

Philippine Rotary

THE MAGAZINE OF CHOICE

SEPTEMBER 2024

RI President-Elect Mario de Camargo visits Manila
page 20

Lawn begone: how to rewild your yard
page 46

CALGARY CALLS

Rotary travels to the Canadian Rockies for its 116th annual convention

page 28



YOUR PROJECT PLANNING EXPERTS



CAROLYN JOHNSON
United States, District 7780

CADRE TITLE:
Cadre Chair and Adviser for Basic Education and Literacy

OCCUPATION:
Educator



WHAT ARE ROTARY MEMBERS SAYING ABOUT CAROLYN?

“Carolyn really takes the time to look at a grant to make sure that Rotary’s money will be well spent! Her comments are honest, thought-provoking, and spot-on in terms of writing an ethical, culturally sensitive, and sustainable grant as defined by Rotary. In our world, she is known to be the must-go-to before submitting.”

— Temrah Okonski, Rotary Club of Ellicott City,
District 7620 (USA)

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There are hundreds of experts standing by to help you plan or enhance your Rotary project!



Urchick's grandmother's house in Slovakia.



The meaning of family

The *Magic of Rotary* is belonging, and it's a feeling that can appear when you least expect it.

Earlier this year, I was in Slovakia serving as a president's representative during a six-week trip through Europe. When I wrote to Katarina Cechova, governor of District 2240 at the time, I mentioned that my grandmother Veronica Zilka grew up in a small village in the area before settling in the U.S.

It wasn't long before Cechova tracked down my grandmother's village, Jakubova Vol'a. She even organized a visit for me, where I received an unforgettable Slovakian welcome.

When I entered the community center of Jakubova Vol'a, a small crowd of people dressed in traditional Slovakian clothing greeted me. They sang with beautiful and powerful Central European voices that reminded me of my grandmother.

A lot of families play cards or games when they get together. When I was young, my father would pick up his accordion and lead my family in song. My grandmother would sing along with her impressive voice.

When I walked into the community center and heard traditional music from my childhood — when I saw a woman play the accordion the way my dad played — I suddenly felt like a little girl sitting at my grandmother's house in Monessen, Pennsylvania. I burst into tears of joy at the memories.

But the magic didn't stop there. District Governor Cechova really outdid herself. A local genealogist worked with a videographer to make a short film

about my grandmother. We watched the video together in the community center.

When the video ended, I turned around and saw a man standing in the back of the room. I quickly learned that this stranger, Frantisek Zilka, was my second cousin. His grandmother and mine had been sisters. I felt like I had been struck by lightning.

I visited my newfound cousin's home, which happens to be the home where my grandmother was born. There, he shared old photographs I had never seen of my dad, my uncle, and my grandmother.

Since then, I can't stop thinking about my family of Rotary. When I refer to you as my family, I'm not just being kind. I really think of everyone in Rotary as my family. But I never would have imagined that my Rotary family would introduce me to long-lost personal family.

Sitting in that community center listening to traditional Slovakian music from my childhood filled me with joy and a profound sense of belonging. I am so grateful to District Governor Cechova and everyone who helped create that magical experience.

As members of Rotary, we have a unique opportunity to share the same magic with each other and with the world. I encourage you to consider how you can help spread that magic and ensure other members of your club — other members of our Rotary family — feel like they truly belong.

STEPHANIE A. URCHICK

President, Rotary International

CONTENTS



▲ ON THE COVER:
Enjoy eclectic boutiques, patio dining, and people watching at Calgary's Stephen Avenue pedestrian mall. Photo by Monika Lozinska.



September 2024

- 1 President's message
- 3 Chairman's message
- 5 Editor's note
- 25 Trustee Chair's message

FEATURES

- 28 **Going to Moh'kinstsis**
For centuries, people have gathered in Calgary at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers. Now, with its June 2025 convention, it's Rotary's turn.
- 38 **Seeds of hope**
Long overlooked, farmers are finding mental health supports tailored to the stresses of rural life.
- 46 **The lazy gardener's guide**
Where can you save money, time, and the planet simply by doing less? In your own backyard.

OUR WORLD

- 6 **If it's broken, fix it**
Repair cafes do more than bring your busted stuff back to life.
- 9 **A community of readers**
An educator expands literacy to help towns sustain themselves.

- 10 **People of action around the globe**
- 12 **It takes more than tech**
Five tips for effective education technology programs.
- 14 **The first patient**
A psychiatrist visits home and discovers the meaning of recovery.
- 56 **Fly me to the moon**
In China, families reunite over mooncakes.

OUR CLUBS

- 20 **RIPE Mario de Camargo visits Manila**
- 24 **Vibrant Rotary, not revolving door**
Attracting the right members must be our responsibility.
- 54 **Mind your p's and q's**
A Rotary alphabet soup SOS.



Scholarships for aspiring journalists

September is Basic Education and Literacy Month in the Rotary calendar. More than 775 million people over the age of 15 are illiterate. That's 17 per cent of the world's adult population.

Our goal is to strengthen the capacity of communities to support basic education and literacy, reduce gender disparity in education, and increase adult literacy. We support education for all children and literacy for all children and adults.

We take action to empower education to inspire learning at all ages. We share our knowledge and experience with educators and other professionals who work with vulnerable populations.

The Rotary Foundation supports education through scholarships, donations, and service projects around the world.

In line with this vital thrust, the Philippine Rotary Media Foundation, Inc. (PRMFI) is poised to initiate an educational scholarship program, particularly for those interested in pursuing journalism course. As a major regional magazine, our PRM provides strong institutional support for the development of skills that are geared toward improving the level of communication skills. Opening new opportunities for young, budding writers would eventually create a larger pool of young talented leaders.

This scholarship program adds value to the Foundation being a carrier of responsible journalism and by supporting educational scholarship for less privileged students. The Foundation showcases its commitment to social responsibility and community development, aligning with Rotary International's core values. Through this initiative the Foundation will actively contribute to the betterment of society, enhancing its reputation and credibility within the region and among Rotary International affiliates.

With this scholarship program, we can build a stringer base of stakeholders in the Philippine Rotary Magazine, including individuals and organizations interested in supporting philanthropic endeavors.

By bridging the gap between educational opportunities and financial constraints, the scholarship program not only adds value to the Foundation. By amplifying its social impact but also serves as a beacon of hope for disadvantaged students, paving the way for a brighter and more promising future for them and their communities.

EMILIANO D. JOVEN
Chairman, PRMFI



“The proposed scholarship program serves as a beacon of hope for disadvantaged students, paving the way for a brighter and more promising future for them and their communities.”

Philippine Rotary

THE MAGAZINE OF CHOICE

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New clubs rejuvenate Rotary

After witnessing the charter presentation of a new club recently, I became even more convinced that, indeed, the birthing of new clubs is the greatest source of Rotary's dynamism. When an entire cohort of individuals — numbering 20 or more — acts in unison to form a new club and thus join the ranks of more than 45,000 clubs in Rotary International, a new center of community dynamism is formed.

In Rotary, the true strength lies in its clubs, not just its individual members. As we continue to grow and evolve, the importance of chartering new Rotary clubs cannot be overstated. Each new club represents not only a fresh wave of service-driven individuals but also a vital addition to the foundation of Rotary's global mission.

When we charter a new Rotary club, we create opportunities for localized service, where communities can engage more directly with the ideals of Rotary. This allows us to address unique challenges and promote solutions tailored to specific areas, ensuring that Rotary remains relevant and responsive. But more than that, every new club adds to our collective voice, multiplying the impact of our service projects, initiatives, and advocacy.

One of Rotary's greatest strengths is its ability to adapt and expand its reach. This is reflected in the recent expansion of membership types within Rotary. Traditionally, Rotary membership was singular in its form, but today, we have different types of memberships to cater to diverse groups, from corporate memberships to associate memberships and even flexible meeting models. These innovations allow us to engage with new generations of leaders and professionals, making Rotary more inclusive and dynamic.

As we look to the future, chartering new clubs is not just about growth; it's about building a sustainable network of service-minded leaders, ready to take on the challenges of tomorrow. Each new club is a seed, and through nurturing and support, it can grow into a beacon of hope and service for its community.

Let us continue to encourage and support the formation of new clubs, recognizing that in doing so, we are not only expanding Rotary's reach but also fortifying its foundation for future generations.



SONNY COLOMA
Editor-in-chief



“When we charter a new Rotary club, we create opportunities for localized service, where communities can engage more directly with the ideals of Rotary... But more than that, every new club adds to our collective voice, multiplying the impact of our service projects, initiatives, and advocacy.”

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

If it's broken, fix it

Repair cafes do more than bring your busted stuff back to life

I show up to my first Dare to Repair Cafe with a notepad and a shopping tote full of holey sweaters.

The pad I need to take notes on the event — a roving ministry of sorts for broken household items. The sweaters, on the other hand, I bring as mea culpas: I had said I'd take a faulty Bluetooth speaker in the hopes a volunteer could make it play again. But my husband had already tossed the speaker in the trash. We were, in other words, part of the problem.

"You won't do that again," says Don Winkelman, 71, a longtime Dare to Repair volunteer. "We have people come in one time, with a lamp or something, and then we see them again and again."

Dare to Repair exists to reprogram wasteful consumers like my husband and me. Since 2017, the roving monthly cafe has traversed Buffalo, New York, and its environs, helping attendees repair broken electronics, household goods, and small appliances.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Americans throw away nearly 40 million tons of such items each year. Repair cafes — there are now more than 3,000 across the world — offer an economical and environmentally friendly solution: Fix your broken stuff instead.

In Buffalo, repair cafes represent part of a larger regional movement addressing sustainability, communal resource sharing, and mutual aid. The monthly events are organized by the Tool Library, a fast-growing, 13-year-old nonprofit group in the city that lends tools and other equipment to

individuals, small businesses, and community organizations.

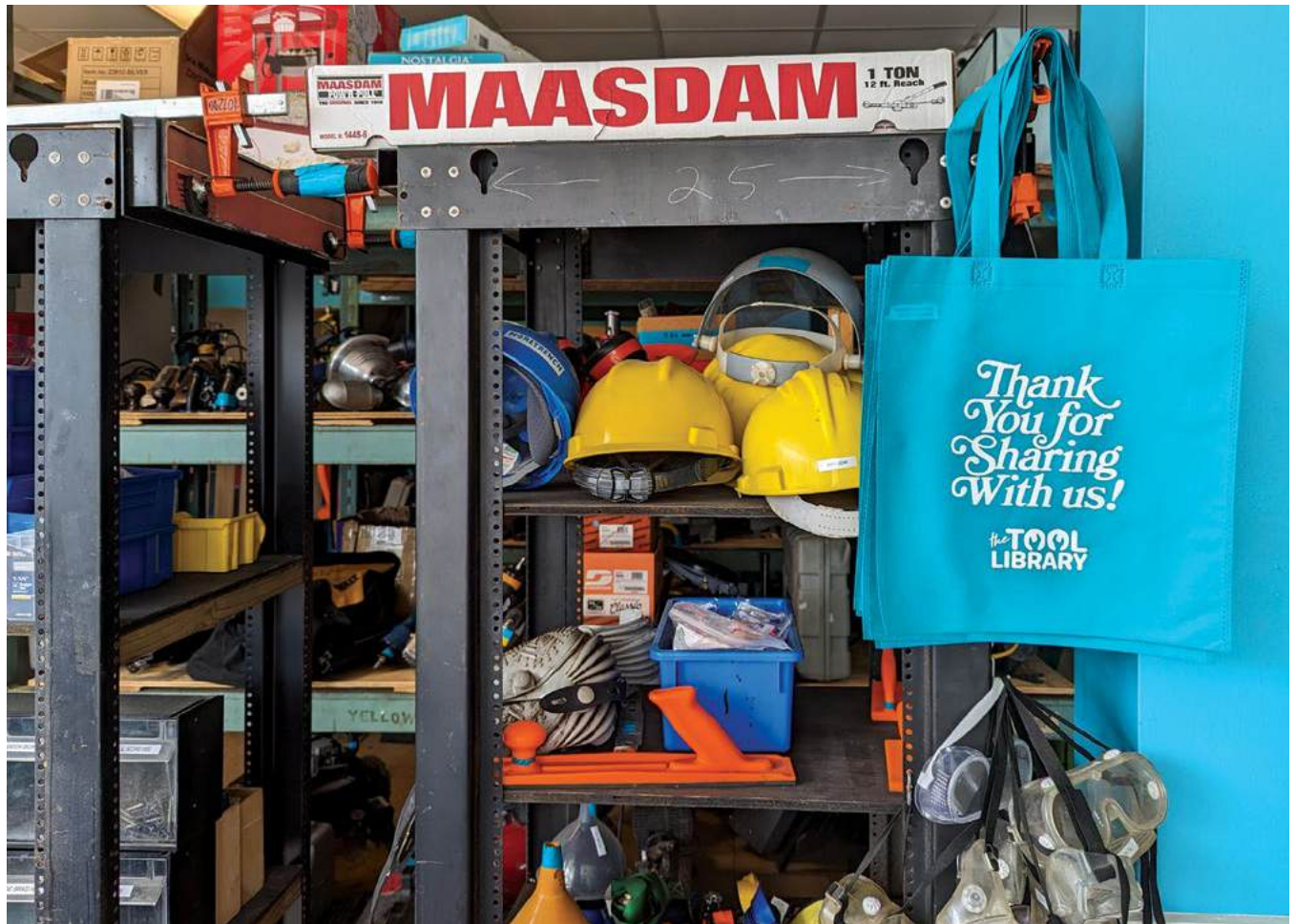
To date, the Tool Library has diverted 7,779 pounds of waste from landfills via its repair cafes and amassed a communal tool collection of nearly 5,000 items. It also serves as a model, a resource, and a centralized hub for a range of other community sharing projects, from Little Free Libraries to public gardens.

