

Rotary

SEPTEMBER 2023

MAGAZINE

Rotary takes
on cervical
cancer
page 18

Closing the
digital divide
starts with
teachers
page 34

A RYLA alum
spreads
a message
of inclusion
page 50

SINGAPORE SWING

The 2024 Rotary Convention city
dazzles with its constant reinvention

page 24



CREATE HOPE in the WORLD

When we nurture peace, opportunities,
and one another, we help heal the
world and create lasting change.

Let's create hope by:

- Confronting stigmas, expanding access, and raising awareness about the importance of mental health
- Fostering understanding and strengthening connections through virtual exchanges
- Unlocking the power of girls and women around the world



Learn more at
rotary.org/initiatives23-24



Peace in practice

The International Day of Peace takes place 21 September. The United Nations General Assembly declared this a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace through observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire.

It is not enough, as people of action, to simply avoid making war. If we are to *Create Hope in the World*, we must aggressively wage peace.

Where can we begin? There are countless armed conflicts around the world, and the global population of displaced people is higher than ever. The opportunities are nearly limitless, but the cycles of violence and hardship seem endless.

My advice is to start small but think big. I look to Rotary members in Pakistan and India for inspiration.

In March 2020, about 50 Rotary members from Pakistan met about 50 Rotary members from India at Kartarpur Sahib, a shrine in Pakistan. The sanctuary honors Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, a religion practiced in both countries. Tensions between the two countries barred many religious pilgrims from India from visiting the shrine. That is, until Pakistan opened a visa-free pathway to them in 2019.

Earlier this year, Rotary members from opposite sides of the border again met at the shrine, this time with about twice as many participants.

Any work toward building peace needs to be brave and bold. What these Rotary members have done is just that. The Pakistani government took an important step toward peace when it admitted Indian pilgrims to the Kartarpur Sahib shrine, but Paki-

stani Rotary members took the next step when they welcomed Rotary members from India as friends and family. That is Positive Peace at work.

These peacebuilders did not stop there. Club representatives at this year's meeting signed twin club certificates to recognize their long-term commitment to continue to learn from each other and to work together on more peacebuilding efforts, and they have held joint meetings via video chat.

The importance of communicating with and learning from another culture cannot be overstated, and Rotary is making it even easier to do so. One way of engaging in cross-cultural dialogue and building relationships across borders is through virtual international exchanges that build on our current programs and make them more accessible.

A virtual exchange uses online platforms to connect people from different parts of the world so they can share their traditions, priorities, values, and more. Virtual exchanges can serve as a window to another part of the world through activities such as teaching a digital cooking class, learning a new language, or even designing service projects with a global impact.

These online chats have the potential to inspire new connections and more respect between societies. Taking that knowledge and using it to better the lives of our fellow human beings is the next step.

Let's see where it takes us.

R. GORDON R. MCINALLY
President, Rotary International



WELCOME



YOU ARE HERE: Sisimiut, Greenland

GREETING: Haluu

TINY HOMELAND: With a population of fewer than 6,000, Sisimiut is still the second-largest city in Greenland. It's located above the Arctic Circle on the country's west coast, on a site originally inhabited 4,500 years ago. Mads Nordlund, president of the Rotary Club of Nuuk and the CEO of an adventure travel company, often brings clients to hike the 100-mile Arctic Circle Trail from Sisimiut to Kangerlussuaq.

A FRAGILE HERITAGE: The small settlements of Greenland are emptying as younger residents seek opportunity elsewhere. "A lot of the existing settlements have anywhere from 20, 30 inhabitants to a few hundred," Nordlund says. Even the custom of traveling by dog sled is dying as Arctic ice melting makes boat travel easier.

THE CLUB: Chartered in 1980, Nuuk is Greenland's only Rotary club and has about 50 members. Its projects include renovating a church in an abandoned settlement. Besides preserving history, the project provides young people with job skills.

— ETELKA LEHOCZKY

Rotary

MAGAZINE

September 2023

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EVERY
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CONTENTS

September 2023
Vol. 202, No. 3

FEATURES

24

Shape-shifting Singapore

On his third visit to the city, the *Rotary* editor finds it has reinvented itself — again

By Wen Huang

34

Wired for success

To close the digital divide, start with the teachers

By Geoffrey Johnson

Illustration by Gwen Keraval

40

Outlasting the pandemic

COVID relief interventions by the Rotary-USAID partnership find a second life

By Diana Schoberg

Photography by Jacqueline Cantu

- 1 **President's message**
- 2 **Welcome**

CONNECT

- 8 **Staff corner**
- 9 **Letters to the editor**
- 11 **The specialist**
Precision plus passion elevates penmanship to a creative art

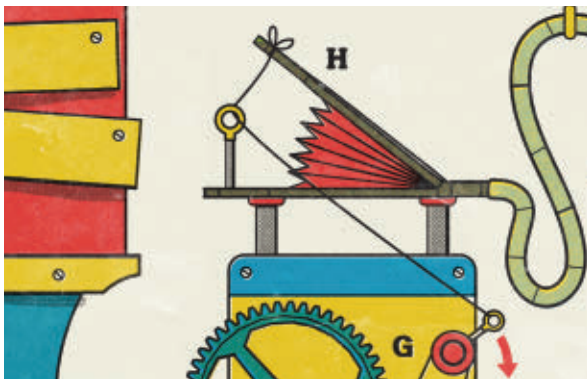
OUR WORLD

- 12 **America's solar energy divide**
Rotary and Habitat bring rooftop solar to low-income homeowners
- 15 **On island time**
A tiny atoll faces challenge with optimism
- 16 **People of action around the globe**
- 18 **A decision to try**
In a bold endeavor, Rotary members work toward eliminating cervical cancer in Latin America
- 22 **The University of Rotary**
Want to build your leadership skills? You don't have to look far

OUR CLUBS

- 48 **Virtual visit**
Rotary Club of Global Water Safety & Drowning Prevention
- 50 **Where are they now?**
Arriving at a RYLA camp in 1991, an anxious teen stepped off a bus and into his future
- 52 **Dispatches from our sister magazines**
- 54 **Registration demonstration**
Our guide to getting to Singapore
- 56 **Trustee chair's message**
- 57 **Calendar**
- 58 **Rotary in the news**
Convention coverage reaches millions
- 60 **The Melbourne convention in photos**
- 62 **2024 convention | Crossword**
- 64 **The kebab you're looking for**
Topped with tomato sauce, Iskender kebab is Turkey's finest

On the cover: Explore a vertical garden in a grove of steel "supertrees" at Gardens by the Bay in Singapore.



54

Singapore National Stadium will host the 2024 Rotary Convention opening ceremony.



STAFF CORNER

Amy Finkelstein

Senior content editor,
Global Content team



Cities have always held a special place in my heart. I was born in Detroit, and my first job after college was in the city. During college, I attended a journalism conference in New York and knew instantly that I had to live there someday. It was the only place I had ever been where people walked as fast as I did! I spent nearly a decade in New York before moving to London, and I have now lived in Chicago for 14 years. They all have what I love about big cities — museums, architecture, art, music, and theater.

When I was 11, I got a paper route. Each afternoon, I'd sit on the floor and read one of the papers before delivering them. I was always interested in the news, and I loved reading. I am the person who talks to strangers at bus stops and learns their life stories. My curiosity about people made journalism a good fit.

I worked at The Associated Press for more than 20 years. My first big bylines were for protests during a newspaper strike and covering a controversial pathologist who was helping terminally ill people end their lives. As an editor, I've helped reporters write about stories as small as a teddy bear in space and as consequential as women being killed by relatives who believed they'd dishonored their families. I took calls from reporters covering earthquakes who didn't know where they might sleep that night. I helped reporters write about the bankruptcy of my home city. For months, I shepherded daily stories about the trial — and retrial — of one of the many Illinois governors accused of corruption.

I took a sabbatical to roam the world for two years. There was kindness: I will always remember the man in Hungary who, despite our language barrier, helped

me count out change for the bus, told the driver where I needed to exit, and explained what to do, all through gestures. There was panic: I realized at the top of a glacier in Iceland that my hiking shoe had come halfway apart. I did not tell my sister, just insisted we hike down as slowly as possible. There was the unexpected: At Machu Picchu, I sprained my ankle. People I barely knew offered me medicine. And there was the comical: A border agent in Prague refused to stamp my passport, saying it was “too full.”

A few years ago, I was a contestant on the TV game show Jeopardy! It was a show my family watched together, shouting out the answers to see who could be first. When I lived in London, my sister would read me the questions over the phone so we could play “together.” When I found out I would be on the show, I tried to quickly memorize all of the U.S. space missions. That didn't come up, but I did get something right because of watching a soap opera. Unfortunately, I never quite found my rhythm with the buzzer. I didn't end up a champion, but I am proud I went after something I wanted.

In 2018, I started working at Rotary. After journalism, I knew I wanted a job where I still felt like I was making the world a better place. In my role on the Global Content team, I'm responsible for ensuring clear communication and conveying Rotary's story to members and nonmembers around the globe, all while maintaining Rotary's distinctive voice.

— AS TOLD TO EVA REMIJAN-TOBA

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The editors welcome comments on items published in the magazine but reserve the right to edit for style and length. Published letters do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors or Rotary International leadership, nor do the editors take responsibility for errors of fact that may be expressed by the writers.

Letters to the editor

IMPACT POTENTIAL

The article “Polio’s ‘hidden figures’” by Kate Silver [June] was outstanding. A 20-30 minute video about this story could make a real impact. As my club’s program chair, I would like to use such a program at a club meeting. Thank you for a great article.

Jim Johnson, Roanoke, Virginia

LIMITED PERSPECTIVE

After Rotary’s recent member survey on diversity, equity, and inclusion, I was surprised that there was not a woman among the photo award judges [“2023 Photo Awards: An eye-opening journey,” June].

Jim Dyer, Blue Ash, Ohio

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

As people around the world celebrated Pride month, I loved seeing the articles “Staff corner” and “A family affair” in the June issue. As a Rotarian for over 35 years, I’ve enjoyed working with many Rotary leaders and members who identify with and support the diverse LGBT+ community. As your staffer Quinn Drew said so well, inclusivity is important to “create a sense of welcoming and belonging for everyone.”

However, as my club prepared to participate in our first Pride festival in June, we were surprised to notice that there was no officially licensed Rotary merchandise on the Russell-Hampton Co. website that reflects Rotary’s support of inclusivity. Not even a single rainbow-colored pin, button, sticker, or shirt that we could wear at the event. This sure seems like a missed opportunity to show that all people are welcomed, respected, and valued in Rotary.

Bill Kaufmann, Toms River, New Jersey

A MAN WHO LENT A HAND

I recently found an issue of this magazine from July 2003, when Jonathan Majiyagbe became the first African president of Rotary International. After reading through the issue for the first time in 20 years, I learned that Majiyagbe had just passed away.



Majiyagbe’s year as president was very meaningful to me. As a new member of the Rotary Club of Northfield, I was working to complete my first service project, a serology lab for the Yendube Children’s Hospital in northern Togo. I had joined Rotary at a time when my wife’s youngest brother had just died of a preventable and treatable illness. At the moment when Majiyagbe was preparing to lead Rotary International, he also faced a loss — of his wife, Ade. I was inspired by the fact that he faced this difficult time by redoubling his work to provide better health care to children and adults in Africa.

One of Rotary’s strengths is continuity from one generation to the next. Last year, when I reached out to Majiyagbe for help with a shipment of books, including two international law collections, to Kano, Nigeria, he deftly put me in touch with a Rotarian there. Sagab Sani Ahmed [now governor of District 9125] put together a strong project committee and has been a wonderful partner. We would never have met if not for Majiyagbe.

None of us is immortal, but we can always do our best to serve and empower others. I think that the family of this kind and tireless man can be proud. When Ade died, he helped to establish the Ade’s Hope Fund for the Education of Women and Children, which changed many lives for the better. I know that my life, that of my family, and those of the many young

OVERHEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In March, we wrote about the Rotary Club of Madras Elite, India, made up entirely of transgender members and dedicated to addressing the needs of transgender people.

Thank you for giving support and showing that DEI is important and in our core values!
Anderson Zerwes
▶ via Facebook

Madras Elite is showing the world that Rotary International truly is an inclusive, welcoming organization where EVERYONE belongs.
Brian Rusch
▶ via Facebook





Renowned chef Rick Bayless explains the art of culinary diplomacy and the ways food can create connections on *Rotary* magazine's podcast. Listen at on.rotary.org/podcast.

children treated at the hospital in Togo have benefited from the work that he and so many other Rotary leaders have done. **Charles Cogan**, Northfield, Minnesota

Editor's note: Our tribute to 2003-04 RI President Jonathan Majiyagbe, "A deep well of wisdom," was published in August.

DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

After completing two medical missions earlier this year, I started thinking about some difficult questions and wondered where to find the answers. Now, as I read through *Rotary*, I sometimes ask myself, "When is Rotary going to start asking the difficult questions?"

When Rotary members fly 30 medical professionals to Honduras to treat children in a hospital for the poor and perform surgeries that change lives forever, how do we compare this to the future suffering that we're contributing to through our carbon footprint? Can this be measured? When we promote the Rotary International Convention, in an effort to get as many Rotarians as possible to come together to exchange ideas that would help others, would it be better to consider methods that would have less environmental impact while enabling the same conversations?

To raise money for polio eradication, Rotary members are promoting a road trip from Alaska to Mexico in antique vehicles that undoubtedly lack sufficient

emissions control systems. This is a great cause that supports one of our areas of focus while totally ignoring another — the environment! When are we going to stop and ask, "Is there an environmentally cleaner way to raise money for polio?"

Rotary has recognized the environment as an area of focus, and we know what the science is telling us, so when do we start making real changes to the way we think and operate, and set an example for other individuals and organizations to follow? There are things we can change and still do the good that we do, but first we have to ask ourselves the difficult questions and start talking about answers.

Bryan Hennessy, Ferndale, Washington

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

I had the opportunity to meet and exchange a few words with [2022-23 Rotary] President Jennifer Jones when she visited Singapore in May. I had thoroughly enjoyed my year as president of my club, and I could sense that President Jones was also enjoying her year. I salute her for allocating a year of her life to serve humankind through Rotary.

Paul Heng, Singapore

Correction: The 2023 Photo Awards feature in June misstated the location in Taiwan of the photography studio owned by awards judge Chao-an Liang. It is in Hsinchu, not Taipei. We regret the error.

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THE SPECIALIST

The write stuff

Precision plus passion elevates penmanship to a creative art

My parents owned a business that made industrial joints. All the company's packages had a label that identified the product and the quantity in the box.

A man wrote all that with a marker in very pretty handwriting. I thought it was so beautiful that I began to imitate him, or rather try to imitate him, because at 5 years old I didn't have the required motor skills. So I gave up pretty quickly. Much later, I reconnected and discovered a real passion.

Calligraphy essentially concerns writings made in a single movement or by a succession of strokes. Lettering is something else entirely. The letterer draws typographic characters, possibly using tools such as a ruler, a square, or a compass. My only tool is my hand and, of course, its extension: the pen or the brush.

