

Rotary

AUGUST 2024

MAGAZINE

LIVING LEGACY

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

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

From challenge to opportunity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEPHANIE A. URCHICK
President, Rotary International

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



WELCOME



YOU ARE HERE: Perth, Australia

GREETING: G'day

A HISTORIC SPAN: When the Canning Bridge was built in 1849 outside Perth's city center, the area was primarily bushland. Today, the bridge is a major link between the city and its southern suburbs, says Jeff Spickett, a member of the Rotary Club of Attadale who lives nearby and photographed this image. The bridge has been rebuilt several times, most recently in 1939 using native hardwoods including karri, jarrah, and wandoo. "Each time I see under the bridge I am impressed by the timber and the weight that they carry," Spickett says.

WHY THE SHOES? Nobody knows, but theories range from the shoes being symbols of couples separating to an art installation to a silent protest. Spickett's guess: "The shoes have been found in the area and one man has taken it as a project to nail them to the timber supports."

THE CLUB: The Rotary Club of Attadale holds an annual golf day in partnership with the nearby Fremantle club that raises around AU\$50,000 to support medical research.

Rotary

MAGAZINE

August 2024

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It's time to consider organ donation

Rotary members push to end global organ shortages

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Photography by Gayatri Ganju

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You've got a friend

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A sense of adventure and the ability to adapt may be secrets to thrive as you age

By Caroline Paul

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



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STAFF CORNER

Brian King

*Director of
Membership Development*

I was born in Nairobi, Kenya. My father, originally from Des Moines, Iowa, was assigned by his company to establish a manufacturing facility in Kenya. When I was 7 and my brother was 10, our parents moved us back to Iowa. It was quite an adjustment. My British accent stood out because I had attended an international school in Kenya.

I was first exposed to Rotary during family excursions to game reserves outside Nairobi. I remember seeing Rotary wheels gracing the side of schools, clinics, and community projects that Rotary members had supported. While I knew nothing about Rotary at the time, I understood that the wheel stood for something good.

My early years in Kenya shaped my worldview. I took a strong interest in economic and community development in East Africa. During college at the University of Iowa, I spent a summer in Kenya to study wildlife management, examining how tourism can be both beneficial and detrimental to local culture and development.

I met my wife, Aimee, in college. At graduation, Aimee wanted to pursue an advanced degree in environmental sciences and geography, while I chose anthropology, specializing in African studies and development administration. We both enrolled in the University of Florida, where, as part of my research, I reviewed the operations of international development agencies and examined the way projects were implemented to ensure sustainability. That was where I became reacquainted with Rotary. Impressed by Rotary's commitment to local and international partnerships, I decided to apply for a job.

I started at Rotary in 2001 and for the first 13 years worked in several fund



development roles. I helped launch Every Rotarian, Every Year, the funding initiative that encourages members to contribute to the Annual Fund each year.

I've been director of Membership Development since 2014. I lead a global team that provides the tools, resources, and best practices to clubs so they continue to deliver an irresistible club experience that is attractive to existing and prospective members.

One of my highlights at Rotary was to bear witness to the transformative votes by the Council on Legislation in 2016 to grant clubs greater flexibility in meeting frequency, format, and attendance, as well as the types of membership they offer, and by the 2019 Council to elevate Rotaract as a distinct and valued membership type. I'm proud to be part of these changes.

I used to play competitive soccer and have coached youth soccer for more than 20 years. I run a soccer program for kids with special needs. As a player, coach, and parent, I've always valued team sports for the social, emotional, and physical values that extend beyond the playing field.

I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in 2015 as a polio eradication fundraiser for the Rotary Club of Evanston. I have been a Rotary member since 2014 and served as club president in 2022-23. I hope to climb Kilimanjaro with my son, Dillon (pictured when he was younger, on the left, with me and his brother, Ben), to celebrate his recent high school graduation, visit my birthplace, and perhaps raise a little money to End Polio Now! ■

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Letters to the editor

FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES

I am a Rotary member and a physician. The cover article about the initiative to improve maternal health in Nigeria ["A labor of love," April] describes a much-needed program. However, there was no mention of an opportunity to make a huge positive difference at almost no cost: dispense iron pills and have all reproductive age women take one every other day.

A recent special issue of the *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics* addresses this issue fully and directly. One article points out that iron deficiency is "the world's most common malady"; it "affects 3 billion people, including 50% of pregnant women."

Another says "it has become abundantly clear that when [iron deficiency] is present during pregnancy, there is an increased risk for several adverse obstetric outcomes and that the developing fetus is at risk for, among other disorders, neuro-developmental impairment that may manifest in adulthood."

[The recommended] treatment is straightforward and easily accomplished. Iron pills cost little and, when taken every other day, will make a huge difference for mothers and babies. From a Rotary perspective, this approach would be a cost-effective way to make a huge difference, and it is one that would garner support from Rotary members because it is simple, direct, and impactful.

Dan Morhaim, Pikesville, Maryland

I was disappointed when I read the article "A labor of love" to learn that The Rotary Foundation is now involved in projects promoting contraception.

I am no doubt in a minority, but you need to know that some of your members find this practice objectionable. It seems to me that once upon a time, Rotary stayed away from controversial issues such as this, but apparently those days are past.

I recognize the many good things that TRF does and am a multiple Paul Harris Fellow, but now I have mixed feelings about our Foundation. For now, I will be directing my donations to the PolioPlus Fund.

Mark Baker, Sublimity, Oregon



BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Thank you for presenting Claire Chiang's belief that "business could be a force for change," which led her to create a marketing platform to curate work done by women in the rural sector ["Part of the movement," April]. By working directly with the producers, more money gets to these women, which Chiang calls "communitarian capitalism."

This is an example of "capitalism done right." I'm involved in the Atlanta chapter of [the nonprofit organization] Conscious Capitalism. I see every day that capitalism does work; we need only guardrails for safety and fairness.

Hal Schlenger, Marietta, Georgia

FRUITFUL PROJECTS

I read with much interest the wonderful article "Food of the future" [April]. The projects described are very similar to what we are doing in the Ecuadorian Amazon thanks to one of The Rotary Foundation's first global grants in the environment area of focus. The Rota-ract Club of Cumbayá, Ecuador, and the Rotary Clubs of Rumiñahui, Ecuador, and Medford, Oregon (with the support of several other clubs), are partnering [on a project] with three local NGOs. Villagers are canoeing into the Amazon to harvest seeds needed to recapture their traditional foods.

OVERHEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In March, we profiled Rotary member Isis Mejias, whose mission to expand access to clean water was aided by a global grant scholarship.

It always impresses me when someone uses their talents for the greater good, in such a selfless way ... May the spirit of Rotary continue to fuel her passions!

Scott Bucklin
► via Facebook

Thank you for highlighting this important subject and for all that Rotary does to advance innovation and problem solving. Thank you, Isis Mejias, for your contribution!

Roby Whitehouse
► via LinkedIn

In addition to species mentioned in the article, like breadfruit, we are including over 90 other useful and super-nutritious fruit and nut species. These include camu-camu, which has 100 times more vitamin C than lemons; chonta and morete palms, whose fruits provide 10 times the vitamin A of carrots; and *Theobroma gileri*, which can be made into a chocolate that is delicious and refreshing.

After enough produce is grown to increase the nutrition of the villagers — currently one-third are considered malnourished — we plan to help them market their surplus produce as an economic development project, just like what is described in the article.

Those wishing additional information or wanting to help can contact me at rotarymedford.org.

Chuck Root, Ashland, Oregon

I was delighted to read “Food of the future,” and I’m very happy that Rotary devotes time to important issues like these. I can’t think of something else that simultaneously improves people’s diet and health, improves rural communities and in particular the lives of women, and addresses some of the grave threats to the environment.

Stories like these are truly inspirational. They do such a great service to our communities and enhance Rotary’s public image.

Michael J. Terrelonge, Mandeville, Jamaica

A STIRRING STORY

The story about Gabi Fleury [“Interspecies diplomat,” April] touched me on many levels: pursuing a dream, the frailty of life, the benefits of higher education, overcoming adversity, etc. I will tell my 17-year-old daughter about her journey, especially since she too wants to pursue a career in natural resources/wildlife and is most likely heading to university in Wisconsin, just like Fleury did.

