

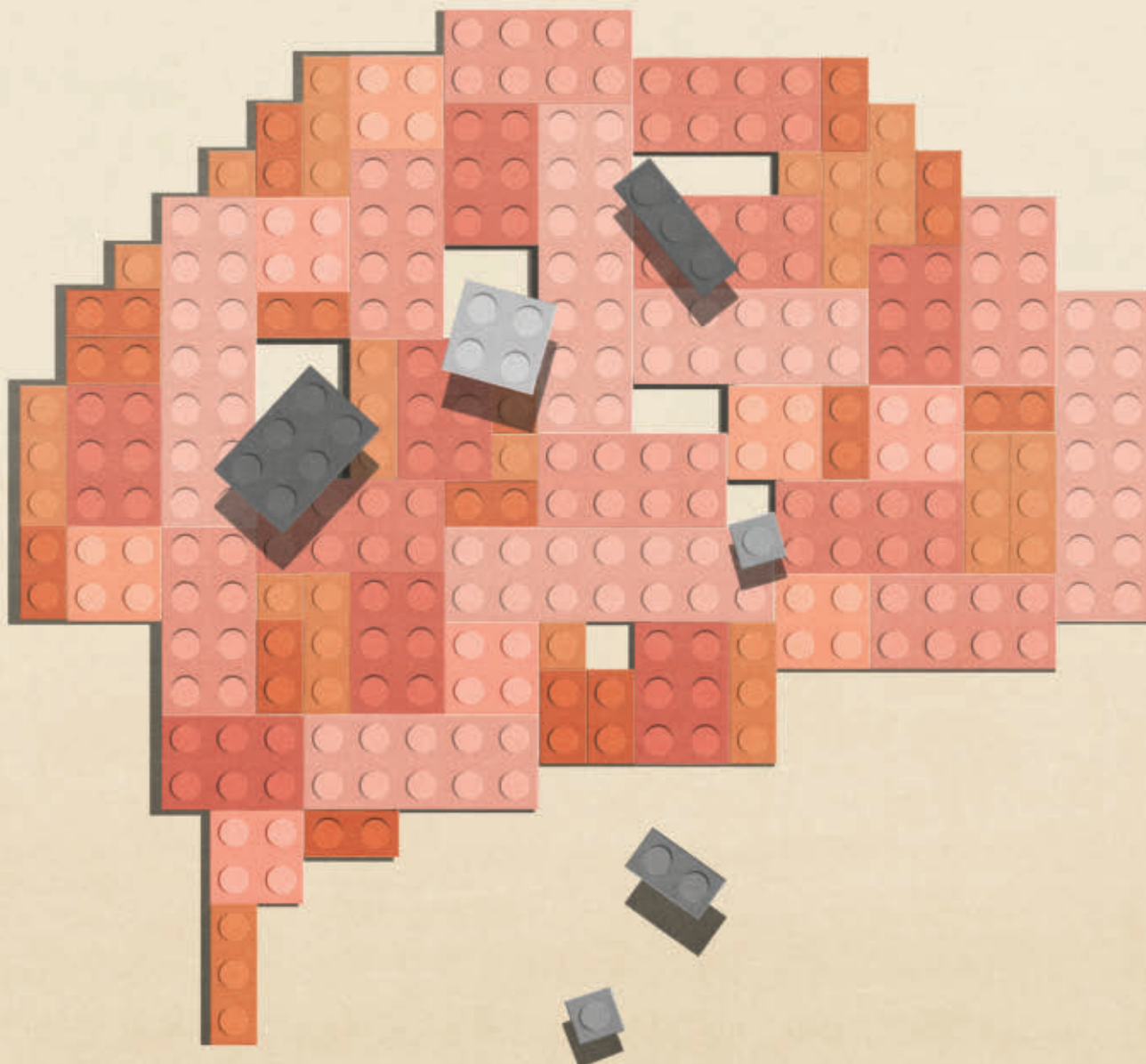
ROTARY

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IMAGINE ROTARY

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partnerships that can
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People of Action — and empathy

I believe it is a time in our world for brave, courageous, intentional leadership. Last month, in this column, you heard from my dear friend Anniela Carracedo. She is an amazing member of our Rotary family, and as a past Interactor and now Rotarian, she is this kind of leader.

Anni shared a very personal story about coping with a panic attack, something that I have also experienced. The outpouring and response to this story have been tremendous and punctuate how critical it is that we acknowledge not only our strengths but our vulnerabilities too.

When we talk about finding space for one another — creating comfort and care within Rotary — we're describing a club experience where we can all feel comfortable sharing like Anni did, and we can all empathize with and support one another. Whatever we are facing in life, Rotary is a place where we know we're not alone.

We spend so much time helping our world, whether it's working to end polio, cleaning up the environment, or bringing hope to communities that need it most. Sometimes we can lose track of the need to apply some of our energy and care to our fellow members and partners in service.

The comfort and care of our members is the single greatest driver of member satisfaction and retention. We need to ensure that it remains a priority — and that we further strengthen these bonds by performing

service that helps reduce the stigma of seeking out mental health treatment and expands access to care.

That is why I'm so heartened by President-elect Gordon McNally's wonderful vision to help improve the global mental health system, not only for Rotary members, but for the communities we serve.

When Gordon announced our focus on mental health at this year's International Assembly in Orlando, Florida, he reminded us that helping others benefits our mental health by reducing stress and improving our mood. Studies show that performing acts of kindness is an effective way to improve your own mental and physical health. Rotary service brings hope to the world and joy to our lives.

Our new focus on mental health will take some time to do right, and yet it builds on something that has been part of who we are for 118 years. We are People of Action, and behind that action is care, compassion, empathy, and inclusion.

Becoming champions of mental health is not only the right and kind thing to do, it is a tool that can *Create Hope in the World*, Gordon's inspiring theme for his upcoming year as president.

If we serve our members, we serve our communities, and if we can meet people where they are and lift them up, they will imagine Rotary in a new light and come to fully understand our value and our infinite potential.

JENNIFER JONES

President, Rotary International



RI President Jennifer Jones (center) with 2023-24 President Gordon R. McNally and his wife, Heather, at the International Assembly in January



View from the
Melbourne Skydeck

WELCOME



YOU ARE HERE: Melbourne, Australia

GREETING: G'day

THE CONVENTION CITY: Mary Barry, a native of Ireland and a former skydiver with 600-plus jumps, moved to Melbourne in 1986 to get a “real job” that enabled her to skydive. She never left. “We are such a vibrant, multi-cultural, and livable city,” says Barry, a nonprofit executive.

SEE, TASTE, FEEL: As chair of the Host Organization Committee for the 2023 Rotary International Convention, Barry recommends three events to experience this art, sports, and culinary mecca:

- Discover the city’s rich history, culture, and food at a welcome reception at Melbourne Museum on 27 May.
- Socialize while sampling food and drinks from local restaurants at the Streets of Melbourne parties in South Wharf on 29 and 30 May.
- Doll yourself up for a visit to Flemington Racecourse to greet winning horses, witness the thrill of the Melbourne Cup through past footage, see the solid gold trophy, and enjoy a formal dinner with Victorian cuisine and wines.

Register now at
convention.rotary.org

ROTARY

May 2023

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Marc Dukes, *Rotary* magazine, One Rotary Center,
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phone 847-866-3092; email adv@rotary.org

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Rotary 



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Your year-end gift to Rotary's Annual Fund supports projects that help create lasting change in your community and around the world.

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COINS

On the cover: Through the Coins for Alzheimer's Research Trust, or CART Fund, Rotary members support research grants for wide-ranging and experimental ideas.

Illustration by Andrea Ucini



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Determined to run

For women in Afghanistan, running is more than a sport. A Rotarian brings their story to life in film.

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Interact is Rotary's future — and its present

Interact is 60, and the hundreds of thousands of young members worldwide are key collaborators for Rotary clubs, often leading the way. We chart Interact's perpetual growth and eternal youth.

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STAFF CORNER

Aurea Santos

Senior content and public relations strategist,
Brazil office

I work and live in São Paulo, a megacity in Brazil with more than 12 million people. It is a modern city of paradoxes. São Paulo has the best of Brazil: It is multicultural with the best jobs, the best universities, and the best art scene and restaurants. On the other hand, many also find it hard to live here. The roads and public transit are always jammed, unemployment is high, and violence is prevalent. Despite this, I love my city because you have everything you need.

As a child, I became enamored of Glória Maria, a well-known TV journalist, who interviewed many of the world's famous and interesting people and reported from far-flung places, such as the Sahara Desert and the Himalayas. She inspired me to pursue journalism in college. But when I started, I was unsure what I wanted to do with my degree.

Two events helped sharpen my focus. First, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the U.S. triggered anti-Muslim sentiment around the globe. Many people in Brazil were confused because they didn't know much about Islam or Islamic culture. The situation prompted me to study Islam and learn Arabic to help people overcome prejudices. Secondly, I was a fan of a popular Brazilian soap opera called *O Clone*, about the adventures of a Muslim girl in Brazil who moved to Morocco. The TV drama aroused my interest in Morocco.

So, after college, I spent three years studying Arabic and went to Morocco for a six-month immersive language training. Despite the initial cultural shock, I quickly adapted to the country and came to love its culture and people. Upon returning, I got a job with the Brazil-Arab News Agency, which is affiliated with the Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce. For eight years, I covered diplomatic and economic relations between Brazil and Arab countries, traveling frequently to



■ Bachelor's in journalism from the Mackenzie Presbyterian University in São Paulo; master's in development practice from the Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po)

■ Languages: Portuguese, Arabic, English, Spanish, French

Dubai, United Arab Emirates, for trade shows and business conferences.

Two of my passions in life, traveling and learning new languages and cultures, have led me to new places and new international jobs. In 2017, I went to Paris to pursue a master's focused on international development at Sciences Po on a scholarship. I learned about financing development projects, managing donor relations, the political and cultural considerations of an intervention, and project monitoring and evaluation.

Back in Brazil, I was employed by a Coca-Cola bottler briefly before joining Rotary in January 2020. While creating and promoting stories about Rotary in Portuguese on Rotary's social media platforms, blog, and website, I also publicize Rotary projects in the Brazilian media and support Rotary members in their media outreach. Rotary has been in Brazil for 100 years and has done tremendous development-related work here.

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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

SALUTE TO DEAR FRIENDS

Thank you for the article “Life during wartime” [February], about the human tragedy of the war in Ukraine. We are honored that you wrote about our Common Man for Ukraine project to provide food and warmth to orphans and refugee families. Our global Rotary organization gives us the opportunity to put Service Above Self as we raise funds to facilitate the good work of our Rotary partners in Poland and Ukraine. We salute these Rotarians, who are now our dear friends. To learn more about our ongoing project, visit commonmanforukraine.org.

Steve Rand, Plymouth, New Hampshire

Alex Ray, Holderness, New Hampshire

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

I appreciate articles about practical, sustainable projects [“Pedaling toward prosperity,” February]. Providing sturdy, locally assembled bicycles [to those in need] and training mechanics [to maintain them] addresses several of Rotary’s priorities, including empowering girls, education, health, and community development. When Rotary clubs work with other service and community groups, the efficiency and longevity of their projects become more likely. Helping people help themselves is service at the highest level.