Valérie Halin
Rotary Club
of Liège-Sud,
Belgium
Calligrapher

Often I start with a gesture, a flick of the hand.

I start over several times, modifying slightly. After a while, the hand lets go and arrives at shapes and features that can be very far from those at the beginning. So indeed, it is very different from graphic design or typography. My goal is to try to give life to my writings by creating links between letters, lines of force, harmonizations. The only limit is the imagination of the calligrapher — and that of her client.

One day, a mother and her son came to my house.

They had me copy a prepared text in my most beautiful handwriting. It was a breakup letter that the son was going to give to his girlfriend on Valentine's Day. On another, more touching occasion, a father asked me to write a beautiful letter, signed by Santa Claus, that he intended to give to his daughter. Needless to say, that order was much easier to fulfill than the first one.

When you take your pen and you start to draw on paper, the mind empties.

It's a bit as if it leaves the brain and comes to join the line. When I have to make several copies of an invitation — sometimes several dozen — my state of mind alters and becomes conducive to meditation. It's crazy to think that what is given as punishment to unruly students has become a form of passion and fulfillment for me.

— AS TOLD TO DENIS CREPIN

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

America's solar energy divide

Rotary and Habitat team up to bring rooftop solar to low-income homeowners

The Habitat for Humanity home that Amber Cox moved into in 2020 not only provided a new, comfortable living situation for her and her son — it also helped keep the family's energy bills low.

That's because their duplex in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley came with a perk: rooftop solar panels, installed shortly after she moved in. The technology produces enough energy to greatly reduce her electric bill and create wiggle room in her budget. "It pretty much covers what would be my electric bill about three quarters of the year," Cox says.

Even in the wintertime, when the heat is running and sunlight is less abundant, she saves about \$40 a month. This, in turn, makes it easier for her to spend on activities for her 9-year-old son, like registration fees for the swim team or a weekend trip to the zoo. Among residents of affordable housing, she's one of the fortunate few with solar power.

While the cost of solar panels has plummeted, the technology has not reached everyone equally. Low-income families, which stand to benefit the most from the savings, are among those with the least access to renewable energy. Barriers include high upfront costs, difficulty accessing loans, and disqualification for tax credits.

Environmental justice advocates in the U.S. have pointed to the disparity as an example of how people of color, who often endure more pollution in their neighborhoods, higher rates of asthma, and some of the greatest impacts of climate

change, are also shut off from climate solutions. The civil rights group NAACP is among those pressing for greater access to solar power in communities with large percentages of Black or Hispanic residents.

Through their service partnership, Rotary International and Habitat for Humanity International are trying to shrink that solar equity gap, an effort that can have a lasting impact on families and communities. Habitat is a global nonprofit that improves living conditions in more than 70 countries, including by removing hurdles to affordable, adequate housing for families.

"There's such a thing as energy poverty," explains Liz Henke, of the Rotary Club of East Chapel Hill, North Carolina. "The energy bill is such a high percentage of disposable income for low-income people. If you can help decrease that power bill, you can help interrupt that cycle of poverty. It means families can afford shoes, buy better quality food, and all that goes back into the economy."

Since 2020, Henke's club has helped the local Habitat affiliate raise more than \$330,000 for solar panels. She recruited a student intern who helped solicit the donation of 100 solar panels from Strata Clean Energy in Durham, North Carolina.

As a member of the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group's Renewable Energy Task Force, Henke also helped produce a guidebook, with support from Habitat and Rotary, to advise other clubs in the U.S. how to make solar a reality for low-income homeowners

15
A tiny atoll faces challenge with optimism

18
The will to end cervical cancer

22
Welcome to the University of Rotary

To find out more, download the Solar for Habitat Guidebook at esrag.org/habitat-solar.



Workers install solar panels on the roof of a Habitat for Humanity home in Hillsborough, North Carolina.

in their locations. The ESRAG guide educates readers on the basics: Rooftop solar uses photovoltaic panels to convert sun rays to electricity, cutting the expense of drawing power from a utility. And power companies pay homeowners for energy that isn't used and is fed back into the grid, which can further offset monthly electric bills. The installation of a 5.4-kilowatt solar system can save a homeowner \$50 to \$150 a month in electricity costs. The guidebook also covers practical topics including tax credits and rebates, grants, fundraising, and donations of equipment, labor, and expertise.

Because of the high upfront investment, Habitat affiliates have had to navigate a patchwork of funding sources, which tend to shift and fluctuate over time, says Beth Wade, director of land acquisition and project development for Habi-

tat of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. The partnership with Rotary could help, she says. "This [partnership] has the potential to stabilize funding because it may provide a new group and a new pool that we can go to when there aren't state funds," Wade says. "We live right in liberal Massachusetts, progressive Massachusetts. And even here, the funding ebbs and flows."

Already, there are Rotary/Habitat solar projects being pursued in places including upstate New York, Delaware, Minnesota, Virginia, Massachusetts, Georgia, North Carolina, Ontario, and Côte d'Ivoire, Henke says.

"It used to be, if you're going to put solar on a house, you really needed to be a tree-hugger, you needed to be willing to actually pay a premium for energy that was zero carbon," says John E.P. Morrison,

executive director of NC Clean Future, an initiative that promotes clean energy, air, and water and land preservation in North Carolina. Today, once the system is in place, maintenance costs are minimal and the electricity is almost free — as long as you can pay for the system upfront, he adds.

The full cost of residential rooftop solar, including installation, dropped 64 percent between 2010 and 2022, according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, part of the Department of Energy. But many tax breaks helping bring down costs favor higher earners. Homeowners with lower incomes often don't pay enough in taxes to benefit from the rebates.

But a law approved last year allows non-taxpaying entities to get the same 30 percent rebate on solar installations as taxpayers, Henke



Left: Homes built by Habitat for Humanity with rooftop solar panels in Orange County, North Carolina. Bottom: Volunteers lift a solar panel during installation at a Habitat home in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

says, so organizations like Habitat can direct the savings to the homeowners. It's a way to begin to bring equity to solar energy.

"We're significantly reducing the energy burden of these families. We're contributing to the generational wealth of these families," says Jeff Heie, director of GiveSolar, a nonprofit organization that helps other nonprofits and homeowners with lower incomes gain access to solar energy. Homeowners can save an estimated \$25,000 over the life of a solar system, he says.

Heie and others hope that putting solar on Habitat homes could have a ripple effect on the homebuilding industry, with more developers equipping homes with the technology. The Habitat project shows that if it can be done for low-income homeowners, anyone can do it, he says.

To reap the full benefits of solar power, it's best to plan for an installation when the home is built. Homes need to be oriented for direct sunlight, and in the Northern Hemisphere the roof plane should face southward for maximum exposure. Building the homes with



the proper electrical infrastructure is also helpful. "Most houses don't have electrical wires running up to the roof," Morrison says. "It's much easier to put that wiring in when the house is being built, as opposed to try to retrofit it later."

An expansion of rooftop solar is also an important path to meeting climate goals. The impact of one 5.4-kilowatt rooftop solar system is the equivalent of planting 3,000 trees or not driving about 300,000 miles, according to the ESRAG guidebook. "Rotary members, for the environment, like to plant

trees. If we plant 50 trees on a Saturday morning, we've worked really hard," Henke says. "If you put up solar panels, that's the equivalent of planting thousands of trees that do not need to be tended, watered, or mulched."

Amber Cox is encouraged that more people are getting access to solar energy. "Once upon a time, the only people that could afford solar maybe didn't have the same amount of need that we do," Cox says. "We've come so far with solar. It does make for a hopeful future."

— AMY HOAK

BY THE NUMBERS

\$25,000+
Potential savings over the life of a solar system

3,000
Tree plantings needed to equal the benefits of one solar rooftop

\$110,000
Median household income of solar adopters in the U.S.

Short takes

Rotary's People of Action: Champions of Inclusion gala, held earlier this year in South Africa, honored six members with inspiring stories. Watch a video of the event at rotary.org/inclusion.

UNICEF reported in April that routine immunization rates declined during the pandemic, leaving about 1 in 5 children worldwide without full protection against vaccine-preventable diseases.



PROFILE

On island time

A tiny atoll faces challenge with optimism

Ruth Cross
Rotary Club of
Tarawa, Kiribati

The highest point on the Pacific atoll of Tarawa is only about 10 feet above sea level. “We joke that it’s like a big speed bump — here we go over Mount Tarawa!” says Ruth Cross, who grew up on the atoll, the capital of Kiribati (pronounced KEER’-uh-bas). Like many low-lying island nations, Kiribati is under threat from climate change as rising seas increasingly infiltrate wells. Yet, its people maintain a sense of optimism, resilience, and even humor. “There’s too much to love,” Cross explains of her homeland.

Cross, a community leader who specializes in climate finance and development work, is among those assisting the islands in adapting, including by helping lead a water desalination project. The climate concerns have converged with other challenges, including disease prevention. Drinking from wells contaminated through flooding, for instance, has made people, especially children, vulnerable to disease, Cross says.

Led by Rotary Zone 8 and UNICEF, the Give Every Child a Future project is helping by immunizing 100,000 children and adolescents in Kiribati and other Pacific island countries against rotavirus, HPV, and pneumococcal disease. “As a developing country, we’re not at the stage where we can do that” on our own, says Cross, who has helped facilitate the project as her club’s charter president. “Projects like this are so important, because if Rotary didn’t do it, it wouldn’t happen. It’s that simple.”

Cross, who worked in Australia for about 20 years before returning to Tarawa, is optimistic as islanders adapt to climate threats and other challenges. “There’s a practical sense of acceptance and resilience,” she says. “People are living their lives and praying for the best.”

— JASON KEYSER

District leaders can now apply for disaster response grants online through the Grant Center. Visit my.rotary.org/disastergrants.

The third annual Celebrate Community week encourages Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, and Optimist clubs to collaborate on service projects during 11-17 September.

Nominations for the Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award, which honors a member working to advance women in Rotary, are due 30 September. Submit via rotary.org/awards.

People of action around the globe

By Brad Webber

3 of 5

Share of Belizean children under age 15 who live in poverty



Belize

Since 2014, members of the Rotary Club of Seminole Lake, Florida, have ventured on service trips to Belize with a focus on the welfare of children: constructing school playgrounds and providing educational assistance, clothing, and medical screenings. “The kids had a recess period but little for them to do,” says David Buzza, a past club president. Three years ago the club forged ties with the Rotary Club of Belmopan, Belize. In February, Rotary members helped construct a seventh playground in Belize and helped hand out 1,500 pieces of new clothing, along with toiletries and backpacks. The Florida Rotarians added to the Belmopan club’s existing wheelchair distribution project with a May shipment of 30 wheelchairs.



United States

The Indian River Lagoon along Florida’s Atlantic coast is home to some 3,500 plant and animal species. In January, District 6970 and the Rotary clubs of New Smyrna Beach and Edgewater introduced a tide pool exhibit in the Marine Discovery Center in New Smyrna Beach. The display is home to horseshoe crabs, sea stars, sea urchins, hermit crabs, marine snails, and other small oceanic creatures. “Having that opportunity to see the animals up close is a very engaging experience,” says Chad Truxall, the center’s executive director. “It’s been fun for us to have this additional tool to share the story of the Indian River Lagoon.” A district grant provided \$20,000, the New Smyrna Beach club devoted \$10,000, and the Edgewater club another \$5,000 toward the cost of the exhibit, representing just a portion of the financial and volunteer contributions Rotarians have made to the marine center over the past decade.

98

Endangered and threatened marine species found in U.S. ocean waters



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF ROTARY CLUBS

Canada

The pandemic's toll on older people struck especially close to home for the Rotary Club of Cornwall Sunrise in southeastern Ontario. "Until COVID, our club met at a seniors residence, and the need for the residents to be able to get out was made clear to us," says club member Elizabeth "Bette" Miller, a past governor of District 7040. To ease the isolation of the town's older population, the Cornwall Sunrise club teamed up with the Rotary Club of Cornwall and their city government to introduce Seniors on Wheels tours on three-wheeled cycle rickshaws. Volunteers pedal seniors around on seasonal tours along the St. Lawrence River. "The trishaw is used primarily by local seniors who would otherwise be unable to enjoy the beautiful scenery," says Miller, whose club contributed an initial CA\$3,000 (US\$2,500) for the project. "The routes for the trishaws follow the bike paths with stops at points of interest, many of which are projects Rotary has partnered on with the city." Volunteers and their passengers covered a cumulative 300 miles last year.



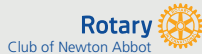
16%

Portion of Canada's seniors who say they experience social isolation



United Kingdom

Some people will walk through fire for a good cause — literally. More than 50 participants hotfooted across wood embers during a fire walk charity event in April sponsored by the Rotary Club of Newton Abbot. The sizzling jaunts, to talko drumbeats, raised more than \$11,000 through sponsorship pledges for charities. The club brought in a professional fire walking company to stage the event. Organizers offered a "motivational psychology fear-busting seminar" before the challenge. The secret? Walk in a controlled, fast manner, says Past Club President Phil Millichap. He and 2022-23 Club President Jeremy Newcombe were among the Rotarians who put their feet to the fire. "Top tip: If you fall over, which one lady did, get up quickly," Millichap advises.



900-1,000° F

Ideal temperature for fire walking coals

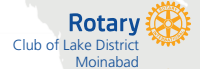


India

In Visakhapatnam, along the Bay of Bengal, Rotary members launched an innovative plastics recycling and youth employment project. Participants from the nonprofit India Youth for Society collect plastic bottles from drop-off locations and beaches and process the plastics into small chips that are sold to recyclers. The nonprofit's goal is to make the operation self-supporting. About eight young people were working on-site as the processing plant scaled up production in June, and as many as 25 people eventually could work at the facility. The roughly \$120,000 project is supported in part by a global grant sponsored by the Rotary clubs of Lake District Moinabad, India, and Naperville Sunrise, Illinois, with contributions from other Rotary clubs in the United States and India. Among its accolades is an award from the American Academy of Environmental Engineers & Scientists. "I wanted to get the academy's feedback and make [the project] more robust using their suggestions," says Prakasam "Prakash" Tata, a retired environmental engineer and a member of the Rotary Club of Naperville, Illinois. "But lo and behold, I heard, 'You won the grand prize.'"

450 years

Estimated time for a plastic bottle to degrade



The decision to try

In a bold endeavor, Rotary members work toward eliminating cervical cancer in Latin America

By Richard Godfrey



We're negotiating the tight curves around Bolivia's Amboró National Park in an ancient red Jeep with

Juan Carlos at the wheel, Irma, Carol, and Mirna in the back, and me riding shotgun in the passenger seat. The mountains tower over us and are thick with a green mosaic of jacaranda and oak trees and cascading shrubs. Juan dodges the cows and dogs wandering along the two-lane highway, while cumulus clouds float overhead, still reluctant, as they have been for the last two years, to release any rain.

It's December 2022, and we are driving toward Santa Cruz, Bolivia's largest city. Behind us lies tranquil Vallegrande, which we left about three hours earlier. Working there with the local hospital team, we have started an ambitious project to eliminate cervical cancer — a project we hope to implement elsewhere in Latin America.

