

ROTARY

January 2023

Amid an epidemic of
loneliness, Rotary extends
a compassionate hand
page 26

Help for airlifted
Afghan refugees
page 14

A 'shocking'
revitalization of
coral reefs
page 40

In South Africa,
a leap from grief
to growth
page 50



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Building connection through comfort and care

Rotary recently surveyed our members and found something that should be unsurprising but still caused many of us in Rotary leadership to sit up and pay attention: The single most important factor in member satisfaction is the club experience. How at home you feel in your club, how rewarding club meetings are, and how engaged you feel in service projects.

I have seen this firsthand across the Rotary world this year. When members feel an emotional connection to their club, they cannot imagine leaving. And that connection is often forged in “Rotary moments,” when people feel that special connection to the people around them and the impact of their service. Our Imagine Impact Tour is all about shining a light on those Rotary moments and encouraging our members to tell their stories.

But there's something else that makes an enormous difference in building and sustaining that connection. It's the comfort and care of our members — both Rotarians and Rotaractors. As my Rotary friend Todd Jenkins says, “People can't see how you think, but they sure can see your actions.”

We are in the relationship business, and if we take care of each other — genuinely show concern for each other — then we will make friends for life, and we will do anything to widen that circle of friendship.

The question is: How do we live with our eyes wide open and do the things that really matter? We do this by taking time for each other, actively listening to one

another, and treating every Rotary member as equally valuable — no matter how long we have been a member or what position we hold.

People like me in Rotary leadership can offer all kinds of advice about how to make your club experience more valuable. But what's most important is for everyone

in every Rotary club to speak up and listen to one another. We should never be afraid to share with our fellow Rotary member what we expect to get out of our membership and have an open discussion about how to make that happen.

To lead a Rotary club is to invite such dialogue and to be willing to try new approaches. Good leadership is giving it away. Propelling others up. Allowing others to feel the victory.

I have one last request for club leaders. We still need to do more worldwide to increase our female membership. It's up a bit this year, but I know we can and must do better. Rotary is growing again. As I write this, we're just a handful of members away from surpassing 1.2 million Rotarians again. So let's redouble our efforts to bolster our clubs with great new members, then keep them for life by providing comfort and care.

JENNIFER JONES

President, Rotary International

↑
Jones gathers with Rotaract members at World Polio Day 2022 and Beyond: A Healthier Future for Mothers and Children, an event at the World Health Organization in Geneva.



WELCOME



Photograph by Günther Aigner

YOU ARE HERE: The Alps in the Austrian state of Tirol

GREETING: Servus

MOUNTAIN MAJESTY: Tirol is known for its luxurious Alpine ski resorts, but Günther Aigner, a member of the Rotary Club of Kitzbühel, prefers getting off the groomed trails for ski touring, which combines cross-country and downhill skiing. "This is the original form of skiing that has existed for more than 5,000 years," Aigner says. "The snow is different every day. It's magical. You experience nature in a very intense way."

DEEP CONNECTIONS: Aigner took this photo of his friend Josef Margreiter, past president of the Rotary Club of Rattenberg, while the two were enjoying a day of ski touring. Aigner, a researcher and consultant on alpine skiing, says Rotary has been a source of many new and satisfying friendships.

THE CLUB: The Rotary Club of Kitzbühel, chartered in 1966, has about 65 members. A special emphasis of the club is a program that encourages young people enrolled in apprenticeships to develop entrepreneurial ideas focused on sustainability.

— PAULA M. BODAH

ROTARY

January 2023

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ROTARY

January 2023

Vol. 201, No. 7

26

Connection is a cure

Rotary clubs, governments, and experts tackle loneliness with meaningful interactions

By Dave King

Photography by Serena Brown

34

Lessons from Dr. Loneliness

What a professor's lifework can teach us about overcoming isolation

By Wen Huang

Illustrations by Hanna Barczyk

40

To grow coral reefs, get them buzzed

Zapped with solar electrical currents, struggling reefs can self-repair with incredible speed — and even grow where none existed

By Geetanjali Krishna

On the cover: Exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic seclusion, loneliness has become a global public health crisis. Illustration by Hanna Barczyk

20

1 President's message

2 Welcome

CONNECT

8 Staff corner

9 Letters to the editor

13 The specialist

For this young Austrian countertenor, singing isn't a job — it's a vocation

OUR WORLD

14 A hard landing

Rotary volunteers ease a difficult transition for airlifted Afghan refugees

17 Lady Leonardo

A Renaissance woman improves natal outcomes in her native land

18 People of action around the globe

20 Remembering Jewish Salonica

The beauty and fragility of a pluralistic metropolis

24 Ask a friend

Convert your network into donors through peer-to-peer fundraising

OUR CLUBS

48 Virtual visit

Rotary Club of Kotor, Montenegro

50 Where are they now?

After heartbreak loss, a student found renewed purpose at her school and in Rotary

52 Dispatches from our sister magazines

54 Handbook

Kick-start your club's social media presence

56 Trustee chair's message

57 Calendar

58 Rotary Action Groups | Rotary and Gates Foundation renew partnership

60 Rotary partnership delivers ambulances to Ukraine

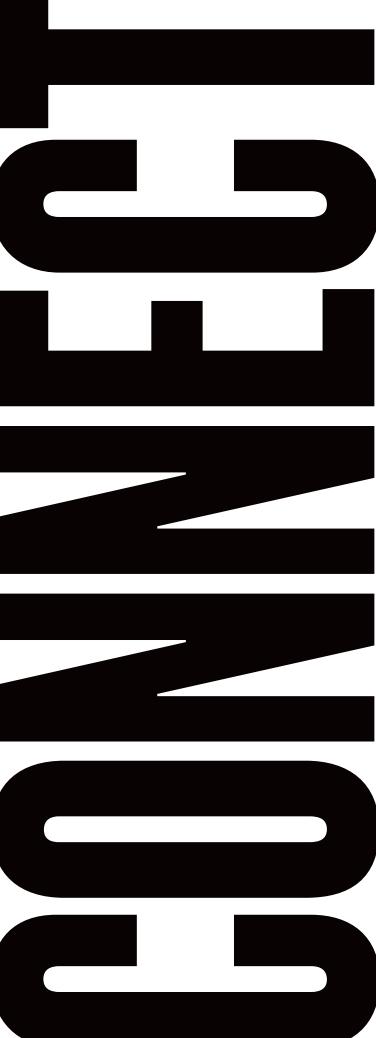
62 2023 convention | Crossword

64 Houston fusion

Forget Tex-Mex, try Houston's Czech and Vietnamese specialties



26



STAFF CORNER

Sarah Remijan

Director, Learning and Development

I was raised in Detroit, the heart of the American automobile industry. Growing up, I loved baseball and was a big fan of the Detroit Tigers. In 1984, my family got tickets to Game 5 of the World Series, and the Tigers won. Being there when your hometown team wins a championship is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

In college, I majored in Asian studies after taking a freshman course on China. When I graduated in 1992, I was accepted into Princeton in Asia, a program affiliated with Princeton University, which sent me to teach English at a university in the southern Chinese city of Shantou. My students had never met or talked to a foreigner. They were excited to speak English with me and learn about American culture. They taught me how to cook Chinese food. During holidays, my friends and I traveled through northwestern China to experience the different regional cultures. The China adventure taught me how to put myself out there and take a chance at opportunities that might seem hard but are rewarding.

In 1993, I bought myself a one-way ticket to Taiwan, where I worked nearly two years for a nongovernmental organization founded by Annette Lu, a Taiwanese legislator. As her English-language assistant, I wrote press releases and articles to promote Taiwan to the

international community. Lu had been jailed in the late 1970s for protesting the government's martial law. In 2000, she was elected vice president of Taiwan. It was an exciting time to witness Taiwan's transition to full democracy.

In the summer of 1998, I went to Japan while my partner worked on a five-month assignment there. We traveled extensively around the country. Sometimes when I asked for directions in my rudimentary Japanese, there were comical incidents where people pointed me in completely different directions. I learned a valuable lesson in communication: Instead of just repeating myself again and again, I try to ask the question from a different angle. That helps move things forward.

Coming back from overseas, I became a public school teacher in Chicago because I believe strongly in working to close gaps in access to education in the U.S.

I've been with Rotary for more than 20 years. My job is to provide learning opportunities and resources to members, and I help organize the annual International Assembly at which more than 500 district governors-elect and their partners gather in Orlando, Florida, to prepare for their year in office. We develop the curriculum and programs that will guide them in the coming year.

- Bachelor's in Asian studies from the University of Michigan; master's in education from Saint Xavier University in Chicago
- Languages: English, Chinese

Sarah Remijan, with daughters Eva and Hope and husband Brian Toba, on a family trip in Santorini, Greece



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Letters to the editor

SHOW AND TELL

When I was pitching a friend about the virtues of Rotary the other day, she asked, "What is Rotary?" Pointing to the October issue of *Rotary* magazine with its memorable cover on ending polio, I replied, "Well, basically, that."

At my first newspaper job in the early 1980s, one of my weekly assignments was to cover the Rotary Club of Center, Texas, and I met a lot of people I wouldn't have otherwise. Wherever I moved around the U.S. — from Texas to Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, and Pennsylvania, as well as overseas to Moscow — Rotary was a constant.

Rotary is important and will always need to lead. My concern today is that as some of our clubs get older, we sometimes tend to settle for the status quo. Thank you, fellow Rotarians, for your engagement and inclusiveness, and for always leading and looking ahead for the common good.

Gary Stewart, Ithaca, New York

STAY INFORMED

After reading "A new weapon against polio" [October], I feel better informed about the work being done to eliminate the disease. My club, the Rotary Club of Winder, Georgia, organized a raffle to raise funds for End Polio Now. I encouraged others in my club to read the article before we began selling raffle tickets. On World Polio Day (24 October), we selected the winner on Facebook Live and sent the funds to The Rotary Foundation.

Tracy Phillips, Bethlehem, Georgia

HEAD OF THE CLASS

I read with great pleasure the article "Ambassador at large" [October]. In 1998-99 I belonged

to the recently chartered Rotary Club of Johannesburg-Egoli, South Africa, and Lorelei Higgins was the first long-term exchange student hosted by our club.

Lorelei was a pleasure to host. Her commitment, communication skills, youthful energy, and good humor made her year in South Africa a great success. The experience kindled our enthusiasm for hosting exchange students on a regular basis.

I greatly admire, and am not at all surprised by, her achievements and the Rotary path she took. Well done!

Greta Du Bois Cleynhens,
Kingston, Ontario

BUSINESS MODEL

Thank you for another great issue [October]. I particularly liked "From competitors to community" about a new club with corporate professionals all working in the same building. What a genius idea! This innovative and relevant model can be used around the Rotary world.

Lara Quentall-Thomas,
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

LESSONS OF THE IRON LUNG

In 2017, Rotary leaders in District 6440 in northern Illinois were planning a youth assembly, and we wanted the young people to understand the importance of our polio eradication efforts. We realized the issue is less tangible to age groups that have no direct memory of polio wards and iron lungs.

We had read an article in the magazine ["A replica iron lung



teaches a new generation about polio," February 2017] about Roger Frank, a Rotary member in England who constructed an iron lung to use as a traveling demonstration. Inspired, we collaborated with leaders in Districts 6420 and 6450 to search for an iron lung of our own.

As luck would have it, a children's museum in Sarasota, Florida, that was closing had a pristine iron lung. After the three districts raised funds to purchase a customizable trailer, the Iron Lung Education Exhibit was born. It circulates in northern Illinois as a mobile museum.

Thank you, *Rotary* magazine.
Suzanne Gibson, Lake Barrington, Illinois

Correction: In the November print issue, the list of 2021-22 honorees of the Arch Klumph Society erroneously identified Douglas and Nora MacLellan as Trustees Circle honorees. They were honored as members of the Foundation Circle, recognizing contributions to The Rotary Foundation of \$1,000,000-\$2,499,999. We regret the error.

OVERHEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA
In October, we published a photo essay about a Rotarian in Poland and the Ukrainian refugees she welcomed into her home.

Thank you for sharing this positive and heartwarming story. Polish and Ukrainian people have always been quite close and share a lot of history. **Margaret Milutinovic** ▶ via Instagram

How wonderful. So proud of my Rotary brothers and sisters. **Nancy Wright Beasley** ▶ via Instagram

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Rotary 

THE SPECIALIST

Preaching to the choir

For this young Austrian countertenor, singing isn't a job — it's a vocation

I was born in Hinterstoder, a small village in the Alpine region of Austria. My parents used to take me and my two older sisters to Sunday Mass in our little Catholic church. When we returned home, I would imitate the church choir as well as the priest. That's how my parents discovered my voice and gave me the opportunity to join the St. Florian Boys' Choir at age 10.

The transition to living in a boarding school was a very hard time for me. I only managed to overcome my sadness because I enjoyed singing so much. Music was the best medicine.

Singing with other people fascinated me right from the beginning. But my music teacher — the choir's longtime artistic director, Franz Farnberger — discovered my musicality quite early, and he promoted my career as a soloist. When I was 15, they offered me a chance to sing at the Vienna State Opera. Since I was still so young, I did not feel any stress. I just went on stage and sang.

Since I was so successful as a choir boy with my high voice, I enjoyed singing in that register. As I grew older, I did not want to lose my high voice and trained a lot to keep it. However, there might also be genetic reasons; for instance, you must have flexible vocal chords. I am very happy to be a countertenor, and in the past 10 years I met a lot of other amazing countertenor colleagues.

Baroque operas are predisposed for countertenors. However, my mentor, Farnberger, is fascinated by the lieder [songs] of Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss. He practiced those with me from a very early age, and therefore I have a rather broad repertoire. I love to sing lieder, as well as from the Romantic repertoire — and I think they fit my voice pretty well.

It is hard for me to say what I like most: singing as a soloist, in an ensemble, or in operas. Each has its



Alois Mühlbacher
Rotary Club of Kirchdorf a.d. Krems, Austria
Countertenor

special charms, but each also has special challenges. Singing as a soloist requires enormous concentration, technical virtuosity, and strong nerves. Making music with an ensemble is more relaxing, and performing in operas offers the opportunity to perform as an actor, which I really enjoy.

Performing live in concert is important to me. An artist needs that interaction with his audience. Recording a CD is like making a documentary. A live concert is over after a few hours, whereas a CD is a document for a lifetime.

My advice for young singers is to really enjoy singing on stage. If you feel singing is your only vocation, then go for it and keep on going. Because it is a vocation, not a job.

— AS TOLD TO GEOFFREY JOHNSON



17

Training Indigenous midwives in Central America

20

Remembering Jewish Salonica

24

Convert your networks into donors

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

A hard landing

Rotarians and a Rotary Community Corps ease a difficult transition for airlifted Afghan refugees

In 2015, Shah knew he had to get out of Afghanistan. His family had lived in a village near the city of Jalalabad for generations. But his work for the U.S. government as a translator and guide during the war that began in 2001 made him and his family targets for the Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate that was growing in parts of the country at the time.

Securing expedited American visas, he fled with his wife, six sons, and a daughter. Years later, thousands of interpreters and others who aided the U.S. in the war would do the same during a frantic evacuation set off by the Afghan government's fall.

