

# ROTARY BASICS

[www.rotary.org/rotarybasics](http://www.rotary.org/rotarybasics)



**R**otary International, the world's first service club organization, is made up of 33,000 clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas. Its members form a global network of business, professional, and community leaders who volunteer their time and talents to serve their communities and the world.

Rotary's motto, Service Above Self, exemplifies the humanitarian spirit of the organization's more than 1.2 million members.

Strong fellowship among Rotarians and meaningful community and international service projects characterize Rotary worldwide.

Rotary enjoys a rich and sometimes complex tradition and organizational structure, with many programs that can be confusing to new and even not-so-new members. The following pages offer a basic Rotary education — the fundamental knowledge that will make every member better informed about Rotary and proud to be a Rotarian.

## The Organization of Rotary

Rotary is essentially a grassroots organization, with most of its service efforts being carried out at the club

**“Thanks to Rotary, my efforts to make the world a better place are multiplied. I'm no longer alone.”**

**— Fernando Aguirre Palacios, Ecuador**

level. The district and international structure is designed to support the clubs and help them provide more service in their local communities and abroad.

### Clubs

Rotarians are members of Rotary clubs, which belong to the global association Rotary International (RI). Each club elects its own officers and enjoys considerable autonomy within the framework of Rotary's constitution and bylaws.

### Districts

Clubs are grouped into 530 RI districts, each led by a district governor, who is an officer of RI. The district administration, including assistant governors and various committees, guides and supports the clubs.

### RI Board

The 19-member RI Board of Directors, which includes the RI president

and president-elect, meets quarterly to establish policies. Traditionally, the RI president, who is elected annually, develops a theme and service emphases for the year.

### The Secretariat

Rotary International is headquartered in the Chicago suburb of Evanston, Illinois, USA, with seven international offices in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, India, Japan, Korea, and Switzerland. The office for RI in Great Britain and Ireland (RIBI), located in England, serves clubs and districts in that region. The Secretariat's chief operating officer is the RI general secretary, who heads a 740-member staff working to serve Rotarians worldwide.

## Benefits and Responsibilities of Club Membership

The club is the cornerstone of Rotary, where the most meaningful work is carried out. All effective Rotary clubs are responsible for four key elements: sustaining or increasing their membership base, participating in service projects that benefit their own community and those in other countries, supporting The Rotary Foundation of RI financially and through program participation, and developing leaders capable of serving in Rotary beyond the club level.

What Rotarians get out of Rotary depends largely on what they put into it. Many membership requirements are designed to help members become and remain active participants in their clubs, and enjoy their Rotary experience.

### Service

All Rotary clubs share a key mission: to serve their community and those in need throughout the world. By participating in club service projects, members learn about their club's involvement in local and international projects and can volunteer their



time and talents where they are most needed.

### **Membership recruitment and retention**

To keep clubs strong, every Rotarian must share the responsibility of bringing new people into Rotary. Even new members can bring guests to meetings or invite them to participate in a service project. The value of Rotary speaks for itself, and the best way to engage the interest of potential members is by letting them experience fellowship and service firsthand.

Keeping members interested in Rotary is another responsibility. Good club fellowship, early involvement in service projects, and involvement in club operations are some of the best ways to sustain the club's membership.

The ideal composition of a Rotary club reflects the community's demographics, including professions, gender, age, and ethnicity. Such diversity enriches every aspect of the club's fellowship and service.

### **Attendance**

Attending club meetings allows members to enjoy their club's fellowship, enrich their professional and personal knowledge, and meet other business leaders in their community. Club meeting times vary to accommodate members' family and professional commitments. Some clubs meet at lunchtime, while others meet in the early morning, after work, or in the evening.

Rotary policy requires members to attend at least 50 percent of club meetings in each half of the year. If members miss their own club's meeting, they're encouraged to expand their Rotary horizons by attending make-up meetings at any Rotary club in the world — a practice that guarantees Rotarians a warm welcome in communities around the globe. Find meeting places and times in the *Official Directory* or through the Club Locator at [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org).



Rotarians can also make up meetings by participating in a club service project or by attending a club board meeting, a Rotaract or Interact club meeting, or an online meeting at one of several Rotary e-clubs.