Becky Engel, Athens, Georgia

STEP UP TO BUILD PEACE

Trustee Chair Ian Riseley’s February message [“A global force for peace”] is spot on. Of specific and timely relevance is the second paragraph:

“And, when you stop to think about it, you and I are also part of a peace organization. I saw this in 2013 when I represented Rotary at an international symposium on advancing a peaceful democratic transition for Myanmar. Despite recent setbacks, the fact that Rotary was at the table demonstrates that the world sees us as peacebuilders who are not deterred by the most difficult issues.”

Today, how could Rotary be a peacebuilder at the United Nations on the Russia-Ukraine conflict? And how could we Rotarians work with and support



Rotary’s efforts and voice on this most difficult issue? Let’s be a global force for peace in 2023 and beyond.

Dennis Wong, Southport, Connecticut

INCLUSIVE INSPIRATION

Rotary’s emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion has often been highlighted. Therefore, I was intrigued by two letters to the editor [“Focus on things in common”] in the February issue. The writers felt invitational prayers were problematic, even divisive and disrespectful.

Isn’t the whole point of diversity, equity, and inclusion to celebrate our differences? Isn’t the definition of inclusive allowing individuals from different faith traditions, as well as those with no faith tradition, to all have a chance to offer an invocation, thought for the day, or moment of silence? Isn’t excluding different expressions of faith the exact opposite of inclusion?

Chris Kimball, Lakewood, Washington

My club is marvelously diverse, including in our faiths. So our tradition is to open every meeting with a reflection — a powerful quotation, a story from the news, an inspiring poem. Always something that triggers a response among our members, affirming the work we do and the dreams we hold dear.

For those of faith, we find ourselves seeing God in each other. For others,

OVERHEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In January, we wrote about the efforts of Rotary clubs, experts, and governments to tackle loneliness with meaningful interactions.

What a brilliant and inspiring article! Connection is a cure. Thank you.
Cayce Crown
► [via LinkedIn](#)

[Everyone] needs to be accountable to others, to feel seen and heard, and to laugh. Facilitating community is something we all can do. Gratitude to Rotary for leading in this area.
Shelley Simpson
► [via LinkedIn](#)



The magazine's "Life during wartime" series, in February and March, chronicled Rotary's response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. For more perspective on the conflict, in its second year, listen to "The battle for Ukraine's identity" at on.rotary.org/podcast.

we find goodness mirrored in the faces around us. From every perspective, we have celebrated Rotary's light of hope in this challenging world.

Mary Eileen Wood, Syracuse, New York

SWEET MEMORIES

I greatly enjoyed Carolyn Alessio's story about Fannie May candy ["A sweet truth," December].

Back in the mid-1930s I was living with my grandparents in the Uptown area of Chicago and then in Evanston, about four blocks from where Rotary's headquarters is now. My grandparents had good friends with whom they played bridge every Saturday, alternating the locale each week. Before it was to be our turn, my grandmother and I — then 9 or 10 years old — would go to Fannie May and get a 2-pound box of candy. My grandmother was always careful in choosing pieces to fill the box. On the counter there was a dish with an assortment of samples for customers, and I was allowed to select a piece to enjoy then.

On Saturday evening, I sat on a high stool at a corner of the bridge table to watch my elders play. Of course, I chose

the corner where the Fannie May box was placed. My favorite was the black walnut cream, since discontinued to my disappointment.

Last year, after a conversation with a member of the alumni office of my Chicago-area college, in which I told her about Fannie May, a box came to me through the mail. It is still the best, even without the black walnut cream.

Richard F. Calhoun, Harbinger, North Carolina

SPREAD THE WORD

I read in Jennifer Jones' July 2022 message ["Telling our stories"] of her hope that one day our magazine would be common in doctors' offices and other waiting areas. In my club, we ask members to bring in their magazines after reading them. We remove the label and add a sticker on the front that says "Enjoy! Redirected by the Rotary Club of Milan" and includes our contact info. We then distribute the magazines to hospitals, doctors' offices, and to the graduating seniors of our Interact club, doing our part to reduce waste and promote knowledge of Rotary.

Monica Klarer, Milan, Ohio

WHAT WILL YOU WATCH TODAY?

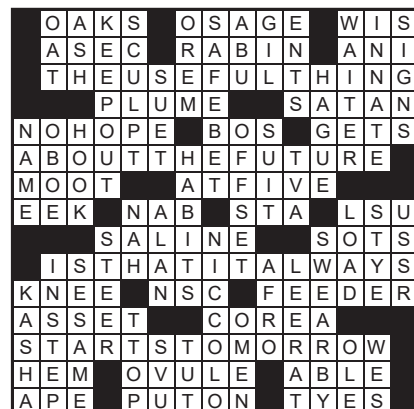
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PHOTOGRAPH: WEN HUANG



THE SPECIALIST

Pitch perfect

A piano tuner listens for the secrets of the strings

I **wasn't drawn to piano tuning;** my mother forced me into it. She thought it would be a good backup trade, so I started learning the craft in high school. She hired our piano tuner to come over and teach me. He got me started, and from there I joined the guild, went to piano technicians conventions, and learned by doing. I'm still improving and still learning.

You have to choose what you're going to make perfect. When you strike a piano string, it puts out multiple frequencies at once. I have to choose what I'm tuning to. Everything else will be imperfect. This is to a large degree an artistic choice; there's no exact right answer. Piano tuning is meditative.

Pianos are meant to last 30-50 years at the very most — a cheap piano, maybe 20 years. The action parts get loose, things come unglued, felt wears out. It's kind of like asking what causes a human body to wear out. It just does, with time.

Bill Magnusson
Rotary Club
of Denver
Southeast
Piano tuner-
technician

Just about everything about a grand piano is better than a vertical piano. In a grand piano, which has a horizontal soundboard, gravity helps you play. You can play faster, and perhaps more delicately. Grand pianos also tend to be larger, so they have bigger soundboards. The soundboard is the speaker. Compare a fine, high-quality speaker with a small, tinny speaker — you get different sounds.

I was so impressed with the talent of a boy named Jude Kofie, who lives near me in Colorado. A local TV station did a segment showing him playing, and I could tell he was a prodigy, an absolute genius. He was playing on an electric keyboard. I thought, this kid will probably not have the opportunity to play on a real piano unless I provide it. I decided to look for a piano and a teacher. I found a good-looking grand piano on Craigslist for \$15,000 and spent 18 hours tuning it. Sometimes, you have to stand up and do what needs to be done.

Imagine the piano had never been invented. What would piano-playing geniuses like Jude be doing? They're naturally suited to play the piano beautifully, magically, "genius-ly." What would they do if they didn't have that to do?

— AS TOLD TO ETELKA LEHOCZKY

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Interactors are serious fundraisers

DISASTER RESPONSE

After the storm

The response to Hurricane Ian is a lesson in the power of Rotary

Kelsey Mitchell was astonished by what she discovered when she volunteered to clean up homes damaged by Hurricane Ian in southwest Florida last year: floors caked in muck and branches, a couch that blew out of one house and into another, a car that flipped upside down, a pontoon boat that came to rest in someone's yard. "It's unlike anything I've ever seen, and I thought I had seen bad hurricanes," says Mitchell, a member of the Rotary Club of Bonita Beach Sunset.

The deadliest hurricane to hit Florida since 1935, Ian killed 149 people in the state, with many of them drowning in the storm surge. The hurricane, which made landfall as a Category 4 storm with 150 mph winds, pummeled entire blocks and left millions of people without power and hundreds of thousands without clean water. Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach, Sanibel Island, and Pine Island were among the areas with the worst damage.

In a region that endures frequent storms, Ian wrought remarkable destruction. It also prompted a remarkable recovery effort by Mitchell's Rotary club and all of District 6960 in southwest Florida.

"I wish that other people could hear some of the stories that I've heard and see some of the things I've seen," she says of that response, "because every single person would want to be a Rotarian — when you see what you have the ability to do, what you have the ability to give back."

When Ian struck the state on 28 September, the members of the

district's Governor Corps (its governor, governor-elect, and governor-nominee) were nearly 1,000 miles away, attending a Rotary training seminar and institute in Baltimore. Being outside the storm zone, it turned out, helped them mount an effective response. "Being in Baltimore gave us a good opportunity, from a logistical standpoint, to plan for the disaster relief," says District Governor Neil Snyder. "When the storm hit, we had internet and phone service, which allowed us to do wellness checks with the clubs and to set up partnerships with the National Guard, FEMA, and every law enforcement agency throughout the counties that were impacted."

Snyder also addressed hundreds of Rotarians attending the event, making a plea for disaster relief help. He gave examples of how hard various areas had been hit, including the story of friends who had evacuated, but whose home had 10 feet of flood water. And during the storm, a neighbor's propane tank became a projectile, striking the house and causing a fire. When the homeowners returned, a car and a boat were in what had been their living room, and another car was in their pool.

The outpouring of help was immediate. The district transformed one of its websites, rotaryfl.org, into a hub for Rotary services where people could make donations, sign up to volunteer, ask for help, and send supplies through Amazon.

Twenty-four hours after Ian hit, Mitchell, the district governor-nominee, contacted churches that could serve as distribution centers for food, water, and cleaning supplies. Her mother, Sandra Hemstead,

To learn more about District 6960's hurricane relief efforts, visit rotaryfl.org.



BY THE NUMBERS

149

Storm's death toll in Florida

\$40 billion+

Estimated property loss in the U.S.

10%

Share of Ian's rainfall that a study attributed to climate change

The ruins of a home in Fort Myers Beach, Florida, show the destructive power of Hurricane Ian. Kelsey Mitchell (below) points to a line showing how high the water rose in a home in the town.



was district governor-elect when Hurricane Irma struck in 2017, and Mitchell helped with relief efforts then. So, she knew how massive the recovery effort would have to be.

Within the first three weeks, donations of tools, clothing, medical supplies, mattresses, food, and water poured in. Companies including Home Depot, Walmart, CVS, Publix, Lowe's, Ace Hardware, and Keller Williams Realty donated goods. United Way sent volunteers.

Rotary clubs and districts around

the world made donations of anywhere from \$100 to \$100,000, says Mark Midyett, chair of District 6960's disaster committee. Financial support was just one way Rotarians responded to the epic needs.

Stan Grogg, a retired pediatrician and member of the Rotary Club of Sanibel-Captiva, and his wife, Barbara, a nurse practitioner, offered medical assistance to storm victims in Harlem Heights, an economically strained community near Fort Myers. "There were some who had diabetes who needed insulin," recalls Annie Campbell, president of the Sanibel-Captiva club. "One person needed a colostomy bag. The Groggs, who created a nonprofit that gives health care to the needy [Power of a Nickel], provided free tetanus shots and referrals for prescriptions."

A member of the Rotary Club of Monterey, California, Dan O'Brien, wanted to do more than write a check. He drove across the country to donate his 2018 Winnebago

Navion. The RV provided shelter and will eventually be sold to fund relief efforts.