The family settled in Minnesota, where Shah (we're not using his full name out of concern for the safety of relatives in Afghanistan) found work as a security guard. They were safe, but did not have an easy landing.

"We had a lot of difficult times," Shah recalls. "The government resettlement agency found us a three-bedroom apartment for nine people, with one bathroom and no laundry. There was a broken window, and every night the house was full of mosquitoes. It was also very old, and my wife and children got lead in their blood. Life was very tough in that time."

Shah and his family struggled to navigate the new country. For two years he did not have a car, for instance, because he had not learned how to take the test at the Department of Motor Vehicles. Occasionally, neighbors would drive them to the grocery store.

"My wife said our life was better in Afghanistan," he says. "There we had a house, we had land and per-

sonal property and everything. And I said, 'Yes we had everything over there, but our lives were in danger.' Not just myself, but my children's lives were also in danger. I said, 'Life is tough, but one day we will set up, and we will support ourselves.'"

Gradually, as Shah stabilized his life, he decided he wanted to assist other Afghans facing similar problems. "Now I want to help people," he says. "I don't want anyone to have a tough time like I did."

One day, Shah was at the airport greeting new Afghan arrivals when he met Rotarian Bob Keller, who was doing the same. The two got to talking and became friends. In 2019, they helped charter the Rotary Club of Minnesota Veterans (District 5950), the first club formed for military veterans helping other veterans. (Non-vets who want to help can join too.) And when the Taliban toppled Afghanistan's government in 2021, Shah got his chance to help other new arrivals. U.S. emergency airlifts would bring more than 85,000 Afghans to America over the year that followed.

In September 2021, Keller picked up Shah and another Afghan friend, Sayed. The three packed a car with shoes, clothes, diapers, baby formula, and other necessities they'd collected from church groups and Rotary clubs and drove from the Twin Cities area to the Fort McCoy Army base in Wisconsin, which temporarily housed airlifted Afghan refugees. After repeating the trip, Keller realized they needed to do something more substantial, more sustainable than just donating food and other items. He approached Past District Governor Tom Gump for advice.

To learn more, including how your club can sponsor a Rotary Community Corps, visit rotary.org/rcc.



Gump suggested establishing a Rotary Community Corps. RCCs are groups of non-Rotary community volunteers who work alongside a sponsor Rotary club or clubs to address the most pressing needs in their communities. “A Rotary Community Corps is established to serve a particular community,” says Gump. “Rotarians do the service with — and at the same time as — the community that’s being served. So we and the Afghans work together, whether it be getting clothes or teaching English or translating driver’s test manuals.”

The concept was introduced by 1986-87 Rotary President M.A.T. Caparas under the name Rotary Village Corps. Today there are some 12,000 RCCs worldwide, about half of them in India.

In January 2022, the Rotary Community Corps for the Afghan Community in Minnesota was chartered. At the group’s first meeting, over 60 people turned up. “It was just incredible,” says Steve May, im-

mediate past president of the Rotary Club of Edina/Morningside, one of five clubs that helped start the RCC. “At our club’s meeting, I said, ‘We need to figure out how to translate the *Minnesota Driver’s Manual* into Pashto and Dari. And a new member, at his first meeting, said, ‘I think I have the software to do that.’ So he ran the DMV manuals through the software.” Right away, one person took the test and passed, he says.

Being able to drive was key to making many parts of life simpler — you can get to work, get your kids to the doctor, and get to meetings like those of the Rotary Community Corps. Meetings are held every two weeks over lunch: One week the Afghans bring chicken and rice; the next week the Americans bring pizza. Tables are set up with information and volunteers to help people with employment, transportation, education, legal issues, and other needs.

“We’re trying to develop a model where Rotary is connecting individuals with resources and not necessarily just putting money in. We don’t have enough money to put in, but we do have connections.”



From the lectern, Steve May, then-president of the Rotary Club of Edina/Morningside, welcomes Afghan refugees to a Rotary Community Corps meeting in May. The RCC is helping the new arrivals obtain essential services.

Liisa Schmitt, who owns a landscape design firm, volunteered to work at the employment table. “The first person who came was Obaidullah,” she says. “We were talking, and he had a degree that covered horticulture, floriculture, and urban forestry. So I said, ‘I can hire you if you want work.’ He couldn’t believe it.”

This kind of support is not limited to the Upper Midwest. Rotary members across the country are helping Afghans who came in the airlifts. In Salt Lake City, for example, Rotary members established a committee to work with the more than 40 Utah Rotary clubs to raise money and help hundreds of Afghans arriving there. In Southern California, District 5340 helped raise more than \$80,000 for organizations that assist refugees in San

Diego. And in Missouri, the Rotary Club of Fulton formed a team of more than 40 community members to help the new arrivals.

One of the biggest needs for the newcomers is to connect with the agencies and organizations that can help. Government resettlement agencies provide assistance in the months after refugees arrive, but their capacity for long-term support is limited. Many new arrivals do not speak English, and most need help navigating government resources.

“We’re trying to develop a model where Rotary is connecting individuals with resources and not necessarily just putting money in,” says May. “We don’t have enough money to put in, but we do have connections across other civic organizations, churches, and businesses. So we’re starting to connect the dots

and to show people, for example, here are the services they can get.”

So far, the RCC has had speakers from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, transit agencies, human rights organizations, libraries, and school districts. The group also hosted representatives from companies looking to hire workers. Several people have found jobs at Emerson Automation Solutions, Toro outdoor equipment company, and other businesses.

“This is redemptive work,” says Keller. “It gives us purpose to help these people get up on their feet. We can’t solve the problems of bringing these families back together. But in terms of giving them a lift while they’re here, this is what a service organization like Rotary is all about.”

— FRANK BURES

Short takes

Anton Zeilinger, a member of the Rotary Club of Wien-West, Austria, was named one of three recipients of the 2022 Nobel Prize in physics.



Project fairs will take place in San Salvador, El Salvador, 20-21 January and in Barranquilla, Colombia, 2-4 February. For more information, visit rotary.org/project-fairs.



BY THE NUMBERS

12,000+

Rotary Community Corps worldwide

105

Countries where RCCs are active

88,500

Afghans airlifted to the U.S. after the Taliban takeover



PROFILE

Lady Leonardo

A Renaissance woman improves natal outcomes in her native land

Miriam Rittmeyer
Rotary Club of Skidaway Island, Savannah, Georgia

This month marks the centennial of Rotary in the Netherlands. The Rotary Club of Amsterdam was chartered 29 January 1923.

Nominations for The Rotary Foundation Distinguished Service Award will be accepted in January and February. Learn more at rotary.org/awards.

Update your Rotary calendars: April is now Environmental Month, in recognition of Rotary's newest area of focus, and Maternal and Child Health Month has been moved to July.

In 2014, after she ended her nine-year tenure as executive director of a community health clinic in Savannah, Georgia, Miriam Rittmeyer needed a little time to recharge her batteries. She exhibited her colorful oil paintings inspired by her native Guatemala, crafted jewelry and scarves, and continued her mastery of the charango, a lutelike Andean instrument.

After a two-year hiatus, this reinvigorated Renaissance woman — who holds an MD, a master's degree in public health, and a doctorate in nutrition and epidemiology — launched a new venture. She co-founded Phalarope, a nonprofit that designs, manages, and evaluates health care and community development programs, including maternal and child health care for Indigenous populations in Central America.

Rittmeyer described Phalarope's Manchichi Midwife Health Monitoring Program at "World Polio Day 2022 and Beyond: A Healthier Future for Mothers and Children," an October symposium sponsored by Rotary International and the World Health Organization in Geneva. The intense 12-month midwife training regimen, aimed at reducing maternal mortality, is adapted to local culture and language for Indigenous midwives.

After demonstrating its effectiveness in 20 rural Guatemalan communities, the program is expanding to six rural sites in Panama, with help from a \$96,000 Rotary Foundation global grant. "These Indigenous communities want to be included in the solution, and that direct involvement of local populations allows for a sustainable model to assist in our public health efforts," Rittmeyer says. "Inclusivity and investment in communities are core principles of Rotary and Phalarope. And with this model, we believe change is possible."

— GEOFFREY JOHNSON

People of action around the globe

By Brad Webber

100 million+
Cell phones discarded annually in the U.S.

United States

Worldwide, only 17 percent of electronic waste and less than 5 percent of devices containing lithium ion batteries are recycled, even though their chemical elements offer a “cycle of nearly infinite recyclability,” according to Redwood Materials. Since early 2022, more than a dozen Rotary clubs across the United States have collaborated with the Nevada-based battery recycler to host collection drives, yielding tens of thousands of pounds of cell phones, laptops, power drills, electric toothbrushes, and more. “This is a turnkey project,” says Clari Nolet of the Rotary Club of Los Altos, California, a board member of the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group. “You clean out your junk drawer, address U.S. supply chain security and environmental issues, and assist in the adoption of electric cars.”



Rotary
Club of Los Altos

2.3 billion

Number of food-insecure people around the world in 2021

Canada

On 17 September, volunteers from the Rotary Clubs of Oakville, Oakville-West, and Oakville Trafalgar, Ontario, packed more than 1,000 bags of barley bound for St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a Caribbean country recovering from a series of natural disasters. Rotary members emptied sacks of barley into bins, manually weighed the grains into 1-pound bags, and boxed them. Normally “it takes two shifts of five full-time people to accomplish what we did in three hours,” says Sundeep Khosla, an Oakville club member. His club has made a commitment to monthly shifts at the warehouse, run by GlobalMedic, a charity focused on rapid response to disasters worldwide.

Rotary
Club of Oakville



1075

Year construction began on Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela

Portugal

Charity walks are a staple of Rotary fundraising, but the Rotary Club of Silves stepped up the effort. Its members tackled a 75-mile portion of the Way of St. James (the Caminho de Santiago in Portuguese) during a six-day journey along the route from Valença, Portugal, to the grand Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. The club used social media for fundraising and sharing dispatches from the route as seven Rotarians and three of their friends set off on 23 September. By the end of the trek, the group had raised about \$14,000 to help fund a sensory room and garden for children with autism or Down syndrome at the Silves Sul school in Armação de Pêra. The schoolchildren tracked the pilgrims' progress online. They also gave the walkers toys for "constant encouragement" and to serve as school mascots they could cheer for, says Pam Winn, one of the walkers.

Rotary Club of Silves



Kosovo

The Rotary Club of Peja dedicated a 9/11 memorial, dubbed "Memory and Friendship," in the city on the 21st anniversary of the attacks. The club, its members, local businesses, and individuals offered financial and in-kind contributions valued at more than \$30,000 for the project. "But the real value of the memorial is immeasurable," says Club President Arbér Asllani. "Searching for such memorials globally, we found that none of them is in southeast Europe." The idea was first suggested by Nehat Devollı, a club member and businessman. The centerpiece — a steel beam from the ruins of the twin towers donated by the New York City Fire Department — was a must, according to Asllani. "New York City is almost 7,400 kilometers away from Peja," Asllani said in his address at the dedication ceremony, "but on that particular day, Sept. 11, it felt closer because tragedy unites people."

77

Minimum number of nations that lost citizens in the 9/11 attacks, according to the U.S. State Department

Rotary Club of Peja

Fiji

Along with community volunteers, members of the Rotary Club of Lautoka planted more than 4,000 mangrove saplings in September along a nearly 2,000-square-foot stretch of beach at Taiperia. The area, home to low-income Fijians, is about 2.5 miles from central Lautoka, on the island of Viti Levu. "For a small island nation such as Fiji, it is particularly important to protect our homes and livelihoods, as the vast population of the country lives near coastal areas," says Club President Chirag Parmar. "The planting of mangroves helps protect these areas from coastal erosion and also rehabilitates the ecosystem of our shoreline." The club teamed up with the Ministry of Forestry on the project and used \$130 in donations to buy the plantings. "We used a small batch of funds from a much larger donation received from the International Fellowship of Rotarian Scuba Divers," Parmar adds, illustrating the depth of Rotary partnerships.

Rotary Club of Lautoka

8

Number of mangrove species in Fiji



Remembering Jewish Salonica

The beauty and fragility of a pluralistic metropolis

By Carl Gershman



I have nurtured a special interest in Thessaloniki, the northern Greek city on the edge of the Balkans, since I traveled there in 1996 to attend a conference on rebuilding democracy and civil society in the Balkan region after the breakup of Yugoslavia. While in Thessaloniki, I decided to take the opportunity to learn something about the city's rich Jewish history, particularly under the Ottomans when it was called Salonica.

I had read *Balkan Ghosts* by Robert Kaplan, who traced the modern history of the region, from the assassination that triggered World War I to the ethnic warfare in Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia. And the organization I headed, the National Endowment for Democracy, supported civil society groups working against such brutalities in the Balkans. But exploring Thessaloniki's Jewish past offered new perspectives on the region's history. I met with Rena Molho, president of the Society for the Study of Greek Jewry, who ran a bookshop on Tsimiski Street that Kaplan had called "the lone thriving remnant of Jewish Salonica." She told me about her efforts to preserve the memory of Salonica's Jewish community that was nearly destroyed in the Holocaust.

Memories of that visit came flooding back in February 2021 when I listened to an interview with Albert Bourla, the CEO of Pfizer, about his family's Jewish roots in Thessaloniki and how his parents survived the Holocaust. Bourla was in the news frequently then, talking about the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. But it was that interview about his family story that captured my attention and

gave me a much deeper understanding of the Jewish experience in Thessaloniki. His story has important lessons today for all of us in our very troubled world.

Bourla's ancestors were among the tens of thousands of Sephardic Jews who took refuge in the Ottoman Empire after they were expelled from Spain in 1492. Along with 20,000 other Jewish refugees from Spain, they settled in Salonica, where the Jewish community soon blossomed into such a thriving center of Spanish-Jewish learning and commerce that Salonica became known as "the Mother of Israel." The community's rabbis, lawmakers, and poets were famous throughout the Diaspora, attracting students and Torah scholars from many cities. The beautiful hymn "Lekhah Dodi," still sung by Jews throughout the world to welcome the Sabbath, was written by one of the most prominent Salonican rabbis of the 16th century, Solomon Alkabez.

By 1900, about 80,000 Jews lived in Salonica, where they made up nearly half the city's population. They were not just the city's lawyers, physicians, teachers, and merchants but also its dockworkers, fishermen, firemen, and hamals (porters). They were a well-organized, diverse, and dynamic community that, more than any other group, shaped the spirit and life of the city. They maintained 33 synagogues, a rabbinical school, Zionist and intellectual clubs, their own schools that offered vocational as well as academic training, an orphanage, a psychiatric hospital, sports and scouts clubs, organizations that provided poor families with basic

necessities, and many other institutions. Between 1865 and 1940 they published 50 newspapers representing all political tendencies in the city.

The importance of the Jewish community in the life of Salonica was perhaps most apparent on Saturdays when the port and virtually the entire city would shut down for the Sabbath. Robust as the Jewish presence was in Salonica, though, it was but one dimension of a bustling, multiethnic metropolis whose population also consisted of large minorities of Turks and Greeks, as well as lesser numbers of Bulgarians, Armenians, and Serbs.