Chris Stein, Marine on St. Croix, Minnesota



A farmer plants a breadfruit tree in Haiti

NOT A POLITICAL ISSUE

I was saddened to read that Rotarian Verlin Janssen feels that references to “climate change” reflect an “ultraliberal bias” and that there is a “political bias in every issue” of *Rotary* magazine [“Unwanted message,” Letters to the editor, April].

The broad scientific consensus is that climate change is real and that it needs the attention of all governments and the general public. This includes Rotary members. While government responses to climate change are political and should be well-debated, the existence of climate change is not a political issue. Drawing attention to climate change and how others are affected by and responding to it makes us all better educated in making choices that reflect our own personal values, beyond those of political parties.

Harry Panjer, Courtenay, British Columbia

It is too bad that we often use hot-button words like “ultraliberal” and “political” in our discourse about the issues to which Rotarians may contribute to potential solutions. Instead, I would think words like “truth,” “fair,” “goodwill,” and “beneficial” are better tests of our Rotary conversations.

As a graduate student in the late 1960s and early ’70s, I admit I scoffed at colleagues who were alarmed at scientific reports of atmospheric warming and polar melting. Today, the evidence is undeniable that ice caps are melting, sea levels are rising, and that natural disasters are on the increase. I am proud that

RI sponsors grants to support efforts to counter these trends.

Rotary International has been a leader in seeking solutions to some of the world’s most troubling problems. Let’s continue on that course without rancor and divisiveness.

Jack T. Pitzer, Alexandria, Virginia

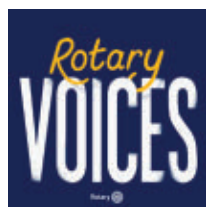
PARTNERS IN PROMOTING GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING

Rotary International and the U.S. Department of State have a shared mission: to make the world a better and more secure place, and to promote peace, human rights, and economic prosperity. Together, we also tackle global challenges such as climate change, public health threats, and conflict resolution. That shared mission is why the connection between the Department and Rotary has never been more essential.

For decades, you have welcomed policy experts to engage with members on timely foreign policy topics and officers who have spoken more broadly about their own experience working in diplomacy. Not even a global pandemic prevented these conversations from happening. The advent of regular virtual meetings has allowed us to connect with clubs where officials may have not previously traveled. Our dialogues have been an asset to the Department’s work because it has allowed us to hear directly from local communities, both in the U.S. and worldwide, on how you see our current foreign policy efforts — and this makes us better diplomats.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, fostering global understanding and cooperation among nations is paramount to addressing shared global challenges and advancing mutual prosperity. At the forefront of this endeavor stand active civic organizations like Rotary. The Department of State recognizes the invaluable contributions of Rotary in increasing world understanding through humanitarian aid, youth exchanges, peacebuilding, and dialogue among members. As local business and community leaders from diverse backgrounds and professions, your members serve as catalysts for collaboration, meaningful action, and important dialogue on today’s most pressing challenges globally.

Bill Russo, former U.S. assistant secretary of state for global public affairs (2023–24)



ON THE PODCAST

No country has greater instances of maternal death than Nigeria. For April’s cover story, the magazine visited a Rotary Foundation Programs of Scale initiative addressing the problem head on. Check out the *Rotary Voices* podcast to hear an audio version narrated by Emmy award-winning storyteller Andy Choi. Listen at on.rotary.org/podcast.



THE SPECIALIST

By the power vested in me

A marriage solemnizer has presided over 500 weddings and counting

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ghim Bok Chew
Rotary Club of
Bugis Junction,
Singapore

Marriage
solemnizer

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is a catalyst
for sustainable
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MEET FRANCIS "TUSU" TUSUBIRA.

A founding partner of an information and communications technology consulting firm, Tusubira is a member of the Rotary Club of Kampala-North, Uganda, and served on Rotary's Strategic Planning Committee when our Action Plan was developed. He's also a member of The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers.



Q. The Action Plan asks us to increase our impact. How should we think about doing that?

TUSU: Here's an analogy: When your children are in school, it's easy to get excited about a great grade or test result — the success of that immediate moment. But as parents, we know we also need to take the long view. What kind of people are our children becoming? What will they do for the world after we're gone?

Real impact is something that resonates well beyond the work we do on a project. It's sustainable long after we have left the scene.

This definition of impact requires us to think about service in a different way. It is not what we give to communities that creates sustainability. It's whether the project enables communities to take ownership and drive the transformation on their own after we are gone. A good project is a catalyst for sustainable change.

Q. Why is it important to measure our impact?

TUSU: So we can be smarter about what we need to start doing, what we need to continue doing, and what we need to stop doing. It's essential to the future of our organization. Major funding agencies demand evidence of impact. Young people — the future of Rotary — have grown up asking institutions and organizations for greater accountability and transparency.

Q. What changes are you already seeing in Rotary?

TUSU: I'm heartened that Rotary is identifying consistent ways to assess and measure results. This way, we'll all be on the same page when it comes to planning projects and identifying impact.

I'm also seeing a greater appetite for risk. Less proscriptive funding will promote smart risk-taking and will encourage people to learn from — rather than fear — setbacks.

There's greater support for clubs to focus their efforts on a few key areas, rather than trying to do too many projects. Instead of starting by asking "What are the deficits here?" clubs are learning how to build on a community's strengths and seeking out what I call the "pressure points" — areas where targeted, concentrated work can set in motion a cascade of change.

I'm also excited by the new Programs of Scale initiative. These projects have the longer time frame necessary to make a sustainable difference. Most important, Programs of Scale incentivize clubs to work together and recognize them for doing that. If you want to provide clean water sources, why would you want 50 clubs doing 50 different projects? We united against polio. Let's unite to solve other challenges facing our world.

Q. What makes you feel optimistic?

TUSU: Our work eradicating polio proves we are an organization capable of genuine and lasting impact. And I'm excited about the rising generation of Rotarians and Rotaractors who are bringing their commitment to sustainable solutions. We can do this.

Besides that, my name, Tusubira, literally means "we hope"!

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Why you need a ‘third place’

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Sink it and they will come

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

vehicle, and artillery to form reefs.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

facts to be sunk,” explains Dworak.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

— CLARA GERMANI

BY THE NUMBERS

7.4

SQUARE MILES

Artificial reef footprint in U.S. waters

14%

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

900

Species of fish in the Sea of Cortez

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

Short takes

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



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



PROFILE

Olympic spirit

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

Ernie Peterson
Rotary Club
of Deland
(Breakfast),
Florida

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

People of action around the globe

By Brad Webber

Belize

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

Rotaract
Club of Belize City



35.6%
Share of Belize's
population
younger than 15



Colombia

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

Rotary
Club of Cúcuta-Ciudad
de Arboles

96%
Literacy rate
in Colombia

1828

Belfast Botanic
Gardens and Palm
House founded

Northern Ireland

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



Liberia

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



\$24.4 billion

Global sanitary napkin
market in 2021

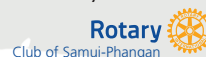


236,000

Drowning deaths
worldwide each year

Thailand

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



GOODWILL

6 tips to elevate your elevator pitch

Attract members and supporters with a 60-second speech

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

1 Present your club as an opportunity.

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

2 Keep it simple.

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

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

3 Remember your enthusiasm.

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

4 Cut the keywords.

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

5 Build the hype.

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

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

6 Find common ground.

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

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

— BETH KOTZ

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



YOUR PROJECT PLANNING EXPERTS



WALLY GARDINER
Canada, District 5360

CADRE TITLE:

Cadre Adviser and Former Technical Coordinator for
Community Economic Development

OCCUPATION:

Retired CEO, Gardiner Computer Consulting Inc.



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

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

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

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ESSAY

Where everybody knows your name

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

By Richard Kyte



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



8-14 September 2024

Celebrate Community Week



Kiwanis



Optimist
INTERNATIONAL

Rotary




For help developing projects or connecting with other service organizations' clubs, or if you have questions related to Celebrate Community Week, write to rotary.service@rotary.org.

During the week of 8-14 September, Rotary and Rotaract clubs around the world will partner with nearby Kiwanis, Lions, and Optimist clubs on service projects related to health and wellness, food insecurity and hunger, education and literacy, and the environment. When we join together, there's no limit on the positive impact we can create in our communities. So start planning today!