Other volunteers helped more than 250 residents remove debris and gut homes with water damage. Once the homes were dry, new drywall and appliances could be installed. Disaster Aid USA, a nonprofit started and run by Rotarians, helped in the mission.

Kim Spitzer remembers getting a text message from a Rotarian with an offer to bring a crew of volunteers to clear debris from her home and thinking it must be a scam. That Rotarian was Mitchell.

Spitzer's home in Fort Myers Beach, a town on a vulnerable barrier island, was torn open and flooded with 7 feet of water. The volunteers removed debris, ripped out soaked drywall, and showed Spitzer and her husband, Doug Cornell, how to prevent mold. "It was amazing. We couldn't have done it without them," Spitzer says in a



video posted on the district's YouTube channel. "Because of all of that, our house is saved."

They were inspired to join the Rotary Club of Bonita Beach Sunset after seeing the Rotarians in action. "We're going to try to help pay it forward and join Rotary and do what we can to help other people, because they saved our lives really," Spitzer says.

At the end of last year, Midyett drove one of the disaster relief trailers in a community holiday parade and saw just how much people appreciated Rotary's efforts. "I got my bucket filled so much driving that trailer and having people get out of their lawn chairs and stand up and applaud and say thank you for helping our community," he says.

Snyder, the district governor,

shares the sentiment. "This is the honor of my Rotary career, seeing all the clubs in our district and Rotarians around the country come together in a time of need," he says. "This is what Rotary is about. You put out the call, and people say, 'How can I help?'"

These days, the district helps coordinate with other nonprofits and corporations to deliver rebuilding supplies. Members already distributed tens of thousands of drywall sheets to homeowners and are connecting residents with professionals to help them finish the repairs.

But there's more to do. "Anybody who knows somebody whose home was flooded or is in conversation with those people on a regular basis, you know that it's very, very far from normal," Mitchell says. One

of the homeowners whom Rotarians helped a couple of weeks after the storm didn't have electricity until months later.

Donations tend to slow when the headlines fade, but Mitchell says funding is still needed for the years of work that remain. Rotary members in this part of the country also stand ready for the next big storm. Climate change is increasing the frequency of catastrophic storms, Midyett notes.

"That, coupled with sea-level rise and increasing populations in our area, creates a problematic environment for those assisting in a disaster," he says. "We know that as a Rotary district, the need for our planning and preparation is more important than it has ever been."

— AMY HOAK AND DINAH ENG

Left: Kelsey Mitchell breaks down a wall in a storm-damaged home. Right: Kelly Sawczyn and niece Bailey Shimp, age 11, remove debris from a home in Sanibel Island, Florida. They were among seven members of their family who participated in the Rotary District 6960 cleanup effort.

Short takes

The RI Board approved the creation of a DEI Advisory Council to consult on the implementation of a diversity, equity, and inclusion action plan.



Rotary Peace Fellows, members, and experts will exchange ideas 4-6 May at the 2023 International Peace Conference, co-hosted by District 6860 in Birmingham, Alabama. Learn more at peaceconference2023bham.com.



PROFILE

The future of Rotary

For a former Interactor, the spirit of service never left his mind

Patrick Chisanga
Rotary Club of
Nkwazi, Zambia

A surprise call to the headmaster's office is usually cause for concern. So when Patrick Chisanga was summoned to the office with seven other students, he remembers wondering, *What have we done?*

The worry was short-lived. Waiting with the headmaster at that meeting half a century ago was Richard Farmer, a member of parliament from Chisanga's hometown in Zambia's Copperbelt region — and a Rotarian. Farmer and the headmaster had been in talks about starting an Interact club at the school, and the eight students had been hand-picked as the club's charter members. "This is the beginning of a long journey," Farmer told them — and for Chisanga, that held true.

After joining the new Interact club, he became its vice president and began sitting in on Rotary meetings to learn about what clubs do. He was selected to go to Kenya, where different Rotarians hosted him for a day or two, including the district governor who took Chisanga to see several Rotary projects in Mombasa. "I was so impressed," he said during an interview with former Interactor and current Rotarian Anniela Carracedo at the International Assembly in January. "I was so intrigued by this man, his commitment, and the heart he was displaying for the community."

The visit convinced Chisanga that Farmer had been right: This was a journey he wanted to continue. Today, Chisanga is a Rotary International director and an expert in corporate governance. He firmly believes that Interact is the future of Rotary. "If we can inculcate Rotary values and the spirit of service at that young age, it stays with you. It never leaves your mind," he says.

The Rotary Action Group against malaria will hold a congress 25-26 May in Melbourne to discuss solutions for fighting the disease. Register at globalmalariacongress2023.org.

The RI Board tentatively selected Manila, Philippines, as the site of the 2028 convention and Chicago as the 2030 host.

A new video highlights resources to help your club and district enhance their service impact. Watch it at on.rotary.org/service-resources.



People of action around the globe

By Brad Webber

More than 300 Interact clubs submitted videos, photos, and essays showcasing their accomplishments for the 2022 Interact Awards. This month we feature some of the clubs that entered the contest. To see the winners, visit on.rotary.org/2022INTERACTAWARDS.

Panama

Helping people and protecting the environment go hand in hand for the Interact Club of Penonomé. In January, a dozen club members converged on a beach in Río Hato in their home province of Coclé. Joined by Rotarians and other volunteers, they removed 20 bags of trash. “We decided to hold this project since the coastline is not only a recreation area but the habitat to many animal species that could very well be in danger of extinction,” says Alejandra Rodríguez, the club’s president. In previous projects, the club has provided children with backpacks filled with school supplies and toys and organized a family day at the children’s school.

Interact
Club of Penonomé

297

Endangered and vulnerable animal species in Panama



United States

To address hunger worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Interact Club of Madison, New Jersey, started a no-contact food collection project in July 2020 to stock a food pantry. The Madison High School students created an online survey and a flyer to gauge the interest of potential donors. More than 100 families and businesses volunteered to fill containers with food items and leave them at their doorsteps for pickup. The Interactors, parents, and other volunteers used an app to arrange efficient pickup routes and communicate with those offering donations. The Madison Ends Hunger project has achieved meaningful results: more than 3,500 bags of food and counting, and about \$4,500 contributed to another food pantry through a fundraising site. “I give them full credit for their initiative and the push,” says Doug Willis, president of the sponsoring Rotary Club of Madison. “We’ve gone through two senior classes. The families’ generosity doesn’t seem to be ending, and the kids’ willingness to stick with it seems unending” too.

Interact
Club of Madison, New Jersey

657,000+

Food-insecure people in New Jersey in 2020

1847

First British patent for a crochet hook is issued

Wales

Members of the Interact Club of Croesyceiliog School in the Welsh town of Cwmbrân asked family, friends, and teachers to crochet rosettes, hearts, butterflies, and other designs for a Random Acts of Croesy Kindness project. As batches of the woolen pieces came in, the students placed them in random locations; one was spotted on the lapel of a prominent statue. The Interactors attached uplifting notes for people who found the gifts. “We have an event on our Facebook page where members of the public can post a photo of their crocheted treasure,” says Pritti Davies, club adviser and a member of the Rotary Club of Henllys. Since the club’s inception last summer, its members have also played host to an intergenerational tea party and collected hundreds of advent calendars and items for food banks.



Interact
Club of Croesyceiliog School

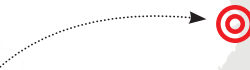
1.9%

Portion of Nepal's population reporting a disability in 2011

Nepal

To foster inclusion, the Interact Club of GoldenGate International College in Kathmandu organized table tennis matches and invited people with disabilities. The event was dubbed Triveni, a Sanskrit word referring to the confluence of three holy rivers. The club chose the name because it unites three themes — diversity, equity, and inclusion — into one project. In July, about 18 club members joined representatives of the Inclusive Sports Club to stage the event, which drew about 200 people to the historic Patan Durbar Square in nearby Lalitpur.

Interact
Club of GoldenGate
International College



China

After conducting a survey of their fellow students, members of the Interact Club of Dulwich College Shanghai Pudong realized many of their classmates struggled with a negative self-image. Three club members formed the Our Image group to promote body positivity. The club created an Instagram account devoted to the project and designed infographics on topics such as body image in males and normalizing periods, with links to help lines staffed by professional counselors. The Interactors also left what are known as mirror messages — encouraging comments written with whiteboard markers — in school bathrooms. “We received positive feedback with multiple students showing interest to join the club and help spread our message and expand our vision,” the Interactors note in their essay.

67%

Share of children in China who are dissatisfied with their body shape

Interact
Club of Dulwich College
Shanghai Pudong

My rainbow baby

A generous gift from strangers reveals the true meaning of Mother's Day

By Gabriella M. Belfiglio



Anna Jarvis, the founder of Mother's Day, spent the last years of her life trying to abolish the holiday's existence. Disappointed at how far it had diverged from her original vision, she tirelessly fought the commercialization of the day, leading protests and boycotts and even challenging Eleanor Roosevelt for using the occasion to raise money for charity. Blind, partially deaf, and impoverished, Jarvis died in a Pennsylvania sanatorium in 1948. She never had children; her mother, Ann Reeves Jarvis, had 13. Only four of them lived past childhood.

My first Mother's Day as a new mother is lost to me: a fugue. Several months before, I'd had an emergency C-section. I later found out that I almost died from loss of blood at the same moment my perfect 37-week-old baby stopped breathing.

I think about all the mothers who have had an experience of loss such as this. "It is a club you don't want to be a part of," another mother who lost her child said to me once. I was lucky enough to have been able to hold my baby. She had a head full of black curls. I never wanted to let her go. My partner, Marg, and I named her Kali Antonia, after a Hindu goddess and my Sicilian grandfather.

Marg and I tried to have another baby. Unlike our first experience, when I got pregnant on our second try with a simple procedure in the privacy of our bedroom, this time presented more of a challenge. My body became a giant science project: injections, operations, hormones, pills, charts, hundreds of hours in waiting rooms among people wearing white coats. We got pregnant again, only to have a miscarriage. At a routine doctor's appointment, the sonogram technician couldn't find a heartbeat, and I screamed, "This can't be happening!" I remember teaching a conflict resolution class afterward while realizing I was holding a corpse the size of a pomegranate seed inside my gut.

Eventually, Marg and I faced the reality that we had run out of money, that I wasn't getting any younger, and that we had already tried the most intensive fertility treatments. I was a failure at becoming a mother. I was haunted by the thought that I killed the first child and now I was being punished. Worse,

most of this was done in a sort of cave: Because of the expressions of pity that inevitably followed, I stopped revealing that we were in the process of trying to conceive and not succeeding.

But this story is so much larger than all that. It is about the magic and generosity of love.

ONE DAY, I OVERHEAR MY FRIEND

Katherine talking to our mutual friend Phyllis about Katherine's plans to have two marriage celebrations: one in Brooklyn, New York, and one in France. Phyllis and her husband, Michael, plan to go to France, and I blithely invite myself, though I had yet to be asked to attend either of the ceremonies.