Salonica's diversity was destroyed in the last century by two momentous events that signaled the arrival of a new era of nationalism and ethnic hatred in the Balkan region and beyond. The 1923 Lausanne Treaty that ended the Greek-Turkish war called for the forced population exchange of Greek Catholics and Turkish Muslims that drastically altered the city's pluralistic character — and gave rise to a new name, Thessaloniki. Many Jews emigrated to Western Europe, the Americas, and Palestine, and by the time of the second momentous event, the Nazi occupation of Thessaloniki in 1941, only 50,000 Jews remained, making them a minority in the city for the first time in centuries.

The Holocaust in Thessaloniki was overseen by Adolf Eichmann, and it eliminated 97 percent of the Jewish community. The Nazis did not murder the Jews immediately. They first confiscated all the contents of the community's libraries and archives as well as other treasures and shipped them to Frankfurt for a planned "Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question." They demanded a ransom for the release of 10,000 Jewish men who had been sent to forced labor camps. The Jewish community in Thessaloniki collected money but was forced to turn over its ancient cemetery of a half-million graves to the municipality in lieu of the total sum. The Nazis accepted the money and property but later reneged on the deal, and many Jewish men died of exhaustion and disease in the camps. Meanwhile, the cemetery, a sacred monument to the uninterrupted Jewish presence in the city for more than four centuries, was promptly despoiled, its gravestones used to pave roads, repair

The Jewish community soon blossomed into such a thriving center of Spanish-Jewish learning and commerce that Salonica became known as the "Mother of Israel."

buildings, and build a swimming pool for the German army.

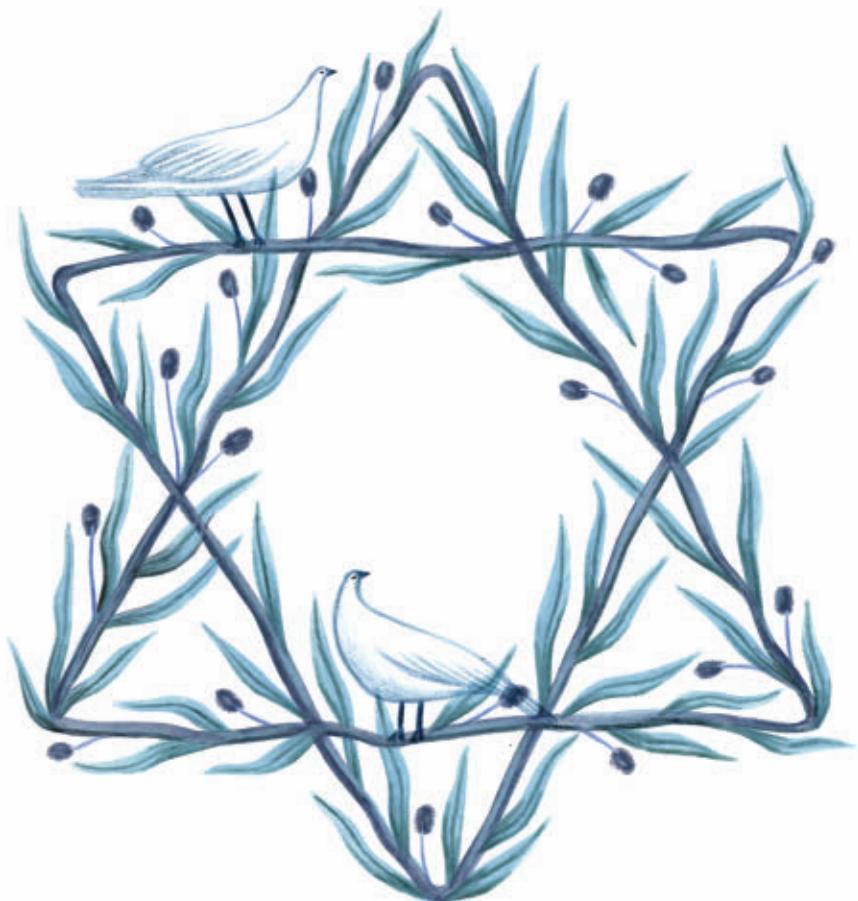
The end came in March 1943 when the Nazis herded the remaining Jews into a neighborhood bordering the old railway station that had been built in the 19th century by Baron de Hirsch, the German Jewish philanthropist, to house thousands of refugees from the pogroms in the Russian Empire. What had once been a refuge for persecuted Jews thus became a transit camp from which their descendants were shipped in livestock cars to the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Among the 2,000 survivors were Bourla's parents, who were teenagers at the time and hadn't yet met. Bourla's father, Mois, fled with his brother to Athens just before the Nazis transported Thessaloniki's Jews to Auschwitz. In Athens they were given forged identity papers by Catholic sympathizers, and they lived there until the end of the war.

Bourla's mother, Sara, was sent to another city by her father to live with her older sister, who had moved when she married a Catholic and converted. Sara was safe there because no one recognized her, but that changed when her brother-in-law was transferred back to Thessaloniki. She hid in her sister's house all day long, but one day, when she surreptitiously ventured outside, she was spotted and arrested.

Sara's sister and brother-in-law, Kostas Dimadas, were aware that a truck would arrive at the local prison every day around noon to take some prisoners to a location where they would be executed. Dimadas knew that the head of the Nazi occupation forces, Max Merten, had a reputation as an extortionist, and so he paid him a large ransom to spare Sara. Her sister didn't trust the Germans, and so she went every day to the prison to make sure that Sara was not among the doomed prisoners.

As she feared, one day she saw Sara being taken from the prison and put on a truck. She immediately informed her husband, who angrily called Merten and tried to shame him for not keeping his word. The next morning, just as Sara was lined up against a wall to be shot with the other prisoners, a soldier arrived on a motorcycle and handed some papers to the German in charge of the firing squad. Sara and another woman were removed from the line, and as they were



being driven away, they could hear the machine gun fire. According to Bourla, it was "a sound that stayed with her the rest of her life."

Bourla's parents both returned to Thessaloniki after the war. They met through family connections, got married, and "built a life filled with love and joy," as Bourla put it when he told this story publicly for the first time on International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Unlike Holocaust survivors who found it too painful to speak about the horrors they had endured, Mois and Sara would often tell their stories because they wanted their children to remember all the lives that had been lost and to understand what can happen if evil and hatred are allowed to spread unchecked. Most of all, Bourla said, they wanted their children to appreciate the value of human life. He stressed that they never spoke about their experiences with anger or a desire for vengeance. They had "stared

down hatred" and wanted to "celebrate life and move forward." Bourla wanted to share their story, he said, in the hope that it might have special meaning at a time "when racism and hatred are tearing at the fabric of our great nation."

Their story continues to have special meaning today as Russia's invasion of Ukraine — along with other genocidal crimes that have been committed in recent decades in other parts of the world — has awakened memories of the Nazi scourge that we thought was no longer possible. With the virus of hatred having returned, it is incumbent upon us all to do whatever we can to ensure that the story of Bourla's family is never repeated and that their values are remembered and preserved. May we summon the courage to rise to this awesome challenge. ■

Carl Gershman served as president of the National Endowment for Democracy from 1983 to 2021.

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G. Viviana
Santa Cruz Mérida
Bolivia, District 4690

Cadre title:
Cadre Adviser for Water,
Sanitation, and Hygiene

Occupation:
Civil engineer specializing in water
and sanitation

What are Rotary members saying about Viviana?

"Viviana's contribution has been fundamental for Rotary members in our district to be trained on water and sanitation projects being planned, structured, sustained, and based on the needs of the community."

— *Livio Zozzoli, district Rotary Foundation chair and district governor-elect for District 4690 (Bolivia)*

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

GOODWILL

Ask a friend

Peer-to-peer fundraising converts your network into donors

If you're on social media, you've likely had friends ask you to donate to their favorite causes to celebrate birthdays or to support disaster relief after tragedies. You see other people in your network contributing, and you're drawn to give as well, by the story or because you want to help a friend. This kind of peer-to-peer fundraising, sometimes known as charitable crowdfunding, has exploded as a tool for philanthropy, and the Rotary network has been doing this long before the trend became popular.

Rotary members ask their friends to donate to our causes routinely because they are passionate about Doing Good in the World. The result can be a small act like buying a raffle ticket or purchasing sponsorships for a dinner. These peer-to-peer fundraising acts, especially in their digital forms, maximize the power of social media networks and have the potential to supercharge Rotary's traditional fundraising while drawing in a new segment of donors. "The profile of the average donor who gives through peer-to-peer websites is a new group of donors: young, less religious, and more likely to be single" than the traditional donor, notes Una Osili, associate dean for research and international programs at Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. A 2021 study she co-authored — *Charitable Crowdfunding: Who Gives, to What, and Why?* — found that donors to these campaigns gave an average of \$42 toward charitable organizations in 2019.

Since the pandemic began, people have become even more willing to go online to shop, entertain themselves, and do good in the world. Raise for Rotary (raise.rotary.org) is The Rotary Foundation's tool to help members around the world capitalize on the crowdfunding movement. Teams or individuals can choose a fundraising template for a challenge, celebration, or memorial, or create their own. And they can choose which Rotary Foundation fund they want to support: any Annual Fund area of focus, PolioPlus, the World Fund, or Disaster Response. Donors to these fundraisers receive the same donor credit they would if they were to donate online or by mail. Two years after the tool's launch in August 2020, 1,637 donation pages had been created, with more than \$1 million raised.

By far the most popular area to donate to through Raise for Rotary is PolioPlus in support of eradicating the disease. And one of the more successful peer-to-peer fundraisers lately was Jump!4Polio. For a District 6290 skydiving event in Grand Haven, Michigan, in June, a team of jumpers each pledged to raise \$1,000. They were able to raise \$63,000 by using Raise for Rotary combined with more traditional methods. "The more vehicles we have for donations, the more donations we will get," says Al Bonney, past governor of District 6290, who led the effort. "I don't care how you give donations, just give. Raise for Rotary was really helpful."

— NANCY SHEPHERDSON



TIPS FOR PEER-TO-PEER FUNDRAISING SUCCESS

1 Be the first.

Show peers how committed you are to the cause by making the first donation. This also is a great way to demonstrate how easy it is to donate on the platform. "I'm a huge fan of Raise for Rotary because it's really, really simple," says Jayne Hulbert, Rotary Foundation chair for District 5150 in the San Francisco Bay Area.

2 Have a launch party!

Just setting up a donation page is not enough, even if you promote it online. Throw a big, in-person event to inspire people who are fundraising, recommends Beth Kanter, co-author of *The Smart Nonprofit: Staying Human-Centered in an Automated World*.

3 Ask your biggest fans.

Who are your key supporters? Who loves you personally? Give your team a launch packet of prepared materials that they can hand out or post online, Kanter suggests. This would include QR codes and links, as well as sample talking points and tips for using social media to post updates about the team's progress.

4 Appeal to new donors.

Think about what people who may be especially inclined to donate online will want to hear about your project. Test it on young people before you launch. Una Osili, an Indiana University crowdfunding researcher, recommends asking friends to spread the link to your fundraising page.

5 Be prepared for anything, but especially checks.

Some people will still want to write checks. You can mail them to The Rotary Foundation as part of your fundraiser to get credit for the individual and club. Jump!4Polio accommodated the friends of 101-year-old D-Day veteran Dick Grout, a member of the Rotary Club of Suttons Bay-Leelanau County, when many donated by check (his preferred crowdfunding technique). As a result, Grout raised \$12,000 and got to see Grand Haven, Michigan, from an entirely new perspective.

92%
of people are
generally aware
of crowdfunding

32%
typically
contribute to
crowdfunding
projects

Source: *Charitable Crowdfunding: Who Gives, to What, and Why?*

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Connection is a cure

Rotary clubs,
experts, and
governments are
tackling loneliness
with meaningful
interactions

by
Dave King

Photography by Serena Brown

F

or Vera Cranmer and Sylvia Worden, two friends in their 80s, it's hard to overstate how much they look forward to their regular visits with the teenage students at a local college on

England's south coast. "We savor these visits like reunions with long-lost friends," Worden says.

The women live independently in their homes in Chichester, a picturesque and vibrant cathedral city near the sea. But Worden, who once worked as a teacher there, was widowed a few years ago, and her outings in town are far less frequent. Cranmer, too, has had to cope with feelings of isolation.

Today, though, the two women are among a dozen elders, as they call themselves, having a lively discussion about the royal family with the students at Chichester College. "I really enjoy the discussions with the young people. Some of them are so aspirational," says Worden. "I am probably one of the younger elders there, but I've made good friends with a lady who is 92. It's a great outlet for a lot of the older residents."

Cranmer, 88, agrees. "Sometimes I'm not sure if I want to go out, but when I come back home, I feel I've had a good morning. It's nice to meet other people like myself, but it's really nice to meet the youngsters, to see a different side and come back feeling positive." Cranmer once worked as an occupational therapist, specializing in caring for people with cerebral palsy. These days, she has difficulty walking and depends on the on-demand minibus transport to get to the college. "I

couldn't manage without it," she says.

Bridging Generations, a project organized by the Rotary Club of Chichester Priory, is tackling loneliness by connecting college students with older people. Every two weeks, a group of elders has coffee, cake, and a chat with students in the college canteen. Afterward, many elders stay for lunch cooked by catering students. The Rotary club pays for transport, while Chichester College provides the space and refreshments.

The costs are minimal, but the rewards plentiful. A 2018 report by the nonprofit organizations Generations United and the Eisner Foundation indicated that intergenerational programs are particularly effective in fostering well-being. Among adults who participated in one such program, 97 percent reported that they benefited from the program, with the vast majority saying they felt happy, loved, and needed.

There are benefits for younger people





Left: For Vera Cranmer, the Bridging Generations gatherings are a reason to get out and enjoy people's company. "It's a good way to spend what could be a lonely day," she says.

UK and Health and Independent Living Support, which provides meals on wheels. "Others came to us through church leaders, sheltered housing, and our own contacts," he says. "When it all comes together, seeing lonely people having good times, talking to students two or three generations below them, is so stimulating."

Exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic seclusion, loneliness has become a global public health crisis. In the U.S., even before the pandemic, a quarter of Americans aged 65 and older described themselves as socially isolated, including 4 percent, or 1.3 million people, experiencing severe social isolation, according to a 2011 study. And loneliness doesn't just affect older people. In Britain, 5 percent of adults, or 2.6 million people, said in a government survey that they felt lonely "often" or "always" during a month in the pandemic's early days in 2020. About 14 percent felt that their well-being had been affected by feeling lonely in the past week; that's about 7.4 million people across Britain whom the Office for National Statistics refers to as "the lockdown lonely."

Such is the concern in the UK that in 2018 the government appointed a minister for loneliness as part of a "Tackling Loneliness" strategy that has invested more than 50 million pounds (about \$59 million) to work with a range of charitable partners.

Studies in Europe and the U.S. link chronic loneliness to poor physical health and an increased risk of dementia, coronary heart disease, and stroke. Researchers have likened loneliness to high blood pressure or smoking 15 cigarettes daily as a risk factor for premature death. A well-known Harvard University study that tracked 724 people over their entire adult lives clearly determined social relationships as the best predictor of a person's long-term physical and emotional well-being. The connection

too. For instance, Chichester College has invited students from across campus to take part in the Bridging Generations meetings, and the project has proved a valuable tool to build students' communication and interpersonal skills. "What has come across more than anything is the shared laughter and camaraderie, the feeling of being valued, listened to, and that you matter, whether you are 17 or 92 years old," says Rae Benn, who until recently helped facilitate the program for the college.