"We're part of a broader economic transition away from a system that really hasn't been serving most people, locally or around the world," says Darren Cotton, the Tool Library's founder and executive director. "We're shifting toward models that are more sustainable, more regenerative, and that rely more on people helping one another, as opposed to a market delivering services."

Cotton, 35, first dreamed up plans for the Tool Library while studying urban planning at the State University of New York at Buffalo. The university is an economic and cultural engine for the region, but its decision to open a suburban campus in the 1960s siphoned people and resources away from University Heights, the neighborhood surrounding its original campus.

By the late 2000s, absentee landlords had gobbled up entire blocks of University Heights, leasing their neglected properties to low-income renters and students. Residents wanted to fix up their homes and address wider neighborhood problems, such as street trash and insufficient tree coverage. But they frequently lacked access to basic tools and the knowledge required to use them. "It was a convergence of all

Repair cafes are part of a larger movement addressing sustainability, communal resource sharing, and mutual aid. Find one near you: repaircafe.org/en/visit.



The Tool Library has amassed a collection of almost 5,000 items, from hand tools to a cotton candy maker.

these different problems,” Cotton says. “I realized, ‘Wow, a library is such a great platform for addressing all of them.’”

The Tool Library launched in a tiny storefront in 2011 with roughly 40 tools and \$15,000 in federal community development funding. Cotton and an all-volunteer staff developed a membership model, where residents could pay a low annual fee for unlimited tool rentals, as well as a system for tracking a growing inventory of hand tools, power tools, and lawn and garden equipment.

In 2022, Cotton took on a full-time role and hired Lissa Rhodes, a poet and trained carpenter, as the Tool Library’s first operations manager. One year later, the Tool Library relocated to a larger space on the ground floor of an old neighborhood bank on Buffalo’s Main Street.

Today, the organization boasts nearly 1,500 members and processes more than 14,000 loans a year. Its wide east- and south-facing windows overlook a bright lending room, where tools are shelved in neat blocks of Ryobi green and DeWalt yellow: drills, jigsaws, sanders, lawn mowers and leaf blowers, hydraulic jacks, router tables. An entire wall is hung with coils of extension cords and hoses, while several shelves gather the library’s growing collection of household miscellanea: a sewing machine, a projector screen, a bocce ball set, a cotton candy maker.

“A tool is anything you need to get a job done, whatever that job is,” Rhodes says. “Is the job a presentation? Then your tools are a projector screen and a projector.”

That community-minded, DIY ethos has gradually prodded the

Tool Library into other initiatives, including tree plantings, park clean-ups and, of course, repair cafes. In 2017, a director with Buffalo’s recycling department approached the Tool Library to collaborate on a series of repair events.

Since then, and despite a hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic, the repair cafe has salvaged more than 500 items. Volunteers will happily tinker with lamps, furniture, small appliances, bikes, broken windows, and damaged clothes, though they don’t currently accept computers, tablets, or phones.

For the March iteration, a team set up shop in the basement of a public library in Akron, a village 25 miles northeast of Buffalo by car. The room hummed with quiet chatter and the intermittent vrooms of faulty vacuums. Volunteer fixers pattered around a coffee station



Volunteer Tom Guerra (seated) at the Dare to Repair Cafe in March.

BY THE NUMBERS

37.4

Million tons of household items thrown away in the U.S. in 2018

3,000+

Repair cafes around the world

7,779

Pounds of waste diverted from landfills by the Tool Library in Buffalo, New York

and traded stories between work on lamps, clocks, KitchenAid mixers, and old CD players.

The atmosphere is both studious and social; over time, fixers often become friends. They also teach attendees the skills needed to make their own repairs: “What I love is that you not only get your fixes for free but you get a lesson as well,” says Antoinette McClain, a Tool Library board member who helps organize the events.

Many of those fixes are quite simple, which makes the impulse to junk these items seem all the more wasteful. Both of the broken vacuums at the March cafe simply needed a good cleaning, for instance. Jennifer and Rebecca Outten, who brought the vacuums, say they would have spent \$400 or more to replace each one.

“We love the Buy Nothing

groups,” says Jennifer Outten, referring to a movement, mobilized on Facebook and through an app, that encourages people to reuse household items instead of buying new. “But this, the repair cafe, I had never heard of.”

I left the Akron library with a newfound appreciation for repair: To fix the holes in two cashmere sweaters, Winkelman and another volunteer, Tom Guerra, coached me through the process of ironing on a fabric patch.

Of course, I am but one of the millions of consumers needlessly tossing and replacing my stuff — and the repair movement faces a long, uphill battle against the wider culture of throwaway consumerism. In Buffalo, the Tool Library faces the sorts of financial constraints common to many small community nonprofits. The organization will soon

have the option, for instance, to buy the building it moved into last year, but the cost to acquire and renovate the structure tops \$1 million.

The Tool Library launched a capital campaign this spring to raise the money and was pursuing a major regional foundation grant. With that funding, Cotton says, the Tool Library could build out new community space, seed mini-libraries across the region, and further champion communal resource sharing as a model for social and environmental innovation. “It’s one thing to be cool and novel and niche,” Cotton says. “But the question for us is: How do we make sharing and repairing ubiquitous?”

— CAITLIN DEWEY

This story was originally published in Reasons to be Cheerful, a non-profit solutions journalism outlet.

Short takes

Rotary member Martine Trunkenwald-Helle carried the Olympic torch through her town of Sarreguemines, France, in June.



A new immersive 360-degree video highlights polio vaccinators in Benin whose work is supported by Rotary and UNICEF. Watch at endpol.io/benin.



PROFILE

A community of readers

An educator expands literacy to help towns sustain themselves

Sophie Bamwoyeraki
Rotary Club
of Kasangati,
Uganda

When teacher Sophie Bamwoyeraki became president of the Rotary Club of Kasangati, Uganda, in 2016, her students quizzed her about what special thing she would do to help the community. Her answer came easily. Her club had helped create classrooms in the village of Makukuba after a child died making the 6-kilometer trek (nearly 4 miles) to the nearest school during heavy rain. She decided to scale up the effort. “From that time, every president who came would construct another classroom block,” she says. “If you go to Makukuba today, it’s a different place altogether.”

Literacy has long been one of Bamwoyeraki’s passions. She grew up in a family of 12 and was always reading to the children in her neighborhood. She’s since earned her master’s in education and become a school principal in Kampala, the capital. She represents the Basic Education and Literacy Rotary Action Group as its technical officer with The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers, and she’s a Major Donor to the Foundation.

She says literacy can preserve a community’s history and decide its future. Her parents don’t know when they were born because their parents didn’t know how to read or write. High literacy rates in adults lead to higher literacy rates in children. “If everyone can read and write, they can encourage the coming generation to read and write,” she says. “It can affect their ability to grow their community.”

That’s why she starts an Interact club wherever she works. “I like exposing these children to the reality in our communities,” she says. “They’re going to learn something new and they’re going to be hands on.”

— JP SWENSON

The annual Rotary-Peace Corps Week, a series of online events hosted by Partnering for Peace, will take place 16-20 September. Register at partneringforpeace.org.



Nominations for the Rotary Alumni Global Service Award, given to a Rotary program alumnus, are due 15 September. Learn more at rotary.org/awards.

The deadline to submit breakout session proposals for the 2025 Rotary Convention is 14 October. Learn more at on.rotary.org/breakout-sessions.

People of action around the globe

By Brad Webber



Canada

About 200 college students, faculty, and community members took turns swinging baseball bats at junkyard vehicles during a Car Smash for Charity event organized by the Rotaract Club of Vancouver-University of British Columbia. The fundraiser, held each of the past three years before final exams, “offers people a fun way to relieve stress or test their own strength, while supporting a wonderful cause,” says Sara Lee, a past co-president of the club. The event, held on the campus quad in April, raised more than \$2,200 Canadian for education-related endeavors. A scrap car company delivered a Volkswagen and a Chevrolet and collected the remnants afterward for recycling. “Our team is continually amazed at the response the event receives,” Lee says.



United States

The Rotary Club of Patchogue in New York has raised more than \$138,000 over the past dozen years by feting civic and business leaders in rollicking style. The most recent soiree, held in March to roughly coincide with St. Patrick’s Day, attracted nearly 250 guests. Attendees paid \$125 each for food and drinks and to listen to friends and relatives roast local celebrities. “There were some slightly embarrassing stories of their childhood and baby pictures,” says Paul Moran, a club member and organizer. A band featuring Moran and other Rotarians performed cover tunes to help lead the merriment. More than \$17,000 was donated to the Patchogue Community Service Foundation, principally for youth services, including Camp Pa-Qua-Tuck, a residential program for people with disabilities that is operated by Rotary District 7255.



26 million+

Registered motor vehicles in Canada in 2022

11%

Share of New York state residents of Irish descent

England

Christopher Hill was diagnosed with a heart condition at age 38. A past president of the Rotary Club of Bolton Lever in Greater Manchester, he has since become an advocate for automated external defibrillators. In 2022, Hill's club joined five other Bolton-area Rotary clubs to purchase a nearly \$1,900 defibrillator for the Bolton Steam Museum. "When you are out there in the countryside, you can be miles and even hours from one," but when needed, Hill says, "it is needed in minutes." Hill takes to area trails as leader of a walking group, prompting the Bolton Lever club to acquire a portable, single-use defibrillator that Hill carries on the treks. All 33 club members have attended training sessions and refresher courses on how to operate the machines.



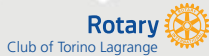
425

Britons who die each day of cardiovascular disease



Italy

Brushes and rollers in hand, members of the Rotary Club of Torino Lagrange converged on a youth center to supply a fresh coat of paint. The club members spent a weekend in April and about \$1,500 sprucing up the facility, which offers counseling services and a gathering place for people ages 14 to 28. "The aim is to help young people overcome difficult moments and face changes in a welcoming, confidential, and judgement-free environment," says club member Raffaele Battaglini. The club partnered with students at an arts high school who made paintings for the center.



27%

Portion of Italians ages 15 to 29 at risk of poverty or social exclusion

India

The Rotary Club of Bombay Seacoast staged a concert and high tea reception in May for about 150 veterans injured on duty and their families. Club members tapped their connections with local celebrities, among them the emcee, Neeta Mirchandani, the wife of club member and singer Vijay Mirchandani. "The jawans (soldiers) participated with full joy and excitement as several kept dancing and clapping to the music, with the families of many joining in toward the end," says Sampath Iyengar, a past club president. "Some of the jawans seated on chairs or in wheelchairs participated as a mark of solidarity, their chairs lifted by their fellow jawans who still had strength in their arms, love in their hearts, and deep empathy for their fellow ex-soldiers without limbs."

2004

Year India established the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare



GOODWILL

It takes more than tech

Five tips for effective education technology programs

By Regina Fuller-White

Can technology help solve the most important challenges in education? It's a question on the minds of many. Unfortunately, the answer is not a simple one. Technology has the potential to improve educational outcomes, many stakeholders believe, but so far there is limited research-based evidence on its impact on student learning and teaching.

During my time as Rotary's area of focus manager for basic education and literacy, I have often encountered this same question as I support members and clubs with their education technology projects. How can club-led service projects effectively use technology to improve learning in primary and secondary education? There is no single answer because students and teachers have diverse needs, country contexts are different, and there are many digital technology tools.

When designing a digital technology in education project, keep these five tips in mind:

1 Focus on learning outcomes instead of equipment inputs

The World Bank estimates that 70 percent of children from low- and middle-income countries were unable to read and understand a simple story in 2022. Around the world, children lost months to years of learning due to COVID-19 school closures, and some still struggle with basic literacy and numeracy skills. When designing your project, focus on how your technology tools can improve learning outcomes in areas such as reading comprehension, writing, mathematics, or science. Providing digital tools on their own will not improve students'

learning or their teachers' ability to teach effectively. Think about the educational goal the community has prioritized and how technology can support that goal.

2 Integrate teacher professional development

Teachers are the backbone of the education system and are integral to student learning. Digital technology tools should not diminish teachers' role but should enhance their classroom instruction. Remember to talk with teachers during your community assessment, before designing a project, to learn about their professional development needs and how they imagine technology enhancing their classroom lessons. Learn from teachers about their digital skills and professional development experiences throughout the past school year. Well-designed teacher training improves their capacity to use digital tools effectively to improve student learning outcomes.

3 Consider gender equality and social inclusion in program design

Girls, marginalized students, and students with disabilities still struggle to access schooling and learning around the world. Digital technology tools in education can increase their participation rates and learning. When designing your educational project, consider how excluded students will have access to the tools and include software programs that provide personalized, targeted instruction for students with diverse learning needs.

4 Understand the education policy environment

Public schools across the world

are often part of regional, district, and national education systems overseen by a ministry of education. Often, policies from the ministry of education or regional ministry manage technology use in the classroom. Before beginning your project, research these policies and the systems in place that guide educational technology in the schools and communities you want to support. Your project can have a stronger effect for students if it complements or works with existing infrastructure.

5 Include youth voices when designing a program

Young people are the fastest growing population on Earth and bring a variety of perspectives and opinions on project design. Championing youth participation in project design ensures that your initiative reflects the needs of students in the communities you work with. Be sure to talk to students during the community assessment, project planning, and implementation stages to undertake projects that prioritize their educational needs and address their challenges.

By committing to these goals, Rotary members can pave the way for equitable and meaningful education technology initiatives.

September is Rotary's Basic Education and Literacy Month. Join the daily webinar series led by the Basic Education and Literacy Rotary Action Group to learn more about education projects across Rotary. Visit belrag.org.