Bolivia has the highest rate of cervical cancer in South America, recording 1,985 new cases and 1,054 deaths in 2020. In the city of Santa Cruz alone, 90 women come to a hospital annually only to die of this preventable disease because of late diagnosis. Worldwide, 341,000 people die from cervical cancer each year, one every minute and a half. More often than not, they will be from a lower income country. Many will have left behind children and spouses who depended on them even as the cancer spread. Equally significant is the degree of suffering any terminally ill woman with the disease will experience as the condition advances toward its inevitable conclusion.

That's why we're dedicated to bringing the newest screening and treatment technologies to Bolivia, where doctors and nurses quickly learn how to employ them. Combining those human skills and medical innovations, we can screen upward of 600 patients in a day and treat early cancer in 40 seconds. Our goal is to test 7,500 patients, a project that may take three years to complete. But as the adage sometimes linked to U.S. President John F. Kennedy insists, "Every accomplishment starts with the decision to try."

AFTER ARRIVING IN SANTA CRUZ, I meet with Jorge Mehdi, chief of surgery at the city's children's hospital and

president of the Rotary Club of Urbari in town. Mehdi takes me on a hospital tour, and later we have a critical meeting to get letters of support from the government that would allow us to bring in the new equipment needed for the large-scale screening and treatment project we are hoping to implement. The government's approval is essential, and I'm apprehensive. But Mehdi has a winning smile and a way about him that puts everyone at ease. And so, at our meeting, Bolivia's minister of health says that he's happy to sign the letters to allow our medical equipment into the country — and there's a twinkle in Mehdi's eyes as the minister delivers the news.

How did this work begin for me? In 2007 I was a surgical oncologist at a busy hospital in California. I had a patient I saw with some regularity, and after a third and difficult cancer surgery, he asked me to come to a Rotary meeting with him. I declined, but he repeatedly extended the invitation. Finally, impressed by his perseverance, I agreed to accompany him.

And my life changed. At the Rotary Club of Niles (Fremont), I discovered friendships and inspiration I had never realized were waiting for me. Looking back, I realized that, while I may have removed some 10,000 cancers — not uncommon in a surgeon's career — how much better it would be to prevent cancer in the first place. Working with Rotary made that possible all around the world.

Combining those human skills and medical innovations, we can screen upward of 600 patients in a day and treat early cancer in 40 seconds.

Here's one example of a successful project and the innovative treatments and technologies that fueled its success. Rotary clubs in District 5170 (California) and PINCC, a nonprofit focused on cervical cancer prevention, have recently completed a four-year project in Guatemala, where we introduced a new technology for genetic screening for human papillomavirus. HPV is the principal cause of cervical cancer.

We also "trained the trainers" in new treatment methods. We spent three years screening women who visited the hospital using a fairly basic procedure known by its shorthand name VIA. With a speculum, a headlamp, and an application of acetic acid, clinicians are able to visually identify early signs of the cancer. Then, using a new device called a thermal ablator, we were able to treat those early cancers in less than a minute.

Seems simple, right? The news only gets better. In 2022 we introduced an HPV genetic screening technology that allows women to test themselves at home. The majority of people will test negative and won't have to retest for at least three to five years. The testing is easier on the women because they don't have to travel to a hospital and on the clinicians, who only have to screen the patients in the hospital who do test positive. These quantum leaps in technology allow programs like the one we introduced in Guatemala and the one we've begun in Bolivia to move forward quickly. In September we will bring a similar program to Nepal — and in May, at the Rotary International Convention in Melbourne, Australia, it was announced that United to End Cervical Cancer in Egypt was the recipient of Rotary's third annual Programs of Scale award, which comes with a \$2 million grant from The Rotary Foundation.

As in Guatemala, the project in Bolivia is conducted in Spanish. My Spanish language skills are OK, but it's a special Rotary experience to work in multiple languages and try to build stronger connections. The Bolivian women speak to me a little more slowly and are very patient, and I know they will be leading the process of eliminating the only major cancer we currently can.

The men are equally determined — and they should be. HPV is associated with several cancers that affect men,

including some types of head and neck cancers. A head and neck surgeon asked me if we could also screen for high-risk HPV. The equipment we work with, known as AmpFire, can test for the virus through oral samples, and it can also test for many infections, including COVID-19. A larger question is whether wide-scale HPV vaccination of children, including boys, will have some effect on these other kinds of cancers, and some medical data suggests that it will. And rest assured: As vaccines become more effective and less expensive, eventually they will be offered to all children, not just the girls, in lower-income countries.

The work in Guatemala, in the Petén region, did have its share of pleasurable

moments. Our team of volunteers made excursions to the Tikal and Yaxha pyramids, went swimming in Lake Petén Itzá, and enjoyed *típico* cuisine. We loved the camaraderie we shared with members of the Rotary Club of Tikal Petén as we attended their meetings and exchanged stories and laughter. There were also long days in the hospital, where we worked alongside Dr. Fabrizio Palma. The new self-testing techniques have been a godsend, both for the patients and for our team, but even after we had screened and triaged hundreds of patients in a sweltering, humid clinic, a crowd of women still waited anxiously, hoping to have their exams. On the upside, the results of our work in Guatemala have been published,

and today Palma leads the program on his own as we move on to new locations.

With these new techniques, however, it's essential to collaborate with our partners in different countries and not try to force or encourage changes until they are wanted. Years ago I learned in the Peace Corps what all volunteers come to know: You gain more from new cultures than you can ever hope to teach, whether it be a new language, new customs, or a better understanding of human nature. That's a gift as great or greater than anything we might provide.

AS I WRITE THIS, I am anticipating a third trip to Bolivia, where I will climb again into the red Jeep and head back to Vallegrande. I look forward to seeing Juan Carlos, and I can't wait to bite into an *achachairú*, the egg-shaped fruit that has a deliciously sweet mango-berry-orange taste.

I am especially thankful to the Rotary clubs of Chicago, Los Angeles, Oakland, San Francisco, and Seattle that make this work possible. The initiator of all this is the Rotary Club of Urbani in Santa Cruz, where Irma Danny Rojas Arteaga, Carol Genevieve Viscarra Guillen, Mirna Ruth Claire de Toledo, and other club members are guiding a project that will in time spread across the entire country.

Bolivia, like every country, faces the challenge of immunizing all children, but lacks the resources to provide enough vaccines. In the early days of Rotary's PolioPlus program, it was an arduous process to fund the initial vaccination efforts — and yet today, the program is closing in on its ultimate goal of eradicating polio. We can dream of a time when Rotary might have the same impact on cervical cancer.

In fact, the idea is more than a dream. There is a growing surge of health care workers from or sponsored by Rotary clubs around the world who are taking on the scourge of cervical cancer. We will find funding, new technology, cheaper vaccines, and intrepid volunteers. After all, we have not merely made the decision to try. We *are* trying — and we intend to succeed. ■

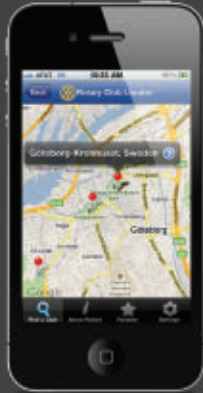
A retired surgical oncologist, aspiring apiarist, and published novelist, Richard Godfrey is a member of the Rotary Club of Niles (Fremont), California.

It's essential to collaborate with our partners in different countries and not try to force or encourage changes until they are wanted.



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The University of Rotary

Want to build your leadership skills? You don't have to look far

By Haresh Ramchandani

In Rotary, we often focus on service. And service is important. But I have often wondered why leadership gets less billing. It is by developing leaders that we change the world.

John Maxwell, an author on leadership, said: "The single greatest way to impact an organization is to focus on leadership development. There is almost no limit to the potential of an organization that recruits good people, raises them up as leaders, and continually develops them."

Around the world, organizations find leadership to be an elusive target. After studying books on leadership and experiencing it firsthand, I think I have a better understanding of why that is. I believe it's because leadership is hard to measure and quantify, so people feel it doesn't work. We focus on areas we can measure.

Take service: What's the impact? How many people will benefit? Is it sustainable? All are measurable.

Or consider the social side of Rotary: How many people showed up? Did they have a good time? Again, measurable.

But just because something is harder to measure doesn't mean it's not effective or isn't working. What does it take to develop good leaders? I suggest it takes:

An atmosphere of honesty and integrity. Good leaders foster an environment where everyone practices these values. They lead by example, demonstrating ethical behavior and encouraging their team members to do the same. This creates a culture of trust and credibility, where open and transparent communication thrives.

Peers who instill confidence and conviction. In a positive leadership environment, peers support and uplift each other, instilling confidence and conviction. People feel empowered to take risks, share their ideas, and contribute their unique perspectives. This collaborative atmosphere encourages innovation and fosters a sense of belonging and camaraderie.

Commitment and passion. Leaders and team members alike are dedicated to achieving shared goals. This shared enthusiasm fuels a sense of collective purpose, driving everyone to go above and beyond to achieve success.

Strong communication. Leaders prioritize clear and concise communication, ensuring that information is shared effectively. They actively listen, encourage open dialogue, and provide constructive feedback. This enables better understanding, collaboration, and alignment.

Empowered decision-makers. Good leaders provide clear direction and guidance. They establish a framework and set expectations, allowing others autonomy to make informed decisions within their roles. This empowers individuals to take ownership of their work and fosters a sense of responsibility and accountability.

Compassion and service at the forefront. Leaders consider the well-being and growth of their team, showing empathy and providing support when needed. They employ a concept known as servant leadership, when you

prioritize the needs and interests of others and work toward a nurturing and inclusive environment.

Where do you find all these? In Rotary! Sure, you can attend a TED Talk or take a course in leadership. You get a certificate — you're a leader! But it's the routine practices, regularly in all the areas of leadership, that truly make a leader.

Through Rotary, you develop your leadership skills over time and through consistent events like district training assemblies, district conferences, presidents-elect training seminars, Rotary institutes, and the International Assembly.

I am living proof of this. My formal education stopped at high school, but I'm a proud graduate of the University of Rotary. I've gone from leading my club, to leading my district, to serving on the Rotary International Membership Growth Committee.

My call to action is for you to take this message to your members, family, friends, and community. Remind them how Rotary develops leaders. Encourage them to share with potential members how leadership development is one of our main strengths.

We need leadership to make a bigger impact in our world, partnering with other organizations and other Rotary clubs and districts. Leadership passes our core values down to future generations. Leadership is needed to truly change the world. ■


Develop your leadership skills through the Learning Center. Visit [rotary.org/learn](https://www.rotary.org/learn).

Haresh Ramchandani is a member of the Rotary Club of L.I.F.E. Jamaica and a past governor of District 7020.



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Shape-shifting Singapore



Rotary editor **Wen Huang** visits the home of the 2024 Rotary International Convention for a third time and finds that the flourishing Asian city-state has reinvented itself — again





Rediscover Singapore

In June 1999, a year after I joined the staff of Rotary International, I attended my first convention. It was then that I first witnessed the global power of Rotary and made my first batch of Rotary friends. And it was then that I was introduced to Singapore for a second time.

My first trip to Singapore occurred five years earlier when, as a journalist, I covered the third Europe-East Asia Economic Summit. At that time, Western financial media were referring to Singapore as the 20th century's most successful development story, which meant that the summit lured scores of policymakers, economists, and businesspeople from across Europe and Asia.

Having grown up in China, where decades of Mao's draconian rule had impoverished the

country, I, along with millions of other Chinese, became enamored of the Singapore model of economic success. My first impression of Singapore in 1994, which will forever be associated with the brightly illuminated skyscrapers that dotted the banks of the Singapore River, confirmed my belief that this was a place of modernity and prosperity.

My return in 1999 for the Rotary Convention only reinforced that impression. Singapore, like many of its neighbors, was still reeling from the Asian financial crisis of the previous two years. So the arrival of nearly 18,000 business and professional leaders from around the world helped reinvigorate the tourism industry while also signaling the resurging presence of Singapore and eastern Asia.

For me, that feeling of prosperous modernity still prevailed, but in other ways, I had arrived at an entirely different destination. As I explored multicultural Singapore, my senses — especially my taste buds — exploded with new impressions. I shopped for spices in Little India, visited the majestic Sultan Mosque in Kampong Gelam, savored the famed Hainanese chicken rice in Chinatown. The experience was like a slice of mille crêpe cake, a locally popular dessert whose nine layers of treats and colors blend toward something inscrutably delicious. Finally, I thought, I knew Singapore.

That is until recently, when I watched the 2018 movie *Crazy Rich Asians*. Partially filmed in Singapore, the romantic comedy displayed breathtaking shots of the country's architectural

Above: At Merlion Park, an iconic statue of the mythical creature greets visitors. **Right:** The alleys of Chinatown come alive at night.



of the place, no matter how recently or how often you've traveled there. "One of the secrets of Singapore's success is our ability to keep reinventing what we need to survive and grow," says Joanne Kam, a vice chair of the 2024 Host Organization Committee who served as the 2022-23 governor of District 3310 (Brunei, parts of Malaysia, and Singapore). "Each year and each decade brings new changes. So, the Singapore you see in May 2024 will be very different from what you and others remember."

That message was reiterated at this year's convention in Melbourne when I saw a promotional video at the Singapore booth. "You think you know Singapore?" intoned a deep voice. "Think again."

It was as if the voice were summoning me back — and this July I complied, re-visiting Singapore in anticipation of the 2024 convention. Next May, thousands of Rotary members will follow in my footsteps, some of whom will be visiting Singapore for the first time. Until then, sit back and imagine that same deep voice enticing you to make that trip as I describe just a few of the delights of this vibrant and dazzlingly modern nation.

landmarks, lush gardens, and mouthwatering food. Much to my surprise, many of those scenes were almost unrecognizable to me. I realized that my perceptions of Singapore were frayed and outdated.

But that is just another aspect



HANS LEE, BERLIN
• SIX CONVENTIONS

Discover ideas

"The convention is a great opportunity to discover new ideas and meet different people and even partners that you can develop future projects with. It's exciting, inspiring, and full of energy. At the convention, we're also building our future together, Rotary's future. So if you're not coming, you're missing out."



A city in nature

Even in July, the sun rises late here — after 7 a.m. I’m newly arrived in Singapore, cruising in a taxi along Orchard Road, an upscale shopping strip. That’s when I see it: a 23-story tropical forest sprouting from an ascending stack of open terraces, each one supported by mammoth concrete columns that are themselves festooned in lush green creepers. It’s as if sentinels of the equatorial jungle have overcome gravity. I squint my eyes and, from this distance, it’s as if I’m looking at a giant block of Chinese script wreathed by nature.

This is the newly opened Pan Pacific Orchard Hotel, recommended to me by the Host Organization Committee. As a smiling front desk agent processes my papers in an open-air lobby, I ask a bellhop to show me

the second-floor terrace, which is essentially a mini-tropical forest populated by exotic trees that I couldn’t begin to name. Sitting on a stone step, I close my eyes. The sound of a cascading waterfall soothes my tired mind.