Jump to the day of the wedding. Marg and I are in the south of France. It is an impossibly beautiful day. Phyllis and Michael couldn't make it after all, so we ride with strangers from the hotel to the beach. As we approach the wedding party, I notice it is an intimate affair: close friends and family, not a one we know. I turn to Marg and say, "I feel like an imposter."

We are seated among the other Americans, which is lucky because neither of us speaks French. I ease into a cocktail-and-crepe buzz and embrace the enchantment of the scene. There is the Mediterranean Sea flirting with a glimmering curve of beach. When Katherine approaches on the arm of her brother to take her wedding vows, she takes my breath away.

At one point, a beautiful young girl is playing on the beach; her dress, the color of seashells, is twirling in the disappearing sunshine. I comment on her enchanting charm, thinking her to be one of the French relatives. To my surprise, she is the daughter of the pair we are sitting with, Josephine and Clilly, another lesbian couple. What's more, they live just blocks from us in Brooklyn.

We are asked the question that is never easy to answer: *Do you have any children?* It isn't easy to tell someone your child died. That's less because of any emotions that arise (they are always there; talking about your child does not make you feel worse), more because I end up having to console the person asking. At the very least it is an awkward conversation stopper.

Yet amid the wines and cheeses and pure joy, our table becomes a haven. It seems impossible that we met these people only hours before. We tell them about our daughter, Kali Antonia. Later, we find out that, during our story, Clilly is kicking Josephine under the table. And this is where I still cannot believe what a gift we have received. Eleven years earlier, their amazing daughter, Gia, was conceived via both sperm and egg donations. They still have embryos frozen from these donations. And right there, right then, they offer us these embryos. Just when we had given up that last kernel of hope, they offer us a miracle.

Marg and I are both crying at this point. And I realize why it was so important for us to come to France, that this is why we were meant to be here.

Jump ahead to a different Mother's Day: There is a 9-month-old child who is never far from my side and who makes it close to impossible to get anything done. In the world of pregnancy and infant loss, there is a specific lingo. A "rainbow baby" is the term coined for a baby born after the death of your previous child.

I celebrate my rainbow, Emmett Agostino. I marvel at his point of view of the world and how he changes mine daily. I also celebrate my daughter, Kali Antonia. She will eternally be central to who I am. And I forever will be in awe of the generosity we have received to make our family what it is today.

In the world of pregnancy and infant loss, there is a specific lingo. A "rainbow baby" is the term coined for a baby born after the death of your previous child.



LAST MOTHER'S DAY, I LEAVE

EMMETT (about to turn 5) and Marg and meet my new friend Joyce just past the gothic arches of Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery. We walk into a spot I have never visited before. Green-Wood is magic. There are twists and turns that act like portals to history and partly hidden paths that have become part of the lustrous nature that embraces you as soon as you enter.

I have hiked and sat and read and picnicked and practiced yoga and cried and pushed a baby carriage and heard concerts and more inside these grounds. But there is always something new to experience there.

Joyce leads us to a plot and then searches, using a stick to find the hidden placard with the number 104. There is no gravestone yet for her daughter. I barely know Joyce, but we met through a mutual friend, and we are silently bonded in our experiences of loss. She burrows a bouquet of plastic flowers in the space she clears. I place a small glass stone the color of the ocean on the earth atop her daughter.

When we get to Kali Antonia's niche, I let Joyce choose from among the tiny nuggets I've collected to add to the eclectic collection under my daughter's

engraved name. She chooses part of a broken beaded bracelet and a sparkling blue bead. I love her for it.

I place a seashore-shrunk murex shell and touch my forehead to the marble-indented letters of Kali Antonia's name.

These days, I have ambiguous emotions about Mother's Day. I have mixed feelings, as I often do about so many things. (Not surprising: My astrological sign is Gemini, the twins.) On the one hand, I've grown weary of all the cards and flowers being sold for the occasion. I mourn my daughter and want to honor her quietly — a small goddess affair, something Anna Jarvis would be proud of.

But I am also of the modern world with a young child, which means I celebrate motherhood and use this holiday to spread as much joy and appreciation as possible. It is a thin line in the end. You, who identify as any kind of mother, my message is to you. Thank you for feeding your love into something born. And to those of you who seem not to fit in because your experience as a mother is veiled in loss, it is especially to you. ■

A writer, teacher, and activist in Brooklyn, New York, Gabriella M. Belfiglio is a member of the trio of Sicilian-American poets known as the Ferlinghetti Girls.

I am also of the modern world with a young child, which means I celebrate motherhood and use this holiday to spread as much joy and appreciation as possible.

Not just child's play

When it comes to fundraising, the young people of Interact are crushing it

Mehreen Rosmon isn't even out of high school, but she's already having a big impact on her community and the world. The senior from Fremont, California, leads Interact District 5170, one of Rotary's larger Interact districts. Launched in 1962, Interact brings young people ages 12-18 together to develop leadership skills and serve their communities.

The money raised by Interactors in Rosmon's district isn't chump change. The 123 Interact clubs in District 5170 are on track to raise more than \$40,000 by the end of this school year, Rosmon says. The funds will go toward causes the Interact district has chosen for 2023: alleviating food insecurity in the San Francisco Bay Area and improving water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions in Honduras. "Clean water is a basic necessity, but some 829,000 people are estimated to die worldwide each year as a result of unsafe drinking water," Rosmon says. Her district is working with the nonprofit organization Water1st to fund piping, flushing toilets, and showers for 15 homes in southern Honduras.

It's not the only place where Interactors are making a difference. The 70 Interact students at Honesdale High School in northeastern Pennsylvania held a karaoke night in April 2022 that raised an impressive \$12,000 for The Rotary Foundation's Disaster Response Fund, to support people affected by the war in Ukraine, according to Lynne Goodwin, the liaison to the club from its sponsoring Rotary Club of Honesdale. And in El Campo, Texas, Inter-

actors raised more than \$1,300 for polio eradication by selling rubber ducks to race at a District 5890 event.

Interactors research and choose the causes they want to support. Like the El Campo Interactors, many clubs devote at least part of each year to raising money for Rotary's polio eradication efforts. Interactors also decide what kinds of fundraisers to hold. They run the gamut from classic bake sales to more elaborate endeavors like Honesdale's karaoke night.

Today's Interactor is often tomorrow's Rotarian. Mitty Chang, the 34-year-old Interact chair for District 5170, has been involved with Rotary for more than half

his life, beginning with Interact as a high schooler. He stresses that although Rotarians act as mentors and advisers, the Interactor leadership teams are in charge. "It's their vision and strategy for the year," he says. "We provide training and guidance, but it's their show."

Next year in college, Rosmon plans to study business, focusing on its social impact on communities. She also plans to continue her service work by joining Rotaract and eventually becoming a Rotarian. "Interact has allowed me to grow into who I am today," she says. "I hope to continue to share that through Rotaract and Rotary." — PAULA M. BODAH

SECRETS FOR SUCCESS

What makes for a successful Interact club? Representatives from some of the highest-achieving clubs weigh in on how to attract members and raise big bucks:

Involve the whole community in fundraising efforts. Pooja Patel, a high school junior who is vice president of the Honesdale Interact club, says her club aims for fundraising ideas that draw more than just students. Karaoke night, which raised \$12,000 last year for The Rotary Foundation's Disaster Response Fund, is a perfect example. To ensure an enthusiastic crowd, the students partnered with a local brewery to hold the event. They reached out to other local companies for sponsorships and raffle prizes to help with publicity and sold tickets for \$10.

Let the Interact members take the lead. "From my experience, success comes from expecting more from the students and making sure they know that from the beginning," says Honesdale mentor Brian Fulp. Mitty Chang, District 5170 Interact chair, agrees. "It's a safe environment to make mistakes — part of growing as a young leader," he says. "When you give them the leadership opportunities, you see that they can really flourish."

Take advantage of your local Rotary club. "Rotarians want to give back and help and empower the next generation," Chang says. Interactors should feel comfortable asking their Rotarian advisers for guidance. And, says Fulp, don't stop with advice. "Whatever money you raise, go to your local Rotary club and ask them to match it," he says. "It's very hard for a club to say no to an Interact club they support."

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Building up like pocket change

How the CART Fund is fueling Alzheimer's
research — one coin at a time

By Kate Silver

Photography by Sean Rayford



CART
Coins for Alzheimer's
Research Trust
www.cartfund.org

The CART Fund
Coins for
Alzheimer's Research Trust

At 50 years old,

Nancy Rogers seemed too young to have Alzheimer's disease. But in 1999, her husband, Norm, knew something was wrong. First, she misplaced a couple of pocketbooks. Then, she started getting lost on the 11-mile commute from her office to her home in Raleigh, North Carolina.

"I would get a call from a highway patrolman 60 miles away in Greensboro saying that your wife is here at 7-Eleven, and she's lost," remembers Rogers.

As the years passed, he had to explain to his grandchildren why Grandma didn't know them. "It's horrible," he says. "It's the longest goodbye you'll ever have in your life."

Nancy died in 2010 at age 61. Rogers was in the depths of grief when a fellow Rotarian asked for a favor. He was the district chair of an effort called Coins for Alzheimer's Research Trust, or CART Fund, which raises money from Rotary members to support Alzheimer's research grants. He had to quickly leave town to care for an ill family member and asked if Rogers could step in and take over his duties.

"I jumped in the car, went to 51 Rotary clubs in three months, and drove 1,200 miles, and that was my introduction to CART," says Rogers. At the clubs, he encouraged members to empty their pockets into a little blue bucket. Each coin donated would go on to fund early-stage research on Alzheimer's. "I did it to honor Nancy."

Twelve years later, Rogers is a regional director for CART. When he travels to talk to Rotary clubs in North and South Carolina, he always asks the same question: "How many of you have been touched by Alzheimer's?" Invariably, at least 50 percent of the room raises a hand. That's because there's no cure or effective and accessible treatment. And there's much work to be done.

Some of that hard work has been made possible by CART, which started with an idea that came to longtime South Carolina Rotarian Roger Ackerman in the middle of the night back in 1995.

Ackerman was a go-getter, a problem solver, an ideas man. An active Rotary member since the 1960s, he relished the way Rotarians tackled different community challenges. But he puzzled over how Rotary members, or anyone, could help solve Alzheimer's, which had also touched his family.

Over nearly two decades, he and his wife, Deane, had watched their "Mother Love" — Deane's mom and Ackerman's mother-in-law, Rae Wodis — slowly lose herself to the disease. In the last four years of her life, she lost the ability to communicate. She couldn't remember who her family was.

"I cannot give you an adjective to describe the heartbreak to a family to see someone you love absolutely in a living-death status," Ackerman recounted during a Rotary presentation in 2013. "Can you imagine not being able to tell someone that you're hungry? That you need to go to the bathroom? That your throat hurts? Things that we do every day and take for granted. No one should have to do that."

During the time that his mother-in-law was suffering, he couldn't find research that gave him hope for an end to the disease, or even a way to treat it. That meant that other families were bound for the same tragic road he'd gone down, and that pained him.