Regina Fuller-White, Rotary's area of focus manager for basic education and literacy, holds a doctorate in comparative international education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar to the University of Ghana-Legon in 2011. This story originally appeared on the Rotary Service in Action blog, rotaryserviceblog.org.

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ESSAY

The first patient

A psychiatrist visits home and discovers the meaning of recovery

By Geetha Jayaram



Eashwaramma had not left her home in two years. She missed her daughter's wedding and couldn't help her husband with his agricultural work. People said prayers for her, consulted a priest, and visited the temple. When I met her 25 years ago, she told me the devil was sitting on her chest.

A psychiatrist, I was visiting the villages near where I grew up in southern India through a Rotary mental health project I initiated. Eashwaramma was my first patient. She was in the midst of a severe depressive episode. Our care team gave her medications and explained the diagnosis to her and her family.

I have treated both princes and paupers. Their sense of shame about mental illness is identical. The wife of a Saudi prince was successfully treated for bipolar illness at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, where I work as a professor. Her family had kept her hidden at home, not reaching out for care until she was brought to the U.S. Like Eashwaramma, she had suffered unnecessarily for years.

Across the world, mental health disorders often go unaddressed and are a major cause of disability. My home country, India, has fewer than one psychiatrist for every 100,000 people, and psychiatric care is not available in rural areas. This fact haunted me when I interviewed for my residency at Johns Hopkins. The department chair asked me what would happen if more doctors like me left the country. That bothered me a great deal and stuck in the back of my mind.

When I became chief resident in my department, I chose to train further in community psychiatry, which focuses on people with severe mental illness and those whose situations are made worse by poverty, illiteracy, lack of transportation, limited access to medical treatment, and other circumstances.

During my first 18 years, I treated people experiencing poverty in Baltimore. I remember Shameka, who witnessed the shooting of a neighbor's 5-year-old child. Another time, her house was broken into and she was attacked. She suffered from post-traumatic stress, but with medication and therapy, Shameka is doing well, serving as a spokesperson for the National Alliance on Mental Illness. She is proud of her job and is teaching others how to care for themselves.

But I never forgot my roots. I launched Project Maanasi to provide community mental health care in India's Karnataka state. It has become a joint initiative of the Rotary Club of Bangalore Midtown and my undergraduate alma mater there, St. John's Medical College. Maanasi means "of sound mind." Villagers of Mugalur, where I met Eashwaramma, chose the name. With support from a Rotary Foundation grant, we opened the project's first clinic in the village in 2002.

In establishing an integrated care model, we focused first on women. They have depression and anxiety at about twofold the rate of men globally. When we treat women, we essentially take care of the entire family, as women are primary caregivers and drivers of health care.

With help from St. John's medical students, residents, and nurses, we started with a door-to-door survey of 17,000 households to assess their mental health needs. We integrated psychiatric care into an existing primary care clinic. That way people receive care where they already go for routine health needs, eliminating obstacles to treatment and reducing stigma.

Today we treat people from 212 villages and several million households. Medications are offered at low or no cost. Female caseworkers with a high school education who live in the villages and speak the local languages perform outreach. Community health workers share information in village cooperatives, at village festivals, and elsewhere. Supervising physicians accompany caseworkers to see patients in their homes or evaluate them at the clinic.

One of those patients was Radha, a Mugalur resident, who was married in her teens to a stranger. After her first child, her husband disappeared with their infant while she was going through severe postpartum depression. With outreach by the village caseworkers and clinical care, Radha recovered. Educated by our clinic workers, her neighbors serve as Radha's support network. They have saved her life on more than one occasion.

Clinic doctors also screen village residents for hearing and vision loss. Other projects have included blanket distribution and the donation of an electrocardiogram machine, computers, cabinets, and so on. With the help of my husband, Jay Kumar, an engineer and a past district governor, we got four scooters for caseworkers. We

have started a tailoring school run by a patient, who has helped other women in the village become seamstresses. Rotarians donated the sewing machines.

We've introduced advanced technology, working with community medicine specialists to develop a cloud-based database for patient records and training caseworkers to enter data in the field on tablets. They've gathered data on more than 2,500 patients that can be analyzed for research and teaching.

Today, Project Maanasi has produced a model that we've been able to replicate, including in Kenya, where we established an integrated care clinic that the Ministry of Health has taken over, serving a population of half a million people. In Guatemala, we are setting up a similar care center for girls who endured child marriages, domestic violence, rape, and illiteracy.

In Lithuania, Jay and I worked with Rotary members to address an alarmingly high rate of youth suicide. With help from a Rotary Foundation global grant, and with the partnership of Past District Governor Vygintas Grinis and Vilnius University, we provided crisis hotlines and a workable system for treatment. This effort contributed to a significant decrease in suicide rates in 14 districts and helped save thousands of lives in just two years.

As part of this effort to improve mental health everywhere, I co-founded the Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives, which is now represented in about 50 countries across the globe.

Perhaps my proudest moment was when I met Eashwaramma again last year, more than two decades after she connected with Project Maanasi. I was happy to see that she is staying with her son in a spacious two-story house, no longer depressed. She has been weaned off medications for years. She welcomed us into their home with a smile and offered us tea. She was full of life. ■

A professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Dr. Geetha Jayaram is a member of the Rotary Club of Howard West in Ellicott City, Maryland, and co-founder of the Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives.

To learn more and get involved, visit ragonmentalhealth.org.

Physicians For Peace-PH and Rotary walk the talk together

by **Menchu Aquino Sarmiento**

Rotary is over a century old and Physicians for Peace Philippines (PFP-PH) just turned 25, but this has not kept them from being partners, almost from the start of the latter’s existence. It is a May-December romance made in heaven. As the Rotary International website declares: “Rotary is a global network of 1.4 million neighbors, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers who see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change – across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.” Such a vision is aligned with PFP-PH President Josephine Robredo-Bundoc’s dynamic and upbeat cheer of “Getting together, so more gets done,” as it works with valuable partners like Rotary in its quest to strengthen health systems and to address the systemic inequity in health service delivery.

A fateful Rotary Club meeting of RC Intramuros in 2004, was where entrepreneur and PFP-PH trustee Robert Lane introduced PFP-PH founder, Dr. Juan C. Montero, to then RC District Governor Nominee of District 3810, Lyne Abanilla. Since then, she has run

PFP-PH’s day to day operations, and raised it, you might say, from a kindergarten to a robust post-graduate of 26 years old. The Philippines used to be just another site for the PFP-USA missions spearheaded by the plastic surgeon Charles Horton, PFP USA Founder, also a Rotarian from RC Norfolk Virginia. Dr. Montero, a general and thoracic surgeon, born and raised in Bayabas, Surigao del Sur, was the only Filipino on the board of Physicians For Peace-USA.

In 1998, Dr. Montero decided the Philippines, with its wealth of home-grown medical professional talent, deserved to be a country affiliate of PFP-USA. Former PFP-PH Chairman and now DOH Secretary Ted Herbosa, also a Rotarian from RC Makati Central, was a pioneering volunteer of those early PFP-USA multi-specialty missions to far-flung areas of the Philippines in the late 1990s. The PFP-USA multi-specialty missions provided valuable learning opportunities for local healthcare workers in various fields, while foreign volunteers also learned from Filipino health care workers’ ingenuity in the face of very limited resources.

The original PFP-USA was dedicated to building peace and friendships in

developing nations with unmet medical needs and scarce resources through medical education and training, clinical care and the donation of medical supplies. Its motto: “Teach one, heal many...” has been ably carried out in the last decade by PFP-PH’s Dr. Dorothy Dy Ching Bing-Agsaoay, a doctor of rehab medicine,

through the only burn care specialty conferences in the Philippines. More children die from burn injuries caused by fires than of tuberculosis or malaria each year. So far over a thousand doctors, nurses, physical and occupational therapists have attended Dr. Agsaoay’s Burn Conferences to advance the skill set of burn care professionals so that they can provide sustainable care to burn survivors, and learn the best methods of managing burn injuries and rehabilitation in a restrictive, under-resourced Philippine setting. Dr. Agsaoay advocates for a wholistic and long term approach to burn care which seeks to fully integrate the burn patient as a productive member of his community. Her work has led to the establishment of the first, and so far, the only Sub-Acute Burn Rehabilitation Unit in the Philippines, at the PGH.



The user-friendly PFP-PH's Women's Health Screening Program led by former DOH Secretary Paulyn Jean B. Rosel-Ubial was launched last Oct. 11, 2019 on the International Day of the Girl Child under the auspices of RC Naga, fittingly presided over by RC Naga Club President, Maryselle Olivan. Almost a hundred Nagueñas of child-bearing age learned how to conduct their own breast exams to detect possibly cancerous tumors. The Philippine Cancer Society has found that the rate of breast cancer in the Philippines has been steadily rising for the last 40 years. Overall, the Philippines has among the highest rates of breast cancer in Asia with 33,079 in 2022 (WHO Report). After breast cancer, cervical cancer is the second most prevalent among Filipinas, between the ages of 21 and 50. 70 Barangay Health Workers and Midwives in Naga were trained to conduct visual inspection of the uterine cervix with acetic acid and since then we have trained more in different areas of the country. This simple and inexpensive test, with the results available in one minute, can detect precancerous lesions and early invasive cancer, resulting in early treatment and preventing unnecessary deaths.

Dr. Ubial stresses: "The PFP-PH Women's Health Screening program offer access to vital services, and also empowers women to take charge of their health. By prioritizing prevention, we aim to reduce the burden of cancer in the Philippines and improve the lives of countless women." This program is not for women only as the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), the main cause of cervical cancer, is primarily transmitted through male sexual partners. The PFP-PH Women's Health Screening Program has since partnered with Local Government Units (LGUs) Rotary Clubs and other Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in medical outreach missions.

These joint PFP-PH and Rotary outreach healthcare missions with Rotary Districts and Clubs have also showcased the **Seeing Clearly and Hearing Healthcare** Programs. There is as yet no comprehensive data on disability for 115M Filipinos. Some estimates place this at: 7.5% in children <18 years; 14.7% in adults between 18 and 65 years; and 49.1% in adults >65 years. During the



local Rotary outreach missions with PFP-PH, PFP-PH Trustee Dr. Norberto Martinez, an ENT with UST and the Better Hearing Philippines Foundation synergistically worked towards developing the path forward to Primary and Better Hearing among Filipinos by taking concrete steps in the areas of early intervention and identification, policy and advocacy. Several dozen analog hearing aids, mostly for indigent elderly adults, are also distributed during these missions. Similarly, the Rotary Club of Manila of D3810 partnered with PFP-PH to bring free professional optical services to children and adults in nearly 20 schools in Manila-NCR and Southern Luzon, the latest being RC of Lipa South-Dist. 3820. Currently, there are no locally manufactured hearing aids, nor low vision, standards compliant, non-electronic optical aids. Similarly, the Rotary Club of Makati West of D3830 is also a partner of PFP-PH in our mobility programs.

Bringing these services directly into communities, where the missions are often held in Rotary Club Halls is a real service since the crippled Philippine public transport system has made most Filipinos mobility-impaired, so to speak. For hearing impairments, there are 76 diagnostic testing facilities conducting

Otoacoustic Emissions and Auditory Brainstem Response tests—but all except two, are privately owned. Further, 62 are located in Luzon with 41 in the NCR alone, while 8 are in the Visayas, and one in Mindanao. For vision, there are 15 diagnostic centers in the country for visual acuity, visual field, contrast sensitivity, color vision along with retinoscopy and refraction. Fourteen of these are relocated in Luzon, with 13 in the NCR. Only one is in the Visayas and none in Mindanao. Moreover, all but one are privately owned. The need for community-based missions, particularly for disabilities, is undeniable.

PFP-PH's flagship Walking Free Program provides adaptive mobility aids, prescribed wheelchairs which are patient-appropriate, orthotics or braces and even prostheses or artificial limbs to above and below knee amputees. Last July 2024, RC Lipa South-Dist. 3820 once again showed how

eminently suited it is to host a PFP-PH mission. Their RC Hall has its own community-based rehabilitation center (CBR) run by Rotarian and Physical Therapist Abie Berces. Most of her patients are seniors recovering from stroke, disc protrusion or bulge. The RC Lipa South CBR is equipped with a treadmill, parallel bars, recumbent bike,



stairs, portable ultrasound and TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) and is open to serve indigent Lipaños for free thrice a week. Other health services offered are free ECGs on Saturday's, and a twice-a-month diabetes clinic with free FBS (Fasting Blood Sugar) labwork. As of 2021, 4.3 million Filipinos were diagnosed with diabetes, but another estimated 2.8 million remained undiagnosed and untreated. Diabetic retinopathy is a top cause of preventable blindness while diabetic nephropathy contributes to 38% of renal disease cases in the Philippines. These impactful and relevant programs may also be due to Dr. Pete Tenorio, a diabetologist and a Past District Governor of D3820. As with visual and hearing impairment, there is a similar dearth of facilities with prosthesis and orthosis assessment, prescription, fitting of endoskeletal or exoskeletal prostheses, and follow-up services throughout the Philippines. Six out of the 10 such facilities are in the NCR, with one in the Visayas, and 2 in Mindanao (Zamboanga and Davao).

The latest recently opened in Naga, which, full disclosure is the hometown of PFP-PH President Josephine Robredo Bundoc. This is a joint venture among Rotary Governor of D3820 Everette Olivan and Lady Maryselle Olivan, Past President of RC Naga Tommy Enrile and Dennis Caramoan, Mike Co and RC Naga District 3820, the De La Salle University Alumni Association (their rehab doctor is an alumna) and PFP-PH. The Bicol Mobility Center is but the latest proof of Doc Josephine mantra that when good people get together, much gets done. That's what real unity is all about.