A man’s voice startles me awake. “If you go up to the fifth-floor terrace, you will find tropical palm trees encircling a languid lagoon,” says the receptionist. “You could relax on a lounge chair beneath a woven canopy of palm fronds.”

My reverie on the hotel’s Forest Terrace was an appropriate introduction to Singapore, which is rightly known as the Garden City — though Singaporeans prefer to call their metropolis “a city in nature” as they strive to be the world’s greenest urban center. More than 40 percent of the country is covered in

greenery, be it in the form of nature reserves, parks, gardens — or a rain forest clinging to a skyscraper. The city-state has mandated that all new commercial and residential developments use landscaping such as green roofs, leaf-lined walls, or luxuriant gardens to help curtail the heat island effect found in almost all major cities.

Over breakfast the next day, Peng Sum Choe, a past president of the Rotary Club of Pandan Valley and CEO of Pan Pacific Hotels Group, introduces me to the concept of “biophilia,” a term defined by the late naturalist E.O. Wilson as humankind’s irresistible urge to affiliate with other forms of life. Choe says biophilic design now permeates Singapore, where nature — greenery — has been artfully integrated into the cityscape.

Singapore hotels like Pan Pacific Orchard tap into biophilic design, blending vegetation and wildlife with man-made structures and adopting innovative sustainability practices.

Singapore is ranked the sixth most peaceful country worldwide and the first in Asia on the 2023 Global Peace Index.



Singapore restricts the sale, import, and production of chewing gum to stop the sticky mess from littering properties.

Singapore cultural snapshot

Singapore's national icon is the Merlion, a mythical creature with the body of a fish and the head of a lion. While the fish embodies Singapore's beginnings as a small fishing village, the lion alludes to the country's former name, Singapura, which derives from Sanskrit and means Lion City. The name was bestowed by the visiting prince who founded the island settlement, which was destined to become, alongside Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan, one of the economically robust Four Asian Tigers of recent decades.

Or so legend has it, though at least one detail of the story seems emblematic of Singapore: A gateway to Asia, the place is permanently populated by a variety of visitors. With a total land area of 284 square miles — smaller than New York City — Singapore is home to 5.6 million people, with a population density 200 times that of the United States.

Today, Singapore's demographics predominantly comprise the Chinese, Malay, and Indian communities, as well as smaller groups such as Eurasians and Peranakans (people of mixed Chinese and Malay/Indonesian heritage). Furthermore, it is considered the most religiously diverse country in the world. Its residents practice Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Taoism, and they celebrate the Chinese (Lunar) New Year, Hari Raya Aidilfitri (which marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan), Vesak (Buddha's birthday), Deepavali (as the Festival of Lights is called by the Tamil of southern India), and Christmas.

Singapore's multiethnic, multicultural, and multireligious identity really took hold in the 19th century, when Great Britain established a strategically placed trading post in Singapore, which eventually became a crown colony. The settlement soon attracted traders and laborers from China, the Malay Archipelago, India, and Europe. Segregation in colonial times bred mistrust among various ethnic groups, and the island was rife with deadly conflicts.

In 1965 when Singapore gained its independence, the government saw racial harmony as being vital to its survival and embraced it as a national ideal. That sentiment is captured in the oft-quoted statement made by Lee Kuan Yew, the first prime minister of Singapore: "This is not a Malay nation, not a Chinese nation, not an Indian nation. Everybody will have a place in Singapore."



MAMTA JAISWAL,
NAGPUR, INDIA
• TWO CONVENTIONS

See the world

"My husband always says to me, 'Mamta, you want to travel, you want to see the world. Why don't you use the conventions to go around the world?' So, that's what I'm doing. I'm going to Singapore next year. I'm going to Calgary the year after that. And before returning home from Melbourne this year, I went to New Zealand, then Sydney, then back to India."



The pioneering concept of a garden city was the vision of Singapore’s first prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, who became known as the “Chief Gardener.” In 1971, his government inaugurated an annual Tree Planting Day on the first Sunday in November, and Choe says that tree planting and other environmental projects have been a priority for Singaporean Rotary members over the past two decades.

And the city is slated to become even greener: The Singapore Green Plan 2030 calls for more than 200 acres of new parks and doubling the annual tree planting rate.

“Each time I return from an overseas trip, I’m grateful to the lush greenery in Singapore,” says

Choe. “It puts me at ease, bringing me close to nature.”

If you want to see this abundant verdancy concentrated in one colorful and futuristic spot, visit the 250-acre Gardens by the Bay, home to a series of natural attractions. Flower Dome, declared the largest glass greenhouse by Guinness World Records, gathers orchids, magnolias, and a multitude of other plants from around the world. Cloud Forest is a tranquil dreamland of unusual flora and breathtaking panoramas, while towering overhead, the forested slopes of Cloud Mountain soar to a height of 115 feet. Is it any wonder that Choe calls Singapore a “beacon” for sustainable tourism?

Above: The “supertrees” at Gardens by the Bay combine nature, art, and technology. **Top right:** RI Director Ghim Bok Chew (second from left) lunches with Rotary friends at his favorite Hainanese chicken rice joint. **Bottom right:** Peng Sum Choe (center) showcases his hotel’s myriad green features to fellow Rotarians.

Where cultures meet

In May, when Rotary leaders gathered at the convention in Melbourne to appear in a *Welcome to Singapore* video, Ghim Bok Chew presented them with a radiant, multihued orchid called the Vanda Miss Joaquim. Chew, an RI director and the chair of the Host Organization Committee for the 2024 convention, later explained to me that the orchid is named after the woman of Armenian descent who first cultivated the hybrid flower in Singapore more than a century ago. “This orchid is Singapore’s national flower



EcoWatch named Singapore as Asia's greenest city in 2022 — and a 2021 *Time Out* survey called it the world's greenest and cleanest city.

Singapore is a country of many languages, especially Chinese, English, Malay, and Tamil, though English is the default lingua franca.



and a symbol of our history and national identity,” he said, and this particular orchid is an apt symbol of the island country’s multicultural heritage.

I get a glimpse of that heritage on my first day in Singapore when Joanne Kam, my Rotary guide and adviser, leads me to Chinatown, a sprawling enclave tucked alongside the city’s glittering skyscrapers. Here we see a five-story pavilion-style temple — where a holy relic, one of Buddha’s teeth, is on display — a Chinese heritage center, and dozens of Chinese restaurants, including Hawker Chan, a funky diner famous for its soy-sauce chicken rice dish that was once known as the least expensive Michelin-starred meal. Shops

along the narrow streets display a colorful array of teas, silk dresses and robes, gold and jade jewelry, medicinal herbs, and porcupine-shaped durians, a sweet-tasting tropical fruit with a notoriously pungent smell.

Chew joins us for dim sum at the bustling, Rotarian-owned Yum Cha restaurant and tells me how his grandparents left their ancestral villages in China’s southern province of Fujian and journeyed to Singapore for better economic opportunities. While his cousins attended Chinese schools, his parents broke with tradition and sent him to study in England; after graduating from the University of Liverpool, he returned home and, with a degree in computer science,



**MARIA VITTORIA
“MAVI” GARGIULO,
SALERNO, ITALY**
• FOUR CONVENTIONS

Get energized

“I could talk for days about why you should come to the convention, how amazing it is, how energizing it is. And even if you’re feeling a bit low about your membership — maybe there is something that you’re not liking — coming to a Rotary Convention is the best medicine ever. There is so much positivity and you’ll make amazing friendships. It’s hard to identify just one special moment for me; it’s more the emotions that will forever be with you.”

Singlish is an informal, colloquial form of English in Singapore that mixes English, Chinese dialects (Hokkien and Cantonese), Malay, and Tamil.

launched a career in information technology and finance.

After our meal, as we make our way through the Saturday throng, Chew points out an imposing green structure, the Jamae (Chulia) Mosque. “There is a Hindu temple down the road,” he says. “Different religions coexist peacefully here.”

On my third day, Kam accompanies me to Kampong Gelam, a Malay district, where I meet Tengku Indra, a business consultant who has his own family history to share. He is a direct descendant of Hussein Shah, recognized by the British in the early 19th century as the sultan of Singapore. The family eventually lost the title, but its royal heritage lives on in Tengku Indra’s name: *tengku* means “prince” in Malay.

Dressed in a traditional baju melayu outfit, Tengku Indra, the charter president of the Rotary Club of Kampong Gelam, shows me around one of Singapore’s oldest urban quarters. As we walk and talk, Tengku Indra gestures toward the golden dome of the Sultan Mosque, which his ancestor had built for his subjects. Streets and bustling byways lined with halal restaurants and specialty stores surround the mosque. Here visitors can find handcrafted jewelry, perfumes, and accessories for the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca. And, as Tengku Indra emphasizes, the neighborhood is also home to Indian and Chinese people, who have set up businesses there.

My next stop is Little India, where two other Rotary members, Rajamohan Munisamy and Anil Changaroth, both of Indian descent, await me. Changaroth treats us to a sumptuous meal at Madras New Woodlands, a south Indian restaurant in the center of Little India, where you

will find the Corinthian pillars of the Abdul Gafoor Mosque, a 50-foot-tall statue of Buddha in the Sakya Muni Buddha Gaya Temple (known as the Temple of a Thousand Lights), and colorful shophouses on Serangoon Road that sell traditional Indian dresses, dried herbs, and spices.

Over paratha, an Indian flatbread, and dosa, a thin pancake, Changaroth, the charter president of the Rotary Club of Peace Builders Singapore, informs me of the different types of South Indian food in his flawless Mandarin and English. I sit next to Munisamy, a past district governor and vice chair of the Host Organization Committee. A practicing Hindu, he is married to a Catholic woman of Philippine descent. Their three daughters follow their mother’s religion.

“Diversity is very important to us,” says Munisamy. “Singapore does not have many natural resources. But we’re rich in human resources. We want people of all races, both established immigrants and new arrivals, to live and work together peacefully. That’s our valuable asset.”

When I characterize Singapore’s multicultural model as a melting pot, Kam corrects me. “A melting pot is a society where people blend together to form one basic cultural norm based on the dominant culture,” she says. Instead, each ethnicity is encouraged to preserve its unique culture and traditions, and appreciate that of others.

And, as Chew told me earlier, “Rotary in Singapore embodies our multicultural society.” At a time when racial and ethnic conflicts are roiling many societies, his hope is that the 2024 convention will enable Singapore — and Rotary — to showcase their unique approach to ethnic and cultural harmony. ■





PHOTOGRAPH: SINGAPORE TOURISM BOARD



PHOTOGRAPHS: WEN HUANG

Top: The Hindu Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple is among varied worship sites in Little India.

Above: Rotarians and Singapore Tourism Board officials enjoy an Indian breakfast.

Left: Joanne Kam and Tengku Indra walk in Kampong Gelam.



To register, scan this code with your phone or visit **convention.rotary.org**.



JERALD COUGTER,
BELMONT, NORTH
CAROLINA
 • THREE CONVENTIONS

Hear life-changing stories

“For work I’ve been to a million conventions. Rarely do I leave and go, ‘Wow. That was amazing.’ But my experience at Rotary conventions has always been so uplifting. You’re surrounded by thousands of like-minded people. And then there’s the learning that happens: You hear from experts. You meet people from all over the world you wouldn’t otherwise meet. It has the power to change your life. And the conventions are fun and in interesting places! There’s so much going on.”



Watch for more coverage of Singapore and the convention in future issues.

Wired for success

To close the digital divide,
start with the teachers

By Geoffrey Johnson

Illustration by Gwen Keraval





It began, in Panama, with a simple backpack drive.

The Rotary Club of Panamá Norte loaded the packs with essential supplies and distributed them to grade schools throughout the country, a classic Rotary service project repeated in communities around the world. In this case, though, it led to something extraordinary — momentous changes in Panama’s education system.

The spark that ignited it came from what the Rotary members witnessed while delivering those backpacks about 10 years ago. “One of the things that we saw was the disaster in terms of technology and in terms of the possibility of kids being able to learn with technology,” says club member Enedely Escobar-King. “Most of the time what we found was that all of the computers were destroyed, or they were to be discarded, or that teachers didn’t know how to use them.

It was very depressing because we became aware that there was a digital gap between those schools that we were visiting in the countryside and the schools in the city.”

Over the next few years, club members continued to deliver backpacks but also laid the groundwork for a larger project to address the high-tech disaster they had encountered. Specifically, they turned their attention to two grade schools in Veracruz, a *corregimiento* (or township) about 10 miles southwest of Panama City, where the club is based.

With a population of about 20,000, Veracruz was, despite its proximity to Panama City, a remote community that had suffered economically since the decommissioning of nearby U.S. Army, Air Force, and Navy bases in the late 1990s. As the Panama Rotarians discovered, all that was reflected in the condition of the computer classrooms: Students had limited access to the internet, and though there were a few computers, they were, in the Rotarians’ words, outdated and in terrible condition.

Working with the Rotary Club of Westchester (Los Angeles), the Panamá Norte club put together a global grant that sought to remedy those deficiencies using \$72,000 from The Rotary Foundation, District 5280 (California), the club itself, and other sources. Among other things, it pro-

vided each school with 30 laptops for students; a smart, interactive whiteboard to digitize classroom presentations and tasks; and all the auxiliary hardware and furniture required for a high-tech, 21st-century classroom.

To ensure the project’s success, the grant also provided for extensive training of school staff and community leaders. The training gave teachers the tools and expertise to use the new technologies as well as the skills to develop lesson plans that would engage students.

The club launched the project in 2018, and the new equipment and opportunities for learning were immediately embraced by teachers and students. “I took the children to the interactive classroom to do math and science,” reported one teacher. “The time passed too quickly. The children were so motivated that they had to throw us out of the classroom so that another grade could use it.”

At the end of the 2019 school year, the project had, by all appearances, been a success. One of the schools that participated was even chosen to take part in a nationwide academic competition, a first for the school and, despite failing to win, a laudable achievement.

Yet an unexpected problem arose. “The teachers that we had trained for the interactive classrooms were rotated out,” a regular practice in Panama’s public schools, says Escobar-King. “And the teachers that were new didn’t have a clue about technology. We had to start all over again and try to train those teachers. When we got that setback, we said, well, let’s find a more permanent solution.”

For Escobar-King and the rest of Panamá Norte, class was back in session.



Escobar-King — she goes by “Nelly” — joined the Rotary Club of Panamá Norte in 2015 after a long career with UNICEF. “I spent five years in Tanzania, four years in Bolivia, six years in Jamaica, five in Mexico,” says this seasoned traveler, before continuing. “I was in Copenhagen for some time, and I spent long periods of time in India and the Philippines.” Some projects she worked on with UNICEF were related to education, so when she retired and returned to Panama, she knew she wanted to remain involved in that area. “My main thing,” she says, “was that I wanted to make sure that kids learn to read and write properly — and that they understand what they’re reading.”

Escobar-King was motivated, in part, by the dire state of primary education in Panama. In fact, the deteriorating conditions that the Panamá Norte club encountered in the schools they visited were emblematic of the effectiveness of the country’s educational system. Escobar-King points to the results of the exams known as the Programme for International Student Assessment that are conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. In the most recent results, Panama ranked 75th in science and 76th in math among 78 countries and geographic areas and 71st (out of 77) in reading.