- ▶ Mark yourself as "going" to the Celebrate Community 2024 Facebook event.
- ▶ Share pictures on social media during that week using the hashtag [#CelebrateCommunity](https://www.facebook.com/celebratecommunity).





It's time to consider organ donation

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

By Neil Steinberg

Photography by Gayatri Ganju

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Another day at the blood laundromat

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

By Neil Steinberg • Illustration by Weston Wei

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

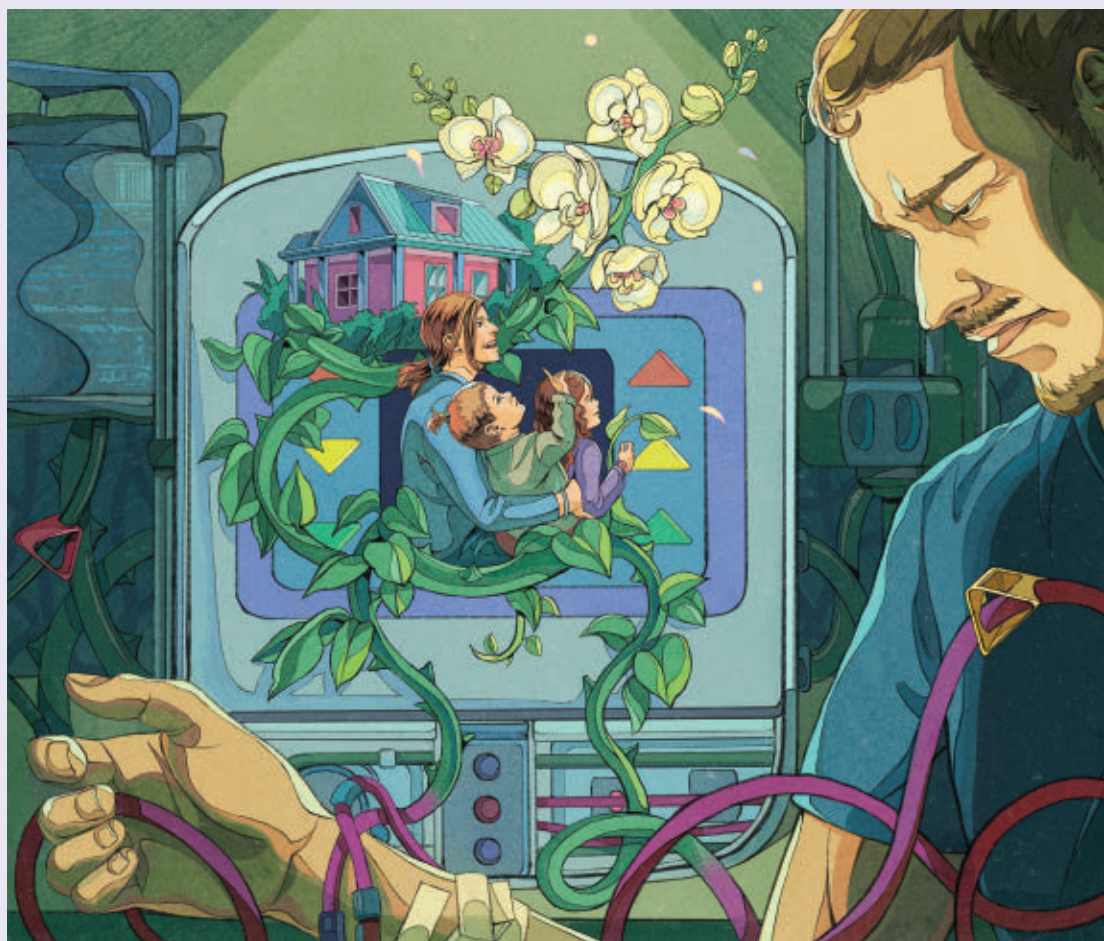
get it, and so die of the raft of medical problems that come with untreated kidney disease. If your kidneys can't remove waste, it builds up in your body, poisoning you. If your kidneys can't pass liquid efficiently, fluid also builds up — your lungs fill. You literally can drown, slowly. It's a bad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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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





You've got a friend

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

By Kate Silver

Photograph by
Jovelle Tamayo







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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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







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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

— Ron Bowden, Rotary Club of Toowoomba East, Australia

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

that affected his household — was something even more profound.

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

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

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

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



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

THE ART OF MAKING FRIENDS

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

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

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

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

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



Mother Courage

A sense of adventure and the ability to adapt — especially in the company of a good friend — may be the secret to thriving as you age

BY CAROLINE PAUL

Illustration by Helena Perez Garcia

There's no way around it: The weather sucks. Wind from the wrong direction, whitecaps, gray skies. As an even bigger swell approaches, I brace myself with a forward paddle stroke.

I'm afloat on the California side of Lake Tahoe, perched on a stand-up paddleboard. Except I'm not standing. Instead, I've been paddling on my knees for the past 20 minutes, hoping the angle or height of the waves will somehow change. But no, here they are slapping at me from the side, getting as high as 3 feet.

I'm not new to stand-up paddleboarding, but I am new to paddling so long like this. Once or twice I gamely clamber to my feet, take a few strokes, see a large wave heading my way, and sink back down, clutching at the heavy gear bag strapped to the bow and filled with items necessary for a night of camping. The wave hits. The board dips and slides, and my arms shoot skyward for balance. Then it has passed, with another heading my way. What's more, the weather is changing for the worse, with the wind rising and the sky a roiling gray.

Ahead of me, on another paddleboard, is my good friend Sue Norman. Sue is 65, but you can't tell when you look at her. Her skin has none of the wrinkles you would expect from someone who has been outdoors so much. Her

dangling earrings give her a slight hippie vibe, but that's confounded by the Patagonia jacket and surf shorts. She has no gray in her short light-brown hair, and she doesn't dye it either. Finally, to cap off her agelessness, she is still impossibly lean from years of backcountry skiing, as well as stand-up paddleboard racing on this very lake.

I add this last point because it's worth noting that Sue, too, is now paddling from a kneeling position. "We never get an east wind in summer!" she shouts over to me, shaking her head. "I didn't expect this!"

Behind Sue is her little dog, Pearl, resplendent in a red-and-yellow life jacket, looking unhappy. Every so often water sprays up, and Pearl half closes her eyes and turns her head with the repressed outrage of a nun.

Behind both of us is a 12-year-old. Seth, who is also my godson, has the luxury of being in a more stable and much faster one-person ocean canoe. Sue yells above the wind for Seth to hurry up; in response, he languidly dips his paddle into the water, and then sits back and looks around. He's not worried about tipping or falling off, and he's making it clear in that preteen way that paddling near us is a bore.

I've known Sue for almost 40 years. We met through river friends from my days as a whitewater guide. We bonded over a shared love of animals and reading, her

boundless curiosity and deep intelligence, a need for more female friends who loved the outdoors, and, eventually, mutually flexible work schedules that allowed for overseas wilderness expeditions (I became a firefighter, and she a hydrologist for the Forest Service). Even though we have always lived in separate places, we see each other when we can, so it's not unusual to find us on a lake together.

But I am here today for a specific reason. A few years ago, the finely tuned trajectory of Sue's life suddenly quit unspooling as it had been so carefully planned. I'm here to see if she can help me understand how the outdoors played a part in adjusting, learning, and eventually embracing the unexpected.

From his canoe, Seth, annoyed, calls out to Sue, his voice breaking with puberty but resonant with the whine of young kids everywhere. "Mom," he shouts, "when are we going to get there?"

Mom?

When she was in her 50s, Sue's twin brother, David, became an unexpected father. His partner was 20 and, with two other children, already overwhelmed. The two struggled with separate personal crises, and Sue could tell that the household was deteriorating. She began to read about child development and realized that there was little time left wherein their 3-year-old son, Seth, could emerge from the difficulties of his upbringing relatively unscathed. Sue stepped in.

By stepped in, I really mean *leaped*. She asked for legal guardianship. Both David and Seth's mother saw what Sue could offer: stability, discipline, security. Sue filed the paperwork. She was Aunt Sue to Seth at first, but soon she became Mom.

Parenting, Sue found out quickly, was not only stressful. It was exceedingly lonely. She tells me now how much she misses her old friends, many of whom could not adjust to this new Sue. They dialed back interactions; many peeled away completely. I don't escape this analysis, either: I wasn't the attentive friend I should have been. I didn't live nearby, yet why didn't I check in more often, make plans to visit with more frequency? I can only think that in my own (kid-less) way, I too was totally thrown by this new Sue, gallant

renderings of wildness in no way resembled the feral antics of a real human child.