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- Deploys team to conduct Vision Care Missions in regions with limited access and resources.
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- You can sponsor the program for Php 50,000.00 (at least 75 to 100 beneficiaries)**



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- Conducts hearing health care services through the services of an Audiologist and Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Specialist.
 - Sends volunteer Audiologists and Physicians during PFP Healthcare missions to check on the ears and hearing conditions of patients.
 - Provides required hearing devices, when available, to patients or connect them to institutions who can provide further services for the patients.
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Sponsor A Surgical Mission

- Minor and Major surgeries for indigent patients in regions with limited access and resources. At least 30 minor surgeries.
 - Medical lectures/training for the healthcare workers of the community.
- You can sponsor the program for Php 300,000.00**



Sponsor A Women Healthcare Mission

- Lecture on Women Healthcare.
 - Screening for Breast and Cervical Cancer.
- You can sponsor the program for Php 15,000.00 (at least 50 women ages 21 to 49)**



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RIPE Mario de Camargo visits Manila

For five days in August 2024, RI President Mario Cesar Martins de Camargo immersed himself among Philippine Rotarians. He keynoted a multi-district membership development seminar, met with The Rotary Foundation benefactors and donors, and mingled with the youth. He also met with senior Rotary leaders and expressed his determination to institute meaningful reforms in Rotary governance and decision-making.

↓
Clockwise from lower left: RIPE de Camargo at the Rizal monument, Luneta; Pilipinas Rotaract Summit Aug 20, 2024 at a meet and Greet with Rotaractor specially prepared by the sister tandem Anna Ladoing and D3820 DRR Grace Ladoing; At the Multi-District Membership Seminar coordinated by DGsE Gina Sanchez, Veronica Yu and Reggie Nolido.





← Top row: At the TRF Meet & Greet luncheon held at the Manila Hotel Champagne Room.



← Second row: RI President Elect Mario was welcomed at the VIP Airport Lounge by the FF from left to right PDG Johnny Yu, PDG Paco Atayde, PDG Gina Sy, PRID Guiller Tumangan, RIPE Mario de Camargo, PRID Raffy Garcia and PDG Ernie Choa; Together with his three aides (L-R) RRFC Penny Policarpio, RPIC Ernie Choa and past ARC and ARPIC Oliver Ong.



← Third row: At Intra-muros museum; RIPE Mario's security team headed by PDG Johnny Yu (third from right).



← Bottom row: RIPE Mario administers oral polio vaccine to a child at the Makati Rotary Center with End Polio Now Coordinator Marilou Co; RIPE Mario at Tuloy sa Don Bosco where he met with the kids at the orphanage.

→ Top row: Special handshake to President-elect Marie Gerdtnan of RC Lipa West to show his gratitude and empower all Club President for preparation on 25-26; At a Rotaract event.



→ Second row, far right: At the Membership Forum



↓ Bottom row: RIPE de Camargo is welcomed by DGEs (L-R) Dan Torres (D3790), Marlowe Selecios (D3870), Gina Sanchez (D3800) Veronica Yu (D3780 and Reggie Nolido (D3830); Welcome tarp at EDSA viewed from Guadalupe Bridge northbound; tarp courtesy of DGE Veronica Yu.





← Top photo: At the PCRG Board induction, August 18, 2024, RI President Elect Mario inducted the PCRG Board of Directors 2024-25 (L-R) Bobby Tanyag, Edwin To, Jon Alonzo, Ed Ayento, Chair Leody “Odie” Tarruela and spouse, Ador Tolentino, Gina Sy, Lili Alino, hidden are Gigi Go and Willie Serafica



← Middle photo: Presentation of token to RIPE Mario. (L-R) Vice Chair Vizmin Edwin Tp, Treasurer Willie Serafica, Assistant Secretary Lili Alino, Chair Odie Tarruela, RIPR Mario, Secretary Gina Sy, Vice Chair NCR Ed Ayento, PRO Gigi Go, and Executive Vice Chair Ador Tolentino.



← Bottom photo: Hand-chain of success: with his Governors (left to right) Pip Acepcion (D3850), Marlowe Selecios (D3870) Alex Santos D3770, Gina Sanchez D3800, RIPE Mario, Veronica Yu D3780, spouse, Dan Torres D3790, Jong Fernandez D3860, Reggie Nolido D3830.

MEMBERSHIP SUMMIT

Vibrant Rotary, not revolving door

Attracting the right members must be our responsibility.

By Mate Espina

Rotary International President Elect (RIPE) Mario Cesar Martins de Camargo could not have emphasized it more. He challenged district leaders, particularly the 10 governors-elect in the Philippines to put an end to the “revolving door syndrome” and make membership growth as their priority.

RIPE De Camargo graced the Membership Summit for Zone 10A at the Bellevue Hotel in Alabang during his recent visit in the Philippines.

De Camargo said Rotary’s membership has “stagnated” at 1.2 million in the past two decades worldwide but lauded Philippine Rotary as among the countries that has seen some growth in the past few years.

Rather than focus on what value can the club give to new members, find out first what these members value most and only then can you provide them the value to meet their expectations.

“Worldwide, we keep losing members and it is only in Asia, which includes the Philippines, that we are seeing a positive growth,” De Camargo said.

This was echoed by Regional Rotary Coordinator, Past District Governor Anna Louise Bumagat who reported that as of July 1, there has been a drop of 1.7 percent in membership worldwide, equivalent to a little over 19,000 Rotarians who left the organization.

Bumagat said it is worse in Rotaract that saw a drop of almost 49,000 members and losing more than 2,400 clubs worldwide in the past year.

However, Bumagat said that there is hope because while Zone 10A has not grown by leaps, we had a positive membership gain last year by ending the Rotary year with almost 300 new members.

For Rotaract, it is only District 3860 that increased their membership with 210 members while the rest of Zone 10A had a significant drop of almost 50 percent, down to 6,628 Rotaractors from 11,166 members in 543 remaining Rotaract clubs from the previous 734 clubs.

Assistant Regional Rotary Coordinator, Immediate Past District Governor Maria Ester Espina said we are stuck in the revolving door syndrome because most clubs, if not all, work to bring in new members at the start of each Rotary year in their desire to meet the challenge or targets set by the new district leadership but “forget to nurture” these members, making most of them leave within the first two years.

Espina presented the results of exit surveys from Rotary International and the recurring reasons for membership loss in the first three years of entry are lack of belongingness, experience-not-meeting-expectations, and cost.

While cost is understandable, “these Rotarians knew what they were getting into, including the question of dues. However, if they are getting the value from their membership experience, cost will not even be a factor for most,” Espina said.

Attracting members is easy but attracting the right members must be our responsibility, she said, adding that “we should not stop in recruitment, but more imperative is to engage and nurture those we bring in so they feel they have a place in Rotary.”

Focusing on the member’s needs and aspirations is the foundation of membership engagement. Rather than focus on what value can the club give to new members, find out first what these members value most and only then can you provide them the value to meet their expectations.

Bumagat on the other hand said, “as we navigate the challenges of membership, it is vital that we collectively work on Rotary’s top internal priority by attracting diverse members, maximizing engagement, and emphasizing retention, thus ensuring our continued growth towards a vibrant Zone 10A.”

The author, who is Assistant Rotary Coordinator for Zone 10A, is Past District Governor of District 3850.





TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

A legacy for future generations

“The great use of a life,” wrote American philosopher William James in 1900, “is to spend it for something that outlasts it.”

Some leave a legacy through family and friendships, others through faith or principles, and still others through their professions. The Rotary Foundation offers another powerful option.

As a believer in the power of passing down a legacy through The Rotary Foundation Endowment, I was humbled that my wife, Gay, and I were able recently to help others in Rotary leave their legacy.

Our district (6860 in northern Alabama) had never organized a fundraising dinner focused on the Foundation’s Endowment before, but we knew it was time. We called it a legacy dinner, emphasizing giving’s long-term impact.

Progress was slow at first, and there were skeptics who doubted we could raise \$1 million, our initial goal. However, we remained optimistic, setting a date for 23 February 2024, Rotary’s anniversary.

During this campaign, committee members traveled throughout northern Alabama, meeting with small groups in fireside chats about contributing to the Endowment. Then, significant gifts began coming in. One Rotarian made a \$25,000 commitment, handing over

a check for \$10,000. Soon, other members followed suit, and we had more than \$200,000 in gifts and commitments.

We still had far to go but if there is one thing I know about Rotary, it is this: If you present the opportunity to members, they will respond. Topping off the district’s generosity were two surprises. One was a bequest commitment of \$500,000, and then another of \$560,000.

By the end of the campaign, our committee had exceeded our greatest expectations: We had raised \$2,729,863.14 for the Endowment, nearly triple our goal. The impact of those gifts will create a legacy that will keep on giving forever.

No single club or district alone will achieve our goal of fortifying The Rotary Foundation Endowment to \$2.025 billion by 2025. Not all of us can give \$25,000 now or as part of an estate plan. But I also know many of us can.

Please help us reach that Endowment goal and in doing so leave behind a legacy and further the work of future generations of Rotary members by visiting rotary.org/legacy. On behalf of the Foundation Trustees, I am grateful for your Rotary legacy.

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.

THE SEARCH FOR **THE MOST OUTSTANDING ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS** 2024-2025

Philippine
Rotary
Media Foundation



Objectives

Rotary International has adopted as its Area of Focus: **Protecting the Environment**. Clubs and districts are now encouraged to apply for global grants to support environment focused activities.

The Rotary Foundation supports activities that strengthen the conservation and protection of natural resources, advance environmental sustainability, and foster harmony between people and the environment. It encourages interventions that have a positive, measurable, and sustainable impact.

Project pathways are envisioned to fulfill the following objectives:

- 1. Conserve nature and biodiversity**, from species to landscape-scale protection.
- 2. Mitigate climate change** by reducing or avoiding greenhouse gas emissions or ensuring that they are absorbed or stored in natural carbon sinks.
- 3. Facilitate sustainable and adaptable livelihood** with smaller ecological footprints that maintain people's social well-being in harmony with flourishing natural systems.
- 4. Strengthen environmental equity** by addressing socio-environmental issues that disproportionately affect marginalized communities.

Search

Rotary Clubs in each of the ten (10) Rotary districts in the Philippines are invited to present and nominate projects and programs that create and foster a sustainable environment through the foregoing pathways. These projects must involve partnership with communities, including public and private institutions, or local government units (LGUs), or national government agencies.

Such projects must be in consonance with Rotary's mission, goals, core values and principles. The projects must have been actively implemented for at least one year prior to the conferment of awards.

Criteria: I-M-P-A-C-T

Innovative (15%) The project should be characterized by an out-of-the-box approach both in terms of understanding the problem and in providing solutions.

Multiplicative (15%) The project should be replicable in other communities, while ensuring that the local context is sufficiently adapted in the project design.

Problem-Solution Fit (15%) Solutions should emanate from clearly-identified social-ecological needs. These should be demonstrably responsive to the problems identified and assessed needs.

Able To Be Sustained (20%) Interventions have a long-term view both in terms of continuity and impact.

Co-Production (15%) The project should be co-designed with the community that is engaged in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating it.

Transformative (20%) Verifiable and positive changes in social behavior and in the environment should be demonstrated. Project objectives are met satisfactorily. Safeguards are in place to deal with unintended consequences that could threaten project viability

Selection & Awards

Each District shall select the Most Outstanding Project from among those submitted by the Clubs. The Most Outstanding Project shall receive a cash prize of Fifty Thousand Pesos (₱50,000) and a Certificate of Recognition.

PRMFI shall form and constitute a Board of Judges that shall select the Top Three Most Outstanding Projects.

Cash prizes and appropriate tokens of recognition will be given as follows: Gold Prize, ₱300,000; Silver Prize, ₱200,000; Bronze Prize, ₱150,000.





GOING **TO** MOH'KINSTSIS

By Geoffrey Johnson

**Photography by
Monika Lozinska**



**For centuries, people have gathered
in Calgary at the confluence of the Bow
and Elbow Rivers. Now, with its June 2025
convention, it's Rotary's turn.**

I arrive expecting to see mountains.

What I get is sky, lots and lots of sky with muscular white clouds coursing across that vast blue expanse like a herd of wild horses galloping over the open range, unbridled and unbroken.

OK, maybe that's a bit much. Or not. Because when I get off the plane in Calgary, the first thing that greets me at the airport, after a mural of red maple leaves emblazoned *Bienvenue au Canada*, is a swirling maelstrom of bronze horses in full stride that their sculptor, Calgary native Robert Spaih, has said evokes the "strength, spirit, and maturity" of Calgary. So clouds as stampeding stallions it is.

These thoughts occur to me as I travel by taxi toward downtown Calgary. Three centuries ago, this was a traditional gathering site of the Siksika, Kainai, and Piikani nations, known collectively as the Siksikaitisitapi or Blackfoot Confederacy. They called this place Moh'kinstsis, which means "elbow" and references the big bend where today's Bow River abruptly changes course from east to south shortly after its confluence with the Elbow River. "In the old Blackfoot sign language, patting your elbow indicated you were going to Moh'kinstsis," explains the Piikani scholar and storyteller Eldon Yellowhorn. Even today, "the same sign means a trip to Calgary."

Following that ancient impulse to gather by the water, other First Nations people, among them the Tsuut'ina and the Nakoda, congregated at the junction of the two rivers, and when European settlers made their way into southwestern Alberta, they too made this place home. A great city arose, and today, with a population of 1.6 million people, Calgary is Canada's fourth-largest metro area, though one that retains a palpable sense of its place and its past.

