reach every child. This is what makes me believe that together we will make polio history.

What message do you have for Rotary members?

I would like to personally thank each and every Rotary member for your unwavering dedication and commitment to polio eradication. Last year, we saw one of the fewest number of wild polio cases recorded, thanks to your generosity. We are close to achieving our shared goal of a polio-free world, and we cannot afford to relent in our efforts. Members of Rotary are people of action and so are my colleagues at UNICEF, and we know that together we can continue to solve so many of the problems facing children today. ■



TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Members are the magic

I love our many Rotary traditions, especially our emblem: the wheel. Whenever I put on my Rotary pin, admire a new club's logo, or spot the emblem on a volunteer's T-shirt, I am inspired by the possibilities that wheel represents.

Early in Rotary, our predecessors envisioned it as a gear, part of a sturdy machine making great things happen. It remains that, and much more. To me, it also symbolizes cycles and movement on our journey of doing good in the world.

August is Rotary's Membership and New Club Development Month, and I encourage you to think about the cyclical connection between membership and The Rotary Foundation.

When we have engaged members in dynamic clubs, *The Magic of Rotary* happens. Members — both new and experienced — deepen their commitment to each other and their communities. And that local engagement attracts attention and more members.

Gradually, the new members realize their club is part of a powerful organization that is making lasting change in the world. They learn about the Foundation, support it, and perhaps apply for a grant. They see themselves as part of the movement that will eradicate polio.

As our members' experience deepens, so does their commitment to Rotary at all levels. The public sees our impact,

making Rotary irresistible. New members join, new clubs are formed, and the cycle continues. With each turn of the wheel, we grow Rotary and our Foundation.

There are countless ways this magical connection between clubs and our Foundation can unfold. For instance, 100% Paul Harris Fellow Clubs, where every member is a Paul Harris Fellow, showcase how engaged clubs are directly connected to the Foundation. Some clubs even up the ante, like the Rotary Club of Crescent (Greensboro), North Carolina, whose 125 members are all Paul Harris Fellows, Benefactors, and Sustaining Members simultaneously.

But you do not need to be in such a "triple crown" club to make a difference.

I am asking all Rotary members to remember this month's goal for what I'm calling Mark's Magical Markers: Please make the personal commitment to contribute what you can to the Annual Fund by 31 August. Do it right now, before you forget, at rotary.org/give. While you are there, set up a recurring direct donation.

With your help, we can keep that great wheel of Rotary and its Foundation rolling in the right direction, moving toward something greater tomorrow than we can even imagine today.

MARK DANIEL MALONEY

Foundation trustee chair

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.

2025 CONVENTION

Canada's country capital



Shouts of “Yaahoo!” echoed across the House of Friendship in Singapore as members snapped pictures in cowboy hats at the Calgary convention booth and lined up to register for their trip to Canada’s West.

You’re sure to hear that cowboy call of enthusiasm at the Rotary International Convention 21-25 June in Calgary, a city with country flair that’s famous for its summer rodeo blowout. Affectionately called Cowtown for its cattle industry history, Calgary even has a link to Beyoncé, whose latest album has country music influences. One of her co-writers on the song “Texas Hold ‘Em” grew up in Calgary and calls it Canada’s country capital.

Don’t miss the National Music Centre in town that includes the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame. A wide-ranging music museum has displays on country

star Shania Twain and a mobile recording studio used by the Rolling Stones.

The timing of the convention, on the grounds of the Calgary Stampede, is perfect. You’ll have time afterward to visit another part of North America for a vacation then return to the city to catch the rodeo 4-13 July. One suggestion: Take a train into the neighboring Rocky Mountains to see Banff National Park’s breathtaking scenery. And Calgary invites you to celebrate Canada Day 1 July, with an Indigenous showcase, a street fair, and fireworks show.