Bridging Generations was the brainchild of Rotarian Mike Harvey, who approached Chichester College in 2013 with the idea. He recognizes alleviating loneliness and isolation as a significant community challenge. The quest starts with identifying those who are on their own a lot of the time and willing to reach out and seek connection.

Harvey, a member of the Chichester Priory club, found participants by talking to community organizations such as Age

between poor physical health and loneliness is so evident that doctors in the UK, Australia, Canada, Korea, the Netherlands, and elsewhere have adopted “social prescribing” by routinely screening their patients for loneliness and directing them to activities within their communities. In one pilot project, health care providers managed to decrease patients’ sense of loneliness by 49 percent.

In leading studies, several groups stand out as reporting more loneliness than others. They include those between the ages of 16 and 24 and those over 75 years old, according to the BBC Loneliness Experiment survey, as well as single and widowed people. Women are often found to report significantly more loneliness than men, though some researchers caution that the gender difference might be due to men being more reluctant to report undesirable feelings such as loneliness. Additional risk factors for loneliness include mental illness and poor physical health.

In June 2022, at the start of Loneliness Awareness Week, the UK government published further research that demonstrated how mental health distress can play a significant role in the onset and continuation of chronic loneliness. The report also suggests a solution: targeted early intervention. “People experiencing chronic loneliness were shown in our study to be nearly four times more likely than people without chronic loneliness to be in mental distress,” explains Sokratis Dinos, codirector of health and social care at the London-based National Centre for Social Research. “Poor mental health can lead to difficulties connecting with others, social withdrawal, and loneliness, while loneliness can equally contribute to poor mental health. Our research highlights the benefit of targeted support for people at different life stages and community-based activities for people with shared interests to improve outcomes.”

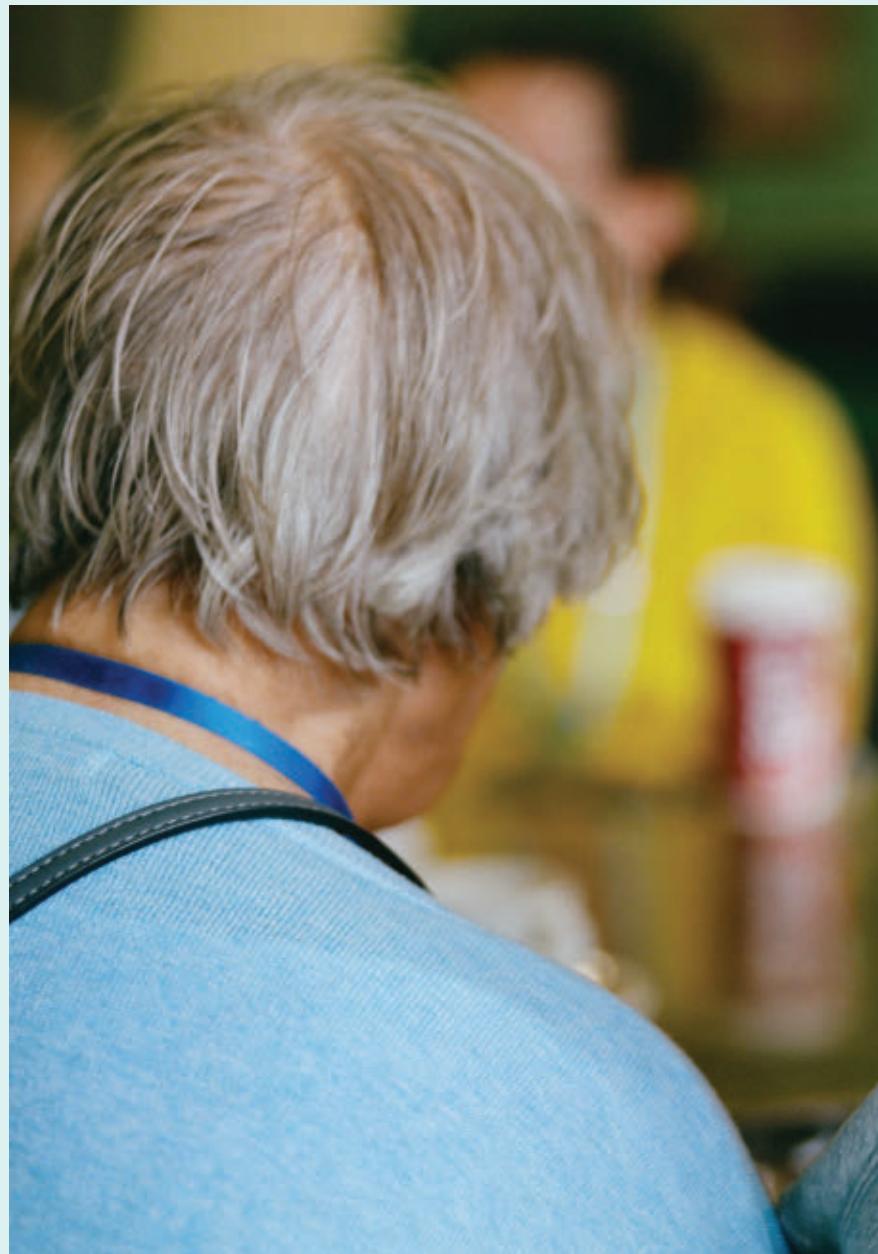
Ministers in the British government came together to draw up a revised strategic plan for targeted intervention to be published early this year, supported by 750 million pounds (about \$895 million) for a charity funding package. “Loneliness can affect all of us, and the research ... highlights that young and disabled people, alongside those with long-term health conditions, are disproportionately affected,” former loneliness minister Nigel

Huddleston said in announcing the research. “I encourage everyone to reach out to someone they think may be feeling alone or isolated. The government prioritized tackling loneliness through the pandemic, and we will now redouble our efforts to protect those most at risk.”

“Loneliness is a growing issue,” acknowledged Gillian Keegan, then serving as the UK’s minister for care and mental health. “We’re accelerating the rollout of

mental health support teams in schools and expanding community services for adults and young people to make sure everyone can access support.”

Since Rotary’s founding purpose is for people from different backgrounds to exchange ideas and form meaningful, lifelong friendships, Rotary clubs are a





Researchers suggest that the quality of relationships, not the quantity, matters most.



natural antidote for loneliness. They offer connections plus closer engagement with the wider community. Researchers suggest that the quality of relationships, not the quantity, matters most. Rotary provides a sense of purpose and meaning, accompanied by the personal payback of greater self-worth.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, when in-person meetings were curtailed, Rotary members kept

Above: Cranmer (left) says that she always returns home feeling positive after connecting with young people through Bridging Generations, a project organized by the Rotary Club of Chichester Priory. Right: Loraine Hunking and Chichester College student Keira Embleton get acquainted.

connecting with older and disabled people through phone calls, running errands for them, picking up prescriptions, and even walking their dogs.

Lisa Hunter, a member of the Rotary Club of Maidenhead Bridge, received a British Empire Medal in the Queen's 2022 New Year Honours List for mobilizing her club's response to families in need during the pandemic. "Through the Rotary network, we come together to use our skills and knowledge to support each other and build up our communities," she says. "Nowhere was this more apparent to me than at the beginning of the pandemic when our community went into lockdown and people were isolated and shut-in. My club formed a community response team to mobilize a network of volunteers to do what we do best: support those who need help in difficult times."

With a pool of 120 volunteers, including non-Rotary members, the club supported more than 150 households, performing more than 3,800 errands, which equated to about 6,500 volunteer hours.

Worldwide, Rotary clubs have always worked within their communities to reach out to those who feel isolated. For instance, Rotary clubs run or otherwise support dozens of Memory Cafes across the UK. They are focal points for people with early-onset dementia as well as their caregivers to meet, play games, chat, watch films, and sing. Originally developed in the Netherlands in the 1990s, the concept was introduced to Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland in 2008 by Tim Jones, a member of the Rotary Club of Wadebridge.

"At the time, I was working for the National Health Service managing mental health services in Cornwall," Jones says. He heard about a Memory Cafe in nearby Launceston, thought he should find out more, and subsequently set up the first Rotary-run Memory Cafe in Wadebridge.

The event was so successful that Jones has since helped other Rotary clubs organize Memory Cafes in their communities. "We try to create a comfortable, failure-free environment," says Geri Parlby, a member of the Rotary Club of Ware. She has been heavily involved in supporting a Memory Cafe in Tavistock in southwest England, and spreading the growth of these meetups. "The idea of Memory Cafes is to offer peer support. It's a simple philosophy about leaving people with a

"What has come across more than anything is the shared laughter and camaraderie, the feeling of being valued, listened to, and that you matter."

positive experience, bringing people together to support one another."

Now retired from the National Health Service, Jones has been conducting his own research into the benefits of Memory Cafes. Though he has not yet published his findings, he sees evidence that socializing and engaging with others creates beneficial changes in the brain. For those with memory loss, this approach aligns with the goals of cognitive stimulation therapy.

"It is about creating positive engagement which focuses on strengths rather than weakness," Jones says. "Psychologists found that cognitive stimulation therapy and psychosocial engagement can be as effective as the medication given to people in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease and can slow down brain deterioration."

Jones is careful not to suggest that social engagement can stop dementia. "There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease," he says. "But what we can do is build resilience, which evidence shows can slow down the progress of Alzheimer's and support people with other dementias.

Memory Cafes are wonderful examples of sanctuaries to tackle loneliness, not just among people with dementia, but for their carers as well."

Taking care of the caregivers is an often-overlooked challenge. Another consequence of the pandemic is an increase in the number of people who are caring for a partner, family member, or friend because of illness.

The London nonprofit Carers UK estimates there are now more than 10 million unpaid caregivers in the United Kingdom. They range from young adults to retirees. Since 2020, Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland has partnered with Carers UK to highlight the issue. Carers UK offers a telephone help line, regular online meetups, and an online forum where caregivers can connect to provide mutual support.

Cheryle Berry, a member of the Rotary Club of Clay Cross, serves as one of the partnership leads. "Caring is often a very lonely situation, and carers can feel isolated and overwhelmed," she says.

More than 100 Rotary club ambassadors and district leads have connected thousands of caregivers in their communities to the free services provided by Carers UK, according to Berry. "Rotarians regularly arrange online and face-to-face meetings of unpaid carers for friendship and support, including respite opportunities, Rotary friendship cafes, and activity groups across the UK," Berry explains.

In August 2022, RIBI launched the Rotary Million Unpaid Carers campaign with a goal to reach 1 million caregivers with support and advice by the end of the 2022-23 Rotary year.

Back in Chichester, Vera Cranmer and Sylvia Worden are feeling the power of face-to-face connection through their meetings at the college. Seeing other older adults like them who are also seeking ways to cope with isolation is proof they're not alone. "Some of the elders, like me, may not have been out for a week or two," Worden says. "The college meetings help us to engage with the students who help us to cope with feelings of isolation. It's also great because of the relationships we are able to form with other elders."

Cranmer agrees and adds, "It's a good way to spend what could be a lonely day." ■



People attending a Memory Cafe in Wales celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee in June, a couple of months before she died. The Living Memory Group, started by the Rotary Club of Narberth & Whitland, provides a place of connection for people with dementia, Parkinson's disease, cancer, and learning disabilities, as well as their caregivers.

Lessons from Dr. Loneliness

What a professor's
lifework can
teach us about
overcoming
isolation

by
Wen Huang

Illustrations by Hanna Barczyk





I met John Cacioppo, a professor at the University of Chicago, in the fall of 2015, around the time he was earning the media's attention as "Dr. Loneliness" for his research on the topic. I was working on campus as a news writer for the office of communications. Cacioppo stopped by to enlist my help in editing and pitching an essay highlighting his latest work on loneliness to the *New York Times*.

I'll admit I was skeptical at first about the urgency of his research, even if I'd had my own bouts of feeling isolated at times, particularly in my youth at a boarding school in China and as a new immigrant after leaving my family and friends and arriving in the U.S. Personally, I viewed loneliness as something that everyone experiences now and then and that, except for those who spiral into clinical depression, most of us can manage and even emerge strengthened. But Cacioppo said I was mistaken. Loneliness, he asserted, was a hidden epidemic, one that would soon become a major public health crisis.

At 64, he appeared a bit thin — I was told he had just recovered from salivary gland cancer. Nonetheless, he looked spirited. Cacioppo co-founded and directed the Center for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience at the university. In fact, he helped pioneer an entire new field known as social neuroscience, which examines the line between social experiences and biological systems. For two decades, he said, he had conducted research, including brain scans, to explore the negative impact of social isolation on mental and physical health. "When loneliness becomes chronic, it increases the odds of mortality by about 26 percent — about the same as for people living with obesity," he explained.

Cacioppo's research showed self-imposed loneliness increases our risk of developing a range of illnesses and disorders, including neurodegenerative diseases, cardiovascular disease, cognitive decline — even cancer. Lonely people, who tend to be more impulsive and hostile, are more likely to eat soothing foods that are high in sugar and fat, and experience elevated levels of cortisol, the body's main stress hormone, he said. When the brain perceives the social environment as hostile or unsafe, it sends out signals to ratchet up the alert status of our immune system defenses, diminishing our resistance to inflammation and disease.

And since loneliness can lead to social withdrawal — because some people see it as a better alternative to the pain of rejection — lonely people

tend to be more anxious, depressed, and hostile, and they are less likely to be physically active, the professor said.

How prevalent is loneliness? Cacioppo cited studies showing 25 percent to 50 percent of Americans reported regular or frequent bouts of loneliness. More recent research suggests those numbers have grown to a majority of Americans. "Because lonely people are more likely to have negative interactions with others, it can actually be contagious," he argued, as I took notes. "The harmful effects do not end at bedtime. Loneliness is a 24/7 condition that leads to poor sleep, leaving people worn out."

"What prompted you to study loneliness?" I asked, always eager to find a personal narrative embedded in an interview subject's area of research or passion project.

"When I was in grade school, my family moved a lot as my father worked to build his small business in the states of Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and then Oklahoma," he recalled. "Every few years, I parted from my friends and a familiar environment. Such wanderings sometimes gave me an early taste of loneliness." Years later, when Cacioppo began his scientific research on human connection, that childhood experience led him to investigate the potential costs and benefits of loneliness.

As Cacioppo spoke, I found myself returning in my mind to the cold dormitories and the military-style mess hall at my boarding school in China's central city of Xi'an, where I had lived until I was 17. After scoring well on a state exam at the age of 11, the Chinese government plucked me from an ordinary elementary school and sent me to an academy for gifted children. I left my friends and doting grandmother, who had raised me, and moved into a guarded compound of drab, austere buildings, where 20 of us boys spent seven hours a day in classes, memorizing science formulas and ideological jargon. Being an entire year younger than my peers and annoyingly precocious made me an easy target for bullies and added to my isolation. In the first two years, I suffered severe digestive problems and frequent bed-wetting. Doctors put me through various tests but couldn't pinpoint a cause. Could loneliness have been the origin of my health problems? I asked Cacioppo.

"The illness was more of a biological signal that reminded you that it was time to reconnect with those around you to promote your short-term survival," he responded, using the language of a researcher examining a test subject.