And now here am I in late October 2023, come to get a close look at the city that will host the Rotary International Convention in June 2025. It's not Rotary's first rodeo (for once the tired cliché is apt): In 1996, 25,000 Rotarians from 126 countries and geographical areas traveled to Calgary for the 87th annual convention with its theme of *Rotary Family Roundup*. Pay attention to that second word, because when you come to Calgary for the 2025 convention, you will

want to bring your family (kids included), as well as your friends and any strangers you meet along the way. Because if you haven't experienced Calgary and the great North American West, this is the opportunity of a lifetime. It is a city and a country you must see for yourself.

First stop: an ascent into that crystalline cerulean canopy — this place provokes rhetorical excess — otherwise known as the sky.

And mountains? Rest easy. There will be mountains.

When the Calgary Tower opened in 1968, it was not only the tallest structure in Calgary but the tallest in all of western Canada. Since then, in this city alone, it has been surpassed six times. Yet the tower remains the lofty symbol of Calgary and the lodestar by which visitors can orient themselves as they explore the city. It is also their stairway to heaven.

Make that elevator, which I take to the observation deck that stands near the tower's 626-foot summit. As you proceed around the deck, there are brief descriptions of everything you're observing from above and might want to see up close later; that includes the concave-roofed Scotiabank Saddledome, the arena that lies at the center of Stampede

Park, the venue for the 2025 convention. For the daring and the bold, there is a glass-floor platform onto which you can step and stare directly down onto distant Ninth Avenue. And finally, off to the west, a craggy apparition beckons: the Rocky Mountains, rising like a gray ghost on the western fringe of the Great Plains.

As the view from the tower suggests, Calgary has a lot to offer. "Anyone who grew up here will tell you that Calgary has all the big city amenities without the big city problems," says Craig Stokke, the co-chair of the Host Organization Committee. "And though we've grown to be a big city, we still have that small town mentality" — as evidenced last year when *Condé Nast Traveller* readers voted Calgary the friendliest city in the world.

The city of Calgary's story began in 1875 when the North-West Mounted Police established an outpost at what had been for centuries the traditional gathering place of Indigenous people; the commander's superior officer, Lieutenant Colonel James Farquharson Macleod, eventually dubbed it Fort Calgary after a castle in Scotland. By some accounts, "Calgary" means, in Gaelic, "clear running water," a fitting name for this place where the Elbow meets the Bow.

Today, Fort Calgary is a 40-acre campus devoted to the city's origins. In May, it was renamed the Conflu-



Above: Viewed in person at the Confluence Historic Site and Parkland, the wooden installation called *Marking* transforms into three-dimensional shadows of people and horses. Right: The Calgary Tower is reflected in one of the many pieces of public art in the city's downtown.



ence Historic Site and Parkland (or I'táámito'táaattsiyio'pi — “harmonious meeting place” — in Blackfoot), aiming to present a broader and more comprehensive narrative of the area’s history.

I already see that as I walk through the campus, reading the copious signage outside the replica of the military barracks and spending a few enlightening hours touring the interpretive center. Alongside and intertwined with the settlers’ stories are the tales of those who were here first. There are some beautiful artifacts — such as the brightly beaded Métis octopus bag, named for the four pairs of decorative tabs that hang from its body — but what I primarily see is a progression of losses. *The Great Slaughter*, a three-dimensional piece by the Saulteaux Métis archaeologist and artist Autumn White-way (Night Singing Woman), evokes the near-extinction of the bison and the decimation of the people who relied on and revered them. There’s a reproduction and explanation of Treaty 7, by which the Blackfoot and other First Nations ceded their lands in southern Alberta. It’s accompanied by an interactive exhibit that focuses on truth and reconciliation and their relationship to the treaty.

Before leaving the Confluence site, be sure to explore the grounds. Pay close attention to an unassuming assemblage of lumber that, on close inspection, turns out to be a remarkable optical illusion. Called *Marking*, the wooden framework delineates in part the outline of the original fort. Its vertical uprights are irregularly shaped and in some instances resemble the silhouette of a face or a body’s curve. Ignore that. Instead, stand back from the structure and pace alongside it. Look at it without looking at it, and from behind the unfinished palisade wall emerge three-dimensional shadows of people and horses. Stare directly at those ephemeral figures and they vanish. And yet ...

Earlier, on my walk to the fort, I passed a theater whose exterior wall was draped in green artificial grass. From it, four words had been cut: THIS FEELS SO REAL. Exactly.



In the heart of Calgary’s revitalized East Village, Studio Bell offers an irresistible array of euterpean delights (look it up). Home to the National Music Centre and the Canadian Music Hall of Fame, four of the five floors are devoted to different aspects of music, and there are endless opportunities to listen to it, learn how it’s made, perform it, and comment on how it makes us feel, as scores of people have done in a variety of languages. Start on the top floor and work your way down, allotting yourself



Last year, *Condé Nast Traveller* readers voted Calgary the friendliest city in the world.

From top: Studio Bell is home to the Canadian Music Hall of Fame; Mark Starratt and his son Alex enjoy the Calgary Zoo; a member of the Rotary Club of Calgary, Starratt is co-chair of the Host Organization Committee. Right: Charming Banff and the majestic Rocky Mountains are a short, astonishingly beautiful drive from Calgary.



SADDLE UP

The Calgary convention ends on 25 June; stick around for the world famous **Calgary Stampede**, which begins 4 July. Those intervening days are the perfect opportunity to take advantage of the unparalleled opportunity to visit a few of Alberta's six **UNESCO World Heritage Sites**.

- **Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks** consists of seven contiguous national and provincial parks. One of them, Banff, is justly celebrated, but with their waterfalls and lakes, their snowcapped mountains and starlit nights, the other parks warrant a visit — and perhaps an extended stay.
- Over the years, Alberta's boundless Badlands have yielded a treasure trove of Cretaceous jewels. See for yourself at **Dinosaur Provincial Park**, followed by a swing up to the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology in Drumheller.
- A vivid insight into Plains culture, **Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump** is more than just the 33-foot-high cliff where, beginning more than 5,500 years ago, Indigenous people on the hunt drove bison to their deaths.
- Straddling the border between Alberta and Montana and comprising Canada's Waterton Lakes National Park and the U.S. Glacier National Park, **Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park** is both a monument to global amity and a breathtakingly beautiful natural wonderland.
- A sacred Blackfoot site, **Áísia'i'pi** (meaning "it is written" or "it is pictured"), also known as **Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park**, is one of the largest aggregations of petroglyphs in North America, carved either by the Indigenous people who once lived here or by the spirits said to dwell among the adjacent hills.
- A 14-hour drive from Calgary, the vast **Wood Buffalo National Park** is home to about 3,000 free-range bison, in addition to bears, moose, wolves, owls, and whooping cranes. Stargazers take note: It's also the world's largest dark sky preserve.



several hours to explore and experience.

The same holds true for the Calgary Zoo, which when I visit is a work in progress. There are signs announcing what is temporarily closed and what will be open when Rotary members arrive in 2025. Chief among these impending attractions is a new exhibit called Wild Canada, devoted to gray wolves, polar bears, and other wildlife that dwell in the country's untamed regions. Despite the closures, I stroll leisurely through lush gardens and see lots of animals, including zebras and giraffes, lions and lemurs, and a water-loving waddle of king penguins. And in Prehistoric Park, I encounter animatronic dinosaurs that disconcert and delight the enraptured children.

In this pedestrian- and bike-friendly city — with more miles of bike and walking trails than any other city in North America — I had walked to the zoo. With various stops along the way, that took a couple of hours. To return downtown, I hop on the CTrain light rail — part of Calgary's extensive public transportation system that will be free for full registrants for the 2025 convention — which

makes for a significantly shorter trip. I'm back at my hotel, the venerable Fairmont Palliser, with plenty of time to prepare for my dinner reservation. Just as Calgary has world-class architecture, bike trails, bonhomie, and nightlife, it is also a gastronomic paradise, with opportunities to sample every imaginable cuisine. But tonight I plan to dine on what I'm led to believe is the city's signature dish.

Calgary is a cattle town, and residents are proud of their beef, whose rich flavor is a result of the Alberta cows' barley-based diet. And so tonight I find myself at the convivial and cozily lit Vintage Chophouse & Tavern, where I enjoy a 24-ounce bone-in New York strip steak, dispatched with the aid of a knife masquerading as a small saber. The meal leaves me well fortified for what lies ahead.

It had snowed for much of the night and traffic was a mess. "If you don't have to drive today," advised the stern voice on the radio, "stay home."

I ignore him. I must drive. Blame it on Cindy Walker, the central Texas girl who

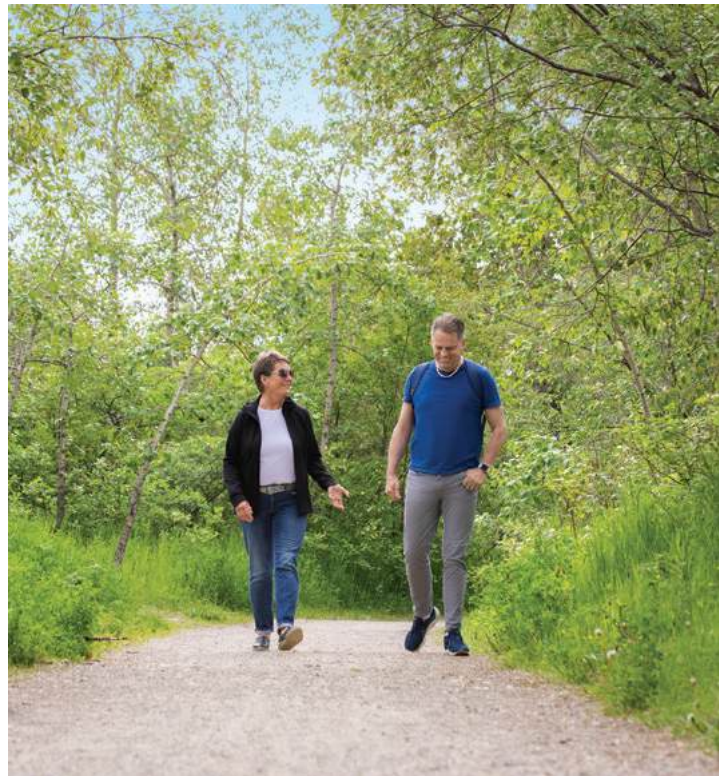
in 1950 composed a quintessential lyric of the Canadian West. It begins:

*In the blue Canadian Rockies,
Spring is sighing through the trees.
And the golden poppies are blooming
Round the banks of Lake Louise.*

Because of that plaintive song, I had always wanted to visit Lake Louise, and now it was a mere 115 miles away. It was going to take more than an October blizzard to kibosh my quest.

I find my way to the Trans-Canada Highway and point the car toward Banff, where I plan to spend the night. The snow has let up, but the skies have not cleared and visibility is minimal. An hour or so into my journey I appear heading directly into a big, densely black thunderhead, which only at the last minute reveals itself to be the side of a mountain huddled close to the road.

I finally arrive in Banff, having accomplished the usual 90-minute drive in about three hours. It is a charming, little low-rise town. Because it's between seasons, the streets are relatively quiet. After



From left: Rotarians Craig Stokke, Corinne Wilkinson, and Luanne Whitmarsh visit the zoo; Calgary's light rail system is part of the city's public transportation network; Wilkinson and Stokke, a co-chair of the Host Organization Committee, stroll along the extensive Mattamy Greenway, created in part by Calgary's Rotarians.

checking into my room, I walk through the town, stopping into two or three shops before I make my way to Chuck's. There, I launch into an 8-ounce tenderloin, wielding the small cutlass that will be the second entry in my forthcoming treatise, *The Steak Knives of Alberta*.

The next day, in the moments before sunrise, I open the curtains on my first-floor window and discover two towering lodgepole pines holding aloft an azure sky touched by gold. I'm soon back on the Trans-Canada, and in less than an hour I am a sigh among the trees of Lake Louise.

In the summer of 1882, Thomas Edmonds Wilson, a seasoned 23-year-old Alberta trailblazer, followed his Nakoda guide Edwin Hunter through the thick, virgin timber of the Rockies until they emerged on a pristine body of water. Wil-

son was astounded. "As God is my judge, I never in all my explorations saw such a matchless scene," he later recalled. "On the right and the left forests that had never known the axe came down to the shores, apparently growing out of the blue and green waters. The background, a mile and a half away, was divided into three tones of white, opal, and brown where the glacier ceased and merged with the shining water."

The Nakoda called this place Horâ Juthin Îmne, the "lake of the little fishes." Wilson changed it to Emerald Lake, and in 1884 it was changed again, this time to honor Princess Louise Caroline Alberta, the wife of the fourth governor general of Canada, the fourth daughter of Queen Victoria, and the woman who gave this province its name.

The Canadian Pacific Railway arrived at about that time, and today's 539-room Chateau Lake Louise, a magnet for politicians, movie stars, and tourists from around the world, had its origins with a single-story building erected in 1894. Things would never be the same, and despite today's snow and cold weather, dozens of people jockey for position along the shoreline so that they might return home with a memorable photo.

Yet the scene remains exactly as Tom Wilson described it, with the aquamarine water, the white fields of snow, and the differently shaded green trees and brown mountainsides layered in a series of overlapping and magically integrated planes. Immutable, Lake Louise is still capable of instilling a sense of wonder.

I close my day serenely soaking in the mineral-rich waters of the Banff Upper Hot Springs. The vertical panorama is unsurpassed: a forest of snow-laden firs giving way to the summit of Mount Rundle, its jagged peaks flush with the rays of the setting sun. If there are any sighs this evening in the blue Canadian Rockies, they are only sighs of contentment.

Calgary has more miles of bike and walking trails than any other city in North America.