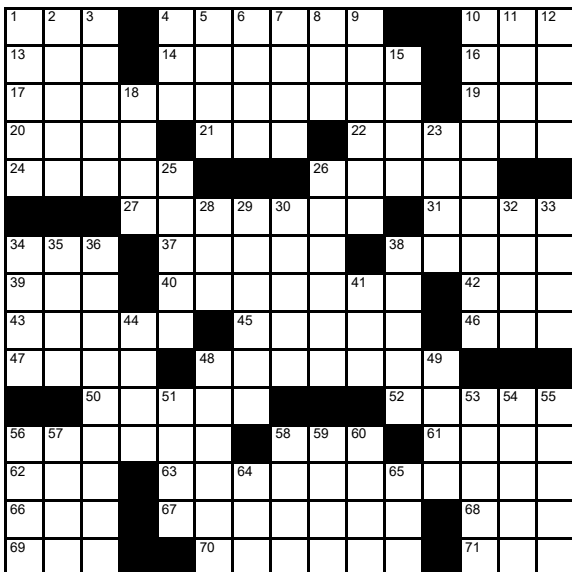
Perhaps you’ll leave town with a cowboy hat or boots. But outside of all the fun, you have a serious job: help local members make noise about Rotary to boost public engagement, while supercharging your excitement about all you can accomplish through this great global network.

Learn more and register at convention.rotary.org.

CROSSWORD

Summer stretch

By Victor Fleming
Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas



Solution on **page 27**

ACROSS

- 1 Mars, Mercury, or Saturn
- 4 Bow and arrow user
- 10 Acupuncture life force
- 13 Apply frosting to
- 14 San Francisco and environs
- 16 Mudder’s morsel
- 17 Start of what August is, in Rotary
- 19 Nada
- 20 Harm severely
- 21 Greek vowel
- 22 Cause shock in
- 24 Company in 2002 news
- 26 Cheapskate
- 27 Emergency indicator
- 31 Situated above
- 34 “Hi _____!” (fan’s message)
- 37 Bovine milk source
- 38 Like Aer Lingus, say
- 39 In the style of
- 40 Part 2 of what August is
- 42 “You _____ dog, you!”
- 43 36-inch units
- 45 Make amends
- 46 How-_____ (instructional books)
- 47 Yesterday, in Lima
- 48 Squad that’s paid to play

50 “Rabbit food”

- 52 Igneous rock source
- 56 Airport structure
- 58 _____ rally
- 61 Anemic’s concern
- 62 Pub draft
- 63 Part 3 of what August is
- 66 Coll. dorm bigwigs
- 67 Breathing tube
- 68 Aliens, for short
- 69 Sinus specialist, briefly
- 70 Winding
- 71 “Love _____ neighbor”

DOWN

- 1 One-foot putt, e.g.
- 2 Atlantic or Indian
- 3 Express opposition
- 4 Lincoln nickname
- 5 “TV is called a medium, because it’s seldom _____ or well done.”
- 6 Dermatologist’s concern
- 7 “Funny!”
- 8 “_____ tu ...” (Verdi aria)
- 9 Made good on, as a debt
- 10 Swindler
- 11 Hard rain?
- 12 “_____ do for now”

15 Certain grocery stores from 1869 to 2015, familiarly

- 18 Allied group
- 23 Anjou or Bosc
- 25 “Proper” words
- 26 Dry red wine
- 28 ‘50s White House monogram
- 29 Actor Norton
- 30 Folio page
- 32 1952 Olympic city
- 33 _____ ed. (gym class)
- 34 Poet Angelou
- 35 Skin care brand
- 36 Metaphorical mess
- 38 Building girder
- 41 Arles article
- 44 Aerodynamic resistance
- 48 Mom or Dad
- 49 Harm severely
- 51 Young fellows
- 53 Meet and _____
- 54 End of what August is
- 55 Unsettled
- 56 Aesop’s also-ran
- 57 Alda or Ladd
- 58 *Frasier* actress Gilpin
- 59 BPOE members
- 60 Blake, Browning, or Burns
- 64 “I do,” at the altar
- 65 Cloth layer

Do you know **Someone**
who is **advancing women**
in **Rotary?**

**NOMINATIONS
DUE 31 AUGUST**

for the

**SYLVIA
WHITLOCK
LEADERSHIP
AWARD**



Dr. Sylvia Whitlock is a Rotary pioneer, an educator, a humanitarian, and a longtime advocate for women in Rotary.



Any Rotarian or Rotaractor
can nominate one member for
consideration from 1 to 31 August.
<https://bit.ly/SWL-Award>





Register and pay by
15 December 2024
before prices increase
convention.rotary.org

**MAJESTIC
MOUNTAINS**

**VIBRANT
CITY**

**MAGIC ALL
AROUND**



ROTARY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

21-25 JUNE 2025 • CALGARY, CANADA