I also shared with Cacioppo my mother's story, which had haunted me for years. She had been hospitalized multiple times in Xi'an for heart and stomach problems after my father's death in the late 1980s. My frequent long-distance calls failed to relieve her loneliness.

In the winter of 2005, alone in her apartment, she collapsed after suffering a heart attack and lay on the floor for 36 hours before my siblings found out. She died at age 67. "If she had had someone to talk with at home, she would have lived," said a Chinese herbal medicine doctor who treated my mother. The Chinese belief of the interconnectedness of emotions and physical health sounded similar to Cacioppo's findings.

Cacioppo lamented that despite the prevalence

of loneliness around the world and its dire health consequences, honest discussions of it were still difficult and infrequent. Fortunately, he said, some nations, notably Denmark, Japan, and Britain, had established programs to raise awareness of chronic loneliness and to improve interventions by professionals.

He believed that the media plays a key part in combating the stigma by educating the public on the role of interdependency in every aspect of life.

"Loneliness should be recognized as a public health problem and should receive greater attention in health care delivery systems and in medical education to ensure health care providers know how to identify and deal with it," he urged.

Having learned so much about the topic, I agreed

to help Cacioppo with an article about his research, and we submitted the draft to a few national media outlets. While waiting for replies, I received an offer to work on a book project and resigned from the university. I had no idea what had become of the essay and never followed up.

Afew weeks after the COVID-19 lockdown, I was languishing at home, feeling lonely, anxious, and helpless, suffering from insomnia and various physical ailments, like so many other people, and I thought of Cacioppo's penetrating research. When I did a search for his name online, I was astonished to see the professor's obituary — he had died in March 2018 at the age of 66.

While feeling sad about the loss, I was also seeing his research in a new light. The pandemic was like a massive, worldwide experiment in which we all participated. We took stock of our feelings and our lonely struggles to get through the miasma of disease that closed in on our lives and painfully separated us from family and friends. We lost the psychological support of social interaction at the office, school, restaurants, or the playground.

I dug out the draft of the professor's article that I edited, regretting not having pushed harder to get it published. Given that his findings and suggestions are more relevant than ever, I'm sharing some of his insights here with our readers to try to fulfill an earlier obligation.

Contrary to the popular belief that loneliness mostly strikes older people, Cacioppo said in his essay that it could affect anyone — teenagers who feel socially awkward because they're embarrassed about their appearance; a young person from a small town who gets emotionally lost in the big city; an executive too busy with a career to maintain a rewarding connection with family or friends; or an older person who outlives a spouse and friends, and whose failing health leads to further isolation.

Subsequent research would build on Cacioppo's findings. A 2018 survey, for instance, said America's 75 million millennials and Generation Z adults are lonelier than any other demographic group, and they report being in worse health than older generations.

More than half of participants said they feel that no one knows them well, and four in 10 reported they "lack companionship" or "are isolated from others." Other research suggests that loneliness can have the same negative impact on mortality as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

People suffering from loneliness tend to resign

Loneliness increases our risk of developing a range of illnesses and disorders, including ... cardiovascular disease, cognitive decline — even cancer.

themselves to a solitary existence, Cacioppo found. "They might have family, friends, or a large circle of social media followers, but they regularly do not feel truly in tune with anyone," he said.

In part, he was speaking from personal experience. "I was in the hospital for my cancer treatment, I wasn't alone and I had all the support I could ask for, but I felt very lonely," he wrote. "People in marriages tend to feel less lonely than people not in marriages. However, people in marriages can feel extraordinarily alone when they feel alienated from their spouse and family."

Our species has come this far by showing a capacity for mutual aid and protection, Cacioppo continued. In order to survive, reproduce, and prosper, we have reached out to each other. Now, that connectivity seems at risk. The psychological disturbance of loneliness and isolation has laid siege to our highly evolved societies.

I remember asking him: Does social media make us more connected?

When people use social media to enrich face-to-face interactions, Cacioppo said, it can help, but when people treat social media as an alternative for real human contact, this can lead to the opposite result. Many young people who are lonely tend to see social media as a relatively safe haven from which to connect with others, Cacioppo added. Since people have a hard time judging the trustworthi-

ness of others on social media, the interaction can be superficial.

In addition, an e-connection does not truly substitute for a real one. A Zoom dinner with your family during the holidays, for example, is obviously not the same as an in-person reunion.

Unlike depression and anxiety, loneliness does not have a clinical diagnosis. How then can it be prevented or treated?

Cacioppo's widow, Stephanie, who has continued his research alongside her own studies on the impact of love on the brain, may have an answer. She is an assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral neuroscience at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. She and her colleagues are working on clinical trials that focus on a neurosteroid called pregnenolone.

Preclinical trials showed that the compound could counteract some of the loneliness-related biological changes in the brain and was well-tolerated in humans without the usual side effects of some antidepressants. "If we could successfully reduce the alarm system in the minds of lonely individuals, then we could have them reconnect, rather than withdraw from others," she explained in an interview with the *Guardian*.

Her late husband had thought about that question too. He suggested starting with something small at first. "Don't focus on trying to find the love of your life or reinventing yourself all at once," he said in the essay. "Just dip a toe into the water. Limit your initial outreach to a few charitable activities. Volunteering may get us small doses of the positive sensations that we need to go beyond the fearful outlook that holds us back."

He emphasized that every step toward increasing the quality of social connections can lead to improvements in blood pressure, levels of stress hormones, sleep patterns, cognitive function, and overall well-being. He believed strongly that chronic loneliness should receive greater attention in schools, hospitals, and senior living facilities to help ensure that teachers and care providers can recognize it and try to help.

I asked Cacioppo if seeing a therapist could help alleviate loneliness. He pointed out that avoiding loneliness is not unilaterally about "getting" support. "This is not how we are designed," he said. "Any social support has to be mutual. Being just a client of a psychotherapist fulfills some needs, but it doesn't fulfill that real need to have a rich reciprocal bond."

Actively searching for meaning in your life also can help, he noted. That could include joining a volunteer organization or movement, such as Rotary, or a religious group.

Genshitsu Sen, a grand tea master in Kyoto, Japan, can attest to Cacioppo's advice. At 99, he stays active in Rotary. "I feel that Rotary is my family," he said to *Rotary* magazine recently about life after retirement and the loss of his wife. "It relieves me of my loneliness and makes me feel cherished."

Cacioppo said connections between people have to be meaningful for those involved. "We should always take an 'expect the best' attitude," he said. "Warmth and goodwill on one person's part is more likely to elicit warmth and goodwill from other people — such is the power of reciprocity. With practice, any one of us can warm up what we present to the world."

Despite the devastating impact of chronic loneliness, Cacioppo always emphasized in our discussions that there is a bright side. He liked to compare temporary loneliness to the feelings of hunger and thirst. "When you feel hungry or thirsty, your body is telling you to seek food or water before you become so emaciated that you can hardly function," he would say to me and others. "And loneliness reminds you that you might be in need of a friend. It motivates you to repair or replace connections that you feel are threatened or lost."

Since much of what happens in loneliness may not be conscious, Cacioppo said families and friends are often the first to detect signs of chronic loneliness. "When a person acts sad and lethargic," he explained, "it may be a quiet call for someone to help and connect. Continued patience, empathy, and support over repeated occasions can help rebuild trust and connection."

As for myself, I benefited from the friendship of my professors and a group of warm-hearted college classmates, who enabled me to overcome the cultural and emotional isolation when I first settled in the U.S. in the early 1990s. My job as a journalist has also provided a rich social circle.

During the COVID lockdown, I followed Cacioppo's advice and made conscious efforts to connect with my family and friends via video chats, and to volunteer for various charity organizations where I met many new people. I got lonely at the beginning, but the feeling never became chronic. The mutual support I have gained from the group activities served as a constant reminder that we live better as connected humans. ■

TO GROW CORAL REEFS, GET THEM BUZZED

Zapped with solar electrical currents, struggling reefs can self-repair with incredible speed — and even grow where none have existed before

By Geetanjali Krishna

In a small boat, two divers set off in the Andaman Islands in India, pulling away from a pristine beach and a coast fringed by mangroves. The sea is every shade of blue, but all is not well beneath the surface of water around this picturesque archipelago. In the last two decades, its coral reefs have suffered several bleaching events, a tsunami, and stress from human activity.

Anjali Sarah and Sangamesh Uday, the two divers, plunge beneath the waves to a section of the vibrant coral reef that drew over half a million tourists to the islands in 2019-20. Parrotfish and stingrays swim around them as the divers methodically survey the reef closely for algal or sponge growth, new marine life, and any new damage. Ninety minutes later, they return to the boat, compare notes, and soon dive again. They do this twice, sometimes three times a week, assessing changes in coral and marine diversity. It is a lot of work for a single reef. But this is no ordinary reef, and Sarah and Uday are no ordinary divers.

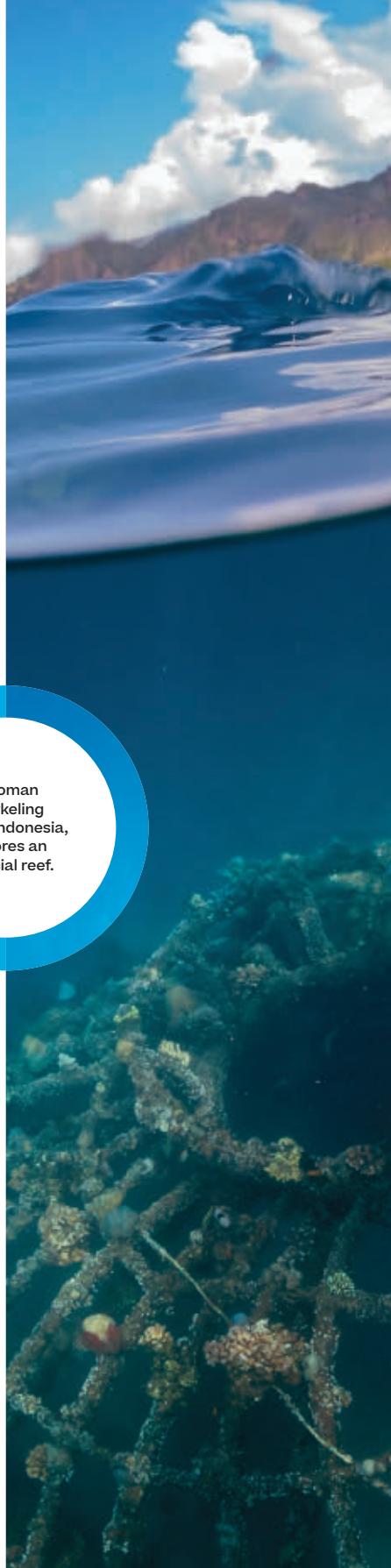
They work for ReefWatch Marine Conservation, an organization that has developed nine artificial reefs near the archipelago's natural coral formations.

ReefWatch's reefs are supercharged. Bobbing on the water's surface, a buoy with a solar panel, connected to the artificial reef's metal frame, delivers a continuous electrical current. Like a lightning bolt that shocks to life a mad scientist's creation, this low-voltage charge accelerates the coral's natural formation process.

In nature, coral grows at a creeping half-centimeter per year through the buildup of minerals dissolved in seawater, which form a thick layer of substrate. But with electrically charged reefs, the electric current takes on some of the heavy lifting needed to deposit essential calcium carbonate on the reef. "This allows coral to grow seven to 12 times faster than in nature," explains Nayantara Jain, executive director of ReefWatch. The organization's divers collect naturally broken fragments of coral and use zip ties to attach them to artificial reefs. They also manually create diverse habitats using rocks, shells, and aquatic plants. "We see an immediate up-tick in marine life when the artificial reef is set up," she says. "In time, hopefully it will fuse and bulwark the natural reef."

PHOTOGRAPH: KONSTANTIN TRUBAVIN/GETTY IMAGES

A woman snorkeling in Bali, Indonesia, explores an artificial reef.





Science of solar-charged reefs

In the 1970s, while studying how seashells and reefs grow, Wolf Hilbertz at the University of Texas School of Architecture discovered that when a small electric current passes between two metal electrodes placed in seawater, dissolved minerals are deposited into a layer of limestone, similar to the substrate that corals need to thrive. Later experiments found that the coating could thicken at a rate of 5 centimeters per year — up to 10 times faster than coral grows naturally — for as long as a current was flowing through it.

With marine scientist Thomas J. Goreau, Hilbertz adapted the process to create artificial coral reefs. They called the resulting substrate Biorock, built the first experimental artificial reefs, and patented the technology. Hilbertz died in 2007, and Biorock's patent expired in 2008, opening the door for scientists everywhere to use the process. Goreau went on to run the Global Coral Reef Alliance, which has developed more than 700 Biorock reef projects in more than 45 countries.

The benefits of Biorock structures have been shown to be numerous, causing not only hard coral to develop at faster speeds, but also other forms of marine life, such as tunicates, bivalves, sponges, and soft corals.

And hastening coral growth is not the only benefit of a small shot of electric current. The buzz ensures a continuous deposit of calcium carbonate, which makes these reefs self-repairing. They are also more resilient to tsunamis, cyclones, and other storms. Studies (albeit mostly



PHOTOGRAPHS: (AERIAL, RAY) GETTY IMAGES; (BUOY) CHOWDULA SATYANARAYANA, ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA; (GOREAU) DICKSON LEE/SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST VIA GETTY IMAGES



“WE SEE AN IMMEDIATE UPTICK IN MARINE LIFE.”



Clockwise from top left: aerial view of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India; solar power buoy to generate the electrical current for the reefs; a tropical coral reef; Thomas Goreau, president of the Global Coral Reef Alliance, which has developed more than 700 Biorock reef projects in more than 45 countries

conducted by Goreau and his team at Global Coral Reef Alliance) show that Biorock reefs quickly get tethered to the seabed with the accumulation of calcium carbonate and can consequently weather storms effectively.

These lab results have held up during real-world events. After hurricanes Hanna and Ike in September 2008, Biorock coral reefs at Grand Turk in the Atlantic Ocean were found to have suffered little structural damage, and most of the coral on them survived. Moreover, research indicates that after Biorock reefs were placed around severely eroded beaches on low-lying Indonesian islands, the beaches regenerated in a few months.

Perhaps more significant, at a time when rising ocean temperatures and acidity are threatening coral reefs worldwide, the electric charge to reefs helps make them more resilient to bleaching events, algal diseases, and increased sedimentation, which reduces the sunlight they receive. Biorock reefs in Indonesia survived bleaching events in 2016 and 2020, while coral on nearby natural reefs did not.

The team at ReefWatch, which began using Biorock technology after its patent ran out, similarly observes that with the mineral accretion of the reef taken care of by the electric current, corals growing on it are able to use their energy reserves to survive. "We've found that the electric current leaves the coral with an energy budget that helps it survive warmer temperature and coral disease," Jain says.

Creating reefs where none existed

Over 2,000 miles from where Sarah and Uday are conducting their research, in the Gulf of Kutch off the shores of the Indian state of Gujarat, divers rue the poor visibility in the water, unlike the clear seas around the Andaman Islands. The gulf is a pretty tough place for marine life, with a wide temperature range, currents, organic pollutants, and high salinity, which means that the 40-odd species of hard coral and 10 species of soft coral here survive against all odds. In this largely barren seabed, an artificial reef stands out from a distance, with bright, large coral and batfish flitting in and out of its frame.