My last full day in Calgary is a day of welcomes. The first comes at the midday meeting of the Rotary Club of Calgary at Stampede Park, where I am the guest of Craig Stokke. As much as anyone, it was Stokke who ensured Calgary got the opportunity to host its second Rotary International Convention. He was not a member of Rotary 28 years ago, so did not attend the 1996 convention. But nine years ago, while in Rome, he met another member of Rotary. When he learned that Stokke was from Calgary, the Italian Rotarian described his marvelous experience at that '96 convention and vowed that, if Calgary ever hosted another convention, he would not fail to attend.

Working alongside Mark Starratt, the other co-chair of the Host Organization Committee and a member of the Rotary Club of Calgary, Stokke got to work at bringing another convention to his hometown. They were assisted by scores of enthusiastic Rotary members, by the city's civic leaders, and by its most prominent public face: the Stampede, the annual rodeo, parade, and 10-day festival that each year attracts more than 1 million visitors to Calgary. "The people at the Stampede are skilled at working with crowds," says Stokke. "We've

got thousands of volunteers who know what to do, and they're ready to go. Their participation helped make our case that Calgary deserved the convention."

In 2017, Rotary made it official: Calgary would host the 2025 convention. Stokke, Starratt, et al. quadrupled their efforts. "The '96 convention set the bar high," Stokke admits, "but we didn't want to do a redo." He doesn't provide any specifics, but he does make one promise. "We can put on a great party," he says. "People are going to know they've been in Calgary."

Stokke explains all this as we tour the Stampede grounds prior to the meeting. Situated on the perimeter of the park, the club's gathering space is a rustically modern cabin. Today it's packed, with roughly 125 people filling nine tables. After lunch, the meeting gets underway with an official welcome to visiting guests.

I meet many Rotary members, and even 18 months out, they share a mutual excitement for the upcoming convention. On more than one occasion I hear about one benefit of holding the convention in Calgary that these folks plan to press to maximum advantage. "There are a lot of things we hope to do by bringing people in from the community and letting them know about Rotary and the great things it's doing locally," Stokke says. "This is

our chance to show who Rotary is."

After the Stampede Park meeting, I dash to my lunch date with the folks from Tourism Calgary. My three hosts — Aviva Kohen, Shelley Zucht-Shorter, and Fraser Abbott — treat me to a delicious meal at Deane House, one of Calgary's finest restaurants. It's one of two, along with River Café, run by Sal Howell, a champion of locally sourced ingredients and sustainable dining.

But the highlight is the surprise pre-meal ceremony where Abbott officially welcomes me to Calgary. "It's not relevant where you come from or what you look like or how you worship or whom you love," says Abbott, quoting a former mayor. "What really matters is that you are welcome here and you belong here, and you've come to a place where you can be your best."

Abbott presents me with one of the city's signature white, red-beribboned Smithbilt cowboy hats. I don the chapeau as instructed and join Abbott in reciting the traditional white hat oath of hospitality, which concludes with a rousing "yahoo!" With that, I saunter into the dining room. And were I wearing spurs, they would undoubtedly be jingle-jangle-jingling as I go stridin' merrily along. All that's missing is a horse. ■



Delicious desserts are served at River Café.

THE TASTES OF CALGARY

Calgary is cattle country, as attested by its world-class steakhouses, such as **Caesar's**, **Chairman's**, and **Vintage Chophouse & Tavern**. But the city also offers a wide variety of dining experiences that will tempt even the most discerning palates.

- Owned and operated by the gastronomically gifted Sal Howell, **Deane House** on the banks of the Elbow River and **River Café** on **Prince's Island Park** serve memorable meals in, respectively, historic and verdant settings.
- A contemporary supper club, **Fortuna's Row** transports diners from the plains of Alberta to the climes, cultures, and cuisines of Central and South America.



Steve McDonough, past president of the Calgary Stampede, and Wilkinson, a member of the Rotary Club of Calgary at Stampede Park, stop by Smithbilt Hats, where one of the city's signature white hats is steamed.




- To discover fresh, coast-to-coast Canadian cuisine, travel to **Klein/Harris** on the Stephen Avenue pedestrian mall.
- Situated on the 40th floor of Stephen Avenue Place, the lofty **Major Tom** accompanies its divine food with heavenly views.
- A great spot for lunch, **Park by Sidewalk Citizen** welcomes guests to its solarium-style space in Central Memorial Park (Calgary's oldest park) situated in the Beltline neighborhood.
- Situated in the lively 17th Avenue neighborhood, yet with a Pacific Ocean vibe, **Lulu Bar** showcases fare influenced by the cuisines from nearby — think California and British Columbia — and afar (Hawaii and Asia).
- Deemed one of Calgary's best new restaurants in 2022, **Orchard** dishes up Asian-Mediterranean cuisine in a casually elegant setting.
- Celebrity chef Darren MacLean's **Shokunin**, which offers Japanese-influenced dining, perennially lands on the list of Canada's 100 best restaurants.

The 2025 Rotary International Convention in Calgary, 21-25 June, is not to be missed. Register now at convention.rotary.org. Register by 15 December to receive a discount.



Seeds of hope





Long overlooked, farmers are finding mental health supports tailored to the stresses of rural life

BY ELIZABETH HEWITT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATHRYN GAMBLE



F

or almost four decades, Dorothy and Don Harms tethered their lives to the needs of their dairy cows. Twice daily milking. Seasonal races to plant and harvest corn and alfalfa for feed. The fourth generation in his family to run the

Reedsburg, Wisconsin, dairy farm, Don Harms knew each of their 130 cows by name. For many people who work in agriculture, Dorothy Harms says, farming is part of their identity. "It's not their job," she says. "It's who they are."

But the grueling schedule took a toll, so they gradually transitioned, launching a farm-stay tourism business, switching to beef cattle, and selling off their dairy herd little by little until they parted with the last 25 cows five years ago. In the weeks that followed, the couple grieved. Dorothy Harms' body, so used to hard but rewarding work, yearned to go to the barn. Her husband struggled with anxiety and self-medicated with alcohol. "It was not an easy year," she says.

Around the same time, another farmer in their community, a close friend of the Harmses, took his own life. As the community rallied around his family, another farmer shared candidly how he had struggled with suicidal thoughts. At one of those community gatherings, Dorothy Harms learned about an oppor-

tunity to try counseling with a voucher from the Wisconsin agriculture department, and the couple found the experience somewhat helpful for processing their emotions. In the agricultural town of Reedsburg, the subject of mental health, so often kept private, was suddenly in the spotlight.

The conversations led people in this area of south-central Wisconsin to start the Farmer Angel Network, an organization that connects farm industry professionals and their families with mental health resources. The group builds a sense of community through events like drive-in movie nights and trains health providers to better understand agriculture's unique pressures. Dorothy Harms, co-founder and board president, says the network is a resource that people know they can turn to if they need help.

"There's so much isolation, oftentimes, in farming," she says. "By having an opportunity for fellowship and people getting to share what's going on, it just opens the doors for possible further discussion, deeper discussion."

Farmers' livelihoods are shaped by many factors



PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF DOROTHY HARMS



beyond their control, from fluctuations in global markets to extreme weather that can derail an entire growing season. These stressors are contributing to a mental health crisis in agriculture. The suicide rate among male farmers and ranchers in the U.S. is about 60 percent higher than that of all working-age men, and farmers have higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide risk than the general population.

Amid this crisis, efforts are growing to break down stigma and improve access to mental health supports. Crisis hotlines and teletherapy are working alongside grassroots initiatives, like the Farmer Angel Network, to open conversations about mental health among farmers and neighbors.

“What we’re trying to do is acknowledge that there’s a spectrum of need and comfort,” says Josie Rudolphi, an assistant professor and extension specialist with the University of Illinois who has researched farm stress. “We’re trying to provide a menu of resources along that spectrum.”

FOR MANY FARMERS, BUSINESS IS PERSONAL. On family-run farms, there’s often no clear separation between work and home life, according to Rem-

“Having an opportunity for fellowship, it just opens the doors for deeper discussion.”

ington Rice, who leads Michigan State University Extension’s Managing Farm Stress project. He grew up on his family’s cattle farm, where his dad can still see the cows from his bedroom window. “Agriculture can be more a way of life than a 9-to-5 job,” he says.

This makes the unique stresses of farming difficult to compartmentalize, Rice says. Those uncertainties are significant: Anything from a late-season frost to a shift in global commodity markets can affect the farm’s financial security.

A 2018 survey of young farmers and ranchers in the Midwest found that more than half of respondents met cri-

teria for depression, and 71 percent showed signs of generalized anxiety disorder. The U.S. is not alone. In India, where climate change-driven weather extremes are diminishing harvests, about 30 farmers and farmworkers took their own lives every day in 2022.

But many farmers avoid talking about their struggles, a discomfort Rice attributes to a pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps mentality. “I never heard my grandpa say that he was stressed or that he was sad,” Rice says. “Even though it was apparent to all of us that he was struggling at times, he never vocalized that.”

That may be changing. As awareness of rural men-

Previous pages:

Kathy Fahy, a longtime Rotarian, at her farm in Bancroft, Iowa.

Above: Scenes from Fahy’s farm.

Left: Dorothy and Don Harms with their dog Max in the pasture to move beef cattle.



tal health issues grows, so does the number of initiatives to confront them, including funding through the 2018 federal farm bill to build out a network to support farmers through regional centers. Rice is optimistic this mosaic of efforts is making a difference. In a 2021 Farm Bureau poll, a majority of rural adults said there was still stigma around mental health in the agriculture community, but 92 percent of farmers and farmworkers felt comfortable talking with a friend or family member about mental health, an increase of 22 percent over 2019.

WHEN FARMERS DELIVERED corn and soybean harvests to local cooperatives in Dickinson County, Iowa, in 2022, many left with something unexpected: a goody bag. Each bag contained a cookie, a granola bar, a bottle of water, and a small card that read: “Work in Agriculture Can be Stressful. It’s Okay to Ask for Help.” On the other side was a QR code to access a list of local mental health resources.

That fall, 760 of the goody bags were distributed by the Rotary Club of Iowa Great Lakes (Spirit Lake), which was part of a coalition including local health providers, school officials, and county resource officials aiming to connect residents with mental health supports.

Farmers seemed like an obvious place to start, says Kathy Fahy, a longtime Rotarian who helped lead the effort. Fahy grew up on her family’s farm, about an hour’s drive from Spirit Lake, during the 1980s agriculture crisis when high debt rates and low crop prices forced hundreds of thousands of farms to shut down. She now runs the 800-acre soy and corn operation with her brother. Each season requires big investments of time and money to get started. This spring, the wet

weather kept them waiting to get their crops in the ground. “The stresses of farming are real,” she says.

One day in 2005, Fahy’s mother — whom Fahy calls a “strong farm woman” — went missing. The next day, as community members gathered to help search the farm, Fahy’s mother tried to climb out of the loft door high up on the huge barn.

Fahy dashed into the barn and scrambled up hay bales to pull her mother back from the edge. When Fahy asked what she was doing, she responded she wanted to be with her mother, who had died months earlier. Fahy had no idea what a hard time her mother was having.

There is a culture of keeping quiet about emotional struggles among many farm families, Fahy says. “We had to get through to her that it’s OK to talk.”

Fahy’s mother got mental health treatment, which helped her process her grief and led the entire family to adopt a more open approach to emotional health. Those experiences helped inform the discreet approach the Iowa Great Lakes club took when reaching out to farmers. The club has since worked on other initiatives to connect people with mental health services, including events through schools. By starting conversations with young people, they hope the effects will ripple

through families to reduce stigma. In the meantime, distributing goody bags from grain coops and farm machinery dealers offered a quiet way to get resources directly into the hands of farmers and farmworkers. “We didn’t want to scare people away,” says Fahy.

The QR code from the goody bags has been scanned about 200 times, connecting people with a website (letstalkdickinson.org) with information about symptoms of farm stress, links to resources like hotlines, and a guide to finding a mental health care provider.

Goody bags offered a quiet way to get resources directly into the hands of farmers.





Clockwise from top left: Katy Carey of the Rotary Club of Iowa Great Lakes (Spirit Lake); Rotarians Tim and Carole Bernhard with Fahy and Carey; Fahy at her farm; goody bags with mental health resources; a scene from Fahy’s farm.

GROWING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES has emerged as a priority for rural areas. Some states offer programs that make services free for farmers. Even so, finding providers can be a challenge. As of 2019, 70 percent of nonmetropolitan U.S. counties did not have a psychiatrist, and almost half did not have a psychologist.

Teletherapy is helping, according to Rice of MSU, which connects Michigan farmers to free online

mental health services. The online sessions also help overcome stigma because they make meeting privately easy and don’t require taking time off to leave the farm.

Demand in Michigan has grown since the program started in 2020, when 20 people reached out. That climbed to 53 by 2022 and has held steady.

Another approach has been telephone hotlines, an effort funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In recent years, the Iowa Concern hotline has been

expanded to serve 12 Midwestern states with around-the-clock support, as well as legal and financial resources, for farmers dealing with stress.

Relationships with family and neighbors are also important. Farm stress initiatives have focused on training community members in basic mental health awareness.

Norlan Hinke, a financial specialist at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, has distributed thousands of mental health pamphlets throughout Iowa. A Rotarian since 2004 and the District 6000 governor-elect, Hinke has spoken with Rotary clubs and incorporated the agriculture-focused campaign into the work of the district's chapter of the Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives.

He has passed out information to people with jobs linked to agriculture, like veterinarians, bankers, and machinery suppliers because they are well-positioned to hear when farmers are struggling. One equipment dealer Hinke spoke with was enthusiastic to share the pamphlets about farm stress with his staff. "His salespeople told him they were spending as much time just listening and counseling as they did selling merchandising equipment," Hinke says.