Lisa agreed — tentatively at first — to stand by Sue. They would try it: raise Seth together, even though they lived apart about half the time in the houses they owned before their marriage. Still, Sue confesses to me, she thought that Lisa would leave in those early years. Instead, Lisa became another adult role model and steady beacon of love and caring for Seth.

DURING SETH'S YOUNGER YEARS, Sue found that the wilderness made a good playground, and she and Seth would often embark on small excursions. In this way, while Seth burned off his incandescent energy, she could pivot into familiar terrain and shrug off some of the stresses of parenthood. They rode horses. They sledged. They swam. They rafted down rivers and paddled across lakes.

These past few years, Sue has invited neighborhood kids and their parents to her beautiful but untamed property in the Sierra foothills. The focal point on this piece of land is a big pond on which I once watched the kids play a game that looked like "step on the back of the paddleboard until you fall off." Later they ran off to look at goats and play Uno in a horse corral. The parents sat in folding chairs under the fading light, paying no attention to their offspring, who floated by only as disembodied squeals and shouts now and then, and that was enough. Even Sue seemed to shed some of her anxiety. "I believe in the power of free play," she explained to me once, and there I saw it happening, in real time, for both adults and children alike.

Which brings us here to Lake Tahoe, where we have finally arrived at our destination. I jump off the board in the shallows, shrug off my wet life jacket, and survey our temporary home. It's a sandy spit just inside a bay and surrounded by high mountain peaks. The beach is only 15 yards wide or so, giving way to thick Sierra forest. A fishing boat idles just offshore, but otherwise we are alone. The wind has dropped. The clouds unfold and regroup, then unfold again as dusk approaches, and I hold on to the hope they will clear completely. When it gets dark I want to

I'm here to see if Sue can help me understand how the outdoors played a part in adjusting, learning, and eventually embracing the unexpected.

but unusually and drastically discombobulated. Her situation made it starkly clear how precarious a life plan could be.

I'm presenting this new stage in Sue's life as if it was thrust upon her. This is simply the way I initially digested it. She chose to step in. But how much of a choice is it if you've already made yourself into the person you want to be by your mid-50s, and that person is loyal and brave? *Of course* Sue was going to intervene.

It was murkier for Sue's wife, Lisa, who was surely even more blindsided by this turn of events than Sue herself. Lisa was serious and quiet, someone for whom the only reasonable chaos was that of her dogs running mad, merry circles in her living room. Yes, she took breathtaking photos of wild mustangs for a living, but those beautiful

point out some constellations. As I am Seth's godmother, surely this is one of my responsibilities. He should be able to spot the Big Dipper; he should know the North Star. If we're lucky and the clouds relent, we can also gawk at my favorite star, Antares, flashing its magnificent beacon of green-yellow-red on the horizon.

Our dinner is simple: burritos and jelly beans. We haven't brought forks, or a stove, or a tent for that matter. Instead: a change of clothes, a flashlight, a sleeping bag and pad, a few protein bars. A rain poncho will double as a groundsheet. This is lean and mean camping, no fuss — though, despite Sue's strict instructions, I secretly packed a pillow, a camp chair, and a thermos of coffee for the morning. "I have a new motto," I tell her in defense. "*Why be tortured?*"

Sue suggests a walk through the magnificent forest to a nearby beach. We plunge into the trees, looking for the path that Sue promises is there. Pearl zigzags ahead, driven a little mad, perhaps, by the smells of creatures we can't see. Soon enough, we come upon scat. Sue points and pronounces it bear poop.

"Hold it, there are bears here?" I ask.

"They're timid bears," Sue assures me.

We don't find the path, but we find the beach, where we stomp around until I say that it's getting late. I suggest we find that elusive path and return. Which we begin to do until we get lost. Well, lost-ish. The path materializes, then peters out, revealing that it wasn't the right path to begin with.

We don't panic. Instead, we take turns hugging a cedar; when you are with a kid, hugging a tree suddenly isn't hokey. Seth shows us a sugar pine, and we each smell it, swooning over its maple syrup redolence. As we near what Sue promises is our beach, she suddenly points down. Disturbed soil indicates that the fallen tree branch next to it has been moved. "See that?" she says. "A bear pushed this over to look for ants underneath."

"Um," I say, laughing nervously. "Neato?"

We aren't near the beach after all, and we bushwhack for a little while longer, the light fading. But Sue and Seth don't seem worried. They are guessing at the genus of trees, calling for Pearl to stick closer, arguing about the way home.

Despite the unique circumstances of Sue's life now, there is also much about it that tracks with others at this stage. We may not find ourselves parenting a 12-year-old, but disruptions and changes of circumstances can loom, ranging from retirement to health changes to the death of a loved one. No wonder anxiety is diagnosed more often than depression or cognitive issues in older adults, affecting up to 20 percent of us.

Yet it can be avoided, or at least diluted. In the most comprehensive research to date, a Swedish study of almost 400,000 cross-country skiers showed that they had a significantly lower chance of developing clinical anxiety. Scientists credit the physical fitness routine for this feat, but what about the fact that these skiers were also exercising in the great outdoors? After all, Mother Nature is nonjudgmental about our human foibles, and she'll wrap us in darkness not because of who we are but because her sun sets at this time, a minute earlier than yesterday, and if you misjudge that, well, that's your business.

WE FINALLY FIND CAMP just as twilight is pinking the sky. The three of us shuffle around trying to find flat ground on which to throw down our sleeping bags.

"So what do we do about those bears?" I ask.

"Pearl will scare them away," Sue says.

"Pearl is the size of a house cat," I answer, dismayed.

Sue shrugs, remarkably sanguine. She alternates between explaining gently that these South Lake Tahoe bears are wallflowers and throwing declarative sentences at Seth: "Brush your teeth!" "Wash your face!" "Bears are shy, Caroline, it'll be fine."

I decide to hope that Sue has offered a considered answer, though I know it's more likely she is distracted by

parental multitasking. We get into our sleeping bags and Seth reads from his favorite joke book, insisting we guess the punchline. (*What did one vampire say to another? Answer: Is that you coffin?*) The jokes are terrible — *What do you get when you cross a ghost with a firecracker? Answer: Bamboo* — but we find ourselves laughing anyway. Maybe jokes are like camp food, delicious when consumed outside in nature.

Finally, Sue declares that it's time to sleep. The sky is too cloudy for stars, but my disappointment quickly dissipates due to the huge silence that surrounds us. It is not the silence of an empty room. It is the deep, nurturing silence of still water, huge slabs of towering rocks, thick cloud cover, no wind. It is the silence of thousands of trees, interconnected, breathing.

Even with my pillow, I wake up constantly. But I don't care. Bits and pieces of favored constellations wink through parted clouds. The quarter moon slides across the sky; I open my eyes to see it to the left, open my eyes again a little while later and it rests above the horizon. I decide that fitful rest is perfect. Lying under this slowly dancing expanse should not be wasted with deep sleep. I even find myself hoping for a bear. What better way to end this beautiful night than with a magnificent wild creature. Sadly, no bear appears, though I listen intently, rewarded instead by a deep quietude, which becomes almost a sound in itself.

Near dawn it starts to rain. I pull my ground cloth over me and fall back to sleep. A slight chance of drizzle had been predicted, but when I wake again it's still raining. Sue says that the rain doesn't look as if it's going to stop, so perhaps we should pack up and head for home.

The water is glassy and there is little wind. The paddle back is easy. We stay in close formation and, despite the rain, everyone is in a good mood. I had wanted to see in real time how nature helped Sue parent, but I am also struck by deeper lessons, ones that both Sue and I needed to learn. As the rain comes down and the invisible bears recede, I think about how I have always lauded the risk-assessment skills outdoor adventure constantly teaches. Wear the life jacket, bring the flashlight, pack the pillow. Paddle on your knees if you have to. In this way outdoor adventure has given me the confidence to control what I can. But the bigger gift may be the flip side of that coin: the way Mother Nature also asks me to cede control. East wind, yep. Morning rain, yep. Sudden nephew who is also your son. Yep. You see the conditions and you do what you can to paddle anyway.