## **Rotary's Guiding Principles**

Throughout Rotary's history, several basic principles have been developed to guide Rotarians in achieving the ideal of service and high ethical standards.

### **Object of Rotary**

First formulated in 1910 and adapted through the years as Rotary's mission expanded, the Object of Rotary provides a succinct definition of the organization's purpose as well as the club member's responsibilities.

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

### **THE FOUR-WAY TEST**

Followed by Rotarians worldwide in their business and professional lives, The Four-Way Test was created by Rotarian Herbert J. Taylor in 1932. It has since been translated into more than 100 languages and is used by organizations and individuals throughout the world.

#### **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?

## DID YOU KNOW?

- ❖ Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarships is the world's largest, privately funded scholarship program.
- ❖ The Rotary Foundation has contributed more than US\$2.3 billion in program awards and operations since 1947.
- ❖ Rotarians have established a host of organizations dedicated to various humanitarian causes, including ShelterBox, HungerPlus, and Gift of Life.
- ❖ Providing vitamin A supplements during polio National Immunization Days has averted an estimated 1.5 million childhood deaths since 1998 — testimony to the “plus” in PolioPlus.
- ❖ RI representatives work with many major international organizations, including the UN and several of its agencies, the Organization of American States, the Council of Europe, and the African Union.

“Rotary molded me from a shy homemaker to a district governor.”

— Victoria Garcia,  
Philippines



through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.

### Classification principle

By assigning each member a classification based on his or her business or profession, this system ensures that the club's membership reflects the business and professional composition of its community. The number of members holding a particular classification is limited according to the size of the club. The goal is professional diversity, which enlivens the club's social atmosphere and provides a rich resource of occupational expertise to carry out service projects and provide club leadership.

### Avenues of Service

Based on the Object of Rotary, the Avenues of Service are Rotary's philosophical cornerstone and the foundation on which club activity is based:

- ❖ **Club Service** focuses on strengthening fellowship and ensuring the effective functioning of the club.
- ❖ **Vocational Service** encourages Rotarians to serve others through their vocations and to practice high ethical standards.
- ❖ **Community Service** covers the projects and activities the club

undertakes to improve life in its community.

### ❖ International Service

encompasses actions taken to expand Rotary's humanitarian reach around the globe and to promote world understanding and peace.

### ❖ New Generations Service

recognizes the positive change implemented by youth and young adults through leadership development activities, service projects, and exchange programs.

## RI Programs

RI's programs and service opportunities are designed to help Rotarians meet needs in their own communities and reach out to assist people in need worldwide.

### Interact

Rotary clubs organize and sponsor this service organization for youth ages 12-18; more than 12,300 clubs in 133 countries and geographical areas.

### Rotaract

Rotary clubs organize and sponsor this leadership, professional development, and service organization for young adults ages 18-30; more than 8,000 clubs in 167 countries and geographical areas.

### **Rotary Community Corps (RCC)**

Rotary clubs organize and sponsor these groups of non-Rotarians who work to improve their communities; more than 6,800 RCCs in 78 countries and geographical areas.

### **Rotary Fellowships and Rotarian Action Groups**

Rotary Fellowships (groups geared to vocational and recreational interests) and Rotarian Action Groups (focused on humanitarian service activities) compose Global Networking Groups, which are open to all Rotarians, spouses of Rotarians, and Rotaractors; about 70 groups.

### **Rotary Friendship Exchange**

Rotarian teams or individuals, who may be accompanied by their families, make reciprocal visits to other countries, staying in each other's homes and learning about different cultures firsthand.

### **Rotary Volunteers**

Rotarians and other skilled professionals are provided opportunities to offer their services and experience to local and international humanitarian projects.

### **Rotary Youth Exchange**

Clubs and districts send and host students ages 15-19 who travel abroad for cultural exchanges of one week to a full year; more than 8,000 a year.

### **Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA)**

Clubs and districts sponsor seminars to encourage and recognize leadership abilities of youth and young adults ages 14-30.