If that weren’t troubling enough, Escobar-King also references a test that tracks early-stage literacy skills among young students. Of the four levels in which the students might place — with the fourth being the highest — most of Panama’s students



Enedelsy Escobar-King addresses students in the digital classroom of a participating elementary school.

were landing in the first and second levels, which meant that, at best, they were able to recognize words and letters and, to some extent, were able to read. But, says Escobar-King, “They didn’t understand what they were reading. And if they cannot understand what they are reading, how are they going to do math, how are they going to do science?”

The long-term implications were obvious. Without mastering those basic skills, those students, once grown, would have fewer and less lucrative opportunities in the labor market — and those opportunities would be further diminished by their lack of exposure to and understanding of modern technology. And there was another aspect to the problem that worried Escobar-King: In the future, lacking knowledgeable young adults, how could the world hope to solve ever-increasing environmental challenges or advance the cause of peace-building and conflict resolu-

tion? “Education is the basis for all the areas that Rotary wants to deal with,” she insists. “All of them.”

With all that in mind, as well as the unexpected development of the teacher shakeup in Veracruz, the Rotary Club of Panamá Norte posed an important question: “How can we get teachers already trained so that no matter where they are sent, they already have the technological tools they could use?”

The answer turned out to be quite simple: Want to get teachers trained? Go to the teachers’ training school — in this case, the Normal School in Santiago, about 150 miles southwest of Panama City. “It is the main teaching college in Panama,” says Escobar-King, “and it’s going to produce the future teachers of the country. As part of the curriculum, would-be teachers have to teach in a real classroom. So we said, OK, let’s make sure they do it in interactive classrooms.”



The Normal School, the teachers' training school in Santiago, was an integral part of the project.

Working with the Rotary Club of Kansas City-Plaza in Missouri, as well as other clubs in Panama, the Panamá Norte club applied for and received a global grant of more than \$230,000 for what they called the Paul Harris Interactive Digital Classrooms. Six of the classrooms would be installed at the Normal School, and another classroom at each of the two nearby grade schools where the apprentice teachers would do their in-class training.

This time, the grant would again provide the high-tech equipment needed for the classrooms. But the empha-

sis was elsewhere. “The most important component was not just to train the teachers to use the equipment but to teach them innovative methodologies that use the technology to teach the kids in schools,” says Escobar-King. “And that’s how the principles of this particular project were developed.”

From the beginning, the project was a model of collaboration among Rotary members, the Normal School, Panama’s ministry of education (Meduca), the Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá, and the Normal School’s parent-teacher association.



Lessons learned from the Veracruz experiment were invaluable as the project in Santiago took shape.

Escobar-King also singled out the Basic Education and Literacy Rotary Action Group (whose board she serves on) and The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers. “They are valuable Rotary resources,” says Escobar-King, “and we have a very close working relationship with them.”

For help in designing the curriculum, the Panamá Norte club turned to the Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá, which put them in touch with Dillian Staine, a professor at the Universidad Latina de Panamá who specializes in, as he puts it, “electronic and didactic technology.” Staine designed the curriculum with both the future teachers and the teachers leading the Rotary-sponsored classes in mind, and also served, he says, “as a facilitator, as a teacher-trainer, and as a techno-pedagogical adviser.”

Like his collaborators at Panamá Norte, Staine understands the long-term importance of the project. “I believe that our country needs teachers capable of developing educational digital skills,” he says. “This will provide better opportunities for students to learn how to use information and communication technologies, which will enable them to participate as responsible citizens and productive professionals in our country.”

According to Escobar-King, there were some complaints about the rigor of the course. “It is quite an intense course,” she acknowledges. “But we don’t want to reduce the quality of the course. We would rather help prospective teachers reach that level of learning.”

Not only will the Santiago project enhance the abilities of those teachers at the Normal School but it will have what its creators call a “multiplier effect.” According to the calculations laid out in the global grant, each teacher, once graduated and posted in a school, will have 30 students in a classroom. Over just one year, that means that as many as 2,500 students would be beneficiaries of the project.

What’s more, those newly posted teachers will have the opportunity to train other teachers at their new schools in the innovative digital teaching techniques they learned at the Normal School. And, of course, the Normal School will continue to train other upcoming teachers in the Paul Harris Classrooms, which Meduca has agreed to oversee. Meduca will also conduct annual training sessions on technological methodologies for teachers, who, by participating in the training, earn points that can lead to promotions and scholarships.

After the success of the Paul Harris Classrooms project, members of the Rotary Club of Panamá Norte decided to broaden their reach. They crafted a plan to expand the interactive digital classroom model, and the teacher-learning process that accompanied it, to eight of Panama’s 10 provinces — a plan that would reach 230 schools and involve 7,500 teachers and 112,000 students. To accomplish this, club members set their sights on securing The Rotary Foundation’s 2022-23 Programs of Scale award with its \$2 million grant, a sum that could make their ambitious dream a reality.

In recognition of all its successes so far, the initia-

tive was named a finalist for the Programs of Scale award. While they weren’t selected for the grant, club members remain enthusiastic about expanding the project and are convinced that a continued focus on educating children is essential to Panama’s future.

At press time, Panamá Norte, working with Meduca, the Rotary Club of Las Vegas WON, and other clubs in Pan-

ama, was preparing to submit an application for another global grant. If approved, it would provide funds three times greater than those awarded to the Santiago project and allow the digital interactive classrooms to expand across Panama. “We are very committed to the project,” says Escobar-King.

Panama’s future may well depend on that. ■



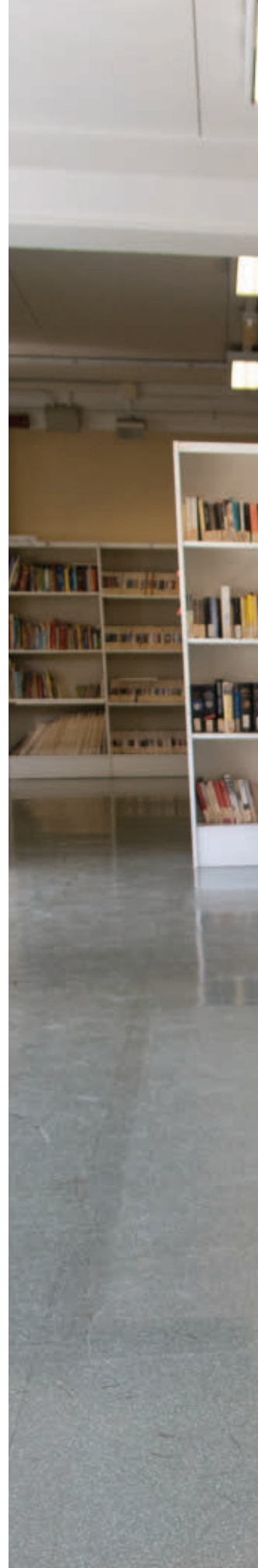
Students in the Rotary-sponsored digital classrooms showed a higher level of engagement.

Outlasting the pandemic

COVID relief
interventions by
the Rotary-USAID
partnership have
found a second life
after the emergency

By Diana Schoberg

Photography by Jacqueline Cantu





Diana Petronela Rufat was falling behind in her classes until she received a tablet through the Rotary-USAID partnership.

Diana Petronela Rufat is certain she would have lost a year of school.

When the COVID-19 pandemic erupted in Italy in February 2020, when schools closed, when the world shut down, she was stuck at home without a computer. Her dad was the only one working, and the work he had dried up. Her mom didn't speak much Italian; the family is from Romania and immigrated when Rufat was 13. Money for a computer was the least of their concerns. They had rent to pay.

When classes went virtual, she did the best she could and used her phone. She held it up to her ear — “like I was speaking to a friend” — and tried to participate in her lessons, including a French language class. “I didn't understand a single thing,” Rufat, 19, recounts this spring while sitting in an orange chair in her school library. “It was really hard to keep up.”

With waist-length mahogany hair and eyes that sparkle like her gem-studded shoes, she speaks animatedly about her and her family's ordeal. Her school is in Tor Bella Monaca, an impoverished district in southeast Rome. The neighborhood, long neglected, is home to one of the largest drug markets in Europe. But the school is a beacon, creating a community for its 2,000 students, and this library serves as a cultural center for residents.

In fall 2020, when students in Italy returned to school part time, Rufat realized she was completely lost. “I was in class, shocked,” she says. She wasn't alone; 70 percent of students had difficulties following classes remotely, according to a 2021 survey by the Italian National Institute of Statistics. At the start of the pandemic, the institute reported that 57 percent of children ages 6 to 17 had to share a computer or tablet with their family, while 12 percent didn't have one at home at all.

A teacher realized that Rufat was struggling and offered help — in the form of a tablet computer and data connection

donated through a Rotary-USAID partnership.

“It helped me to understand things because I could see the teacher more clearly. It helped me a lot, and it still helps,” she says. Without the computer, “I think I would have lost that year. For sure I would have lost that year.”

SOMETIMES IT'S HARD TO REMEMBER

those early days of the pandemic. It was three years and a lifetime ago. Italy reported its first case on 31 January 2020. Within weeks it had the biggest COVID-19 death toll in the world. In one city, “the number of corpses was so huge that they needed the army to carry them outside of the town and to the crematorium,” recalls Giulio Koch, a member of the Rotary Club of Milano Linate and governor of District 2041.

Rotary members began meeting on video calls, which led to one of the early positive outcomes to emerge from the crisis: a nationwide Rotary project, a rarity in Italy. Typically, Rotary districts in Italy prefer to work on their own, Koch says. But the pandemic was “an emergency that convinced the districts to work together.”

By mid-April, the Italian Rotarians, in partnership with Rotary members in Minnesota and elsewhere, had submitted four global grant applications to outfit 28 hospitals nationwide with equipment such as thermal scanners at hospital access gates to instantly detect fevers, tools for COVID-19 triage units, and covered biocontainment stretchers.

Meanwhile, with Italy at the epicenter of the pandemic in spring 2020, the U.S. government wanted to support the Italian people. It approved \$60 million in aid, to be disbursed primarily through USAID,

the government agency that provides international development assistance and disaster relief.

Rotary and USAID have been partners for more than a decade, first on water and sanitation projects in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. Rotary brought its access and reach; USAID and its partners had the technical expertise. More recently, the two organizations have partnered through Hearts of Europe, a four-year jointly funded program aimed at fostering collaboration and friendship among Rotary in select Eastern European countries and the United States by providing low-cost, high-impact, locally led community activities.

USAID doesn't typically distribute aid in Italy, focusing instead on countries most in need of development assistance through partnerships and investments that save lives, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance, and help people emerge from humanitarian crises and progress beyond assistance. So when it came to the pandemic relief efforts, the agency looked to trusted partners already working in Italy — including Rotary.

Rotary in Italy covers the entire country, from north to south, from metropolises like Rome to tiny villages dotting mountainous landscapes. “Rotary is a unique power in Italy,” Koch says. “Rotary members know the communities. They know the way the community thinks and acts. They know the mayor, the doctor, the pharmacist, the butcher — everyone who counts.”

USAID saw Rotary as the perfect gateway into the communities it was trying to reach. The \$5 million grant received through USAID was eventually divided among the 14 Rotary districts. Each district proposed to USAID how to spend the money.

Rotary members in Italy saw the grant as a chance to build on their nationwide

project. They decided to focus on three areas: health care, education, and community and economic development. In total, the 14 districts implemented 53 projects throughout the country. “We had a win-win situation,” says Koch, the zone’s regional Rotary Foundation coordinator at the time.

“It was a natural thing to do,” says Robert Camilleri, a deputy director at USAID. “When you want to reach communities, Rotary is a partner that comes to mind as one that’s having an impact and that we can help support.”

SMALL AND MEDIUM BUSINESSES are the Italian economy’s lifeblood. They employ nearly 80 percent of workers and

generate about two-thirds of the economic value of businesses outside of the financial sector, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. In a report by the consulting firm McKinsey & Co., 80 percent of businesses surveyed in Italy in August 2020 felt the pandemic had somewhat or greatly reduced their bottom line.

At the headquarters of Unindustria, a business association in Rome, Davide Lucchetti and Alberto Formichetti demonstrate an app developed to help small businesses make sense of the web of relief available to them. The app works like a search

engine, providing hyperlocal information about available benefits. Unindustria has 2,800 member companies employing 220,000 people across the Lazio region. Eighty-five percent are small and medium businesses. In the pandemic’s early days, Lucchetti recalls working 20-hour days trying to help companies through the crisis.



An app provides information about business benefits.



Rotary members (from left) Claudia Conversi, Anna Maria Bonomo, Gabriele Andria, and Maria Rossella Ricciardi helped lead District 2080’s efforts.

When it came to the pandemic relief efforts, USAID looked to trusted partners already working in Italy — including Rotary.

Claudia Conversi, a member of the Rotary Club of Guidonia-Montecelio and District 2080's Rotary Foundation chair in 2018-21, has a family business that mines Roman travertine, a stone used as building material that can be seen in landmarks throughout the city (imagine the Colosseum). She's associated with Unindustria through the company, as are many Rotary members who are entrepreneurs.

When thinking about the plight of Italy's businesses and how the USAID funding could help, Unindustria came to mind. "I asked myself: How can we help a bigger number of companies with a small amount of money?" she recalls. "We have to find a partner."

Unindustria had already been thinking about the app, and the injection of funding from the Rotary-USAID partnership helped

make it a reality. It launched in the spring of 2022, and within a year it had 16,000 users and 40,000 views. "The Rotary and USAID assistance was essential," says Cristiana Campanella of Unindustria. "We had allies with us to get out of the crisis. It was a great opportunity to collaborate."

And Lucchetti sees great possibilities for the app's future. There was the emergency of the pandemic, but also an energy crisis and a commodity crisis. The group could evolve the platform to deal with multiple business problems or use it to invest in shrinking the gender gap by helping women start businesses.

Medical projects, too, have found a second life after the pandemic's crisis period. After Constantino Astarita, 2021-22 governor of District 2101 in the Campania region including Naples, learned that

Italy was behind in processing positive COVID-19 tests to detect virus variants, the district decided to help. Rotary members used USAID funding to purchase lab equipment for TIGEM, an institute in Pozzuoli that researches genetic diseases. During the pandemic, the facility was the leading COVID-19 sequencing site in Italy. The donated machines reduced the time needed to prepare samples by 90 percent, helping further researchers' understanding of how the virus mutates and spreads. Today, researchers use the machines to study rare genetic diseases and cancers.

The district used another grant for a monitoring system that allowed pregnant or postpartum people with COVID-19 to remain in close audiovisual contact with staff 24 hours a day at a hospital in Naples.



Rotary members meet with school administrators to talk about possible future collaborations.

Clubs have found new members as their communities gained a greater understanding of what Rotary is and what Rotary does.



Teacher Sara de Lorenzis (right) poses with her student, Zoe. De Lorenzis uses the tablets donated by Rotary and USAID to build lessons for her students.



Roman Chaika fled with his family to Rome from Ukraine. He used one of the donated tablets to teach himself Italian and earn top marks at his new school in Monterotondo, Italy.