Ahead of me, Sue apprises Seth of their schedule for the day: breakfast, then a shower, then theater camp. "Remember to take off that wet shirt as soon as we get to the car so you don't stay cold."

Seth huffs something back. Sue laughs. They paddle toward home, and I follow. ■

A resident of San Francisco, Caroline Paul is the author of six books. This essay is adapted from Tough Broad: From Boogie Boarding to Wing Walking — How Outdoor Adventure Improves Our Lives as We Age, published by Bloomsbury Publishing Inc. and available at bookstores and online. © 2024 by Caroline Paul.

OUR CLUBS

VIRTUAL VISIT

The power of partners

Rotary Club of Mitchell River (Bairnsdale), Australia

Two years of drought already had taken a punishing toll when bushfires flared across Australia in late 2019. For several months into 2020 flames raced from forest to farmland and other populated areas, killing about 30 people and causing about \$1.5 billion in insured losses. With more than 60 million acres of the country scorched, the farmers were among those most impacted. “They’re up against the wall,” says Bernie Farquhar, a past president of the Rotary Club of Mitchell River (Bairnsdale), located in a region of the state of Victoria where one-fifth of the land is under agricultural production. And the pain was hardly limited to financial loss. “The mental health side of things in these situations has been profound.”

The club had previously worked on drought-related projects for sheep farmers, partnering with the Rotary Club of Canterbury, a suburb of Melbourne, to secure a Rotary Australia World Community Service grant of about \$35,000 to purchase feed dispensers. The partnership paid school fees and purchased uniforms

for children of farm families, acquired water tanks, and inaugurated a mentorship program that paired experienced farmers with younger ones to provide direction on how to cope with the drought.

Shortly after the fires ignited, the Mitchell River club joined with four other clubs in the region to form the East Gippsland Fire Aid committee. The group brought in about \$900,000 in grants and donations to support farmers, including with feed, fencing, and cash vouchers.

The fire also spurred the club to address the mental health effects on farmers. Club members would check in on the community and organize gatherings for supportive conversation over tea and cake. The wife of a farmer who had died by suicide was left with a farm that resembled “a moonscape,” says club member Leanne Jennings. Besides providing money, the Rotarians made personal efforts to comfort the family. “That care factor lifts you so much.”

That comfort has extended to the larger community, including through sponsorship of a weekend outing to Melbourne for about 30 youth soccer and cricket players. “It freed up the parents from having to care for the kids,” Farquhar says. “The kids got the benefit of being together and talking about what they were going through.”

The club discovered that getting people together was central to their recovery. “They’re so used to being by themselves. It’s a massive wall. The farmers knew each other as neighbors but had not talked to each other” about their shared hardship, says Farquhar, “so we brought the com-

munity together.” Community halls, operated by the East Gippsland Shire Council, were scarcely attended before the fires. “Now they have meetings every four or five months. The halls are full.”

Building community connection has brought newfound purpose to the club, which was chartered in 1981. Most club members are retired, with an average age of 65. A popular farmers and makers market provides a regular revenue stream for residents as well as the club. Some of those proceeds are channeled into the club’s Junior Community Award, a program which for nearly three decades has engaged 10- to 12-year-olds in service and education over a 12-week period.

Those projects have been mainstays, but old ways of doing business have not. When Farquhar, a second-generation Rotarian, joined the club in 1999 it was predominantly men who sat around contemplating projects to fund. “We were old-fashioned knife-and-forkers, sitting around and drinking red wine,” he says. “We’re a club that has gone from being very formal to very informal.”

Monday evening meetings take place at a bistro and are characterized by friendship, transparency, and care for each other, says Michael Nelson, another past president. Jennings has her own characterization of the group: “We get in and do the job.”

Thinking big has paid off, says Farquhar. A partnership with the local district of Lions Clubs International, for example, operates three mobile timber mills that have made trees downed during the fire into millions of dollars’ worth of lumber



Members of the Mitchell River (Bairnsdale) club, including (from left) Leanne Jennings, Michael Nelson, and Bernie Farquhar, are helping farmers recover from 2019 bushfires.

for fencing and other farm needs. Rotary clubs purchased the first two \$17,000 mills, and the Lions invested nearly \$500,000 to add trucks, trailers, and heavy equipment. “The two organizations are so closely aligned that it was a breeze,” Farquhar says.

Area leaders for the Lions share that enthusiasm. “This project is simply too large and too complicated to have been achieved by either organization alone,” says Steve Boyce, a Lions Clubs International past district governor who now serves as fundraising and partnerships national coordinator for Lions Australia.

“The skills that have been identified, the access to funding, the passion of delivery — all this has only been possible to achieve due to the outstanding partnership between the world’s largest service organizations.”

Rotarians and Lions make a point of ensuring that the farmers are involved in every step when the mills are operated on-site. “We didn’t just come in and take over,” says Farquhar.

“We’re in the fourth year after the disaster,” he says. The farmers “love hearing that we’ve helped them and now are helping others.” — BRAD WEBBER

FOSTERING WINNING PARTNERSHIPS

Rotary members in Victoria, Australia, teamed up with a district of Lions Clubs International on a timber-milling venture to aid farmers after devastating wildfires in 2019-20. Here are some tips for working with another service organization or any partner:

Divide responsibilities

Identify and eliminate areas of duplication by communicating which organization will cover a specific duty. “By having a joint meeting we realized we could be more effective if we separated the areas and had each organization take a certain task,” says Bernie Farquhar of the Rotary Club of Mitchell River (Bairnsdale).

Meet partners where they are

Don’t make people come to you. Ask how you can be of service to potential allies. Help them with their projects. Be a friend to their organization and often it will turn into a reciprocal relationship.

Network like crazy

Not everyone loves a confab, “but going to those coalition meetings, going to partner events, that face time is so important,” says Christina Holt of the University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development. “Making those connections and making those relationships enables everything. It builds the trust that’s the foundation for everything else.”

Think big picture

Look for commonalities and areas where the service groups have a shared passion. “The beauty of a coalition is those multiple partners coming together and doing together what one of them can’t accomplish alone,” Holt says.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Growth strategy

An entrepreneur makes it his business to help



A past Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar, Paul Shmotolokha is CEO of a company that provides solar-powered generators in disaster situations.

Days after Hurricane Ida slammed into Louisiana in August 2021, Paul Shmotolokha followed the Grammy-winning band Lost Bayou Ramblers as the musicians rode through devastated neighborhoods on a flatbed trailer. He watched with wonder as the group's morale-boosting traveling concert lured residents out of damaged homes for tunes, dancing, and refreshments.

His company's solar battery units provided the juice for the musicians' amplifiers and instruments, and powered community Wi-Fi and charging stations that helped thousands of people reconnect with loved ones. "It gave me a buzz about how much you can directly impact people," Shmotolokha says. "It was my first experience working with NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] in the field to help people, not make money."

As chief executive of a solar energy company, Shmotolokha has enjoyed long careers in telecommunications and renewable energy that started with building cable TV markets and progressed to supplying portable power units. He credits much of his success and interest in serving others to the year he spent in Chile in 1991 as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar. "I can't emphasize enough how formative that year was," he says. "It started my journey of being able to learn to walk in somebody else's shoes."

Shmotolokha grew up in Thousand Oaks, California, and was a member of his school's Interact club. His parents told him many stories about their flight from Ukraine during World War II, which influenced his decision to study international relations at Georgetown University, focusing on Soviet history and U.S. Cold War policies.

During his senior year at Georgetown, he learned about Rotary scholarships and applied through the Rotary Club of Westlake Village in California. He chose the Institute of International Studies at the University of Chile in Santiago because it allowed him to use his fluency in Spanish and continue studying international relations involving

Latin America. He joined four other scholars hosted by the Rotary Club of Santiago, traveling frequently.

He had many opportunities to spar with fellow students who didn't share his worldview. The courses were dialogue-focused, with group discussion daily. "I listened to views that opened my mind and learned to see from a non-U.S. perspective," he says.

He had funding for only one year of a two-year master's program, so he joined his father and brother in scouting business opportunities in a newly independent Ukraine. For the next several years, he helped introduce paid satellite television in former Soviet bloc countries. "They were thirsty for knowledge, and with satellite, we could bring it anywhere," he says.