A YOUNG FARMER WAS GETTING READY to inherit the family farm. The person had been involved with farming and invested in farm equipment. But the parents, in their 70s, simply wouldn't talk about a plan for the future.

The young farmer shared the stress caused by this precarious situation at an online "resiliency circle" event to help people in agriculture navigate farm transitions. Led by a counselor, 20 participants each month share their experiences and worries in writing and by speaking anonymously, without using video or identifying details. The sessions help people manage the practicalities of farm transitions and the complex accompanying emotions, like loss and grief.

While therapy appointments and crisis hotlines are important mental health options, says Monica McConkey, a Minnesota-based counselor who specializes in agriculture and leads the circles, these online support-group-like spaces can be more approachable. People listen in while driving a tractor or doing farm chores. "It's a no-barrier option," she says. "You don't have to say anything. You don't have to pay anything."

These resiliency circles are run by the Cultivating Resiliency for Women in Farming project of the Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center. The project launched virtual "coffee chats" in 2019 to give farmers an outlet to talk among peers about problems. The resiliency circles — focused on farm transitions and the particular pressures facing women in farming — started in 2022. These programs have grown to reach nearly 900 participants, most of them women, from almost

every U.S. state, five Canadian provinces, and multiple other countries. "There's just not enough support in rural areas," says Doris Mold, a Wisconsin dairy farmer who co-leads the Cultivating Resiliency project. "So we're just trying to offer additional services."

Peer support can also be more comfortable for farmers than speaking with mental health providers, who don't always understand the pressures and lifestyle of farmers. Mold has heard of counselors advising dairy farmers that they should take a few weeks off work, a near impossibility for a farm operator. Cultivating Resiliency programs fill the gaps. One woman told Mold the program had "saved her life."

Efforts to support farmers are also looking beyond symptoms of stress to address root causes. Another organization that focuses on women in farming, Annie's Project, offers courses that teach skills in managing farm finances and marketing. The program has proven particularly valuable for the networks it builds among women farmers, according to Karisha Devlin, who co-leads Annie's Project with Mold.

Devlin, a longtime member of the Rotary Club of Knox County in Missouri, says those relationships help farmers navigate stressful situations. "Being able to make those connections and have that peer group is really powerful for women," Devlin says.

MSU Extension also aims to address the deeper causes of stress, offering links to teletherapy alongside guides to farm budgeting and strategies to manage aspects of extreme weather, like harvesting frost-damaged soybeans. Rice often gives suicide prevention presentations at more general gatherings, like farm succession planning events or Farm Bureau meetings. Intertwining mental health and farm resources makes people more likely to engage.

For some farmers, addressing the root causes of stress can mean finding other ways of bringing in income. The expansion of renewable energy across the Midwest has offered some farmers opportunities to establish a steady cash flow by siting wind turbines on their land.

Around 2009, when the Michigan utility Consumers Energy was looking for wind turbine locations in Mason County, Ralph Lundberg signed up his family's farm, which he had run since 1980.

"We're not gamblers," Lundberg says. "But this spring between the seed corn and the herbicide and the fertilizer, we're going to put \$150,000 in the ground and then sit back and wait and hope we get enough rain, enough sunshine for the crops to be raised.

"So in that sense, we are gamblers."

But Lundberg also has five turbines on his land that generate an annual royalty of \$10,000 to \$25,000. The income just about covers the property tax bills.

Diversifying income is not always easy or cheap for farmers, says Rudolphi

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health emergency, contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in the U.S. by calling or texting 988 or going to [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org). If you are outside the U.S., visit [findahelpline.com](https://www.findahelpline.com) to get connected with a service in your country.





Clockwise from top: Wind turbines near Bancroft, Iowa; a postcard promoting resources; farmers Tim Bernhard (left) and Tony Helderfer, Fahy's brother.

of the University of Illinois. But such opportunities for stable cash flow can reduce the pressures. "It's providing some consistent income that a lot of farm families have never known," she says.


The Harmeses, in Wisconsin, have settled into life without their dairy cows. The beef cattle they raise now are less labor intensive, and they sell the meat directly from their farm, giving them more financial control than they had in the milk commodity market. Their oldest daughter and her husband are preparing to take over the farm.

And Farmer Angel Network's influence has grown.

Not only is the group reaching farm families across the county through events including ice cream socials and county farm breakfasts but it's also inspiring mental health networks in other places. Another chapter launched recently in northwest Wisconsin. These grassroots networks build connections and a sense of belonging. "There's room for everybody in this," says Rudolphi, "and we need everybody in this." ■

This story is a collaboration between Rotary magazine and Reasons to be Cheerful, a nonprofit solutions journalism outlet.





Where can
you save
money, time,
and the
planet simply
by doing less?
In your own
backyard.

By Nathaniel Reade
Illustrations by Madison Wisse

The lazy gardener's guide



People in Gig Harbor, Washington, had long complained about the embarrassing mess along a highway interchange in their town. It was a neglected, overgrown 3-acre plot of grass and invasive plants that did not reflect well on this handsome community of 12,000, south of Seattle on Puget Sound. So members of the Rotary Club of Gig Harbor volunteered to bring in their tractors and brush cutters to mow it down. Again, and again, and again. For years.

To club members Gary and Chris Pellett, this didn't make much sense. Chris Pellett is a lifelong gardener who has worked with conservation groups, and her husband, Gary, had been in the plant business for 50 years. They knew that mown grass does nothing for birds, bees, or the pollinators our planet depends on, and it is arguably the most unnatural, expensive, carbon-intensive, and time-consuming ground cover available.

So the Pelletts suggested "rewilding." Rather than mow those 3 acres eternally, they proposed planting trees and shrubs native to the area. Because native flora have evolved over millions of years to thrive in a particular spot, they tend to be far easier to grow and far better for the natural world. Once they're planted and established, you can just walk away and relax, just as you might strolling through your local nature preserve.

And how was their idea received? Well, says Gary Pellett, a kind and mild-mannered person, "there's a lot of resistance to change in our species."

The Pelletts and many other Rotary members who work to protect the environment point to the research of people like Douglas Tallamy, an entomologist and ecologist at the University of Delaware. Tallamy has sounded the alarm about the dangers of ignoring the needs of the planet when managing our land, from backyards to the sides of highways to city parks. He believes that many of us have an antagonistic relationship with the natural world we depend upon and irrational fears about wildlife — especially insects. "We must abandon our age-old notion ... that humans are here and nature is somewhere else," Tallamy writes in his book *Nature's Best Hope*.

Without pollinating insects, we would lose about 90 percent of the flowering plant species on Earth. The lack of native bumblebees in Australia, for instance, has pushed some commercial tomato growers to try robot bees, which cost \$10,000 apiece to make. Insects are so essential to our survival that the biologist E.O. Wilson once said: "If all mankind were to disappear ... the world would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed 10,000 years ago. But if insects were to vanish, the terrestrial environment would collapse into chaos."

Plants and animals are declining at an alarming rate — it's been called the sixth extinction — in large part because they are losing habitat to human development. That's happening primarily through the expansion of cities, roads, farms, and ranches, but the replacement of native flora with mown grass in our yards also has a cumulative effect. In the United States, one study of suburban developments built between 1990 and 2005 found that 92 percent of the area available for landscaping was planted in lawn. Lawn covers about 45 million acres in the country today, almost as much as its national parks. Lawn is not only arguably the most expensive and high-maintenance ground cover, but it is what Tallamy calls a "biological wasteland."

Tallamy has proposed that we manage our land in a way that considers not just neatness or convention, but also the natural world on which we depend. He points out that backyards in the United States collectively make up an ecosystem the size of New England, so a few simple changes

could have a hugely beneficial impact on the planet. And one of the biggest things that has to change, he says, is our relationship to lawns.

Tallamy says that "lawns are terrible at delivering the essential ecosystem services we all depend on." They produce less oxygen, cleanse less water, trap less carbon, provide no food to us or most other living things, and cost more time and money to maintain than other plantings. In the United States, lawn irrigation and other residential outdoor uses account for an average of more than 7 billion gallons of water daily. In arid parts of the Western U.S., up to 60 percent of household water use goes to irrigate lawns. Some cities and states, like Nevada, have placed restrictions on grass lawns, even requiring their removal from some properties in favor of less water intensive desert landscaping.

Half of the nitrogen fertilizer applied to lawns runs off and contaminates our streams, rivers, and groundwater. Those big-box store bags of lawn chemicals are bad for the planet, and very possibly bad for you: About 40 percent of the chemicals used by the lawn care industry in the United States are banned in other countries as carcinogens, and scores of studies show a connection between lawn pesticides and lymphoma, with pets and children most at risk.

Why our obsession with the green-sward? There isn't a single definitive answer. Tallamy suggests that maybe a lawn planted feels like dangerous wilderness tamed. Others claim that fields of green appeal to our ancient heritage evolving on grassy African savannahs, where open vistas made us feel safe from threats. Some point out that in the early years of the U.S., wealthy tastemakers on their estates tried to display their sophistication by mimicking English manors and creating not only massive lawns, which were prohibitively expensive to maintain for most, but by planting shrubs and

→ **Left to right:** Chris Pellett (pictured) and her husband, Gary, proposed rewilding land along a highway interchange; members and friends of the Rotary Club of Gig Harbor at the planting.



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF GARY PELLETT

→ 1. A colorful garden greets apartment dwellers in Shanghai. 2. Weijie Gai (left) spearheaded the project. 3. Restoring wetlands along the Boise River in Idaho. 4. A pollinator garden in Shoreview, Minnesota. 5, 6. Rotary members traveled between Windsor, Canada, and Michoacán, Mexico, to educate people on monarch butterflies.

trees from Europe and Asia. Two centuries later, we still equate a yard of clipped grass and nonnative shrubs trimmed to resemble green meatballs as signs of wealth and success. It could also be the lawn chemical and machinery companies busily telling us that grubs or clover reveal our moral failure. Or maybe it's just ignorance: One of the simplest things you can do to a yard is mow it. And this isn't just an American thing; in 2022, 65 percent of the revenue from lawn mower sales came from outside North America.

Whatever the reason, experts today point out that the lawn, riding mower, weed killers, bug killers, annual mulching, and leaf removal are all busywork, expensive and harmful to the natural world on which we depend. We could all save money, carbon, wildlife, and our own time if we simply did less lawn care. The win-win, in other words, is rewilding, which we could also call lazy gardening.

Members of Chris and Gary Pellett's club in Gig Harbor were concerned about what kind of garden they should plant off the highway interchange, its ongoing maintenance, and whether enough volunteers would even show up to do the project. In the end, they agreed to plant a portion with plants carefully selected not only because they are native to the area but are particularly good for pollinators. Experts have compiled lists of what Tallamy calls keystone plants, which provide extra benefit to beneficial insects. According to the National Wildlife Federation's Native Plant Finder, for instance, a willow tree in Gig Harbor supports 339 species of butterflies and moths, whereas a horse chestnut supports just 13 — and a non-native tree like a ginkgo might support nothing at all.

The Pelletts and their club started designing their project in 2022, working with the state transportation department that owns the land. Then, Gary says, "being good Rotarians, we bought the plants and got her done."

About 30 people and a post-hole digger showed up on a cold day in February 2023 to plant about 175 trees and shrubs, including fir, pine, oak, Indian plum, red-twig dogwood, and Oregon grape. Environmental projects typically appeal to younger generations, and this was no exception. Chris Pellett says that the project enticed several younger, newer club members to volunteer. And the reaction from the local community and press was so enthusiastic that the club is planning to plant more.



This is just one of many Rotary rewilding projects around the world. Chris Stein, a National Park Service ranger, the chair of the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group's pollinator task force, and a leader of Operation Pollination, says some 200 Rotary clubs on six continents have already signed a "pollinator pledge" and started projects to expand habitat for beneficial insects. Weijie Gai, for instance, a former Rotaractor and ESRAG member in Shanghai, rallied the residents of his apartment block to plant the space outside their building. Rotary clubs in Mexico and the U.S.



2



3



4



5



6

Get involved
Encourage your district or club to join Operation Pollination. Start here: esrag.org/operation-pollination.

raised money and began planting 60,000 oyamel (sacred fir) trees, the winter habitat for threatened monarch butterflies, at a sanctuary in the Mexican state of Michoacán. Ten Rotary clubs in southwest Idaho are working together to restore 18 acres of wetlands along the Boise River.

And many Rotary members, like Chris and Gary Pellett, are also changing their own backyards. They have “not been lawn fans for a very long time,” Chris Pellett says. They transformed their yard into a pollinator oasis by removing grass and adding native plants, ornamental stones, and other

low-maintenance features. The result has been smaller water bills, more butterflies, more birds both in number and diversity than their neighbors, and a lot more free time to relax and enjoy the outdoors.

“I have people say to me, “That is so much work,”” Chris says. She admits that the upfront effort to plant natives is greater than just mowing. But five years in, “I think I spend a tenth of the time as someone with a lawn. I have to do some trimming in the spring and a little raking in the fall, and that’s about it. Whereas a lawn takes up a lot of time, money, fertilizer, and mowing every week. Think of all those hours.”

And isn’t that the real reason to have a yard? To enjoy the movements, sounds, and scents of the natural world? As Rachel Carson once said, “Those who dwell ... among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life.” ■

PHOTOGRAPHS: (1,2) COURTESY OF WEIJIE GAI; (3) COURTESY OF LAURIE ZUCKERMAN; (4) COURTESY OF CHARLIE OLTMAN; (5,6) MONIKA LOZINSKA



How to go wild

Shrink your lawn

Grass is the least environmentally friendly ground cover for most climates. It is nice for backyard games and parties, so ask yourself how much grass you actually need, and figure out ways to let the rest of your yard go natural. Stop watering the lawn — if you live in an ecosystem that supports grass, it'll go dormant in summer and return in fall — and set your mower to the highest setting to encourage beneficial plants like clover.