### **World Community Service (WCS)**

Rotary clubs and districts from two different countries form partnerships to implement community service projects. ProjectLINK at [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org) is a searchable database of club and district community service projects in need of volunteers, funding, and donated goods.



## **The Rotary Foundation**

The Rotary Foundation of RI is a not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to enable Rotarians to advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through the improvement of health, the support of education, and the alleviation of poverty.

### **Financial Support**

In the year ended 30 June 2009, The Rotary Foundation received contributions totaling US\$223.8 million and spent \$187.8 million in support of humanitarian and educational programs implemented by clubs and districts and global polio eradication activities. Contributions go into one of three main funds:

- ❖ **Annual Programs Fund**, which provides grants and awards through Foundation programs
- ❖ **Permanent Fund**, an endowment from which only a portion of the earnings are spent in support of Foundation programs, ensuring the long-term viability of the Foundation
- ❖ **PolioPlus Fund**, which supports Rotary's goal of a polio-free world

Every dollar contributed to the Foundation funds the humanitarian, educational, and cultural programs and program operations. Clubs and districts apply for and receive Foundation grants to carry out many worthy projects worldwide. The Every Rotarian, Every Year initiative, designed to encourage worldwide annual per capita giving of \$100 or more, supports vital Foundation programs.

### **Educational Programs**

These programs promote international understanding by bringing together people from different countries and cultures.

**Ambassadorial Scholarships**, an international program for university-level studies, sends about 500 students each year to serve as ambassadors of goodwill while abroad.

**Rotary Peace Fellowships** are awarded to individuals for study in master's degree and professional certificate programs at one of the six Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution.

**Group Study Exchange** is a short-term cultural and vocational exchange program between districts in different countries for non-Rotarian professionals ages 25-40.

“I find a quiet satisfaction in lighting up someone else's life, in being part of building a park, funding a medical clinic, or helping reforest thousands of acres with trees.”

— George M. Yeiter, USA

# ROTARY TIMELINE


**1905** | Chicago attorney Paul Harris organizes first Rotary meeting on 23 February, leading to formation of the Rotary Club of Chicago.

**1907** | Rotary Club of Chicago helps to organize installation of public toilets, one of the club's first acts of community service.

**1910** | Paul Harris elected first president of National Association of Rotary Clubs at the first convention.

**1911-13** | Clubs formed in Canada, Great Britain, and Ireland; organization name changes to International Association of Rotary Clubs.


**1916** | Club chartered in Cuba, the first non-English-speaking Rotary country.

 **1917** | President Arch Klumph proposes establishing an endowment fund, precursor of The Rotary Foundation.

**1945** | Forty-nine Rotarians help draft the UN Charter.

**1947** | Founder Paul Harris dies in Chicago; outpouring of funds from Rotarians used to establish fellowship program.

**1947-48** | First 18 Rotary Fellows study abroad, a precursor of Ambassadorial Scholars.

 **1962** | First Interact club formed in Melbourne, Florida, USA. World Community Service program launched.

**1965** | Special Grants (now Matching Grants) and Group Study Exchange programs begin.

## Humanitarian Grants Program

Humanitarian grants enable Rotarians to increase their support of international service projects that provide water wells, medical care, literacy classes, and other essentials to people in need. Rotarian participation is key to the success of these projects.



**Matching Grants** assist Rotary clubs and districts in carrying out humanitarian projects with clubs and districts in other countries.

**District Simplified Grants** enable districts to support service activities or humanitarian endeavors that benefit local or international communities.

## PolioPlus

Eradicating polio is Rotary's top priority. The PolioPlus program provides funding for mass immunization campaigns and support for social mobilization, surveillance, and laboratories to help carry out the final stages of global polio eradication.

Rotarians have raised funds that will amount to more than \$1.2 billion in support by the time the world is certified polio-free and have provided hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours.

Rotary is a spearheading partner with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in this initiative. As a result of their efforts, over two

billion children under age five have received the polio vaccine, five million people who might otherwise be paralyzed are walking today, 500,000 new cases of polio are prevented each year, and the number of polio cases has declined by 99 percent worldwide.