Set up in 2020 by the Zoological Survey of India, with support from the Gujarat forest department and the Global Coral Reef Alliance, this project is more ambitious in its scope than ReefWatch's. "We

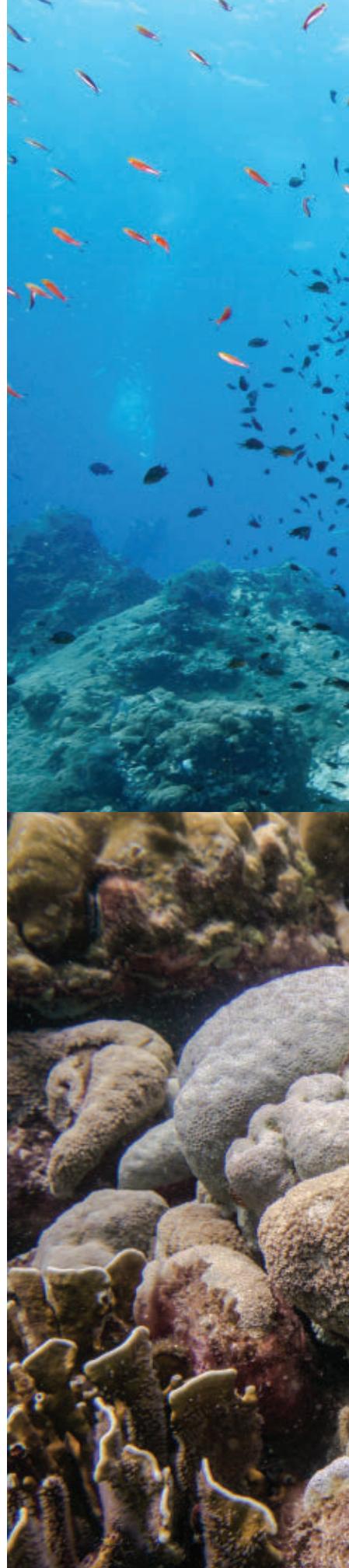
wanted to not just restore the degraded reefs of the gulf, but also to bring back the staghorn coral, which had become locally extinct here 10,000 years ago," says Chowdula Satyanarayana, a scientist with the Indian zoological organization who is leading the project.

Earlier attempts to repopulate the gulf with staghorn coral had failed. Instead, Satyanarayana, who had trained in Indonesia with the Global Coral Reef Alliance, decided on a two-pronged course of action — Biorock technology and a smarter transplantation technique. "Past attempts to bring back staghorn coral had used specimens from [India's] Lakshadweep Islands, which are pristine compared to the gulf. Perhaps when they were transplanted in the turbid waters here, they couldn't withstand the shock," he says. Instead, the Zoological Survey transplanted specimens from over 1,200 miles away in the Gulf of Mannar, which lies between the southeastern tip of India and the west coast of Sri Lanka. This area is, in parts, even more degraded than the waters of Kutch.

The approach worked. Two years later, Satyanarayana says that about 65 percent of the coral has survived the long-

THE ELECTRIC CHARGE TO REEFS HELPS MAKE THEM MORE RESILIENT.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (SEA FAN, BLEACHED REEF) GETTY IMAGES; (BIOROCK REEF) CHOWDULA SATYANARAYANA, ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA





**Clockwise
from top:** coral at
Richelieu Rock, a famous
Thailand dive site in the
North Andaman Sea; an
electrically charged reef,
which allows coral to grow
seven to 12 times faster; a
reef damaged by high
temperatures



distance transplantation. What's more, the transplanted corals are growing eight to 10 times faster on the Biorock reef. The artificial reefs have also withstood the water currents and have become "almost cemented to the seabed," he says, adding that the corals growing on this reef seem more resilient to the effects of sedimentation and lower exposure to the sun, compared with those on the natural reef.

The ReefWatch model differs from the Biorock process in that it does not supply continuous current to the reef. Jain and her colleagues remove the floating solar panels during the monsoon to prevent them from being damaged and reattach them in September, whereas the solar panels on the Biorock reefs in Kutch run year-round. This has enabled ReefWatch researchers to observe how the reef behaves when it does not have current running through it. "We've observed that corals grow slower without the current," Sarah says. "Algal growth increases as well, and last year, when we returned to the reef after the monsoon, we noticed an uptick in coral predators like parrotfish." Once the reefs are connected again to the solar panels, the conditions swiftly become more conducive to coral growth.

This is why critics of such intensive coral regeneration projects ask if they are worth the expense and extensive monitoring and maintenance they require. Satyanarayana reckons that the Zoological Survey's reefs in the Gulf of Kutch cost about \$31,400 each to construct. "When compared to the outcome, the fact that we have managed to regenerate coral reefs in a polluted area and have created a repository of rare corals found off the shores of India, the cost is worth it," he says.

While ReefWatch's Jain states that the group's costs have been much lower (about \$19,000 to construct nine reefs), the lean outfit of divers will need to monitor the nine artificial reefs for at least five years. The organization is developing a more resilient solar device that would provide more continuous current to its reefs. On World Oceans Day in June 2020, it launched Adopt a Reef, a program that invited individual sponsorships of reefs for \$470 per year. Within six weeks, all existing reefs were fully funded.

But healthier reefs don't merely cost money — they generate it too. Jain says that the tourism department of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is interested in

developing artificial reefs to attract more tourists. Satyanarayana is more ambitious, suggesting that coastal areas could create reefs where none existed before, offering more habitats for fish and more dive sites for tourists.

"The beauty of this technology is you can have Biorock reefs anywhere along the coast, even in areas without natural coral reefs," he says, adding that the Zoological Survey has been approached by a diving company to develop a dive site with a new coral reef structure in the waters off the coastal city of Chennai. "Developing new reefs would benefit not just corals but other marine organisms ... and it would bring tourism revenues as well." Such reefs also could help protect the coast and mainland from storm surges, tsunamis, and beach erosion.

The big question is whether coral transplantation can restore a fully functional reef system. Finding the answer to that question lays bare the biggest challenges to coral reef restoration today. The climate is changing, and extreme coral reef bleaching events are happening more frequently. The planet may have already exceeded the upper temperature limit for coral reef ecosystems to thrive. This is where electrically charged artificial reefs — and the heat resilience they have been shown to develop in the corals growing on them — offer a viable solution. But without more funding and a global collaborative effort, they risk remaining isolated proofs of concept, not widespread solutions.

Meanwhile, in the turbulent waters off the Gulf of Kutch, divers carefully secure freshly broken coral fragments to the reef with zip ties. Beyond, in an underwater nursery, new transplants of staghorn coral and many other coral species are being nurtured. Satyanarayana says Biorock reefs and such coral nurseries could ensure the eventual survival of different coral species in the world's rapidly warming oceans. "One day, they could populate this reef just like they did 10,000 years ago," he says. "That's the hope, anyway."

This article was originally published by Reasons to be Cheerful, an editorial project founded by artist and musician David Byrne. Reasons to be Cheerful aims to inspire readers to be curious about how the world can be better and to be part of that change. Learn more at reasonstobecherful.world.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (TOP) REEFWATCH MARINE CONSERVATION; (BOTTOM) DEWEY C. SERGIO





Above: Biorock reefs can even be placed in areas without natural reefs. **Below:** Since Rotary members submerged this artificial reef over a decade ago, it has become a breeding ground for marine species.



ROTARY AND REEFS

Beneath the blue waters of Lamon Bay in the Philippines lies a remarkable symbol of Rotary's involvement in reef restoration: a giant artificial reef in the shape of a Rotary wheel. The Rotary Club of Atimonan, with help from the Philippine military, submerged it there in 2009 in response to the pleas of local fishermen for help restoring the marine ecosystem and a fishing industry devastated by large-scale commercial fishing.

It's one of many projects Rotary members have taken on to try to restore reefs, including one elsewhere in the Philippines, in the Caramoan Islands, using Biorock technology to speed the growth of corals.

To learn more about the Atimonan reef project and experience it in immersive virtual reality, watch the film *Bahura* at rotary.org/vr.

OUR CLUBS

VIRTUAL VISIT

Woven into the cultural fabric

Rotary Club of Kotor, Montenegro

Nestled on a fjord-like bay along Montenegro's Adriatic coast, the town of Kotor is a time capsule. With its medieval Old Town area, overlooked by a hilltop castle fortress, the city accounts for a significant percentage of Montenegro's cultural heritage sites. Its Cathedral of St. Tryphon is one of Europe's oldest (it's older than Notre Dame in Paris). The town's narrow lanes include one of the narrowest in the world, barely wide enough for two people to pass each other. And all of the Old Town is enclosed by walls as high as 65 feet that zigzag from the coast and up the cliff that rises imposingly behind the town.

"When you come inside the walls, there are no cars," explains Aleksandra Ivanović, a member of the Rotary Club of Kotor. "You have this feeling that you are living in the past."

After a 1979 earthquake destroyed much of the town, the Kotor region was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The buildings were repaired, following

strict rules to preserve the town's heritage. Today, tourists flock to see the cultural sites and enjoy the coastline.

The Rotary Club of Kotor celebrates this history and cultural heritage through its fundraisers and projects, which have supported everything from the town's orchestra to a traditional maritime organization. There are only seven Rotary clubs in Montenegro, and the organization is not yet well known, Ivanović explains. "We need to do a lot of promotion, talk about Rotary and what it does," she says. "For us it was very important to make this connection with the local community, and through Rotary promote the local values, the cultural heritage."

The club, chartered in 2017, remains the youngest one in Montenegro, which shares District 2483 with Serbia. Ivanović, who works for the country's coastal zone management agency, learned about Rotary while studying in the United States. She initially joined the Rotary Club of Budva in 2004 and then became a charter member of the Kotor club.

From its start, the club decided to support Kotor's cultural initiatives. The Venetian Republic ruled the town for centuries, and aside from the fortifications and churches, it left a 500-year tradition of carnival festivities. The Kotor club contributes to the merrymaking by hosting an annual masquerade ball, drawing Rotary members from all over the region. For the past several years, the ball has raised money for equipment for local hospitals. "More and more people from Kotor, not related to Rotarians, are coming to our events to support us," Ivanović says.

During the summer, the club organizes an annual fundraising boat tour of the Bay of Kotor. The club puts on a concert at one of the small islets and uses the tour to promote communities along the bay. (One of the club's members was a yacht captain; while he died in November 2021, club members and his family have continued the fundraiser.)

The money raised from the tour has gone to various cultural organizations. In 2021, the club used 3,500 euros (about \$4,100 at the time) to buy a horn for the town orchestra. Last summer, the club collected money to pay for aquarium tickets for more than 7,000 local children.

The club also plans to buy two new hand-sewn uniforms for the Boka Navy, a more than 1,200-year-old maritime organization and folkloric dance group that performs the traditional kolo circle dance during town celebrations and is on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list. (In Montenegrin, the Bay of Kotor is known as Boka Kotorska.)

The club is small, with fewer than 20 members. About 60 percent are women. Leaders aim to have one activity or project a month to allow participation by those who can't make it to meetings. In September, for example, the group collected 250 books for two elementary schools.

With its impressive history, the town swells with tourists in the warm summer months, and the club hosts visiting Rotary members nearly every week. "Every second day, I'm having coffee with some Rotarians," says Club President Janko Racković, general manager at the Cattaro Hotel.

David Alexander, Rotary's chief com-



Members of the Rotary Club of Kotor, including Janko Racković and Aleksandra Ivanović, celebrate the town's cultural heritage through the group's projects.

munications officer, is one of the many who have enjoyed the Kotor club's hospitality, encountering the group while on vacation there with his family in June. His wife was browsing through the Cattaro Hotel when she noticed a Rotary wheel. That led her to Racković and an invitation to the club meeting the next night.

Even the club's meeting space has a unique history. The French built a theater in 1810 after gaining control of Kotor. Napoleon's Theater was among the first theater buildings in the Balkans; later, it served

as the town hall, and today it is part of the Cattaro Hotel — and where the club meets.

The meetings take place in the evenings and are followed by dinner on a small terrace overlooking the main entrance to the walled city. "There was a band playing below," Alexander recalls. "The hospitality just blew us both away. They really welcomed us in and wanted to show us what Montenegrin culture was all about."

"We are a great hub for Rotarians from all around the world," Ivanović says. "We are waiting for you." — DIANA SCHOBERG

"For us it was very important to make this connection with the local community, and through Rotary promote the local values, the cultural heritage."

A RICH HERITAGE

The Rotary Club of Kotor, Montenegro, draws members in by supporting and celebrating the medieval town's cultural heritage. Here's a look at some of Kotor's top cultural attractions:

Old Town of Kotor: See the city walls and architecture of one of the best-preserved medieval towns in the Mediterranean.

Trg od Oružja (Square of Arms): The square is the primary gathering place for the town.

Sveti Ivan (San Giovanni) Fortress: Zigzag up a trail to the fortress castle located above the Old Town's city walls.

Church of Sveti Luka (St. Luke): The church is a rare building in town not significantly damaged in the 1979 earthquake.

Cathedral of Sveti Triphon (St. Tryphon): The 12th century cathedral is dedicated to the town's protector, whose relics were brought to Kotor in 809.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Like family

After heartbreaking loss, Lungiswa Gwaai found renewed purpose and unexpected opportunities at her school and in Rotary



I grew up in Langa, a township in Cape Town, South Africa. My mother, sister, and I moved there from the Eastern Cape province to seek a better education for me. But in 2004, when I was 14, my mum got sick and died of diabetes. Shortly afterward, my sister died of a heart attack.

I was raised in a one-room house by my cousins. There were a lot of us, but everyone made sacrifices for me. We knew that was our situation for the time, but it wasn't forever, so we worked hard to change things. What kept us going was love.

I attended the very first LEAP Science and Maths School. (The acronym stands for Langa Education Assistance Program, and now there are six LEAP schools in three South African provinces.) I would walk down the streets of Langa and be seen as a role model, which put so much pressure on me. Every child would look at a student wearing an orange and black jacket — our uniform — and see hope.

One day, when I was in 11th grade, I was called into the school director's office. I asked, "Did someone die again?" It was such a difficult time. First my mum, then my sister. I kept hearing that someone in my family was dead, and in my head, when I was called in, I thought, "Oh my goodness, it's death again."

This time, though, it was something different. John Gilmour, the school's founder and director, told me I had been nominated to attend a Rotary Youth Leadership Awards camp. I was so happy. At RYLA, I learned about Interact, and I worked to start a club with the help of the Rotary Club of Newlands, which was supporting LEAP — as has The Rotary Foundation. I was my school's first Interact club president. From there, the opportunities kept coming. I got to meet and engage with other students coming from more privileged schools, and I heard about other Rotary programs. I was especially interested in Rotary Youth Exchange, and the Newlands

club agreed to sponsor me for a year in Brazil.

It was a long journey for me to get everything required to go on the exchange, but I was helped along by all the Rotarians and the teachers in my school. They became like family members — especially John Gilmour. In the townships of South Africa, it is normal for Black people to grow up without their fathers. I didn't know mine and have no idea where he is. But when I got to the embassy to apply for my visa, the man said, "Where is your father?" I had no time to explain to him about everything with my father and my family. I pointed to John and said, "Here's my father."