Rotary members used the \$5 million grant from USAID to reach:



956
schools

41
hospitals

620
nursing homes

16,000+
workers

Data as of 27 April

Today, the system is used for all hospitalized patients in the maternity ward, with or without COVID.

CHILDREN FLOCK TO SARA DE Lorenzis like she's the Pied Piper, following her under a wisteria-covered arbor and through the dappled shade of chestnut trees when visitors to her school appear. De Lorenzis is a support teacher for students with special needs at a culinary and hospitality school in a leafy neighborhood near the Roman Appian Way, the ancient cobblestone road that ran from Rome to present-day Brindisi in the heel of Italy.

Among the school buildings are three former villas, including one that was once home to actress Ingrid Bergman and her filmmaker husband, Roberto Rossellini.

The school received tablets through the Rotary-USAID project that it initially used to support pandemic-era hybrid learning, but with students back at school full time, De Lorenzis has been using them to build lessons. "Sometimes it is hard for the students to follow all the lessons in a standard way," she says. "I can make it very interactive and accessible. It is playful for them."

Sabrina Torino has seen her 14-year-old son, Marco, blossom. "He is the protagonist of the lesson thanks to the use of the device," she says. "It is much better than a simple book."

In District 2090, which encompasses four central Italian regions, Rotary members realized that COVID-19 would "forever change our habits, both in society and in the education field," says 2020-21 District Governor Rossella Piccirilli, a member of the Rotary Club of Lanciano, near

the Adriatic Sea. After distributing 513 tablets to 49 schools with its first round of USAID funding, the district decided to enhance the 397 tablets given in its second funding round by pairing them with wireless keyboards. "This way, students could use the device as both a study tool and a complete workstation," Piccirilli says. When the immediate need for tablets during pandemic-era schooling was over, students in the city of Teramo repurposed the equipment to increase their STEM skills by programming robots that they took to national robotics competitions.

The initiatives funded through the Rotary-USAID partnership were disaster response projects, but Rotary members built in an impressive amount of sustainability. The projects continue to pay dividends, not just through the equipment that people are using in new ways, but also by continuing relationships with partners that are developing into future projects. In Sicily, for example, those partnerships have evolved into mentoring and other opportunities for Rotary members to work with students. In Rome, Rotary members used their connections in schools to pitch Rotary Youth Exchange to parents, students, and school administrators. Other clubs have found new members as their communities gained a greater understanding of what Rotary is and what Rotary does.

"It was a big opportunity for us to work with the community, to reach a large number of people who did not know about Rotary," says Conversi, who oversaw the partnership activities for District 2080, encompassing the regions of Sardinia and Lazio, which includes Rome.

And the project kept Rotary members

engaged too. Districts typically worked with most, if not all, of their clubs to implement the projects. "During that period, clubs were disoriented and unable to meet in person. Older members were isolated due to their limited familiarity with technology," Piccirilli of District 2090 says. "However the project was enthusiastically embraced by the clubs, who, thanks to USAID, could offer tangible assistance to their communities and convey the message that Rotary is ready to take action."

STUDENT ROMAN CHAIKA STANDS on the dais in the auditorium of his school in Monterotondo, a town about a half-hour drive from central Rome. Mayor Riccardo Varone congratulates the lanky teenager on receiving a scholarship of about \$1,000 from the Rotary Club of Monterotondo-Mentana. Chaika poses for a photo with friends.

He and his family moved to the Rome area from Ukraine, fleeing by car in July 2022. When Chaika started school that fall, he barely spoke a lick of Italian. But using a tablet supplied through the Rotary-USAID partnership, he translated the words he didn't know, watched educational videos, and went on to score top marks in all his subjects at this science-based high school. "I use the tablet almost every day," he says in a quiet, measured voice. "It's very useful for me."

The school orchestra plays. Its director, the school's physics teacher (also a musician and composer), has taught them the Rotary anthem. The notes waft through the open door and outside into the sunlight, a celebration of what's to come. ■

The projects continue to pay dividends, not just through the equipment that people are using in new ways, but also by continuing relationships with partners that are developing into future projects.

OUR CLUBS

VIRTUAL VISIT

Uniting around a cause

Rotary Club of Global Water Safety & Drowning Prevention

On one of her frequent visits to train swim teachers in Thailand,

Eve Fraser was demonstrating the proper technique for helping people overcome a fear of water. Modeling with one of the trainees, Fraser let go and the young woman swam to the side of the pool. Afterward, the woman came up to Fraser and the other instructors with tears in her eyes. Ten years earlier, she had nearly died of drowning and had been revived by CPR. This was the first time she had swam.

“It was a teary moment for all of us,” Fraser says of the experience earlier this year in the city of Phuket in Thailand’s coastal south. “She passed the course, became a swim teacher, and is now a nurse teaching swimming on the side for extra income.”

The curriculum Fraser was using that day, Rhythm of the Water, was developed by the Rotary Club of Global Water Safety & Drowning Prevention, which Fraser helped charter in 2022 from her home near Brisbane, Australia. The cause-based

club has brought together water safety professionals in 17 countries and most continents to expand access to quality swimming lessons.

Around the world, common barriers to lessons include costs, low availability of convenient classes, and a lack of awareness among parents. In the U.S., marginalized communities, in particular, have more limited access and experience disproportionately higher drowning rates.

Fraser, the club’s president and a Swim Australia-accredited teacher, began thinking more intently about drowning prevention after the dramatic 2018 rescue of a youth soccer team from a flooded cave in remote Thailand. She began volunteering through the Rotary Club of Chiang Mai International in northern Thailand to train swim teachers for the club’s aquatic program, which has taught thousands of children to swim.

After the University of Southern Queensland named her alum of the year in 2020 for her efforts, she found herself on social media with other industry leaders, developing a vision for how to reach even more children.

“I had a pretty good model in my head,” says Fraser, who worked for the United Nations as a trauma counselor with the International Organization for Migration before joining Rotary. “At the UN, we could get displaced people anywhere in the world because we had people on the ground. I needed a model like that for swimming because the places we needed to go are remote and in all parts of the world. Sending people from big cities is not sustainable.”

Rotary provided that reach. Encouraged by a friend, she joined the Rotary Club of Brisbane International in January 2021. But after leading a water-safety project in Uganda later that year, she yearned for a club focused exclusively on the cause. She sent invitations through social media to industry connections. The cause-based club, which meets online twice a month, was chartered on 25 July 2022, the UN’s World Drowning Prevention Day.

“I had this vision to train all these teachers up in all these communities around the world. But I needed people on the ground to run the programs,” explains Fraser. “It doesn’t matter where you go in Rotary; someone is there who can help us deliver.”

The club launched the Swimming Gift initiative that invites Rotary clubs to donate US\$650, roughly the cost of teaching one class of 30 children. Its 2nd Dip program collects used equipment for students in need. The Triple T program sends teams of trainers to qualify swim teachers for international certification.

The club’s members, who include leaders of aquatic safety organizations, are exploring how to use their positions to press governments to fund swimming instruction for all children and make it a priority. “We have an opportunity to help countries set up organizations and establish standards,” says club member Leslie Donovan, CEO of the U.S.-based Starfish Aquatics Institute. “I’m really excited because I think the club gives us the entrée to be able to do that on a global scale, which is what Rotary is all about.”

Donovan described a trip she took with Starfish Aquatics to Uganda where she vis-



Members of the Rotary Club of Global Water Safety & Drowning Prevention, including (from left) Alina Graham, Eve Fraser, and Brendon Ward, are expanding access to quality swimming lessons around the world.

ited a village well. “It went down forever. People were drowning all the time,” she recalls. “They said the way you knew if a child had drowned is if they didn’t come home for dinner.”

Moses Kalanzi, executive director of Swim Safe Uganda, joined the club because of his prior work with Fraser on the Brisbane International club’s project in Uganda. As a child, he was crossing a bridge with schoolmates when he fell into the river and was swept away. A tree stopped him, and a bystander pulled him ashore unconscious.

“Luckily, I regained consciousness. Since that time, I started taking water seriously,” Kalanzi says. “In university, I saw the pool and knew I needed to learn how to swim so that I could help other people not drown.”

Michelle Michael, of Wodonga, Australia, is exploring initiatives for the club to pursue in the Philippines. She lost three nieces to drowning there in 2017 when

the girls were hauling in fishing nets. The youngest slipped into the river, and the other two jumped in to help. The three girls had not had swimming lessons. “It was after this that I thought, ‘I have to do something. I have to be able to help these beautiful children,’” says Michael.

That sense of a shared mission and focus, common with cause-based clubs, “brings a whole new level of energy to Rotary International,” says John Schorr, a charter member of the Rotary Club of Chiang Mai International.

The format is not without its challenges. Members strung across continents cannot readily gather in person for social events or fundraisers. But Fraser is working hard to make sure members learn Rotary basics, so they get plugged into the organization as a whole. “All of our projects we do with other Rotary clubs,” she says, “so our members get that connection with other members.”

— ARNOLD R. GRAHL

A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

In 2021, the United Nations passed a resolution recognizing 25 July as World Drowning Prevention Day and calling on member states to develop national prevention plans with measurable targets. According to the World Health Organization, drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury deaths worldwide. An estimated 236,000 people die yearly from drowning, with low- and middle-income countries accounting for over 90 percent of those deaths. Drowning is among the 10 leading causes of death globally for 5- to 14-year-olds. WHO considers drowning preventable and recommends interventions including teaching school-age children basic water safety and safe rescue skills; training bystanders in rescue and resuscitation; providing safe places away from water for preschool-age children; installing barriers to control access to water; enforcing boating, shipping, and ferry regulations; and improving flood risk management locally and nationally.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The shape of things to come

Arriving at a RYLA camp in 1991, an anxious teen stepped off a bus and into his future



"A focus of my life was to view every challenge, every setback as an opportunity," says Alex Montoya. "Always focus on what I had and not on what I was missing."

In March 1978, Alex Montoya left behind his family in Colombia and moved to California. He was 4 years old, and because his mother had taken thalidomide during her pregnancy to treat nausea, he was missing his arms and his right leg.

"I was part of the generation of thalidomide babies whose mothers took the drug before it was known for its devastating side effects," says Montoya. "Prior to [coming to the United States], everyone had to carry me around and do everything for me completely."

The Shriners Hospitals for Children brought Montoya to the U.S., arranging for him to be fitted with prosthetic limbs. He describes the mixture of excitement and fear that colored those first days and weeks when he made a new home with his aunt and uncle, whom he came to view as a second mother and father. "Without a doubt, God definitely picked, with both sets of my parents, people that were both compassionate and strong," Montoya says. "They didn't mince words about the fact that [living a fulfilling life] would be tough. But it could be done."

As he grew up, Montoya's uncanny luck at finding the right benefactors at the right time continued. One of those benefactors would be Rotary International — though first there would be a devastating setback.

In 1991, when he was 17, Montoya flew with about 100 other teenagers from San Diego to Arizona, where they boarded a bus and rode to a summer camp in the mountains outside Phoenix. When they arrived, Montoya stepped off the bus wearing shorts and a T-shirt. "You could clearly see my prosthetics, but I wasn't very self-conscious," he recalls. "I was just thinking how fun the camp was going to be."

That's when the camp's director approached Montoya. "He made a point of looking at my two prosthetic hooks and my one prosthetic leg. And he said: 'Wow, I wish you weren't here. There are other camps for kids like you. You don't belong here.' I was stunned — and it hurt."

Photograph by Frank Ishman

Montoya made it through the entire camp session, but the director's words haunted him. "I thought about it every day," he says. "I didn't realize at the time that it was affecting my mental health. It gave me the feeling that, no matter where I went, I was going to be a burden."

But back at San Diego High School, his good fortune rebounded. A counselor told Montoya that she had nominated him to be the school's representative at a RYLA camp. Montoya had no idea what that meant. "That was the first time I had heard of Rotary or RYLA [Rotary Youth Leadership Awards]," he says. "I welcomed the chance to be part of the camp, especially when I learned it was a leadership camp. But I was still very worried that it was going to be the same kind of experience as I'd had in Arizona."

And so, after yet another bus trip, Montoya arrived at the RYLA camp in Idyllwild, about 80 miles northeast of San Diego. "I stepped off the bus very tentative, very hesitant," he says. "And instead of one main camp director, I saw a bunch of different people, and they were all Rotarians. They greeted me enthusiastically, gave me hugs, and actually said the words, 'Wow, we're so glad you're here.' It was night and day from the reception that I'd gotten at the other camp."

During those three days in Idyllwild, Montoya's confidence returned and his sense that he was

doomed to be a perpetual burden vanished. "That's the beauty of RYLA, whether you have a disability or not," he says. "RYLA makes you feel like you have superpowers."

What's more, Montoya glimpsed his destiny. "There were phenomenal speakers," he says, "and they were all very inspirational, very motivational. They actually planted the seed in my mind that, hey, I've got a pretty great story too, and someday I'd like to be on the stage and tell my story. And that's what I'm doing today."

All that lay in the future. After high school he attended the University of Notre Dame, his dream school since eighth grade, on a scholarship. While there, he not only earned a bachelor's degree in communications, but successfully championed efforts to make the 150-year-old campus more accessible to people with disabilities. Following graduation, he remained in Indiana for one more summer, during which he carried the Olympic torch on one stretch of its journey to Atlanta for the 1996 Summer Games.

"It was fun and giddy and fantastic, but more than anything I was extremely blessed, honored, and humbled," he says before elevating the experience into metaphor. "It gave me the realization that we're all torch carriers. We all carry the message of hope and kindness and inclusion, and we try to pass it along to the next generation."

Montoya returned to California, where he spent 17 years with the MLB's San Diego Padres, including a decade as the director of Latino relations. When the job ended — "I was the victim of downsizing" — he regrouped and charted a new course. "It was tough to leave a job that had become my life and my identity," he says. "But a focus of my life was to view every challenge, every setback as an opportunity. Always focus on what I had and not on what I was missing."

Today, just as he had dreamed at Idyllwild, Montoya is a motivational speaker, as well as the author of 10 books, beginning in 2008 with the autobiographical *Swinging for the Fences*. And he is the founder of his eponymous foundation that raises awareness of issues related to disabilities and immigration. He became an honorary member of the Rotary Club of Mental Health & Wellness District 5280 in 2022, a few weeks after he addressed the Rotary International Convention in Houston, where, interrupted several times by sustained applause, he delivered an eight-minute speech that was equal parts thanks and inspiration.

"Rotary and RYLA have shaped and molded me because they included me," he said at the convention. "Rotary is inclusion; Rotary is friendship. Rotary is leadership; Rotary is love. Maybe you've seen the TV show *This Is Us*? Rotary is us."

— GEOFFREY JOHNSON



Alex Montoya

- **Rotary Youth Leadership Awards**, 1991
- **Bachelor's in communications**, University of Notre Dame, 1996
- **Founder**, Alex Montoya Foundation, 2020
- **Speaker**, Rotary International Convention, 2022

Left: Alex Montoya addresses a presidents-elect training seminar in Newton, Massachusetts, in March 2023. Right: Montoya is joined by Dr. Maribel Khoury-Shaar (left) and Judith Verduzco of the Rotary Club of Mental Health & Wellness.