In 1996, he was recruited by Metromedia International Telecommunications, a U.S. company owned by television mogul John Kluge, to lead a group tasked with launching low-cost wireless cable TV to multi-family apartments in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and, later, Kyrgyzstan.

Central Asia was a new experience. "I learned quickly that you have to respect the culture to succeed," he says. "Otherwise, they will block you. That's what happened to my predecessors. They came in with arrogance. I went in with great humility, which I had learned as a scholar."

In 2003, he transitioned from

expanding telecommunications empires to selling equipment to them. In Bellingham, Washington, he headed a unit at Alpha Technologies, which manufactured power systems for broadband and telecommunications companies.

Again, his scholarship and education helped. "I'd sit across the table from Brazilians, and I'd understand their issues," he says. "I took my experience as a Rotary scholar and grew the business thirtyfold."

Alpha Technologies eventually acquired OutBack Power, a leading brand in off-grid solar power, which became part of a division that Shmotolokha oversaw. The portable battery systems he was selling used lead acid. But Shmotolokha started to watch the emerging lithium iron phosphate technology and knew the time had come to shift. Lithium can perform in hot environments, is lighter, and lasts longer.

In 2019, he launched his own company, New Use Energy, which supplies solar and battery generators. The lightweight units can be charged by solar panels, generators, or through the electric grid and moved to remote locations to supply hours of power.

Solar generators have advantages over those powered by gas. Fuel to run gas generators can be scarce in disaster situations or difficult to transport to remote areas. The generators themselves can be dangerous due to the risk of carbon mon-

oxide poisoning or engine fires that can happen when spilling gas on a hot engine. They emit significant noise and air pollution as well. After Hurricane Laura hit Louisiana and Texas in 2020, more people died from carbon monoxide poisoning than from the hurricane itself.

The company's major clients come from the telecommunications, emergency management, and film industries. Shmotolokha got in touch with disaster relief agencies, which eventually led him back to Rotary. Heidi Rickels, a Rotarian in Montana, contacted him looking for better generators for a project she was launching to provide portable power for Ukrainian hospitals with the help of the Rotary clubs of Kharkiv New Level, Ukraine, and Evergreen, Colorado.

"It was a serendipitous moment," recalls Rickels. "I was driving home in the freezing cold in Montana, thinking of the plight of people in Ukraine enduring a bitter cold winter without power. I did a search for Ukraine and solar generators, and up came Paul and his organization. He has been absolutely amazing to work with."

Shmotolokha hopes to expand his connections with Rotary clubs. Meanwhile, he continues to draw inspiration from his year in Chile and remains in touch with other scholars from the program. "We always talk about how it changed us," he says. — ARNOLD R. GRAHL



Paul Shmotolokha

- **Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar**, University of Chile, 1991
- **Executive development program**, London Business School, 2001
- **Telecommunications executive leadership program**, Tuck School of Business, Dartmouth College, 2018

From left: Shmotolokha (center), a U.S. Army veteran, during joint exercises and (second from right) with his Interact club.

DISPATCHES FROM
OUR SISTER MAGAZINES
ROTARY EN MÉXICO
[ROTARY IN MEXICO]

Turning tires into treasure in Mexico



The Rotary Club of Chetumal worked with Furmex, an organization founded by Rotarians in Mexico to support the country's Rotary clubs, to hold a tire recycling workshop to help people living in poverty learn to create useful products out of waste material and generate income. The 2023 workshop included eight families in the town of Luis Echeverría Álvarez in the municipality of Othón P. Blanco in Quintana Roo state.

During the workshop's 19 weeks (more than 380 hours), five women, three men, and additional family members were trained to convert used and discarded tires into items such as flowerpots, vases, figures of birds and other animals, children's games, and furniture. Participants were given the necessary equipment, tools, and supplies, including worktables and protective gear, to use their new skills for home-based businesses.

District 4195 Governor Jean Baptiste Manel, a member of the Chetumal club, spearheaded the project, which has had a positive impact on the local economy and the environment. His creativity is reflected in his career as an architect of hospitals and residential homes. He is originally from Senegal and retired from the Mexican Social Security Institute. He provided some more details about the project and its results.

How did the project idea arise?

I deal with waste issues a lot, and I see that it is very complicated for municipalities to have infrastructure that allows them to process items such as tires. One day I came across an artisan who works with tires as a raw material, and I

started buying furniture, flowerpots, and other products from him. I noticed that they are very durable.

Then in 2019, the initiative Heart 2 Heart, an alliance of clubs and districts in Mexico and the U.S., invited clubs to participate in a funding opportunity called 100



in 100, and our club submitted a project proposal. Thus arose the idea for a project that would reuse a large number of tires and at the same time create family income. We presented our proposal and won the support of 150,000 pesos, about US\$9,000, from Heart 2 Heart and Furmex. Unfortunately, the pandemic arrived, and we had to stop until 2023, when we managed to reactivate this idea.

How did the community workshop come about?

We spoke with an artisan who works wonders with tires, and we designed the teaching plan. We decided the workshop would run for 16 weeks, Monday to Friday from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. We designed modules for flowerpots, soap

↑ A workshop organized by the Rotary Club of Chetumal trained eight people and their families to convert discarded tires into useful products like flowerpots and furniture.



The project gives new use to tires, which municipalities sometimes cannot process as waste because they lack the infrastructure.

↑ Workshop participants received toolkits and supplies so they could continue their efforts.

holders, animal figures, children's games, and furniture. After that, we spent three weeks setting up the workshop spaces in each of the eight students' homes.

We gave participants worktables, a toolkit, and supplies on the condition that they would completely finish the workshop. Initially 10 people signed up, but along the way two students dropped out, one due to illness and another due to the long distance to travel to the workshop.

The people in the training program are from Luis Echeverría, a community located half an hour from Chetumal. We had previously worked on two water purification plant projects there; the residents have health problems from consuming unfiltered hard water. From the group that manages the water plants, we invited unemployed people to take the tire recycling workshop.

This support was not only training, but also in-kind?

Yes, the participants now have their tools. We give them the supplies they need such as nails,

screws, knives, paints, etc. The raw materials are free, and the electrical energy they use is minimal when working with rechargeable drills and compressors to paint.

Since the workshop concluded, has your club carried out any follow-up?

Yes, recently the immediate past governor of District 4195, Elia Fabiola Zavala Díaz, attended the workshops where people produce and sell items created from waste tires. She also visited a center for minor offenders and proposed the idea of taking the workshop to them so that they could learn a trade.

The closing of the workshop took place in the courtyards of the state government palace, where the workshop participants exhibited more than 200 products for a week. We also approached the state government to receive additional support. The Ministry of Economy communicated with us, and several ideas were generated:

- Create a trademark in the Mexican Institute of Industrial Property. (We are acquiring one for the people's business.)

- Create a cooperative or have families create individual micro-enterprises (the second option is the most viable).
- Obtain government support such as microcredit payments.
- Have spaces to exhibit and sell the crafts at events held by the government.
- Have modules for sale at the Mayan train stations.
- Find a way to reach agreements with transporters to transfer merchandise and raw materials.

Are there plans to repeat the workshop in other communities?

Yes, there are plans to hold another one next year. Meanwhile, there is another effort taking place to set up a student center in a palapa (an open-sided structure with a thatched roof) for young people from the countryside. There are eight tables on loan and enough space for the tires. I also know that one of the workshop participants who graduated in this year's class is teaching the course to other young people in his area.

— MARÍA ELENA
ALCÁNTARA CASTRO

HANDBOOK

‘May peace prevail’

How to make a mark with a peace pole

With a blinding flash, a 900-foot-wide fireball exploded above Hiroshima, Japan, in August 1945. Along with a second atomic bomb dropped a few days later in Nagasaki, the attack led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, ended World War II, and reshaped the nature of war and peace. A decade later, the Japanese spiritual teacher, philosopher, and poet Masahisa Goi began spreading the message “May peace prevail on Earth.” As peace gatherings grew, supporters began handing out posters, stickers, and literature carrying Goi’s simple yet profound message. In the 1970s, people began inscribing the phrase on poles, and today, more than 250,000 peace poles exist in such locations as the remote Canadian arctic and the pyramids of Giza in Egypt (as well as Rotary headquarters in Evanston, Illinois).