I still don't understand why I did it. You could see in the man's face that he wondered how I could be the daughter of a white man. But John played a fatherly role in my life. I would say he *is* my father. It was a success: I got my visa.

Youth Exchange was an amazing experience. My eyes were opened. I wanted to be in a country where I was challenged enough that when I returned home, I would be a different person. During that year, I reflected on my life. That's when I decided that I wanted to go back to South Africa and be an agent of change. I wanted an opportunity to open doors for young generations that would come after me.

Back home, I went to work for LEAP while earning national diplomas in operations management from Cape Peninsula University of Technology and safety management from the University of South Africa. Today I'm part of LEAP's management team, working on operations and fundraising. I started a Rotaract club — again sponsored by the Newlands club — in Khayelitsha, the largest single township in South Africa. The club brought together mainly young professionals who want to make a difference in their lives and the lives of others.

I joined the Rotary Club of Newlands when I was 29. We are working with early childhood development centers in Langa, and having grown up in Langa has been an asset for this project. The way to build relationships in the townships is to wear your jeans, walk the streets, touch, feel, hear, and be a part of the people. I know the dynamics of the community. I'm on the ground and I speak the language.

In 2017, I got a phone call from a man in Switzerland. He said that they wanted to interview me for a film about Rotary Youth Exchange that had been commissioned by the Swiss Rotary Foundation. They flew to South Africa and sat down with me to hear my story. That film became *Lungie's Story*. (Lungie: That's me!) I'm very grateful for the

"I wanted to go back to South Africa and be an agent of change. I wanted an opportunity to open doors."

film. It's won several awards, and because of it, other opportunities opened up. I was invited to speak at the 2021 Rotary institute in Prague, and there I met then-RI President Shekhar Mehta. He asked me to be an Empowering Girls ambassador.

Women's empowerment is my passion. If you want to invest in a young woman, invest in her education. That's how they grow, find their voice, and learn to stand up. As an African woman, I know there are cultural differences. People may say not to look someone in the eye or not to challenge what a chief is saying. But as soon as you are educated, you learn that it is OK to express your opinions and to trust that change is possible.

I'm a proud product of Rotary. I know how much its members have personally invested in my growth. I wanted to be part of that team that makes a difference in the world — and I keep on taking each and every opportunity that comes my way.

— AS TOLD TO DIANA SCHOBERT



Lungiswa Gwaai

- **Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, 2007**
- **Rotary Youth Exchange, Brazil, 2009-10**
- **Cape Peninsula University of Technology**, national diploma, operations management, 2019
- **University of South Africa**, national diploma, safety management, 2020

From left: During her Youth Exchange in Brazil, Gwaai visits Rio de Janeiro, and leads a parade of students during a district conference.

Roses for beehives



The **Roses for a Hive** project, started by the 2021-22 district governors of France, was designed to raise public awareness of the alarming decrease in the number of bees and its negative impact on ecosystems. Hundreds of Rotary clubs sold rosebushes to raise funds for the installation of beehives, insect hotels, and traps for Asian giant hornets, major predators of bees. This nationwide project underscores clubs' commitment to Rotary's environment area of focus.

Maud Fontenoy, a sailor and a former Rotary member who was the youngest person to serve as president of a French Rotary club, sponsored the project in partnership with the country's largest rose-growing company. The project was officially launched in November 2021 and culminated on 20 May 2022, World Bee Day.

↑
The Rotary Club of Montpellier donated hives to an agricultural high school to encourage beekeeping training.

A READY-MADE PROJECT FOR CLUBS

To encourage Rotary clubs in France to join the project, each club received flyers, order forms, and posters. The price offered by the rose grower allowed each club to make a profit of about \$7 to \$10 per bush sold. The clubs used the proceeds to purchase hives made in France with local wood as well as other bee-related products. To facilitate the clubs' work, the organizers provided contact information for apiaries and groups of amateur and professional beekeepers. The clubs could donate the hives to municipalities or beekeepers, or install insect hotels in public institutions or businesses.

SUPPORTING THE BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY

Beekeeping professionals have

been suffering from a decline in honey production for years. "The profits from 270 rosebushes sold to the public were used to provide Antoine Leroy, a beekeeper, with hives and beekeeping equipment," says Marc Valence, a member of the Rotary Club of Montluçon. The production difficulties have caused a sharp rise in the price of honey, leading to frequent thefts of hives. The Rotary Club of Arras Coeur d'Artois donated money from its rosebush sale to help Pascal Denis, a beekeeper who had 48 hives stolen. "The Rotarians came to see me at the market. I didn't know what to say; it's an extraordinary step," says Denis, who is still struggling to recover from the theft.

The Rotary Club of Saint-Paul de Vence donated hives to a beekeeping training center that provides

training to 300 people and has an apiary school. "Before the official handover, Rotarians attended the training session and, equipped with the necessary attire, verified that the implantation of the newborn queens in hives had been successful," says Francis Walter, 2021-22 president of the club.

The funds collected are also used to purchase the Asian hornet traps. "The project was implemented by a Rotarian beekeeper, and the equipment was distributed to beekeepers in the area," says Damien Bidoire, a member of the Rotary Club of Roubaix-Est.

EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

One of the beehives donated by the Rotary Club of Pornichet Saint-Nazaire Atlantique is used as an educational tool in schools. A beekeeper gives a presentation to students to raise awareness about the importance of preserving biodiversity. A center that welcomes children with psychological difficulties has also been equipped with a beehive. "It was lovingly decorated by the children with vegetable paints that are safe for bees' endocrine systems and was then placed in an apiary near Pézenas," says Bernard Jourdan, head of communications for the Rotary Club of Montpellier. He adds that "two other hives and their swarms have joined the apiary of the private agricultural high school in the Hérault Valley."

SUPPORT FOR OTHER PROJECTS

Several clubs planned two projects in one. The beehives donated by the Rotary and Interact clubs of Bourg-en-Bresse to the town have been quickly populated by swarms deposited by a beekeeper. "It is planned that part of the honey produced will be distributed by Rotary members to local associations," says Eric Liatout, 2021-22 president of the Rotary Club of Bourg-en-Bresse-Brou. This idea is shared by the Rotary Club of Auxerre Saint-Germain, which plans to use future honey harvests to fund local projects.



One of the beehives donated by the Rotary Club of Pornichet Saint-Nazaire Atlantique is used as an educational tool in schools.

BY THE NUMBERS

50,000
rosebushes sold

About
\$400,000
collected

2,000
hives donated

3,000
insect hotels
built

3,000
hornet traps
installed

A PUBLIC RELATIONS OPPORTUNITY

This project has generated about 200 stories in the French regional press. Both the rose plantings and the beehive donations were opportunities to meet with journalists and elected officials.

Public exhibitions served as a framework to promote the project to the local population, such as when the Rotary clubs of Senlis and Crépy-en-Valois joined beekeeping professionals and amateurs for an event.

To mark Rotary members' commitment, the donated hives are stamped "Rotary Club," and many clubs have placed plaques in public places. In the Jardin des Plantes in Rouen, a "Rotary Protects the Environment" plaque is placed in the

apiary at the garden. Beekeepers introduced members of the Rotary Club of Rouen to their passion and invited them and their families to visit the apiary, say club members Geneviève Grise David and Thérèse Wagemans. The visit included a gingerbread snack, made with honey from their bees.

The Roses for a Hive project was a first. The environmental protection project was carried out in conjunction with beekeeping professionals and enthusiasts, elected officials, and the media. It has a national dimension that will ultimately help raise Rotary's profile. It's a project that goes far beyond doing a favor to bees.

— CHRISTOPHE COURJON

HANDBOOK

Kick-start your club's social media presence

Rotary's social and digital media specialist offers some tips

Social media makes expanding your club's reach easier than ever, but how? There are tips, tricks, and tools for creating content for social platforms, and the goal is simple: connection. A well-built social media presence will help you create connections in your community and beyond, from building awareness of your club's presence to showcasing its success. To help boost your social media savvy, we've put together the following eight tips and tools.

— HANNAH SHAW

1

Pick your platform.

With so many social media platforms available, getting started can be intimidating. Choose one platform to focus on and grow from there. We recommend starting with Facebook, which has the largest user base.

2

Assign roles.

The first step in creating content is capturing it. Assign a designated photographer to take pictures at club events and service projects. Additionally, pick a point person to manage your club's social media posts.

Capture
Rotary
members
in action.



3

Be consistent.

Whether you post daily, weekly, or monthly, set a goal to share on social media regularly. Consistent posting helps cultivate followers.

4

Take photos that tell a story.

Opt for images that show action rather than just offering group shots. Show people getting their hands dirty, giving out supplies, or sharing a moment of laughter.



 **Rotary Club Dunakeszi** is with Kossuth László and 3 others.
Zone 5

Úta általára került a Rotary Liget a Víktor Sportcsarnok Otthonban Szödligeten. Klubunk költségénél az intézmény vezetői látogatnak vendégek. A projekt keretében az otthon lakó 30 diáknevűről és 30 gyermekszülött gondozóhátról a jövőben, melyek hamarasan árnyas közösségi terekkel, gyümölcsrel és egypéren hasznos szabadidős tevékenységgel fogják szolgálni szolgálni.




18

5

Use your photos to tell a story.

Lead with impact and encourage engagement.

When planning an event, project, or fundraiser, think about how you'll use social media to showcase it. Tell a story by identifying the problem, your solution, and its impact. Or consider what one thing you want someone to know after viewing your post.



rotarymelbourne • [Follow](#)
Hawthorn Park

Members and friends gathered to plant 3000 new seedlings, shrubs and grasses. #doinggoodintheworld #hawthorn

alisonmerry • 1 hr ago

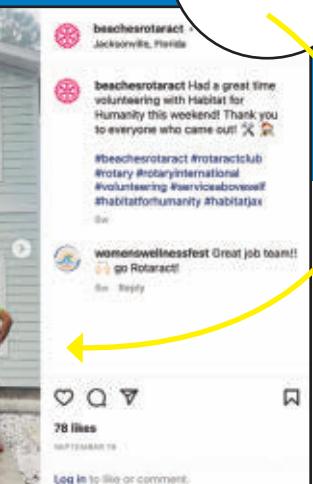
berat_kaya • 1 hr ago

Rotary Club of Carol Stream is at Pottawatomie Park, St. Charles, IL September 24 - Saint Charles -

Fun fellowship today while supporting Alzheimer's Walk #ENDALZ



Show your club members having fun together.



beachessrotaract • Jacksonville, Florida

beachessrotaract Had a great time volunteering with Habitat for Humanity this weekend! Thank you to everyone who came out! #team #rotary #rotaryinternational #volunteering #serviceaboveself #habitatforhumanity #habitatjax

womenwellnessfest Great job team!! #goRotaract! #team

78 likes · SEPTEMBER 19 · Log in to like or comment

6

Celebrate partnership and participation.

Tag participants and community partners in your posts. Avoid Rotary jargon. Not everybody who reads your posts will be familiar with acronyms like PETS (presidents-elect training seminar) or RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Awards). Remember that those engaging with your posts include prospective members!

Use the Brand Center.

The Brand Center is your one-stop shop for logos, creative assets, guidelines, and more. Be sure to visit often as new materials are added for your use.

8

Find inspiration.

Examine the content you engage with on social media. What captures your attention and holds your interest? How can you apply that to content you create? Check out Rotary International's profiles and posts for more inspiration (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter).

7



TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

New beginnings, new opportunities to serve

A new year is upon us. As we look forward to new beginnings and experiences, let's think outside the box and find new opportunities to serve through Rotary.

Consider taking up a community economic development project this year. In this Rotary area of focus, we apply our professional experience by promoting the entrepreneurial spirit as we help communities help themselves in a sustainable way. Community economic development projects, to paraphrase the universal adage, don't just give someone a fish today but teach them to fish so they can eat for a lifetime.

These projects can be microloans to start up a livestock breeding business, or they might take the adopt-a-village approach in which Rotary works with communities on multipronged efforts to boost local economies sustainably.

In 2000, during its transition to independence, Timor-Leste was reeling from political violence and destruction. Communities not only needed shelter and improved living conditions but also a new economy.

This is where Australian Rotary clubs stepped up with the East Timor Roofing project to produce and install corrugated roofing, and later, water tanks and grain silos. As the project grew, other organizations joined, including The Rotary

Foundation, which delivered a grant that set the project on its path to success.

Before long, East Timor Roofing became a financially viable enterprise, raising enough money to build roofs for homes, schools, orphanages, and commercial buildings. Subsistence farmers got silos for their crops. Hundreds of Timorese received professional training in basic building and administrative skills. Thousands of new water tanks ensured that young girls could attend school rather than fetching water.

What began as a roofing project is today a commercial enterprise employing local people and making a huge impact. And your Foundation paved the way.

What experiences lie ahead for you in 2023? A district or global grant? Or possibly a visit to Melbourne, Australia, just up the road from my home, to make new friends, reunite with old ones, and find partners for projects during the 2023 Rotary International Convention?

Let's make a New Year's resolution to take advantage of opportunities to learn, grow, and serve. And let's have some fun in the process. This is Rotary, after all.

So, my friends, let us go forth and *carpe annum* — seize the year.

IAN H.S. RISELEY

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

January events

GO TAKE A HIKE

Event: New Year's Day Hike

Host: Rotary Club of Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

What it benefits: Local projects

Date: 1 January

Start 2023 on a happy and healthy foot with what the club hopes will be an annual New Year's Day event: a 2-mile hike around Fowler Lake, one of more than 20 picturesque lakes in northwestern Waukesha County. Hikers are advised to dress for winter weather. Suggested donations will help fund the installation of a splash pad at a local park.

IT'S BRRRRISK!

Event: Polar Plunge

Host: Rotary Club of the Bridgewaterers, Massachusetts

What it benefits: Local and international projects and charities

Date: 1 January

This club tradition invites brave souls to ring in the new year by leaping from Onset Beach into the frigid Atlantic Ocean. Through sponsorships, participants raise funds that go toward the club's community-based projects and other causes; last year's event garnered \$12,000. Onlookers are welcome at the beach, while those who prefer the comforts of home can watch a livestream on the club's Facebook page.

FEELIN' HOT, HOT, HOT

Event: Crazy Pepper Chili Cook-off

Host: Rotary Club of Highlands County, Florida

What it benefits: Local projects and charities

Date: 21 January

For more than a decade, hundreds of people have gathered in downtown



LET IT SNOW

Event: Snowmobile FUNd Run

Host: Rotary Club of Upper Kittitas County, Washington

What it benefits: Local youth-related projects

Date: 28 January

Begin in 2012, this snowmobile run is held each January — as long as there is enough snow on the ground. (Cross your fingers!) Participants meet at a recreational resort to navigate snowmobile trails on the edge of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest in the Cascade Mountains. In addition to the thrill of winter adventure, the event provides thousands of dollars in raffle prizes.