DISPATCHES FROM
OUR SISTER MAGAZINES
ROTARY THAILAND

Safer roads are saving lives in Thailand



The island of Phuket in southern Thailand attracts tourists from all over the world with its beaches, food, cultural sites, and vibrant night markets. Unfortunately, one of Phuket's other notable features is far less attractive: The city has one of the highest rates of traffic deaths in Asia. The problem is not limited to the island. Across Thailand, more than 20,000 people die each year on average from traffic accidents, according to the World Health Organization. For perspective, England, with a similar population, has about 1,800 traffic deaths each year.

Nearly three-quarters of traffic fatalities in Thailand are related to motorcycles, which are popular and more affordable than other vehicles. Though the law requires helmets, fewer than half of riders wear them in Thailand. For their

passengers, the number is even less at 20 percent. Drunken driving, excessive speed, and violating laws and safety rules are also common. The thousands of working-age people lost each year to traffic accidents represent a huge economic loss equal to 3 to 5 percent of the country's GDP.

Rotary clubs and districts in Thailand have long been interested in reducing these deaths and injuries. Clubs in Krabi province handed out 99 helmets to young people, and the Rotary Club of Palaelai conducted safety training for motorcycle users. But these efforts have not been enough.

To increase public engagement, all nine Rotary clubs in Phuket came together in 2016 to expand their reach and work with provincial road safety networks of government and private agencies. The

goal is reducing deaths and injuries among Phuket's residents and tourists. Efforts have included equipping police with tests to check blood alcohol levels, installing red light and speed cameras, and making engineering improvements such as replacing problematic intersections with roundabouts.

A recent project by the Thai Health Promotion Foundation is training 100 women in Phuket on traffic laws and road safety so they can assist police in communities. This project is led by Major General Teerapol Thicpharoen, a former deputy police commissioner who is a road safety advocate. He says the program is intended to raise people's awareness of road safety as a sustainable measure to reduce deaths. Michael Woodford, the CEO of the Safer Road Foundation UK, has helped with advising

↑ Nearly three-quarters of traffic fatalities in Thailand are related to motorcycles, a popular and affordable mode of transportation in the country. Though the law requires helmets, fewer than half of riders wear them.



The Safe Roads Save Lives campaign is led by Thailand's four Rotary districts and aims to reduce deaths and injuries by working with road and safety networks on every level.

and with budget support of up to \$1 million. Dr. Wiwat Seetamanotch, who coordinates Thailand's road safety efforts with WHO, is another key player who has worked for years on road safety in Thailand. As he puts it, "Saving lives is more laudable than building a seven-tiered pagoda."

Rotary districts in Thailand want to move this project to a national level. In October 2022, all four of the country's districts (3330, 3340, 3350, and 3360) agreed to push forward a project called Safe Roads Save Lives. The goal of the long-term project is reducing deaths and injuries by working with road and safety networks on every level, including with the national parliament.

In December 2022, the four Rotary district governors and several club leaders met with the president of Thailand's parliament for a signing ceremony after an agreement to work together on the campaign. It also involved officials from WHO and the Thai Ministry of Public Health.

The first campaign is to promote the goal of 100 percent helmet use nationwide. It's estimated that this level of use could save more

"People are the real cause of road traffic accidents. To reduce them, we must focus on people."

than 6,000 lives a year. All 400 Rotary and Rotaract clubs will be instructed on tactics to support the campaign. The main strategic action is establishing corporate measures in the workplaces of Rotarians and all network partners requiring employees to wear helmets when riding motorcycles. Organizers will also use social media channels to promote road safety.

Preecha Klinkaeo, a member of the Rotary Club of Phra Nakhon, and Dr. Chuchart Nijwattana, an orthopedist in the Rotary Club of Tongkah, enlisted all Rotary clubs in Thailand's four districts to work together on Safe Roads Save Lives. "People are the real cause of road traffic accidents," Klinkaeo says. "To reduce them, we must focus on people. Saving just one life also

means saving the lives of all those who are dependent on that person."

The same campaign was repeated at Bangkok City Hall in March. Chadchart Sittipunt, mayor of Bangkok, joined and strongly supported the project. Yod Sangswangwatana, a member of the Rotary Club of Bangkok Suwanabhumi, is another key player in the campaign. "Traffic accidents destroy not only yourself but also your whole family instantly," he says. "We need to be aware and prevent it."

Safe Roads Save Lives has a long way to go before we see the results. Rotary has been dedicated to polio eradication for more than four decades. Reducing 1 million road traffic deaths annually could be a new challenge and mission.

— SANGUAN KUNAPORN

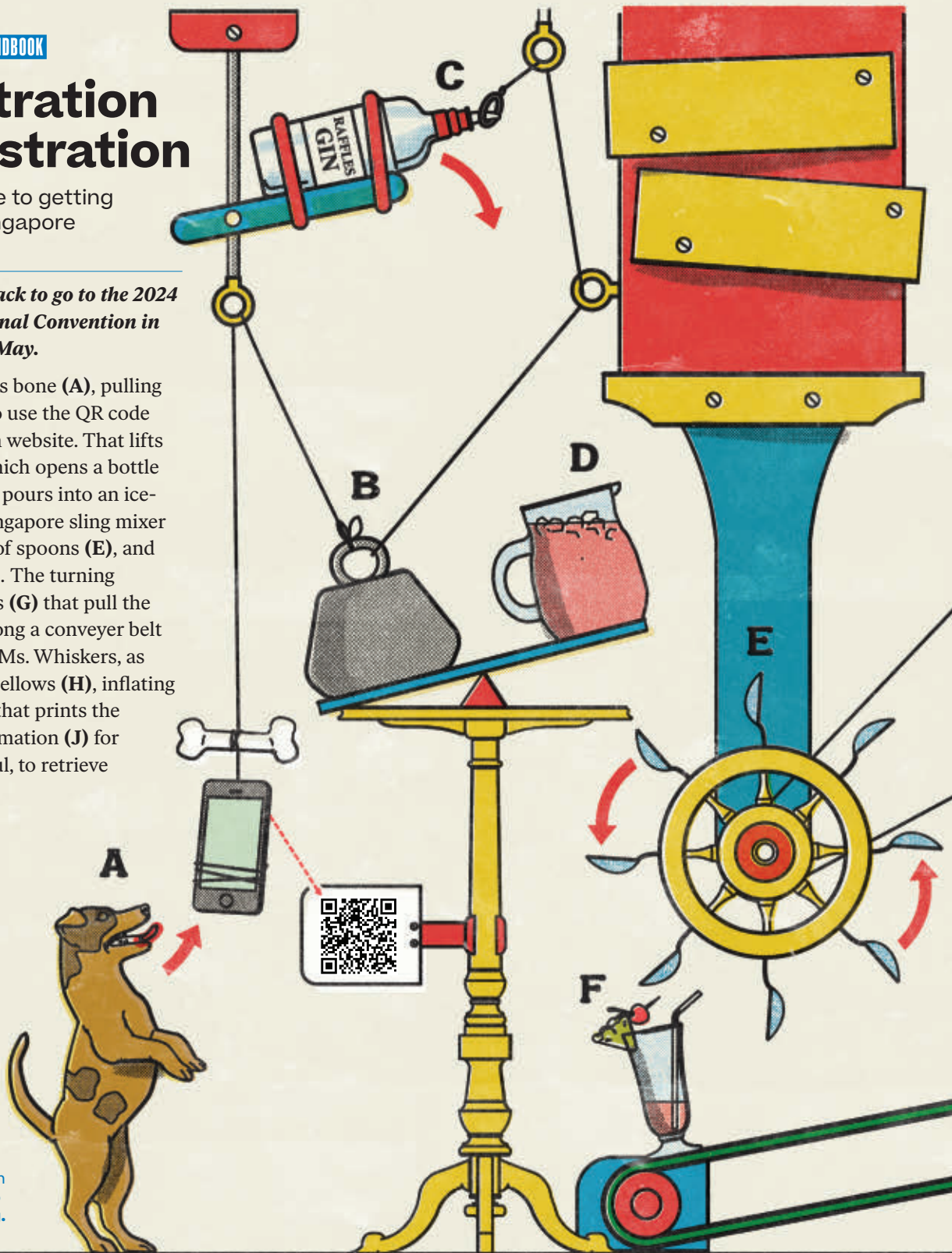
HANDBOOK

Registration demonstration

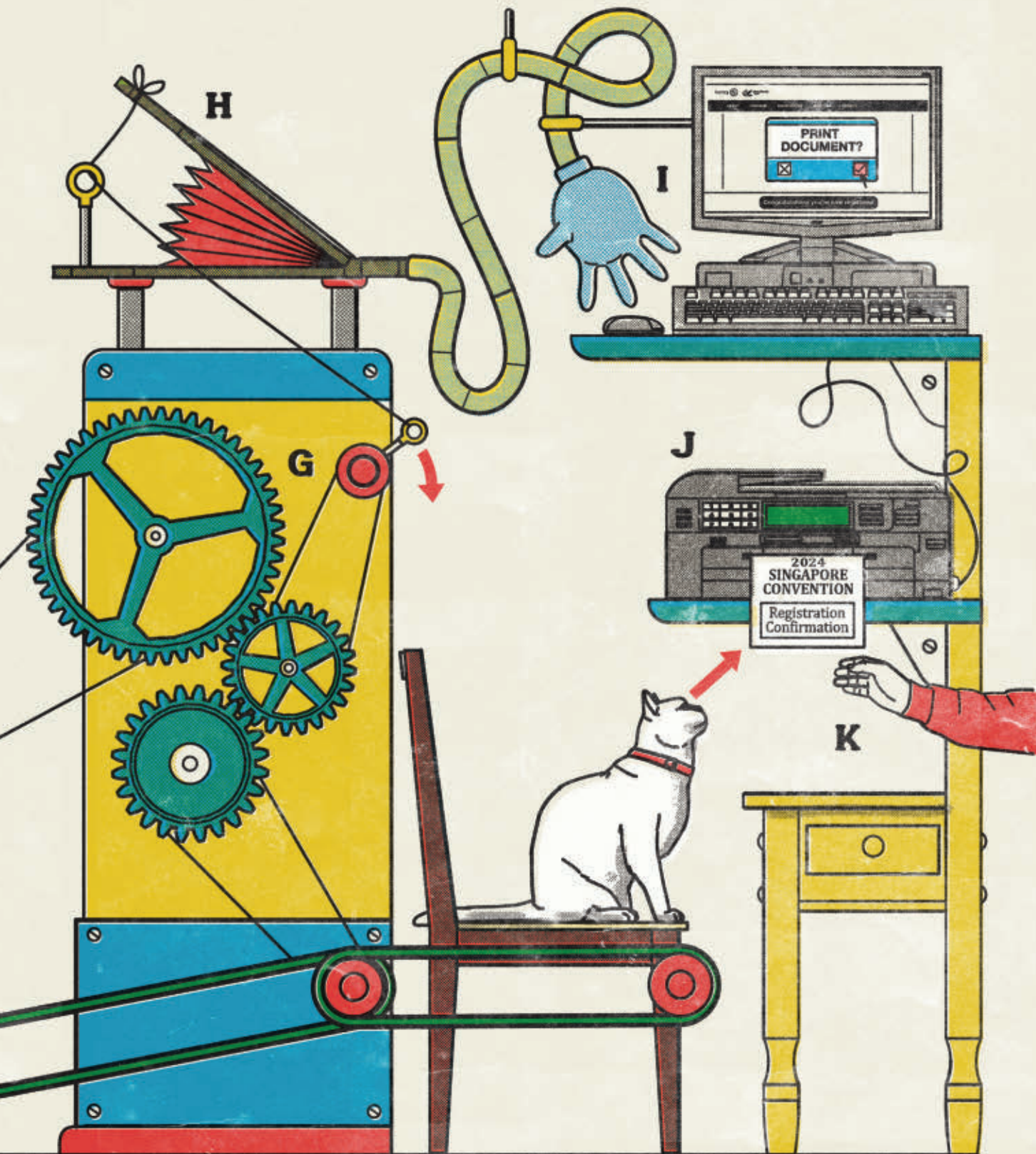
Our guide to getting to Singapore

Rover wants his pack to go to the 2024 Rotary International Convention in Singapore, 25-29 May.

Rover jumps for his bone (A), pulling down the phone to use the QR code for the registration website. That lifts a kettlebell (B), which opens a bottle of gin (C). The gin pours into an ice-filled pitcher of Singapore sling mixer (D), onto a wheel of spoons (E), and into a tall glass (F). The turning wheel cranks gears (G) that pull the Singapore sling along a conveyer belt to Rover's cohort, Ms. Whiskers, as well as depress a bellows (H), inflating a rubber glove (I) that prints the registration confirmation (J) for Rover's owner, Paul, to retrieve (K). Good doggy!



If you don't have a four-legged friend to buy your ticket for you, register the conventional way by scanning the code with your phone or going to convention.rotary.org.





TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Create your Rotary moment

When was your Rotary moment? It's when you realize that being part of Rotary means more than just showing up for a meeting, when you discover you are part of something that changes the lives of others as it changes yours.

I will never forget the moment when I learned about Daniel, a Haitian child. Rotary Foundation Trustee Greg Podd, who at the time was serving with me on an RI committee, had been trying to get Daniel on a plane for urgent heart surgery through the Gift of Life program. But Daniel couldn't get the visa to travel, and doctors had given him only months to live.

When Greg told me this, I remembered that Gift of Life was operating in Haiti and we could do the surgery there. This was on a Wednesday. Greg helped get ahold of Daniel's medical records. The Gift of Life surgeon I knew — who visited only once or twice every month — happened to be in Haiti. By Thursday, the surgeon had looked over the medical charts and told us that he could repair Daniel's heart but said he was traveling soon. We had to get Daniel to a medical facility by Friday morning.

Daniel and his parents rode 90 minutes on a scooter through the bumpy roads of rural Haiti to get to the facility, and the surgeon successfully performed the procedure. Thankful, Greg and I moved on to other projects.

A few months later, I got an email with a picture of Daniel. I will never forget his smiling face, despite the foot-long scar running down his chest, and what he wrote: "I know you helped me. You saved my life. Thank you."

On behalf of Daniel and countless others, I am passing along that gratitude to all Rotary members who have helped or will help this year.

The beauty of Rotary, especially with The Rotary Foundation, is that we can create these Rotary moments anytime. Just reach out to others in Rotary and discuss our work. Our caring network, our dedicated volunteers, and available resources will take care of the rest.

If two people can make such a difference, imagine what we can accomplish by working together in larger groups through The Rotary Foundation. Picture the impact of clubs within a district joining forces for a Foundation district grant to boost literacy, or two districts from different parts of the world transforming a community through a water, sanitation, and hygiene global grant.

If you haven't discovered your Rotary moment yet, keep searching. Serving Rotary through our Foundation is a great place to find it, and it will change your life.