Rotary members around the world have dedicated many such poles in parks and public spaces. In Australia, the Rotary Club of Canberra Burley Griffin led an effort to plant 100 peace poles at 100 schools leading up to the 100th anniversary of Rotary’s presence in Australia in 2021.

Each pole dedicated in that campaign has its own story. In Brisbane, an octagonal pole carries the message of peace in the languages of a cohort of Rotary Peace Fellows studying at the University of Queensland. A series of peace poles sponsored by the Rotary Club of Maryborough feature carvings by Indigenous artists. The peace pole at Coonamble Primary Public School includes student art. On 21 September 2021, Australia’s governor-general, David Hurley, was on hand to unveil the 100th pole. And Rotary members didn’t stop there: As of May, 348 peace poles had been planted by Rotary clubs through the initiative in every state and territory in the country.

How did they do it? To find out, we spoke with **Michael Rabey**, a member of the Canberra Burley Griffin club who coordinated the effort. He has these tips for Rotary clubs interested in dedicating a peace pole.





1 Pick a school or other public location

Australian Rotary members decided to site their poles at primary schools, targeting students around 11-12 years old to participate. They work with schools to find a location at an assembly point or in a garden where playful kids won't bump into it. "The poles shouldn't be hidden away; they should be in a public place," Rabey advises.

2 Choose which languages to feature

In English, the peace poles bear the message "May peace prevail on Earth." In Australia, Rotary members worked with school leaders to select additional languages to feature on the poles, based on languages spoken by students and teachers.

Many schools wanted to inscribe their local Indigenous language, which led to an unexpected outcome of the project: It created cultural bridges since Rotary clubs had to reach out to Indigenous communities for language guidance. A school in Canberra, for example, wanted to include the Ngunnawal language on its pole, but these words didn't exist. So, Rabey says, club members worked with elders and decided to inscribe the phrase "Dreaming strong on Ngunnawal land" instead.



Clockwise from top left: David Hurley, the governor-general of Australia, unveils the 100th peace pole of a centennial project; the pole is located in Lennox Gardens in Canberra; a peace pole is planted at the pyramids of Giza in Egypt; members of the Rotary Board reveal a new peace pole at the Rotary headquarters in Evanston, Illinois.

PHOTOGRAPHS (CLOCKWISE): CANBERRA ROTARY PEACE POLE PROJECT; WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; SHUTTERSTOCK; WEN HUANG

3 Order your peace pole

The cost and source vary by location; see peacepoleproject.org for details. The poles in Australia include panels with the history of the peace pole movement and the names of the sponsoring Rotary clubs with Rotary branding.

4 Hold a dedication ceremony

In Australia, many Rotary clubs and schools hold ceremonies at their peace poles annually on the International Day of Peace, 21 September. "We didn't want these peace poles to be just sticks in the ground that didn't mean anything," Rabey says. A college in Tasmania developed a suggested template in which student participants deliver a peace pole history and read the peace message in each of the languages displayed. The ceremony often includes words attributed to the sixth century B.C. Chinese philosopher Laozi:

*If there is to be peace in the world,
there must be peace between nations,*

*If there is to be peace between nations,
there must be peace between cities,*

*If there is to be peace between cities,
there must be peace between neighbors,*

*If there is to be peace between neighbors,
there must be peace in the home,*

*If there is to be peace in the home,
there must be peace in the heart.*

It's timeless wisdom, Rabey says, pointing to today's problems, for instance, with domestic violence and cyberbullying. "It's about world peace," he says, "but it's about peace at home, too." ■



TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Members are the magic

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MARK DANIEL MALONEY

Foundation trustee chair

SERVICE ABOVE SELF

THE OBJECT OF ROTARY

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

First The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;

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

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

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

THE FOUR-WAY TEST

Of the things we think, say or do:

1. Is it the **truth**?
2. Is it **fair** to all concerned?
3. Will it build **goodwill** and **better friendships**?
4. Will it be **beneficial** to all concerned?

ROTARIAN CODE OF CONDUCT

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

As a Rotarian, I will

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

CALENDAR

August events

A DAY ON THE LINKS

Event: Bob Knutson Golf Classic

Host: Rotary Club of Delta Township (Lansing-Waverly), Michigan

What it benefits: Scholarships and local projects

Date: 1 August

This tournament includes on-course games, a putting contest, and a ball drop raffle, in which golf balls purchased by participants are spilled onto the putting green with the winner's ball landing in the hole. Lunch is served during play, and the day ends with a reception. The event is named in memory of a club member who was instrumental in raising funds for the club's many community projects.

SUMMER SIZZLE

Event: Corn and Bratwurst Festival

Host: Rotary Club of Geneva Lake West, Wisconsin

What it benefits: Local nonprofits

Date: 3 August

In its 63rd year, this annual celebration is a highlight of summer in Walworth County. Rotarians prepare and serve meals of grilled bratwurst and roasted ears of corn. The daylong event at Devils Lane Park in the town of Walworth also features a beer tent and live entertainment. Those who can't stop to eat can use a drive-through line to get their meal to go.

OUTDOOR FUN

Event: In the Park

Host: Rotary Club of Racine-Founder's, Wisconsin

What it benefits: Local nonprofits, international projects, and scholarships

Date: 10 August

This event takes place at the Franksville Craft Beer Garden, a family-friendly



POP THE CORK

Event: Wine & Vine Uncorked Carlsbad

Host: Rotary Club of Carlsbad, California

What it benefits: Local and international projects and nonprofits

Date: 3 August

Selections from California wineries and breweries, including local San Diego County producers, will be poured at this evening tasting event. Tickets include drinks as well as gourmet food. Attendees can dance to live music and enter a silent auction to win prizes such as unique artworks and vacations to wine country.

gathering spot in a community park with over a dozen Wisconsin beers on tap. Attendees can enjoy bites from food trucks, listen to live music, and participate in a silent auction and 50/50 raffle. Other attractions include a bounce house, a caricature artist, and the Racine Public Library's bookmobile.

A TANTALIZING TRIO

Event: Bands, Brews & BBQ

Host: Rotary Club of McHenry Area, Illinois

What it benefits: Local and international projects and nonprofits

Dates: 16-18 August

The shore of McCullom Lake is the scenic site of this weekend festival, which promises high-energy performances from rock, blues, and country artists, including an act that pays tribute to the music of 1980s hitmakers Journey. There will also be plenty of beer, barbecued

ribs, and other food and drinks. The club has raised nearly \$300,000 through the annual event since it began in 2012.

GOOD EATS

Event: Comox Valley Ribfest

Hosts: Rotary clubs of Strathcona Sunrise-Courtenay and Comox Valley, Courtenay, British Columbia

What it benefits: Local and international projects

Dates: 23-25 August

About 10,000 people are expected to descend on a park in Cumberland, a village on Vancouver Island, for this festival of food and music. Five traveling rib trucks will offer a range of mouthwatering menu items while a lineup of local musicians entertains the crowd. A portion of the proceeds will go toward the local construction of a hard-surface pump track, a circuit of rolling hills and turns for bikes, scooters, skateboards, and wheelchairs.

Tell us about your event. Write to magazine@rotary.org and put "calendar" in the subject line. Submissions must be received at least five months before the event to be considered for inclusion.

PROGRAMS OF SCALE

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

water potential, transforming 700 acres of agricultural land.”

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

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

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

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

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

Recent Programs of Scale award recipients

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

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

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

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



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



POLIO ERADICATION

A \$1 billion partnership

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What gives you hope that polio eradication is possible?

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

What message do you have for Rotary members?

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

IN MEMORIAM

A force against polio

Herbert G. Brown, 1923-2024



Herbert G. “Herb” Brown, the 1995-96 president of Rotary International who met with world leaders to advocate for polio vaccination and helped raise millions of dollars to fight the disease, died 23 April at age 100. A member of the Rotary Club of Clearwater, Florida, Brown exemplified the Rotary ideal of Service Above Self.

Brown’s advocacy for polio eradication included serving as chair of the PolioPlus campaign committee for the U.S., Bermuda, the Bahamas, and Puerto Rico in 1986-91. He played a pivotal role in raising over \$125 million in the U.S. and more than \$240 million worldwide to help immunize children against the disease.

As a Rotary Foundation trustee in 1985 and as RI president in 1996, Brown met Pope John Paul II in Vatican City, sharing information about PolioPlus and other Rotary programs. Brown also met with South African President Nelson Mandela in 1996, shortly before the launch of the Kick Polio Out of Africa campaign, and with leaders in India before the country agreed to undertake National Immunization Days. He advocated for U.S. funding for polio eradication in a 1995 meeting with President Bill Clinton.