That's when the early-morning inspiration hit. Ackerman had been fast asleep in his bed in Sumter, South Carolina. The day before, he'd had lunch with a friend, who had told him that \$8 billion to \$9 billion in coins changed hands every day in America. He jolted out of bed, realizing that pocket change could be the key to a cure.

Ackerman waited for the sun to rise and then called the president and president-elect of his Rotary club. He explained his vision. He wanted the effort to be straightforward: Place a little blue bucket on a table and ask Rotarians to toss in their pocket change at each meeting. It would be called the Coins for Alzheimer's Research Trust Fund, or the CART Fund, and all money would go to research grants.

The club's board of directors took it to a vote and unanimously agreed to start a trial program in late 1995. In seven months, the initiative raised \$4,200.

To Ackerman, that was proof his concept could work — that people were willing to empty their pockets, and that pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters

➔
From left: Norm Rogers, Rotary Club of District 7730 Passport, North Carolina; Carol Burdette, Rotary Club of Anderson, South Carolina; Rod Funderburk, Rotary Club of Lake Murray-Irmo, South Carolina; Tiffany Ervin, Rotary Club of Hendersonville-Four Seasons, North Carolina; and Bill Shillito, Rotary Club of Catawba Valley (Conover), North Carolina



could add up to some serious cash. If other clubs joined the effort, the sky was the limit. To rally support, Ackerman traveled to different clubs — first in the area, and then around South Carolina, and eventually to clubs in North Carolina, Georgia, and beyond — to talk about a disease that today affects 1 of 9 older Americans. He urged clubs to add a little blue bucket to meetings and drop their coins in. He believed in the CART Fund so strongly himself, it didn't take long to get buy-in.

Ackerman died in 2018, but his legacy lives on. “He had the ability to persuade you to hitch your wagon to his horse,” remembers Rod Funderburk, board president of the CART Fund and a member of the Rotary Club of Lake Murray-Irmo, South Carolina. “I mean, it was a crazy idea. But Roger had the ability to persuade people.”

In 1999, that loose change added up to \$100,000, and the CART Fund, with guidance from the American Federation for Aging Research, made its first grant to a team at Emory University led by neurologist Allan Levey. He was researching whether biological markers in a person's blood could be an early indicator of Alzheimer's disease.

That grant was life-changing for him and his lab. “It came at a really important time early in our career and our trajectory, and was sufficient to influence the course of research for us for the next several decades,” recalls Levey, who today is the director of both the Goizueta Alzheimer's Disease Research Center and the Goizueta Institute @ Emory Brain Health.

Although Levey and his team weren't successful in developing a blood test, he says that the project opened a new era of research for them — and led to millions of dollars in grants that would follow. Today, they lead national programs for understanding the causes of Alzheimer's disease,

its biological markers, and possible treatment targets.

But it wasn't just the funding that shaped Levey's life and his career. He became close friends with Ackerman and other Rotary members involved with the CART Fund. He admired what they were doing and saw that he could fill an important role in the organization. “Roger always put me in the role of helping me translate science into lay understanding for him and the rest of the CART board,” Levey says.

That role was formalized in 2006, when Levey became part of CART's scientific advisory board. He helps select several annual grant recipients and translates their work into plain language that makes sense to Rotarians without a science or medical background. The selected scientists vary by interest and background, but they tend to have one thing in common: They're pursuing ideas that wouldn't receive traditional funding, usually because they don't yet have the data to support the idea at hand.

“The CART approach is to invest in young, promising scientists and research that is higher risk but could have a higher impact if that research could be sustained,” says Levey. “So it's really to help get the seed funding for the initial experiments that will then grow and gather support to really take off.”

Over about two decades, Ackerman attended more than 200 Rotary functions as a guest speaker, telling the story of his mother-in-law and the CART Fund, and how Rotarians could help unlock new understandings about the disease.

“He's the reason that CART is successful. It's a brilliant concept. And it's so easy to explain,” says Bill Shillito, chairman of the Alzheimer's/Dementia Rotary Action Group, who served as CART Fund's executive director from 2009 until retiring in May 2022. “But it would have died without Roger's passion. He was courageous and tenacious.”

Alzheimer's, a progressive neurological disorder and the most common type of dementia, mostly affects people older than 65, though it can develop in those who are younger. The disease, which causes memory loss, disorientation, personality changes, and other symptoms, has grown more prevalent in recent decades. Between 1990 and 2019, global incidences of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias increased by nearly 150 percent, according to a study published in *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience*. The older adult population in the U.S. is expected to grow, and by the year 2050, the Alzheimer's Association predicts that the number of Americans 65 and older with Alzheimer's may reach more than 12 million — nearly double what it is today.

Ackerman found purpose in CART, and now others do too, like Funderburk, the CART Fund board president. In

“The CART approach is to invest in young, promising scientists and research that is higher risk but could have a higher impact.”

Can antibodies ‘hitchhike’ through the blood-brain barrier and help protect the brain?



As the body’s command center, the brain has evolved in such a way that it’s protected at all costs. Take the “blood-brain barrier,” for example. It is composed of blood vessels and tissue designed to allow necessary substances, like oxygen and glucose, in while keeping potentially harmful substances, like bacteria and toxins, out. But figuring how to get medication past the blood-brain barrier has been a long-standing obstacle to developing a drug that could help people with Alzheimer’s disease.

Peter Tessier, the Albert M. Mattocks Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Chemical Engineering at the University of Michigan, is working with a multidisciplinary team to try to solve that question. And their possible answer involves hitchhiking — attaching antibodies to proteins on the blood-brain barrier’s “allowed” list so they can get past it.

Tessier and his team have had success with the method in mice. In coming months, the team will endeavor to learn more about the kind of protection that the antibodies might offer when they bind to brain cells. Could the process prevent cell death, for example? Could it prevent some of the cognitive decline and Alzheimer’s-like symptoms that mice develop?

“If we can advance the brain delivery of biologics in a safe, effective, predictable manner, it could open the door for testing a lot of new therapeutic approaches,” Tessier says.



the mid-1980s, when Funderburk was an engineering supervisor, a remarkable engineer named Joseph Bearden joined his team. “He was brilliant,” Funderburk says. “We built chemical plants all over the world.” When Bearden retired, Funderburk stayed in touch. At age 70, the engineer was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, and Funderburk watched with sadness as his essence seemed to fade. “The last 3½ years of his life, he knew nobody. He was in a shell by himself,” says Funderburk. “He’d been the most organized engineer I’ve ever met. But Alzheimer’s took over.” When Bearden died, Funderburk was at a loss. “I looked around and asked: How do you solve this thing?” he says. That led him to the CART Fund.

Tiffany Ervin, the fund’s executive director and a member of the Rotary Club of Hendersonville-Four Seasons, North Carolina, says that most of the people involved have a personal connection to the disease. Her mom started showing signs of Alzheimer’s in 2010, at age 70. Watching her lose her memory was agonizing. In particular, Ervin recalls a Mother’s Day visit. “She said, ‘Why are you wanting to spend the day with me today? Wouldn’t you rather be with your mom or your family?’” she recalls. “It was like a knife to my gut.” Shortly after her mom died in 2018, Ervin was invited to become vice president of public image for the CART Fund. She says that it gave her purpose and a platform to share her mom’s story. Today Ervin says, “Everywhere I go, someone has an Alzheimer’s story, unfortunately. Our goal is for people to no longer have an Alzheimer’s story.”

When he talks to Rotary clubs, Norm Rogers asks: “How many of you have been touched by Alzheimer’s?” Invariably, at least 50 percent of the room raises a hand.

Over the last two-plus decades, pocket change — and donations made at cartfund.org, which accepts funds in an increasingly cashless society — has accumulated more than anyone had dared to dream. Today, 41 Rotary districts contribute, and, as of last year, the donations had amounted to \$11.2 million dollars, funding 64 grants. Over that time, 100 percent of every dollar donated has gone to research, just as Ackerman insisted. Those grant recipients have gone on to receive many millions more in traditional funding, from sources such as the National Institutes of Health. “We have a huge percentage of success,” says Fun-

Could ancient virus-like elements in our DNA be responsible for Alzheimer's disease?



Jerold Chun is working to better understand the brain's building blocks and how they may contribute to Alzheimer's disease. His starting point: viruses.

"Within our genomes, which is the DNA that makes us us, there are a lot of sequences that are derived from ancient viral infections," says Chun, a professor and senior vice president of neuroscience drug discovery with the Sanford Burnham Prebys biomedical research institute in La Jolla, California. Genomic and evolutionary biologists estimate that about 50 percent of our genome came from viruses.

Chun and other researchers hypothesize that these genes may form virus-like particles called extracellular vesicles that seem to operate much as a virus does to transfer materials from one cell to another. Chun and his team are isolating extracellular vesicles in the brains of people who died of Alzheimer's and those who did not. They are studying the contents of these particles to better understand how they might be altering other neurons in the brain.

"It's possible these viral elements have been co-opted to make our brains function normally, and have also been disrupted to produce any number of diseases," says Chun. "Alzheimer's disease is the one that we're targeting. But if this is indeed occurring, it's going to be something that I think will be common to many, if not all, brain disorders."

By learning about these basic processes, Chun hopes that one day scientists could be able to target and inhibit these particles, thereby slowing or even preventing certain diseases. "It's certainly a fascinating step into the unknown," says Chun. "So we're very excited to be able to pursue it and see where it takes us."



“Everywhere I go, someone has an Alzheimer’s story, unfortunately. Our goal is for people to no longer have an Alzheimer’s story.”

— Tiffany Ervin

derburk, “if you count success as a researcher that proves their hypothesis and gets additional money.” Reflecting on past grant recipients, Levey says that many of those early-career scientists have gone on to become prominent figures, even referring to them as “giants in the field.”

CART-funded research has been wide-ranging and experimental; some of the researchers have called their own studies “provocative,” “high-risk,” and “highly controversial.” In 2022, CART awarded grants to three research teams for a total of \$850,000. Those researchers are studying ways to transport protective antibodies into the brain; whether medications for other illnesses, such as malaria, might potentially slow Alzheimer’s; and the role ancient viruses may play in diseases such as Alzheimer’s.

Beyond the impact of the research, the CART Fund has paved the way for relationships and experiences that Rotarians and researchers relish. Grant recipients are asked to travel at their own expense to the annual CART Fund board meeting in May in South Carolina for the announcement of the winners. There they have dinner with CART Fund board members and present their research to Rotarians.

Norm Rogers says he has learned an extraordinary amount about the disease through these meetings. He channels the grief over his wife’s death into educating others and encouraging them to empty their pockets into that little blue bucket. “We go back and keep it at a third grade level and explain it to our clubs,” he says. “And it’s proven that when we tell them what we’re working on, they say, ‘Oh Lord, we need to give you more!’”

The scientists, too, take away more than funding. All of the 2022 grant recipients say that they are energized by the dedication of the Rotary members. “They have an incred-

ible passion,” says grant recipient Peter Tessier, the Albert M. Mattocks Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Chemical Engineering at the University of Michigan. “After spending time with them, I went back and was completely humbled and honored and appreciative and impressed. I’ve not really met a group like that. They’re really unique.”