BARRY RASSIN

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

September events

HOPPY TOGETHER

Event: BrewFest

Host: Rotary Club of Lebanon, New Hampshire

What it benefits: Local projects

Date: 2 September

More than 700 people are expected to attend this Labor Day weekend festival at Colburn Park in downtown Lebanon. The annual end-of-summer gathering includes beer from more than 35 craft brewers, a variety of food vendors, live music, and games. This year's event promises to be even more festive than usual, as the club recently observed its 100th anniversary.

PROST!

Event: Oktoberfest

Host: Rotary Club of Palatine, Illinois

What it benefits: Local charities

Dates: 15-17 September

The club celebrates German cultural heritage with a weekend of food, drinks, and music. Last year's offerings included bratwurst and schnitzel bites, pilsner and dark lager beers, and four rousing bands. Opening ceremonies take place on Friday evening, and Saturday is Family Day, with activities for kids. Since the event was first held in 2008, the club has raised over \$900,000 for community organizations.

TRIATHLON WITH A TWIST

Event: Driathlon

Host: Rotary Club of Bay City Morning, Michigan

What it benefits: Local scholarships

Date: 17 September

This race diverges from the traditional triathlon format by replacing swimming with paddling a canoe or kayak. The paddle portion covers a 5K stretch of the



GET IN GEAR

Event: Sacramento Century Challenge

Host: Rotary Club of Sacramento, California

What it benefits: Sacramento Children's Home crisis nursery program

Date: 30 September

In its 10th year, this popular ride offers cyclists four routes: 100 (century), 63 (metric century), 36, and 16 miles. All routes begin at Capitol Mall in downtown Sacramento, winding their way through the lush California Delta region before returning to the city. The ride is supported by roaming support-and-gear vehicles. A post-ride festival features live music, food trucks, and beer and wine vendors.

Kawkawlin River, followed by a 20K bike ride and finally a 5K run along the river. People can enter as individuals or pairs. Pairs compete either as a team, with both partners completing all three legs for a combined score, or as a relay, rowing together and then dividing up the other two segments.

FUN IN THE SUN

Event: End of Summer Beachside Bash

Host: Rotary clubs of Ventura, Ventura East, and Ventura South, California

What it benefits: Local nonprofits

Date: 23 September

The three Rotary clubs of Ventura are joining forces to host a celebratory farewell to summer in what they hope will become an annual tradition. The event takes place at San Buenaventura State Beach, which overlooks the Pacific

Ocean. The schedule includes a ribeye steak cook-off, barbecue, live music, and an elite car show sponsored by a local detail shop. General admission is \$10.

IT'S A PAWTY

Event: Pawtoberfest

Host: Rotary Club of West Allis After Hours, Wisconsin

What it benefits: Local animal rescues

Date: 24 September

Pets are more than welcome at this family-friendly Oktoberfest celebration, held at the West Allis Farmers Market. Two- and four-legged attendees alike can enjoy demonstrations, performances, and contests. The event also includes food trucks, a beer garden, and vendors of pet supplies and services. A raffle provides the opportunity to win a basket of pet-centered prizes.

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 IN THE NEWS

Rotary reaches millions through convention coverage

Our annual conventions provide ample opportunities for Rotary International to reach new audiences through local and national media, increasing the public's understanding of Rotary's global impact. During the Rotary International Convention in May, when nearly 13,000 Rotary members from 136 countries and geographic areas converged in Melbourne, Australia, the public relations team, in partnership with local Rotary members, reached out to newspapers, radio and TV stations, and influential online media networks. As a result, Rotary stories were widely reported in Australia, with dozens of prominent mentions across various media platforms. Convention coverage reached an estimated audience of more than 3 million, according to a media tracking service.

- *Nine News Melbourne*, a nightly TV news program that airs across the states of Victoria and Tasmania, featured a segment highlighting Rotary clubs' support for Night Nurses Outreach, a service by the Melbourne-based nonprofit Youth Projects that provides after-hours primary health care to people experiencing homelessness.



- Melbourne's leading talk radio station, 3AW, broadcast its weekend morning program live from the convention center. The host interviewed Jennifer Jones, then RI president, as well as Amanda Wendt, District 9800 governor at the time. The on-site broadcast drew a large crowd of convention attendees and residents. The station released Wendt's interview about Rotary and the ongoing convention as a podcast episode.
- *Nine News Melbourne* also covered a food packing event spearheaded by District 9800. Rotary members loaded boxes with more than 100,000 meals for people in Turkey, Syria, and Ukraine.
- Mary Barry, a member of the Rotary Club of Melbourne and chair of the convention's Host Organization Committee, was interviewed by multiple media outlets including ABC Radio about how the convention boosted tourism and brought millions of dollars to the region's economy.

- On the convention's opening day, TV outlet Nine News interviewed then-Vice President **Nicki Scott** alongside Melbourne Lord Mayor Sally Capp. News shows on two other networks also broadcast the interview footage. Meanwhile, Capp promoted the Rotary Convention during live interviews on Channel 9's *Weekend Today* and Channel 7's *Weekend Sunrise*.



- Grammy-nominated singer Gaby Moreno, who joined Jones in Guatemala earlier this year to visit schools participating in the Rotary-supported Guatemala Literacy Project, gave a stirring performance at the convention. Before Moreno sang, journalist and filmmaker **Zara Janjua** previewed the trailer of her upcoming documentary *The Gift of Reading* that chronicles the life-changing project. ■





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2023 CONVENTION RECAP

Rotary imagines what's next

Members celebrate and connect in May at the Rotary Convention in Melbourne, Australia

1. Gordon McNally, 2023-24 RI president, speaks at a dinner for substantial and active donors to The Rotary Foundation. **2.** Liberian peace activist Leymah Gbowee, a 2011 Nobel laureate and the founder of Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa, inspires attendees with her dream of a peaceful world. **3.** Emmanuel Katongole, a past district governor from Uganda who co-founded a company that produces affordable drugs to fight disease in Africa, shakes hands with 2022-23 RI President Jennifer Jones after addressing a general session. **4.** In the House of Friendship, a member of a Rotaract club in Mauritius joins other visitors in placing a pin on a world map to show where they're from. **5.** Chin Mei Lu of Taiwan (right) receives the inaugural Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award, honoring a member who has actively worked to advance women in Rotary, from the award's namesake, the first female Rotary club president. **6.** Kari Aina Eik, managing director of global strategy at the SDG Impact Fund, calls on Rotary members to help ensure that new technologies that support progress toward sustainable development goals are made available in communities around the world. **7.** The crowd of thousands inside the Rod Laver Arena basks in the glow of the closing session. **8.** Jones gazes out from the convention stage during the opening session. **9.** RI General Secretary John Hewko and his wife, Marga (center), greet Rotary members from Ukraine. **10.** Nakeeyat Dramani Sam, a 10-year-old Ghanaian poet and climate activist, recites an original poem that illustrates the harms of climate change and encourages listeners to come together to protect the environment. **11.** A Melbourne-based group of vocalists, dancers, circus artists, and musical theater performers put on "The Greatest Show" for the convention audience.





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2024 CONVENTION

A dazzling venue



The triple-skyscraper complex that will host part of the 2024 Rotary International Convention in Singapore is sure to rank as one of the coolest sites yet for the global gathering.

To start, there's how it looks. Marina Bay Sands has a roof deck resembling a long boat that connects the trio of 57-story hotel towers and includes an infinity pool. Attending the House of Friendship and breakout sessions in the convention center below puts you in the heart of a dining, luxury shopping, and entertainment megaplex.

Exploring the top attractions is a vacation in itself — one that you can fit conveniently around your convention schedule. Buy a ticket to SkyPark on the roof deck to look over the skyline and the bay. The Shoppes mall features big-name brands,

even including kids clothing stores from Dior, Versace, and more.

Book a meal to remember at one of several restaurants by celebrity chefs. Two are recognized with Michelin stars: Cut steakhouse by Wolfgang Puck (one star) and Tetsuya Wakuda's Waku Ghin (two stars), which offers Japanese fine dining with French and Italian touches.

Take a boat ride on an indoor canal fed with rainwater collected in a giant, transparent bowl outside. A waterfall through a hole in the bowl dumps into a pool inside.

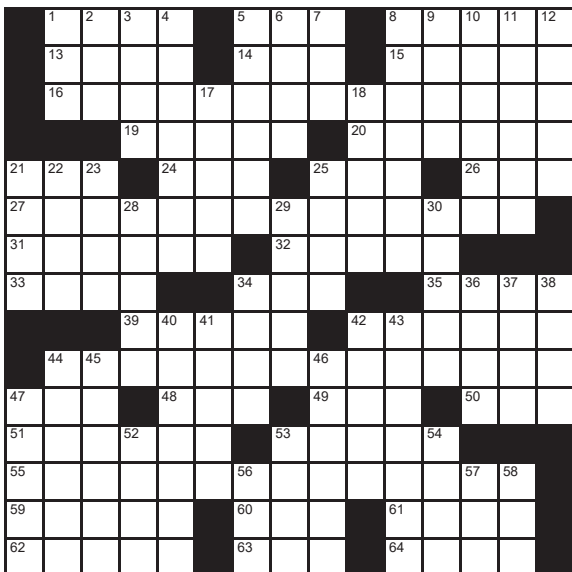
A light and water fountain show called Spectra is free each night. And there's still a stacked schedule of live shows, an art and science museum, a nightclub with a three-story spiral slide ... discover the rest 25-29 May when you arrive to start *Sharing Hope With the World*. ■

Learn more and register at convention.rotary.org.

CROSSWORD

Fun with 55-Across

By Victor Fleming
Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas



Solution on page 10

ACROSS

- 1 Paper Mates' rivals
- 5 Mobile's state (abbr.)
- 8 Peruvian volcano El _____
- 13 Basra's nation
- 14 Aswan or Hoover
- 15 Happening, quaintly
- 16 MD who treats only cosmetologists?
- 19 Geeklike
- 20 Glib
- 21 Sheet music abbr.
- 24 Bucolic place
- 25 Start to log?
- 26 Exit, with "out"
- 27 Malanga chips and mojitos at a Havana gambling site?
- 31 Driver's license datum
- 32 Big celebrations
- 33 "Happy Motoring!" sloganer
- 34 Altar declaration
- 35 Approximately
- 39 Tasteless porridge
- 42 Frasier Crane's ex-wife
- 44 Small house for brainstorming Brownies?
- 47 I-30 or I-40, e.g.
- 48 "Ich _____ ein Berliner"
- 49 Alkaline solution

- 50 "Full," at a theater
- 51 Fundamental component of RNA
- 53 _____ the lily (embellishes)
- 55 Literacy promoter ... and anagram of 16-, 27-, and 44-Across
- 59 Be dishonest with, in a way
- 60 Meyers of Kate & Allie
- 61 "When all _____ fails ..."
- 62 _____ a tie (require overtime)
- 63 Exceptional word?
- 64 Additional word?

- 11 Acknowledge with a honk
- 12 Like wool sweaters, often
- 17 Pick up the tab for
- 18 "So _____ to offend ..."
- 21 Pine (for)
- 22 Bemoans
- 23 A bases-loaded triple is worth three
- 25 Over again
- 28 Part of a notable nightclub name
- 29 Losing poker comment
- 30 Sicily or Sardinia, to locals
- 34 Blood conduit
- 36 Baby back _____
- 37 Agitate
- 38 "Rats!" alternative
- 40 River famously crossed by Caesar
- 41 Of service
- 42 1971 Clapton classic
- 43 Cold brew
- 44 Huff and puff
- 45 Came to a halt
- 46 Bring to the surface
- 47 100 kopecks
- 52 Bank opener?
- 53 Ashram figure
- 54 Flowerpot site
- 56 Just a touch
- 57 1940s spy grp.
- 58 Paleo's opposite

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Rotary 



The kebab you're looking for

Topped with tomato sauce, İskender kebab is Turkey's finest

For much of the Ottoman Empire era, lamb was roasted on a spit parallel to the ground. Then came İskender Efendi. The 19th century butcher and chef upended hundreds of years of culinary tradition when he turned that spit perpendicular, paving the way for döner kebabs (döner comes from the word dönmek, meaning “to rotate”).

The dish bearing his name, İskender kebab, is especially beloved in the place where he created it: Bursa, a city in northwestern Turkey across the Marmara Sea from Istanbul. It's also known as the Bursa döner kebab. In it, you'll find slices of lamb or beef over crispy pita squares. The dish is covered in tomato sauce and melted butter and served with a side of yogurt. “If you like to eat meat, you will love it,” says Rotary member Sabahat Karakaşlılar.

WHEN TO EAT IT: The butter and red meat make İskender kebab a heavy dish, so locals save it for family dinners or special occasions. They typically eat it in restaurants, as it's difficult to cook at home. “It's kind of a big meal,” Karakaşlılar says. Thankfully, any time is fair game if you're a tourist — this is one of Turkey's most famous dishes, after all. You can find it in restaurants all over the city. “Tourists should not return to their homes without tasting this,” Karakaşlılar insists.

TO DRINK: The typical accompaniment is şıra, a non-alcoholic, slightly fermented grape juice. “It's wine without alcohol,” Karakaşlılar explains. The drink can be sweetened to taste and is considered great for digestion — which you may need after your heaping portion of İskender kebab. — DIANA SCHOBERG

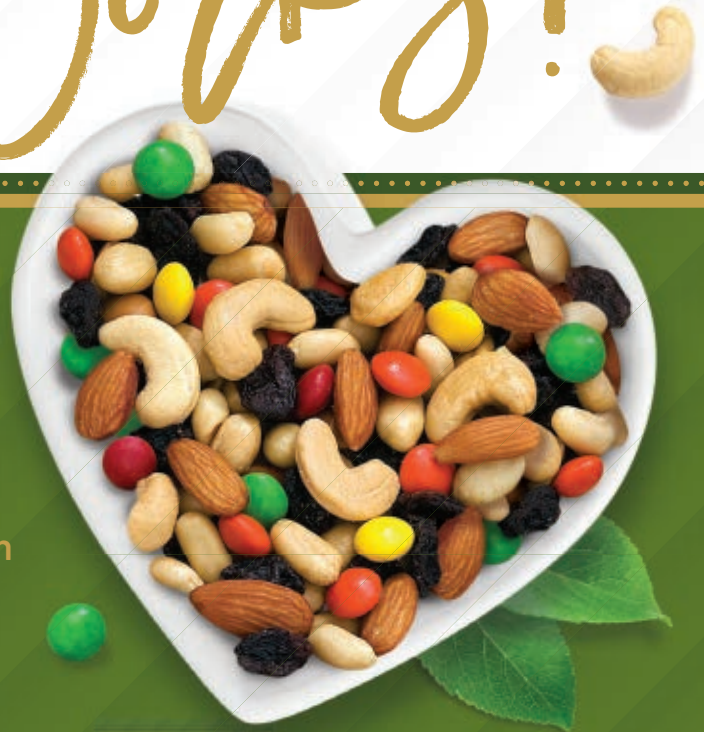
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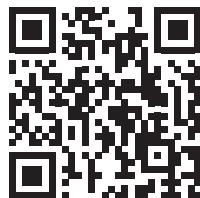


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