Sebring for this annual chili cook-off. Teams whip up recipes in the hopes of satisfying the crowd and winning the judges' first-place prize of \$500. The event also features a chili-dog eating contest, a car show, live music, and additional food and refreshments.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Event: Mission 10 Race

Host: Rotary Club of Hollister, California

What it benefits: Local and international projects

Date: 28 January

This race leads runners through the scenic farmland and hills outside San Juan Bautista, a small California Mission town about 50 miles south of San Jose. Competitors can choose from a half-marathon, a 10-mile race, a 5K race, and a 1-mile fun run. Medals

are awarded in several age categories. Teams dressed in themed costumes are encouraged, with trophies presented to the most creative efforts.

IF YOU'RE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD ...

Event: Charity Car Show

Host: Rotary Club of Inglewood, New Zealand

What it benefits: Local charities and upgrades to the club's meeting house

Date: 28 January

Automobile aficionados will delight in the collection of custom and classic cars on display at this 27th annual show, held at Inglewood High School. Attendees can fuel up at food and drink stalls, and children under age 15 are admitted for free. The event's major sponsor is Custom Street Rides, a local automotive restoration shop.

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.



Rotary Action Groups

Rotary Action Groups help clubs and districts plan humanitarian service projects on various focused topics. The groups are organized by Rotarians, Rotaractors, and Rotary Peace Fellows with skills and interest in a particular field. Membership is open to people who want to share their expertise to make a positive impact or support action groups' projects and activities. Action group members have the opportunity to engage in meaningful service activities outside their clubs, districts, or countries. Clubs can draw on these groups to enhance projects, engage members, and attract new ones.

Addiction prevention rag-ap.org	Endangered species rag4es.org	Mental health initiatives ragmentalhealth.org
Alzheimer's and dementia adrag.org	Environmental sustainability esrag.org	Multiple sclerosis rotary-ragmsa.org
Basic education and literacy belrag.org	Family health and AIDS prevention rfa.org	Peace rotaryactiongroupforpeace.org
Blindness prevention rag4bp.org	Food plant solutions foodplantsolutions.org	Polio survivors rotarypoliosurvivors.org
Blood donation ourblooddrive.org	Health education and wellness hewrag.org	Refugees, forced displacement, and migration ragforrefugees.org
Clubfoot rag4clubfoot.org	Hearing ifrahl.org	Reproductive, maternal, and child health rotaryrmch.org
Community economic development ragced.org	Hepatitis ragforhepatitiseradication.com	Slavery prevention ragas.online
Diabetes rag-diabetes.org	Malaria ram-global.org	Water, sanitation, and hygiene wash-rag.org
Disaster assistance dna-rag.com	Menstrual health and hygiene ragmhh.org	
Domestic violence prevention ragfamsafe.org		

Find out more by emailing or visiting the website of the group you're interested in, or by writing to actiongroups@rotary.org.

IN BRIEF

Rotary and Gates Foundation renew partnership

Rotary and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have renewed their longstanding partnership to end polio. The renewal agreement includes a joint commitment of up to \$450 million to support the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

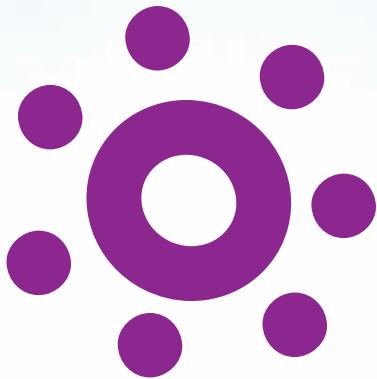
“We’ve made tremendous progress, but the world is facing multiple pandemics, and vaccine hesitancy is on the rise,” says Ian Riseley, trustee chair of The Rotary Foundation. “Partnering with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation helps us ensure that children in polio-affected countries get the lifesaving vaccines they need.”

Rotary is committed to raising \$50 million per year over three years, with every dollar to be matched with two additional dollars from the Gates Foundation. The joint commitment was announced in October in conjunction with the World Health Summit in Berlin, at which global leaders collectively pledged \$2.6 billion in funding toward the GPEI’s 2022-26 strategy.

“Eradicating polio requires the dedication and generosity of nations and individuals around the world, and Rotarians are again leading the way,” says Melinda French Gates, co-chair of the Gates Foundation. “Rotary International and Rotarians continue to be the heart of GPEI — and have been since the beginning. Together, we are moving closer to our shared goal of ending polio and ensuring that families will never have to fear this disease again.”

“As the first organization to envision a polio-free world, Rotary is more committed than ever to delivering on our promise that one day, no child will ever again be paralyzed by polio,” says Rotary President Jennifer Jones. “Our partnership with the Gates Foundation helps us eliminate any impediment to conquer polio now.”

The GPEI was formed in 1988 by Rotary, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Gates Foundation and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, joined later. Since the initiative started, the incidence of polio has plummeted by more than 99.9 percent.



IMAGINE ROTARY

Our dreams become reality
when we engage and build
partnerships that can
change the world

Take action to:

- Imagine DEI: Expanding Our Reach: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Imagine a Welcoming Club Experience: Comfort and Care
- Imagine Impact: Expanding Rotary's Reach Media Tour
- Empower Girls

Learn more:

rotary.org/initiatives22-23



IN BRIEF

Rotary partnership delivers ambulances to Ukraine

In late September, a convoy of 40 ambulances wound its way from Slovakia, around mountains and through roadblocks, military checkpoints, and torrential rain, to the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv, where the critically needed vehicles were delivered to government officials.

The \$600,000 initiative is the first joint project between Rotary and the U.S.-based nonprofit Ukraine Friends, which agreed in July to collaborate to provide resources, organize logistics, and distribute funds for high-impact projects that help Ukrainians affected by the war with Russia. Each organization donated \$300,000 to buy the ambulances, and Rotary districts in Ukraine and neighboring Slovakia coordinated the delivery.

Brock Bierman, Ukraine Friends CEO and a member of the Rotary Club of Staunton, Virginia, says the logistics of moving that many vehicles across an international border would be difficult under any circumstances, and that moving them into a war zone was especially complex. The journey of about 540 miles took more than twice as long as it would have before the war. Yet the ambulances were delivered without any major problems.

“I don’t think the trip could’ve gone any better,” says Bierman, who was in Kyiv for the ambulances’ arrival. “The way people worked together to get this done was spectacular.”

Ukraine Friends secured the ambulance drivers, while Rotary District 2232 (Belarus and Ukraine) bought the fuel. The ambulances are equipped with oxygen tanks, defibrillators, electrocardiogram machines, mechanical ventilators, and other medical equipment.

Rotary clubs in the Czech Republic and Slovakia procured 22 of the ambulances that the Ministry of Health uses for civilians. The 18 ambulances supplied by Ukraine Friends were given to military personnel with Ukraine’s Territorial Defense Force. “Updating the fleet of fast vehicles [ambulances] is one of the most urgent tasks on the agenda for Ukraine,” Ihor Kuzin, Ukraine’s deputy minister of health, said at the time of the delivery. “We are very grateful to our international donors and partners for joining such an extremely important cause.”

Rotary members and Ukraine Friends are also working together to rehabilitate two schools in the Bucha district near Kyiv that were damaged by shelling. Ukraine Friends is coordinating the logistics required to rebuild the schools’ infrastructure, while Rotary clubs are buying books, school supplies, and computers.

Mykola Stebljanko, a member of the Rotary E-Club of Ukraine and past governor of District 2232, says the



ambulance project is part of a comprehensive program for clubs in the region to provide specialized equipment for emergency vehicles, including firetrucks.

Rotary General Secretary and CEO John Hewko says the organization is glad it can expand its reach by partnering with Ukraine Friends. “This terrible crisis has brought out the best in Rotary — demonstrating our generosity, increasing membership in Ukraine, and now opening up new opportunities for providing vital services,” he says. He notes that the partnership will help Rotary “do more for Ukrainians as they struggle to survive and rebuild in the months and years ahead.”

Bierman adds that the collaboration “will have an amplifying effect and create an even larger impact on those we are trying to help. The critical humanitarian assistance and medical aid to those most in need will provide Ukrainians with a helping hand exactly at the time when they need it most.”

Since Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022, more than 14 million Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes. To address the humanitarian crisis, Rotary awarded more than \$11.7 million in disaster response grants by late October. These 353 grants, for club projects in 29 countries, support people in and around Ukraine who have been affected by the war. Rotary and Rotaract clubs around the world have donated millions more directly to Ukrainian clubs that are providing people food, shelter, medicine, and clothing.

— RYAN HYLAND

↑ Ambulances procured by Rotary and U.S.-based nonprofit Ukraine Friends are delivered in September to Kyiv, Ukraine. The \$600,000 initiative is the first joint project between Rotary and Ukraine Friends.

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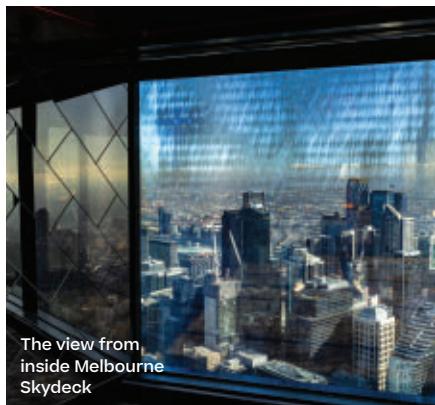
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2023 CONVENTION

Memories in Melbourne



The view from, inside Melbourne Skydeck

Melbourne's dazzling cityscapes provide the perfect backdrop for capturing photos alongside the new friends you're sure to make at the 2023 Rotary International Convention 27-31 May. You can sightsee at cloud level, gaze at the skyline surrounded by natural beauty, or soak in the sights right around the convention venues. Just don't forget your camera.

Melbourne Skydeck bills itself as the Southern Hemisphere's highest observation point. Take the Eureka Tower elevator to the 88th floor for a 360-degree perspective on city landmarks — from the Arts Centre's spire to the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Look over Port Phillip Bay, and you can spy distant low mountains, the Dandenongs, when the clouds clear.

At the Shrine of Remembrance war memorial, you get a skyline view from the building's balcony. At Albert Park, take

winding paths lined by exotic and native trees to the lake's south side for more picturesque downtown horizon sightlines.

Stop outside the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, the location for breakout sessions and the House of Friendship, to watch the South Wharf Promenade riverfront bustle, with the photo-ready Polly Woodside tall ship anchored nearby. Inside the building, you'll feel immersed in Melbourne when you see the downtown skyline and river through huge windows.

You'll visit Melbourne's sports precinct for general sessions at Rod Laver Arena, home of the Australian Open. Grab a snap for social media outside against the looming skyscrapers, or pose inside one of the meeting sites in front of a convention favorite: Instagram-worthy Rotary backdrops for selfies with new connections.

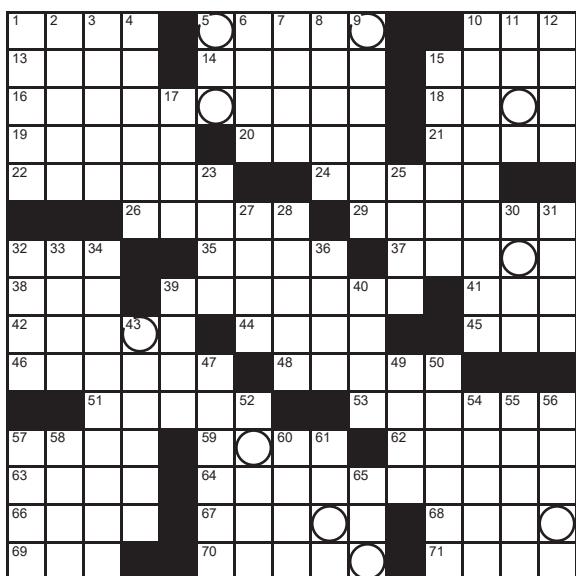
— EVA REMIJAN-TOBA

Learn more and register at convention.rotary.org.

CROSSWORD

Rotary quintet

By Victor Fleming
Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas



Solution on page 10

ACROSS

- 1 Pickle flavor
- 5 Pancho's amigo
- 10 Dalmatian, e.g.
- 13 Falco of television
- 14 Speedskater Ohno
- 15 Chauffeur-driven ride
- 16 Capacity to direct
- 18 Ended
- 19 78-card deck
- 20 A seeming eternity
- 21 Descartes or Lacoste
- 22 Allay the fears of
- 24 River near the Vatican
- 26 Squads
- 29 Deleted
- 32 "No more!" initially
- 35 Close, as an envelope
- 37 ___ and well
- 38 Layer in a coop
- 39 Helpful action
- 41 Countdown start
- 42 At the ready
- 44 "___ meeny ..."
- 45 '20, '21, etc.
- 46 Access need, for short
- 48 Approval mark
- 51 Fabled wish grantor
- 53 Less cluttered
- 57 Structure near a silo
- 59 Publicize aggressively
- 62 Papal cape
- 63 Met moment
- 64 Community of interest
- 66 "Oh, why not!"
- 67 Become, finally
- 68 Exude slowly, as charm
- 69 Assemble, as bricks
- 70 Demolishes
- 71 Patricia of old films
- 72 Clinton's veep
- 75 Beauty products brand
- 77 Basic French verb
- 78 "At ___!"
- 79 Hebrides hill
- 80 Pierre's parent
- 81 Doesn't throw away
- 82 "... happily ___ after"
- 83 Animal lairs
- 84 \$1,000, slangily
- 85 Clothing store section
- 86 Adherence to principle
- 87 Navel accumulation
- 88 Short car trip
- 89 Blue-green
- 90 Concert sites
- 91 Be unlike, with "from"
- 92 Kitty's comment
- 93 Manse dweller
- 94 Justice Kagan
- 95 California border lake
- 96 Fictional Doolittle
- 97 Beat back
- 98 Cinderella event
- 99 Domain
- 100 Bygone G.M. make
- 101 Art class aid
- 105 Chances to get photos

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Houston fusion

Forget Tex-Mex, try Houston's Czech and Vietnamese specialties

Like many Texans, Rhonda Walls Kerby is fond of barbecue brisket and Tex-Mex fajitas, on flour tortillas with onions, poblano peppers, sour cream, and “maybe a side of queso.” But what Walls Kerby really wants visitors to Houston to try are the fusion specialties inspired by the city’s Czech and Vietnamese communities. “There’s so much,” says Walls Kerby, a past governor of District 5890. “The world meets here in food.”

KOLACHES: The sweet yeast pastries arrived in the mid-1800s with Czech immigrants who moved to Texas from the Moravian region of their home country. Filled with fruit or poppy seeds, the snack got a local makeover in 1953, credited to a baker in the town of West who stuffed his pastries with sausage. These savory-style kolaches (which some argue should be called klobasniky) have become a favored variety in

Houston. The version Walls Kerby likes best is “bacon and cheddar cheese baked into the delicious bread,” she says. “And if you really want to do it Texas style you can get it with a jalapeño sausage.”

VIET-CAJUN CRAWFISH: “We have a huge Vietnamese population in Houston, in part because the climate here is similar to Vietnam,” Walls Kerby says. Business owners have developed a genre of Vietnamese-Cajun crawfish restaurants throughout the city, with some concentrated in the district known as Asiatown. There you can find the tasty crawfish — or “mudbugs” as they’re nicknamed — cooked in French butter, garlic, and a variety of Cajun and southeast Asian spices. Or you can enjoy more traditional staples, including pho noodle soup and banh mi sandwiches.

— MONICA ENG

Rhonda Walls Kerby
Rotary Club of Katy, Texas

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