And Jerold Chun, a 2022 grant recipient who is a professor and senior vice president of neuroscience drug discovery with the Sanford Burnham Prebys biomedical research institute in La Jolla, California, was similarly moved and grateful to be a part of CART. “They gave their blood, sweat, tears, and money to allow us to take a crack at this,” he says.

Chun believes that this kind of grassroots motivation is key to helping scientists pursue new ideas and gain a deeper understanding of the brain. “There’s so much that we as scientists don’t know,” he says. “Every effort to better define how our brains work is an effort worth pursuing and supporting.”

That notion, in fact, was what was on Levey’s mind in the fall of 2022 when he read about promising results in a late-stage trial for a new drug, developed by companies Biogen and Eisai, that seems to modestly slow cognitive decline in people with early-stage Alzheimer’s. “It’s the first drug that really seems to have consistent benefits in slowing down the course of Alzheimer’s disease,” he says. “That’s a huge breakthrough to have the first treatment that looks like it’s on our doorstep.”

Of course, his mind went to CART Fund research. While the drug didn’t come from the initiative, he says that it rests on the shoulders of thousands of researchers and decades of work, and those little blue buckets have been a part of that. You could say that Alzheimer’s research has been building like pocket change. It started small and fragmented, but with dedication, determination, and vision, it has flourished. ■

Could malaria drugs help protect brains from Alzheimer's disease?



Bringing a new drug to the market can take a decade or more and cost billions of dollars. So instead, some researchers are interested in testing drugs already approved by the Food and Drug Administration to see if they could work in new and different areas. In their work at Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School, Doo Yeon Kim, associate professor of neurology, and Luisa Quinti, instructor in neurology, are trying to find out if malaria drugs could help patients with Alzheimer's disease. "Maybe this way we can accelerate discovery," Kim says.

The researchers are using a method that Kim pioneered, which he calls the "3D Alzheimer's disease brain-in-a-dish model." It uses human brain cells, rather than those of mice, which are often used in research. This approach will save time and money, and it may offer insights that cells from mice wouldn't.

That's because in mouse models, it takes months or even years to genetically engineer mice that develop Alzheimer's disease, says Kim. And, he adds, mice don't develop some of the hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease that humans do, which may be why in the past potential drugs that seemed effective in mice have gone on to fail in humans. Using the "brain-in-a-dish" model, the team generates human brain cells that have similar conditions to Alzheimer's disease, including markers of the disease, such as tau protein tangles and beta-amyloid plaques that may be responsible for memory loss and dementia.

Over a matter of months, the team tested more than 800 compounds frequently used in drugs on the brain cells. Two showed promise in reducing the tau proteins in the brain cells, and both are found in antimalarial drugs. Scientists found that they are increasing beta-amyloid, which could be a negative, but as they learn more, their research could reveal new understandings about the mechanisms involved in Alzheimer's disease and suggest alternative therapies.

While these malaria drugs may not go on to be used in Alzheimer's treatment, the researchers hope that their work prompts the scientific community to take a new look at the disease and what causes it, and to consider different ways of testing old therapies to find new solutions.

"We need to try something different," says Quinti.



Determined to run

**For women in Afghanistan,
running is more than a sport.
A Rotarian brings their story
to life in film.**

BY ERIC ZORN

A seasoned runner might take water and protein bars on a long training run, but girls and women in Afghanistan consider other equipment more essential: knuckle dusters or pepper spray, so that when anybody comes close, they can demonstrate they have something to defend themselves. It's one of the startling details in a 2019 documentary about female runners in the deeply conservative nation.

The film is the culmination of years of work by Martin Parnell, a Rotarian from suburban Calgary, Alberta, and an avid runner. What he calls the greatest adventure of his life began in October 2015 when his wife, Sue, showed him a *Guardian* article describing the tribulations and triumph of 25-year-old Zainab Hussaini. That year, she became the lone woman to complete Afghanistan's first official marathon.

Parnell, a member of the Rotary Club of Cochrane and his district's 2021-22 governor, had experienced the power of distance running, how it freed both the body and the mind. It had transformed his grief in the wake of his first wife's 2001 death from cancer, when his brother challenged him to train for a marathon. "Running became my meditation," he says. "It was huge from the perspective of both physical and mental health."

He found training and facing physical challenges so rewarding that he decided to put his career in the mining industry on hold. A few months after finishing the Calgary Marathon in 2003, he sold his house, put his belongings in storage, and pursued even more challenging adventures.

Among the feats he accomplished were climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in 21 hours (most people need five to 10 days), bicycling across Africa, completing ultramarathons of up to 100 miles, and in 2010, running the equivalent of 250 marathons in a single year. Some were part of a series of challenges that he dubbed his Quests for Kids. Through that initiative, he raised more than \$1.3 million for the humanitarian organization Right To Play, which seeks to protect, educate, and empower children around the world through sports and play-based programs.

But in early 2015, just after he finished his final quest, he experienced a debilitating headache. What he thought was a migraine ended up being a life-threatening blood clot in his brain. (His doctor said his endurance training did not cause the clot.) The man who had run marathons now needed help to walk a few steps to the bathroom. During Parnell's slow recovery,

he found inspiration in Hussaini's determination to run in that year's inaugural Marathon of Afghanistan, an international competition that organizers say is the only mixed-gender sporting event in the country.

Though some of the most severe social restrictions introduced by the Taliban were relaxed in parts of the country after their defeat in 2001, the sight of women running in the streets for exercise enraged some conservative Afghans. "The children were stoning us; the people said bad words like, 'Prostitutes, why don't you stay at home? You are destroying Islam,'" Hussaini recalls in the film. For her safety, she ran laps inside a walled garden and trudged on a treadmill.

Even in Bamyán province in central Afghanistan, which has seen less conflict and where the Marathon of Afghanistan takes place, she faced slurs. When she finished the race, an achievement that won her the Franco-German Award for Afghan Woman of the Year, the governor of Bamyán remarked that she might have been killed in other parts of the country for running a mixed-gender marathon.

Parnell was inspired by Hussaini's tenacity and decided that if he could get well enough to run again, he would travel to Afghanistan to support her and other women, run alongside them in the second Marathon of Afghanistan in November 2016, and tell their stories. For him, the journey would fulfill The Four-Way Test familiar to all Rotary members: His actions

Kate McKenzie and Martin Parnell during filming of *The Secret Marathon in Afghanistan*.





For the safety of women participating, the organizers kept significant marathon details confidential, including the route. This led to the title of the film, *The Secret Marathon*.



would promote truth and fairness, build goodwill and better friendships, and be beneficial to all concerned. “It was an obvious fit,” he says.

While preparing for his trip to Afghanistan, Parnell was approached at an event by former junior high school teacher Kate McKenzie. She had been inspired by his first book, *Marathon Quest*, and was pursuing a career as a documentary film producer. Parnell invited her to coffee and mentioned that he was looking for someone to edit videos he planned to take on his cell phone and a mini wearable camera to chronicle the Afghanistan marathon. McKenzie had a better idea: She offered to go with him.

Later, she came back with a specific proposal. She would put the film crew together and run the marathon in solidarity with the Afghan women. McKenzie understood not only the symbolic value but also the practical value of running. She had experienced mental health issues in her life, which she recounts in the film. “There is this negative voice that repeats in my head, ‘You can’t do it. You’re not enough,’” she says.

With the guidance of doctors, she had found relief in running. “As we move, our bodies release positive hormones,” she says. “It clarifies our thinking. It helps us feel more positive.” To her, running became a tool to manage her mental health and stress: “If I run fast enough, hard enough, the negative voice stops. That’s why I run. Everyone deserves that freedom.”

The longest distance she’d ever run was 10 kilometers (about 6 miles), less than a quarter of the marathon distance, but she figured that including footage of her training ordeal would give viewers an idea of the

physical rigors Hussaini and the other Afghan women were experiencing as they prepared for the race.

For most runners, completing a marathon is the culmination of months of discipline and effort. Many well-trained athletes can run 10 or 15 miles. But without focused endurance training — mixing shorter and longer runs on a tight schedule over several months — the muscles begin to tire before mile 20. Crossing the finish line is a triumph of the will as much as the body.

For the female runners in Afghanistan, the marathon represented freedom, a bold denial of the harsh restrictions on the lives of women ushered in by the Taliban. “We were fighting back against the rules, many of them unwritten,” Hussaini says. “We were coming out of our houses to say that we are human. We have equal rights. You cannot stop us.”

Even though the female athletes dressed in long-

Martin Parnell (top left) runs alongside Kubra Jafari, an Afghan who decided to enter the 2016 marathon when Parnell volunteered to accompany her even though she was not properly trained. Kate McKenzie (above) trails another runner.

sleeve shirts, full-length pants, and the traditional headscarf while training, they were threatened by people with rigid conservative views, including some in their own families. “I begged my mother to let me go to the race,” one young woman told the filmmakers. “She said, ‘We must ask your father’s permission.’ When I asked, he responded, ‘She’s not my daughter. I will break her legs if she dares to step out.’” Another woman decided to run the marathon distance in her own courtyard instead of joining her fellow runners on the streets.

For the safety of women participating, the organizers kept significant marathon details confidential, including the route. This fact led to the title of the film and Parnell’s subsequent book, *The Secret Marathon*.

The book details the difficulties McKenzie encountered in making the film. It took months to find travel insurance that specialized in conflict zones. The crew eventually put itself in the hands of an adventure travel company specializing in trips to countries like Afghanistan.

More than 250 runners took part in the 2016 Marathon of Afghanistan, including six Afghan women who ran the full distance (the event includes a shorter 10K). Several female participants declined to be filmed out of fear of reprisals. And Zainab Hussaini, the pioneering runner who was supposed to be a main character in the documentary, decided not to participate in the race because she had not been able to train for it, something McKenzie learned only after she’d arrived.

But the crew captured inspiring footage of girls running and playing. Free to Run, an international nonprofit, supported the female runners, aiming “to drive change in community gender norms in conflict areas by supporting adolescent girls and young women to advance their leadership and wellness through running.”

Kubra Jafari, an Afghan freelance videographer for Free to Run, decided to enter the marathon when Parnell volunteered to accompany her on her effort even though she, too, was not properly trained.

People used to images of marathon runners loping past crowds of cheering spectators will be surprised at the lonely race scenes in *The Secret Marathon*. The course started at an elevation of 9,000 feet and had an elevation gain of an additional 1,200 feet. Often just one or two participants can be seen passing through the stark beauty of the vast desert landscape.

McKenzie wore No. 61 in honor of Kathrine Switzer, who in 1967 became the first woman to run the Boston Marathon with an official race number, No. 261. A race official tried to forcibly remove Switzer from the Boston course, but she prevailed. In Afghanistan, armed guards lined the route, and national defense trucks closely followed the female runners to protect them. Despite the thinner air at that altitude, McKenzie finished her first marathon in Afghanistan in 4 hours and 52 minutes, close to the global average for female runners.

Jafari struggled mightily with stomach cramps and

fatigue, yet Parnell successfully urged her across the finish line in 6:52, just eight minutes before the course was officially closed.