## Rotary's US\$200 Million Challenge

In 2007 and 2009, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recognized Rotary's leadership in the polio eradication effort with challenge grants of \$100 million and \$255 million. Grant funds are spent on immunization and other polio eradication activities. Rotary's challenge aims to raise \$200 million in matching funds by 30 June



2012, and every Rotary club is asked to help by organizing an annual public fundraising event. The \$555 million generated will be a vital catalyst to help achieve Rotary's top priority.

## Key Meetings

Several key meetings bring Rotarians together to share ideas, celebrate successes, enjoy fellowship, and plan for the future.

### RI Convention

The RI Convention, the largest Rotary meeting, is held in May or June in a different part of the Rotary world each year. This lively, four-day event features speeches by world and Rotary leaders, spectacular entertainment reflecting the local culture, and unparalleled opportunities to experience the true breadth of Rotary's international fellowship.

### District conferences

Rotarians are encouraged to attend their district conference, an annual motivational meeting that showcases club and district activities. A family event, the district conference mixes fellowship with learning and allows Rotarians to become more directly involved with charting their district's future.

## The Future

With more than 100 years of experience in providing service to communities worldwide, Rotary stands ready to respond to the needs of an ever-changing world.

### RI Strategic Plan

The RI Strategic Plan focuses Rotary's efforts on clubs, helping them expand their service and publicize their accomplishments. The plan's three priorities are equally important to Rotary's future:

- ❖ Support and strengthen clubs.
- ❖ Focus and increase humanitarian service.

- ❖ Enhance public image and awareness.

The plan reflects research gathered from a worldwide survey of Rotarians about the organization's priorities and from focus groups on Rotary's image in different countries. It also unifies the strategic direction of RI and The Rotary Foundation by emphasizing the connection between clubs' most effective service areas and the areas of focus in the Future Vision Plan.

**"The RI Convention put the Rotary in this Rotarian."**

— Eric Marcus, USA

### Future Vision Plan

The Rotary Foundation Future Vision Plan aims to increase efficiency and develop a more strategic focus for the Foundation. A three-year pilot of the plan's new grant structure began July 2010 and involves about 100 Rotary districts worldwide.

Clubs in pilot districts do not participate in current Foundation programs (except for PolioPlus and Rotary Peace Fellowships). Instead, these districts may apply for district grants, which will enable them to carry out local and international projects of their choice, and global grants, which support projects and activities in six areas of focus: peace and conflict prevention/resolution, disease prevention and treatment, water and sanitation, maternal and child health, basic education and literacy, and economic and community development.

During the pilot, the Foundation will phase out current educational and humanitarian grants and refine the plan for participation by all Rotary districts in July 2013.

**1968** | First Rotaract club formed in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA.

**1979** | Foundation grant to immunize six million Philippine children against polio sets stage for PolioPlus.


**1985** | Rotary launches PolioPlus program and campaigns to raise US\$120 million to immunize all the children of the world.

**1987** | First women join Rotary.

**1988** | Through the PolioPlus campaign, Rotarians raise US\$247 million.


**1989** | Rotary returns to Hungary and Poland.

**1994** | Western Hemisphere declared polio-free.

 **1999** | Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution established.


**2000** | Western Pacific region declared polio-free.

**2002** | Europe declared polio-free. Rotary launches a second polio eradication fundraising campaign to help fill a critical funding need. Rotarians raise over US\$129 million.

 **2005** | Clubs around the world celebrate Rotary's centennial.

**2006** | Polio reduced to four countries: Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

**2007** | The Rotary Foundation recognizes the millionth Paul Harris Fellow.

 **2007-09** | Rotary receives US\$355 million in challenge grants from the Gates Foundation to help eradicate polio.

**2010** | Rotary Foundation launches three-year pilot of Future Vision Plan.

“Rotary is the one place where it does not matter who you are, other than in how you can use your skills, knowledge, and abilities to be of service to others.”

— Andre Brandmuller, South Africa



Rotary Basics continues online at [www.rotary.org/rotarybasics](http://www.rotary.org/rotarybasics).  
See videos, listen to audio presentations, and learn even more about what it means to be a Rotarian.

Connect with other Rotarians online: [www.rotary.org/socialnetworks](http://www.rotary.org/socialnetworks)