Hit the books

Read *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard*, by Douglas W. Tallamy (Timber Press, 2019).

Go native

You can easily shrink your lawn by replacing parts of it with the kinds of plants, shrubs, and trees that have lived in your area for millions of years. Unlike the plants brought from other continents, native varieties are easier to grow because they have evolved to survive in local conditions and can naturally resist predators without your help. They also provide the right habitat for insects. Once established, native plants pretty much take care of themselves, requiring little or no mowing, raking, fertilizing, or water. If you live in the United States, you can find lists of native plants for your postal code at sites like the National Wildlife Federation's Native Plant Finder at [nativeplantfinder.nwf.org](https://www.nativeplantfinder.nwf.org). Your state extension office and local gardening organizations can help you find and plant native plants. And early fall is a great time for this project.

Leaves are food

Few things are a bigger waste of time than hauling away leaves in the fall, then buying mulch in the spring — which might contain strange ingredients like construction debris and have been sprayed an artificial color. Leaves are a superior mulch, and they're free. Matthew Cunningham, a landscape architect and rewilding expert raised in Bucksport, Maine, says that his farmer grandfather used to voluntarily rake up his neighbor's leaves so he could have them for his garden.

Once you've created areas of native trees and shrubs, they become a great place to put your leaves, which break down over time to create healthy soil and provide habitat for bugs, bees, butterflies, and birds. If your yard is tiny, you can make a compost bin out of pallets or wire fencing and produce your very own compost — no need to buy it and drag it home in big plastic bags.

Let go a little

Let nature have more say. The perfectly manicured yard might actually be an ecological disaster. Those weeds you've been pulling or spraying might be pollinators — and beautiful. Goldenrod, for instance, supports many species of insects, and the misnamed milkweed is not only more fragrant than many types of rose, but vital to the survival of monarch butterflies.

The urge to tidy up is bad for beneficial creatures in many ways. Perennial stems left over the winter provide habitat for the insects that nest in them, and the seed pods provide food and interest. Dead leaves, branches, and trees provide habitat for all kinds of good things.

Don't spray or fertilize

Americans use about 13 million tons of inorganic nitrogen fertilizers each year, which releases six times that amount of carbon dioxide and equivalent greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. Inorganic fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides are not necessary, and they're bad for us. You know those little yellow flags the lawn-care companies put out saying "Danger! Keep off! Toxins!" Well birds, bees, and young children can't read them.

And Tallamy says that "most North American native plants are adapted to the low nitrogen soils they encountered after the last glaciation and do not require high doses of synthetic fertilizers." In fact, fertilizing encourages invasive non-native plants, which bully out the natives.

Electrify

A residential-grade, gas-powered leaf blower generates more air pollution than a truck — and often more noise too. Gas-powered lawn and garden equipment produces about 4 percent of all volatile organic compounds emitted in the United States. Think of the cost, effort, and infrastructure you need to buy and maintain a riding mower, or the cost of the hearing aids you may need after using a gas-powered leaf blower. With your lawn shrunk to the size you actually use, your yard will be easy to maintain with an electric walk-behind mower and leaf blower, which are less expensive, longer lasting, and don't emit noxious exhaust.

Begin a long journey with small steps

"I know everyone is busy, and the idea of changing your yard or ripping up your turf might be scary. So start small," advises Rotarian and pollinator advocate Chris Stein. "It can be as simple as planting a native oak tree, since we know they attract the most pollinators." The tree's leaves will drop and smother the lawn so you're mowing less, and they'll break down over a few years into excellent soil for native shrubs and flowers. An outdoor wall of trees and shrubs will screen out traffic, neighbors, or nosy homeowners associations, giving you privacy, quiet, shade, cooling in summer and windbreak in the winter. "Even some native plants on a balcony helps," Stein says. "It's scientifically proven to enhance the diversity of insects in urban areas."



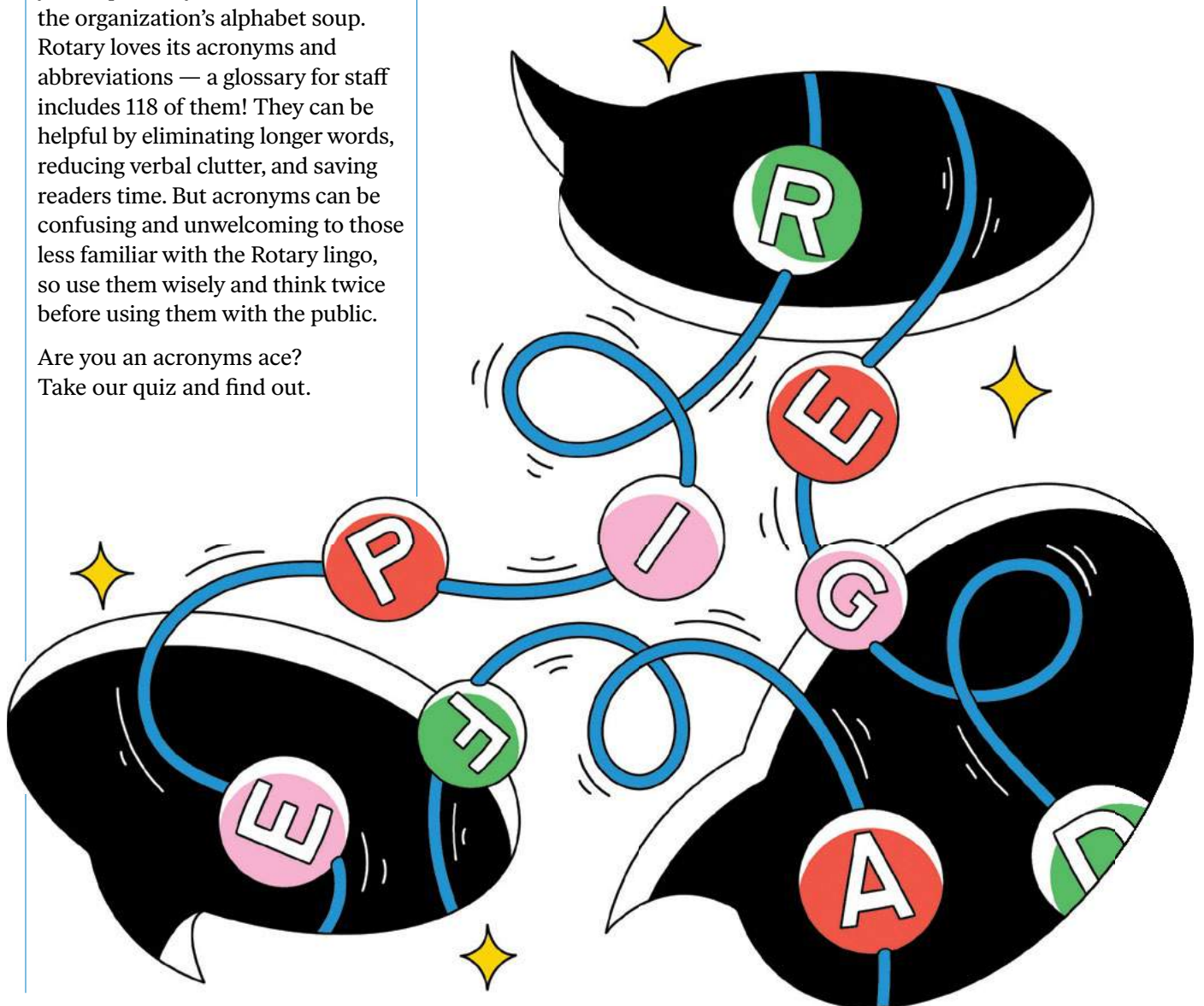
HANDBOOK

Mind your p's and q's

A Rotary alphabet soup SOS

If you've been part of the Rotary family for any amount of time, you've probably had a taste of the organization's alphabet soup. Rotary loves its acronyms and abbreviations — a glossary for staff includes 118 of them! They can be helpful by eliminating longer words, reducing verbal clutter, and saving readers time. But acronyms can be confusing and unwelcoming to those less familiar with the Rotary lingo, so use them wisely and think twice before using them with the public.

Are you an acronyms ace? Take our quiz and find out.



1

If the RIP* was RIPE last year, what will they be next year?

- A PRIP
- B compost

*An acronym recently retired by Rotary. Rest in peace, RIP.

2

Where are you likely to find a DGE?

- A GETS
- B GELS
- C IA
- D the hotel bar

3

Which of the following acronyms is not related to The Rotary Foundation?

- A PPP
- B MD
- C AF
- D FOMO

4

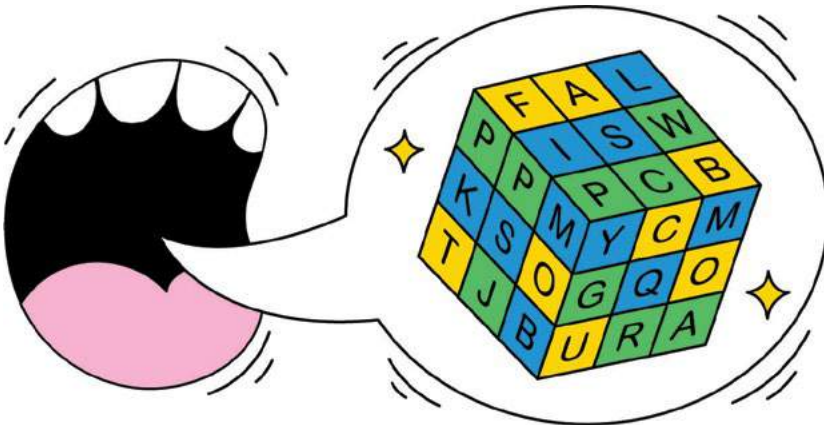
GPS stands for:

- A Global Positioning System
- B Global Polio Sector
- C Global Philanthropy Seminar
- D Giant Panda Species

5

An RC, DMC, and RRFC bump into their DGN at the airport and wonder if she is going to the COL. Which city is she traveling to?

- A Huh?
- B Calgary
- C Chicago
- D This trip has nothing to do with Rotary – let her take a vacation already!



Rotary lingo do's and don'ts



DO

remember who your audience is when deciding if an acronym is appropriate



DON'T

overuse acronyms or abbreviations



DO

use the shorter version of a term instead of the acronym (for example, use "governor" instead of DG)



DON'T

use an acronym for a term mentioned only a few times in your text



DO

provide the full phrase at first reference with the abbreviation in parentheses



DON'T

include periods, except for "U.S."

ANSWER KEY

1: A The Rotary International president was Rotary International president-elect last year and will be past Rotary International president next year.

2: B and C The governors-elect learning seminar is the new name for what was formerly known as the governors-elect training seminar.

Additional sessions for incoming governors take place at the International Assembly. (Though you might find some at the hotel bar too!)

3: D Fear of missing out. The others are PolioPlus Partners, Major Donor, and Annual Fund.

4: C Global Philanthropy Seminar

5: D District governors-nominee are not eligible

to represent their district at the Council on Legislation, which is held in Chicago every three years. Representatives must have served a full term as district governor at the time of their election. (The other abbreviations stand for Rotary coordinator, district membership chair, and regional Rotary Foundation coordinator.)



Fly me to the moon

In China, families reunite over mooncakes

A Chinese legend has it that 10 suns took turns in the sky. One day, they all appeared at once, scorching the earth and making it uninhabitable for humans. The Jade Emperor who ruled heaven sent Hou Yi, a skilled archer, to conquer these blazing orbs, leaving only one. As a reward, the archer received an elixir of immortality. While he was out hunting, his wife, Chang'e, secretly swallowed the elixir, floating into the sky and ascending to the moon.

Hou Yi missed his wife. He could only hope to get a glimpse of her on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month each year, when the moon is brightest. That day became the Mid-Autumn Festival, a harvest festival celebrated across Asia in September or early October. A pastry called a mooncake commemorates the offerings Hou Yi would leave for Chang'e.

A CHILDHOOD DELIGHT: Growing up in northern China, my siblings and I would wait anxiously for our mother to bring mooncakes — round or square pastries filled with red bean or lotus paste. Some contain salted egg yolks in the fillings to represent the moon. My father would remind us that a full moon symbolizes family reunion: “No matter where you are in the world, you look at the sky and share the same moon.”

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES: Cantonese-style mooncakes have a thick crust filled with anything from lotus or melon seed paste to ham, poultry, or roast pork and egg yolks. In Taiwan, the pastries are filled with mung bean, taro, or pineapple paste or minced meat, while the Teochew-style mooncakes in Singapore have a deep-fried puff pastry crust filled with yam paste.

Wen Huang
Editor in chief,
Rotary magazine

What food is your region famous for? Tell us at magazine@rotary.org and you may see it in an upcoming issue.



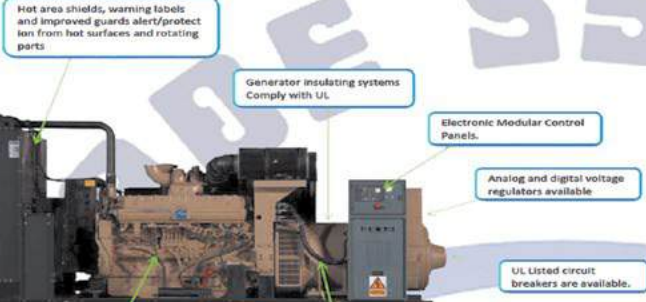
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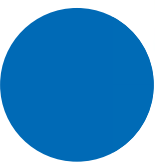
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