The Secret Marathon documentary ends with an exhausted Jafari sobbing joyfully in Parnell’s arms. Parnell drapes a finisher’s medal around her neck and tells her, “That was really something special for me ... running with you and what we did together. ... That’s pretty cool, eh? It’s done. You can tell all your friends, ‘Hey, remember you said I couldn’t do it. I did it!’”

The next year, Jafari ran it again, beating her time by an hour and 20 minutes.

Parnell returned to the event in 2018 as a “pace bunny” for girls and women. Meanwhile, Hussaini became the Afghanistan manager of Skateistan, an organization that works to empower children through skateboarding and education.

What viewers don’t see in the documentary is that the film almost didn’t get made. McKenzie and her team learned that some women featured prominently were getting persistent death threats over their participation.

“This is the real story,” McKenzie writes on the website for the film. “This is why the film is important. ... To lose [their] stories meant losing the whole reason we were making the film. So, we had a decision to make. ... Do we scrap the project altogether? Or do we find a way to tell this story that won’t put anyone at risk?” She and her team had already been working unpaid on this project for two years. “After much discussion, we decided we would put in the work.”

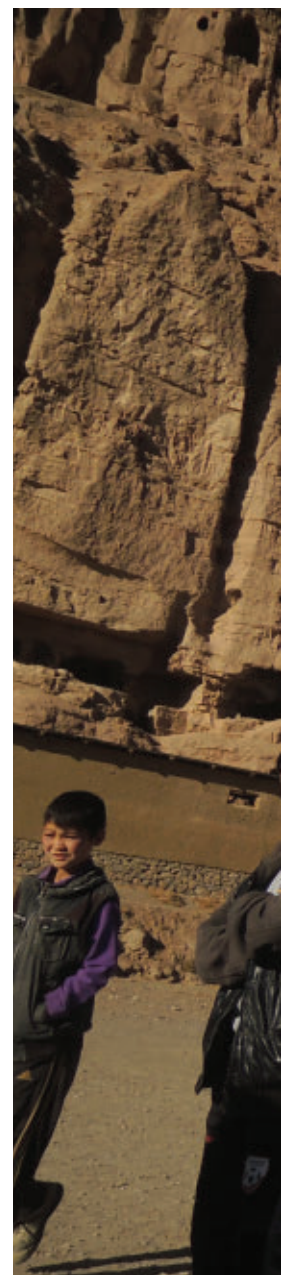
It took another year to re-edit the film and add animation sequences to replace footage that illustrated the dangers female Afghan runners encounter.

Because *The Secret Marathon* came out in 2019, it does not incorporate the aftermath of the Taliban’s return to power in the summer of 2021. The Marathon of Afghanistan, which at its peak attracted more than 300 female participants to run a marathon or 10K, was canceled.

Hussaini, her family, and colleagues fled the country, and she now works for Skateistan from upstate New York. “We were at serious risk of being killed for our work supporting women and girls,” she says. “It’s a shame the new regime will not allow girls to do sports of any kind.” The Taliban banned girls from attending school after sixth grade and prohibited women from traveling without being accompanied by a male relative and from entering certain public places. Female students already enrolled in universities have been barred from finishing their studies. And women have been largely prohibited from working with nongovernmental aid organizations.

Afghanistan ranks among the lowest of countries in terms of women’s rights, educational opportunities, life expectancy, and access to justice. “Everything has just collapsed,” Hussaini says.

But positive reverberations from Parnell’s involvement remain. He helps female cyclists from Afghanistan adjust to life in Canada. And he and McKenzie have been inspired to draw attention to the general need for safe spaces.



“While I was working on the film, I heard from a lot of people who said they could relate, somewhat, to some of what these Afghan women were going through trying to train,” McKenzie says. “They live in Canada, one of the safest countries in the world, but they don’t always feel safe going for a run or a walk in their own communities. So I thought: Well, what if we could do something one night of the year where we could bring people together where they could feel safe to go for a run or a walk to raise awareness of the safety issues still facing both women and men everywhere?”

With the help of John Stanton, founder of the Running Room chain of athletic shoe stores, McKenzie inaugurated what was first called the Secret Marathon 3K and is now simply the Secret 3K: an annual noncompetitive run/walk to promote gender equality, held during the week of International Women’s Day, March 8. “It’s an accessible distance,” she says.

“Just about anyone can get off the couch and make it 3 kilometers. It’s to show solidarity and support for those who are not yet safe to run in their communities, especially women in Afghanistan.”

The runs began in 10 Canadian cities in 2018 and have spread to over 25 countries around the world. They raise money for aid organizations that advance education and athletics for women. Rotary members in Canada have adopted race day as a day of service.

It’s not exactly the ending to the story he envisioned eight years ago, but the relentlessly upbeat Martin Parnell sees the upside. “It’s incumbent on me and others who have had good fortune in our lives to give back,” he says. “Where can we help, both locally in our community and on a broader basis, internationally? That’s the ethos of Rotary, and it fits exactly how I feel. By being Rotarians, we can do so much more together.” ■

Kubra Jafari (left) struggled with stomach cramps and fatigue, yet Parnell successfully urged her across the finish line just minutes before the course officially closed.

To watch the documentary *The Secret Marathon* and a 30-minute adaptation for children, visit thesecretmarathon.com.

“It’s incumbent on me and others who have had good fortune in our lives to give back. That’s the ethos of Rotary, and it fits exactly how I feel.”



FOREVER

YOUNG

**Interact is 60 going on 16 —
or is it the other way around?
Join us as we examine
Rotary's leadership and
service program for teens
through the lens of yesterday,
today, and tomorrow.**

To change the world, start young

Since 1962, generations of young people have discovered the power of Service Above Self and — judging from the pages of this magazine over the decades — had some serious fun along the way. From the White House to Pisa, Italy, and beyond, we chart Interact's perpetual growth and eternal youth.

↓ Encircled by members of their sponsoring club, the members of Rotary's first Interact club stand in the shape of the letter "I." "Even then we knew this was a historic occasion," recalled member Woody Bowden (front row, left, at the base of the I), the inaugural treasurer of the Interact Club of Melbourne High School in Florida. "We were proud of being the first club of its kind."



1962

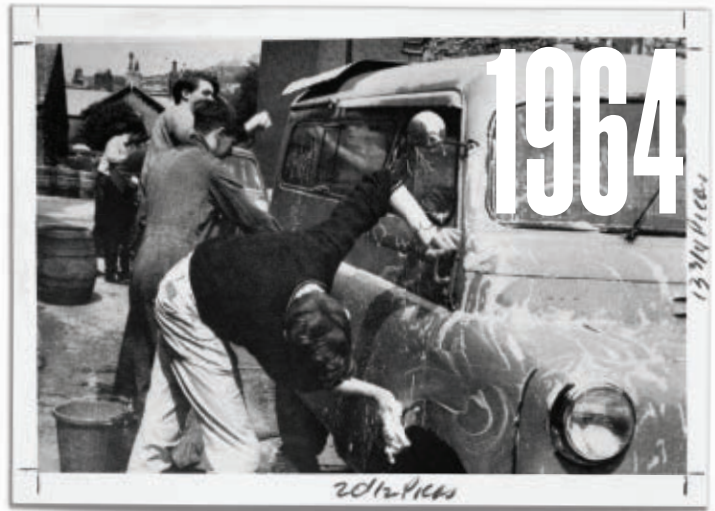
December: An article in the magazine entitled “The blueprint’s ready for Interact” introduces Rotary’s “new youth group,” whose purpose, the article explains, is “to provide opportunity for young men [ages 15 to 18] to work together in a world fellowship dedicated to service and international understanding.” The article goes on to outline the program’s goals, which include developing constructive leadership and personal integrity, and encourage interested Rotary clubs to obtain an Interact Club Organizing Kit. As for the group’s name, Interact — an amalgam of “international” and “action” — was selected from more than 200 suggestions, and “linguists agree, [it] translates clearly in almost every language spoken by Rotarians.”

1963

January: The magazine article “Interact’s in orbit” introduces the Interact Club of Melbourne High School in Florida; certified 5 November 1962, it is Rotary’s first Interact club. Previously established as a campus service club by the Rotary Club of Melbourne, its 39 members already had 35 “helpful activities” to their credit, including collecting toys for poor children, painting gymnasium bleachers, and buying a class ring for “one of their number,” exchange student Katsutoshi Shintani, of Hiroshima, Japan. “The club cut across all kinds of socioeconomic barriers,” member Woody Bowden recalled 25 years later. “We came from different backgrounds and cliques, but Interact brought the many groups together. We always looked forward to Monday nights when we got together.”

February: In a letter to the magazine, Mississippi Rotarian Frank E. Cotton Jr. writes: “If Interact is as good as it appears, I wonder if there is any justification for our seriously limiting its potential value by restricting it to young men. The article indicated no principle of Interact which would not apply as well, perhaps better, to clubs of boys and girls.”

November: On its first anniversary, Interact numbers 177 clubs in 24 countries. That includes a club in Thanjavur, India, the first Interact club outside of the United States, with certification two months after the Melbourne club.



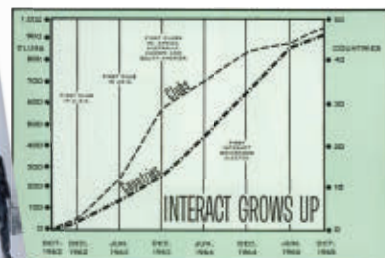
1964

September: With “deep satisfaction,” RI President Charles W. Pettengill announces the first Interact Week, a forerunner of World Interact Week. “It is my hope that every Rotary club in the world will take advantage of the unique opportunity,” he says, “... to focus attention on this dynamic youth program.” The same issue reports that, in its most recent meetings, Rotary’s Board of Directors requested district governors “to appoint district Interact advisory committees ... to assist the district governor in publicizing the Interact program, promoting the organization of new Interact clubs, and administering the program of Interact within the district.”

↑ Members of the Interact Club of Ulverston, England’s first Interact club, demonstrate their drive by washing cars, a weekly project whose goal is to raise money for a public swimming pool.

1965

October: A series of articles, including a profile of a club in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, recognizes Interact’s “booming, boyful success.”



November: Interact celebrates the arrival of its 1,000th club, this one in Rio de Janeiro.

1966

March: At the White House, U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson greets Peter Arroyo, president of the Interact Club of Bridgeport, Connecticut. An honor student, class president, and co-captain of the football team at Warren Harding High School, Arroyo had been chosen Boy of the Year by the Boys' Clubs of America.

October: Ahead of Interact's fourth anniversary, RI President Richard L. Evans declares it "a Rotary success." With some 34,000 members in nearly 1,400 clubs and 51 countries, Interact, he says, "has enlisted the energy of youth in service and in international understanding."

1967

October: "Interact, just five years old, is one of [Rotary's] newer efforts, but it could prove to be what Winston Churchill might have described as your 'finest hour,'" writes Tom Lawrence, president of the Interact Club of Meridian High School, Mississippi. "I say thanks from our Interact club for giving us faith in a better tomorrow."