During the 1995 International Assembly, Brown shared his dreams of a world free of polio, at peace, and where people were true to their word. His presidential theme, *Act with Integrity, Serve with Love, Work for Peace*, bore witness to his belief that these dreams were possible if Rotary remained committed to those values.

“The words of our theme are action words, and they encompass every aspect and deed of our Rotary history,” Brown said. “Marked by the inspiration and leadership of our great past presidents, it is easy to see that integrity, service,

love, and peace have always been the actions that have led to the fulfillment of Rotary’s dreams and visions.”

Brown’s presidential year was also, as he said in his International Assembly speech, “a milestone year for Rotary” as the first in which women served as district governors. “The admission of women into Rotary has diversified our organization and made it more representative of our business and professional communities,” he said.

During his nearly 80 years as a Rotarian, Brown held various roles in the organization, including RI director, chair and trustee of The Rotary Foundation, aide to the RI president, committee chair and member, and district governor.

A recipient of RI’s Service Above Self Award, he was also honored with The Rotary Foundation’s Citation for Meritorious Service, Distinguished Service Award, PolioPlus Pioneer Award, and International Service Award for a Polio-Free World.

Beyond Rotary, Brown had a significant presence in the business world. After serving in the U.S. Army domestically in 1943-45, he expanded his family’s furniture business in Louisiana and launched a discount drugstore chain that eventually merged with the larger Eckerd Drugs in Florida. Brown later built a real estate business in Florida and Louisiana, and he served as chairman of the Checkers restaurant chain. He also held leadership positions in the Boy Scouts of America and received numerous humanitarian awards.

He is survived by his wife, Diane Brown; daughters Deborah Arnold and Donna McMullen; sons Jared Brown and Robert Gregory Brown; and multiple grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

— ARNOLD R. GRAHL

With deep regret, we report the death of **Masaomi Kondo**, Senri, Japan, who served RI as director in 2010-12 and district governor in 1997-98 and 2000-01.

In addition, we report the deaths of the following Rotarians who served RI as district governors:

John Sever

Potomac, Maryland, 1978-79

Frederick R. Luedke

Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, 1991-92

Seung-Young Song

Bucheon, Korea, 1991-92

Hazem Finge

Tripoli Elmina, Lebanon, 1992-93

Gordon L. Quick

Lakewood, Washington, 1993-94

Bob Aitken

Lower Blue Mountains, Australia, 1996-97

Raymond E. Botz

St. Charles, Missouri, 1997-98

Barry Howie

Oakville Trafalgar, Ontario, 2000-01

Eiji Oshima

Tosu, Japan, 2000-01

Low Teong

Titivangsa, Malaysia, 2001-02

Masayuki Sano

Sano, Japan, 2003-04

Catherine J. Zimmerman

Oshkosh, Wisconsin, 2003-04

Yukio Kurita

Fukui North, Japan, 2010-11

Hildegard Dressino

Worms, Germany, 2011-12

Hidehisa Tomita

Amagi, Japan, 2016-17

A tribute to John Sever, an infectious disease specialist who played a key role in the development of Rotary’s polio eradication program, will appear in an upcoming issue.

2025 CONVENTION

Canada's country capital



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

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

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

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

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

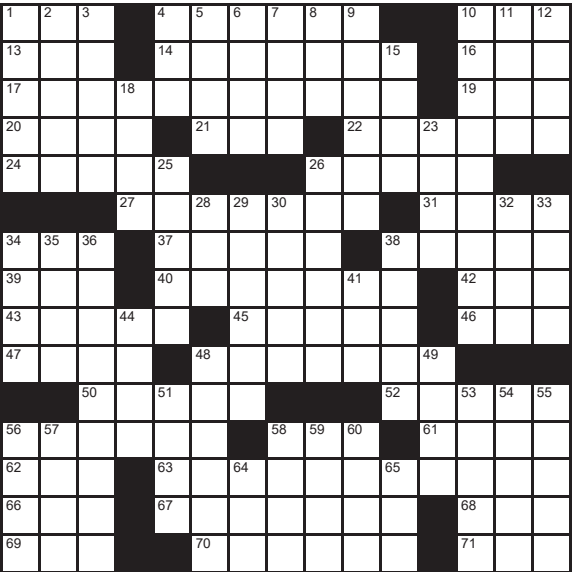
Perhaps you’ll leave town with a cowboy hat or boots. But outside of all the fun, you have a serious job: help local members make noise about Rotary to boost public engagement, while supercharging your excitement about all you can accomplish through this great global network.

Learn more and register at convention.rotary.org.

CROSSWORD

Summer stretch

By Victor Fleming
Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas



Solution on **opposite page**

ACROSS

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

50 "Rabbit food"

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

DOWN

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

- 15 Certain grocery stores from 1869 to 2015, familiarly
- 18 Allied group
- 23 Anjou or Bosc
- 25 "Proper" words
- 26 Dry red wine
- 28 '50s White House monogram
- 29 Actor Norton
- 30 Folio page
- 32 1952 Olympic city
- 33 ____ ed. (gym class)
- 34 Poet Angelou
- 35 Skin care brand
- 36 Metaphorical mess
- 38 Building girder
- 41 Arles article
- 44 Aerodynamic resistance
- 48 Mom or Dad
- 49 Harm severely
- 51 Young fellows
- 53 Meet and ____
- 54 End of what August is
- 55 Unsettled
- 56 Aesop's also-ran
- 57 Alda or Ladd
- 58 *Frasier* actress Gilpin
- 59 BPOE members
- 60 Blake, Browning, or Burns
- 64 "I do," at the altar
- 65 Cloth layer



Healing in a Divided World 2025 PRESIDENTIAL PEACE CONFERENCE

Connect with others committed to peacebuilding at this special, one-time event led by Rotary International President Stephanie Urchick in Istanbul, Türkiye, 20-22 February.

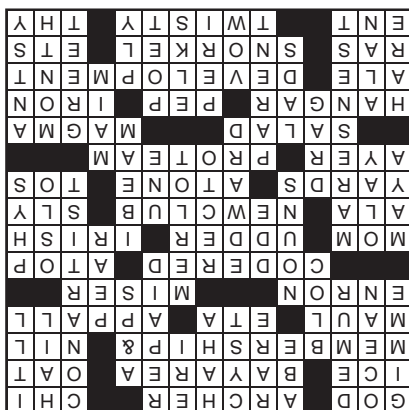


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News
roundup

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Rotary



Pride of New Zealand

It may not be native, but feijoa fruit is beloved in its adoptive land

In New Zealand, “the people’s fruit” is a source of national pride, emblematic of kindness and community. The feijoa, also known as pineapple guava, is a prolific green, egg-shaped fruit with a cream-colored center. It’s a popular backyard tree for New Zealanders, explains Donna Cox, “as the trees take little looking after and usually crop well.” Sometimes too well. “The fruit doesn’t store well, and if there is a glut of it, people will often share them with friends and neighbors,” she says. “It is not uncommon to see buckets of the fruit outside homes with a sign saying ‘Free, help yourself.’”

While the evergreen bushes thrive in locations with cool winters and moderate summers, commercial feijoa production beyond New Zealand is limited. The fruits are also grown in Uruguay, Japan, Italy, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and in the U.S. in California.

A KIWI COMPANION: Feijoas received their name from a Brazilian naturalist, João da Silva Feijo, and are native to a pocket of southern Brazil and northern Uruguay. It’s unclear how they made their way to New Zealand, but horticulturalist Hayward Wright began propagating them and advertising them in his plant catalogs in the 1920s (the same decade he developed a commercial cultivar of today’s kiwifruit).

DELICACIES TO TRY: To eat a feijoa, cut it in half and scoop out the flesh with a spoon. Once you’ve had your fill of fresh fruit, try combining feijoa with apple to make a pie or crumble, or adding it to fruit salad, loaves, cakes, jam, salsa, or chutneys. Find Cox’s recipes for feijoa and apple sauce and feijoa muffins at [rotary.org/magazine](https://www.rotary.org/magazine).

— DIANA SCHOBORG

Donna Cox
Rotary Club
of Papakura,
New Zealand

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