Interact approaches a milestone: the certification of its 2,000th club. Among the newer clubs is the Interact Club of Pisa, Italy. It comprises 25 boys from the Ulisse Dini science high school and the Galileo Galilei classical high school, who, according to a May 1968 magazine article, "have already made a fast start down the avenue of Interact service."

1968

January: Rotary's Board of Directors expands Interact's horizons. "Should local circumstances indicate to the sponsoring Rotary club that good cause would be served by the admission of girls, the sponsoring Rotary club is at liberty to use its discretion accordingly. Should the sponsoring club decide on a mixed membership, at least half should be boys."



1970

October: In a special issue of the magazine that addresses the conflicts and challenges confronting young people in a turbulent era, an article entitled "Alternatives to anger" recommends both Interact and Rotaract as a way of fostering "community builders today, world leaders tomorrow."



In April, Interactors register for a district Interact conference held in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.



A member of the Interact Club of Sheffield, Alabama, speaks during a panel session on international projects held at the district conference in Tuscaloosa.

1982

October: After 20 years, Interact's 90,000-plus members serve in 4,100 clubs situated in 78 countries. "Everyone is aware of problems in the world," says Diane Mezzich, a member of the Interact club at St. Mary's High School in Manhasset, New York. "It is a good feeling to know that we can do something positive through Interact."



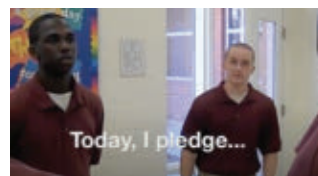
↑ A group of Interactors gathers in Brazil. As its silver anniversary approaches, Interact numbers about 5,000 clubs in 83 countries.

2002

November: A youthful 40 years old, Interact now has about 8,600 clubs in 107 countries. For this year's World Interact Week, those clubs and their Rotary sponsors are asked to give an inspiring presentation about Interact to a Rotary club that does not sponsor an Interact club or conduct a joint Rotary-Interact project to increase awareness of Interact.

2009

The Interact Video Awards are introduced. The grand prize winner is the Interact Club of Communities-in-Schools at the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice with a video entitled *Giving Back Through Interact*. In a surprise, two videos each win first prize: *What Interact Means to Us* from the Interact Club of Shoumen in Bulgaria and *The World We Live In* from the Interact Club of Edmonton Centennial, Alberta. In 2020, the video prize becomes a component of the more broadly themed Interact Awards, which also honor photos and essays.



2010

The minimum age for participation in Interact changes from 14 to 12.

2013

→ Four Interactors from the United States celebrate Interact's golden anniversary at the Rotary International Convention in Lisbon, Portugal. They're at a booth in the House of Friendship that tracks Interact's history.



2020

Rotary International approves an Interact Advisory Council; it will merge in July 2023 with a reimagined Youth Advisory Council.

2022

For Interact's 60th anniversary — when it has more than 437,000 members in about 19,000 clubs — RI President Jennifer Jones looks to the past and the future. "For 60 years," she says, "Interactors have been changing the world. ... This year, I challenge you to Imagine Rotary. Imagine a Rotary where, in the next 60 years, youth voices and youth perspective lead the way."

→ Anniela Carracedo, a member of the Rotary Club of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, and an Interact alumna, exchanges high fives with RI President Jennifer Jones at the International Assembly in January 2023.



Acting is in their nature

Today's Interactors are channeling enthusiasm and ideas into projects of remarkable impact. These young people offer more than just volunteer numbers for your club's service projects. They're key collaborators from start to finish. And in some cases, they're leading the way.

PHILIPPINES

Typhoon Odette relief effort

When Super Typhoon Odette caused widespread destruction in the central Philippines in 2021, a 17-year-old Interactor navigated debris-choked roads on foot to climb a hill where she could get just enough of a phone signal to put out a call for help.

Only a year earlier, Chynna Dorado had started the Interact Club of Metro Mandaue in her home city of Cebu, one of the hardest-hit areas. But she already had a network of Interact friends in other areas of the Philippines that she knew she could rely on. Together, they organized a large-scale response that raised money and distributed donations of food, hygiene kits, medicine, and drinking water to more than 1,000 families across several cities and islands.

At the same time, Dorado was among those grappling with the personal impact of the storm, which triggered landslides that damaged her family's home.

So, Dorado leaned on Interactors in other parts of the country that were less affected. First, she had to find a way to reach them with electricity down and many lines of communication cut. "The internet was best in high places," she says. "So to get a few minutes or an hour of signal, I would walk up a hill. And I had to do that on foot because there was no gasoline for the cars," and fallen trees blocked roads.

She worked with her fellow Interactors to create graphics to share on social media, contact corporations for donations, find nonprofit organizations to partner with, and reach out to Interactors abroad. Other Interact clubs in the country hosted donation drives and fundraisers in their



schools and communities. The Interactors tapped their families — including some Rotarian parents and their clubs — to volunteer alongside them.

Those connections and communication skills, Dorado says, enabled them to mobilize quickly. "One thing Interactors do very well is networking and communicating with each other," she says. "They just have this creativity. How well-versed we are with technology is also a big factor."

More than a year later, Dorado is a high school senior and a member of the Interact Advisory Council that works with the RI Board of Directors. Among her goals, she wants to encourage more Rotarians to start Interact clubs in their communities and learn how Interactors can be strong project partners through the skills, ideas, and perspectives they bring.

Since Dorado started her club, four others have formed in the Cebu area. "We're more visible to Rotary clubs now," she says. "And they definitely see that Interactors do make an impact."



↑ Top: Interactors distribute food aid in the municipality of Argao. Above: People comb through the debris on Siargao Island.

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHYNNA DORADO

CALIFORNIA

Stem cell donation awareness

For most patients with life-threatening blood cancers such as leukemia, a bone marrow transplant is a potential cure. But finding the right donor match is a challenge, and the odds are especially narrow for ethnic minority groups, which are not as well represented on registries of potential donors.

So, members of the Interact Club of Silicon Andhra, California, were thrilled when an attendee of their first donor awareness webinar signed up and a month later received word that he was a match for a person with cancer who needed a transplant. “It’s fascinating to me, because it’s this nebulous concept that you might save a life,” says Aaditya Ravula, the club’s 2021-22 president. “This made it very concrete, very real. This is a person, the same as you or I, he just saw this webinar, he signed up, and he got the opportunity to genuinely say, ‘I’ve saved someone’s life.’”

The club in the San Francisco Bay Area and its sponsoring Rotary club of the same name started a campaign together to raise awareness about the importance of registering to donate blood stem cells, which enable bone marrow to form new blood cells. They focused on the region’s South Asian immigrants, a group that is especially underrepresented among potential donors, who send in cheek swab samples to be added to the registry.

Through webinars, information booths at community events, and other initiatives, the Interact club has been urging people to sign up to join the donor registry managed by Be the Match and dispelling misconceptions about donation.

The Interactors have brought fresh enthusiasm and ideas to the awareness campaign, says Sneha Vedula, the Rotarian who serves as the Interact adviser. One Interactor even sang south Indian classical music during her pitch. Vedula thinks the Interactors can be more persuasive than older Rotarians when trying to reach potential donors in the target age range of 18 to 35 years old. “It’s about their honesty and the passion,” she says.

The Interactors, too, gain from the partnership with Rotarians. Ravula says he’s more practiced at stepping out of his comfort zone when approaching people to make conversation. Now a freshman at the University of California, Davis, he says learning about the issue of stem cell donation helped him decide to pursue a career in oncology.

↓ Aaditya Ravula (bottom center) staffs an information booth during the Hindu festival of Holi.



PHOTOGRAPHS: (CALIFORNIA) AADITYA RAVULA; (TAIWAN) LAWRENCE TSAI

TAIWAN

Coastline cleanup



For a coastline cleanup project, members of the Rotary Club of A-Kong-Dien, Kangshan, Taiwan, knew they wanted to go big. We’re talking 1 kilometer (more than half a mile) of urban coastline in the large port city of Kaohsiung, some 1,500 volunteers, buses to transport them, as well as food trucks and other vendors.

So, the Rotarians enlisted the help of Interactors in the A-Kong-Dien club they sponsor, and about 100 of them joined the cleanup day in September. They were also involved in planning the event. “We have a saying, ‘It’s nice to be young,’” says Lawrence Tsai, the Interact chair for District 3510. “Many of our Rotarians are in their 50s, 60s, and 70s. The Interactors, they’re young, energetic. So, it helped bring energy to the event.”

Many of them had Rotarian parents and grandparents, so multiple generations were working together. Tsai says the Interactors were quick to volunteer for labor-intensive duties like carrying bottled water and other equipment. Many were also eager to help with photographing the event, Tsai says.

Among them was Interactor Liu Fang Ci, who enjoyed the chance to “feel useful and make a difference.” He was surprised the Rotarians were asking for the Interactors’ input rather than just directing them. “We can learn from Rotarians not to be afraid to talk with adults and share our opinions,” he says.

Tsai encourages clubs in his district to involve Interactors in projects and events. His top reason: They’re the future of Rotary.

4 ways to elevate youth voices

1

Work toward their goals, not yours

This is a club by and for young people — allow them to be the ones to shape it. Remember, Rotary members are there to mentor young people, not manage them. Meet them where they are. Let them set the priorities and ask them how you can best support their goals.

2

Include youths in your committees, task forces, and teams

Look for opportunities to include Interactors in leadership roles in your club and district. Invite Interactors to your district conferences and training events, where they learn alongside other leaders and can contribute to the broader conversation. At the international level, starting in July, Interactors will sit on a reimaged Youth Advisory Council, giving them the chance to have a voice on Rotary's youth programs.

3

Let them take the lead

It's by planning club meetings and service projects that Interactors gain life-long skills in management, negotiation, and relationship building. So play the supporting role by volunteering at Interact events wherever they need help. Think about additional ways to help Interactors learn leadership skills, such as Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, district leadership events, and local training opportunities.

4

Watch out for “adulthood”

Adults always know best ... or do they? Instead of assuming you know all the answers, be ready to ask questions and listen. Think about the respect you'd give another adult's viewpoints and ideas and treat a teen the same way.



Having been an Interactor myself I know how enthusiastic Rotary youth are to get involved in whatever way we can. So please, I urge you to reach out to students your club sponsors via Interact, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, Rotary Youth Exchange, and every other youth program, no matter how long ago their experience was, and ask them how these programs shaped their lives. Let them know how they can stay involved in the Rotary world.

— Taylor Randall, Australia



Interact members bring fresh perspectives and creativity to projects. Their unique viewpoints, in addition to their tech know-how and capacity to think creatively, can assist in the creation of innovative and successful solutions. And Interact members may use their substantial social media presence to significantly increase awareness of Rotary projects, widening Rotary's influence and contributing to positive change in their communities.

— Rafael Barac-Bologa,
Romania

As an Interactor in District 5170, I have had the pleasure of working within my district on projects ranging from COVID-19 relief to anti-human trafficking campaigns — all of which could not be done without Rotary's support. I hope to see Interactors involved in Rotary and Rotaract service projects, elevating youth voices and ensuring a brighter future.

— Mehreen Rosmon, California



We want to continue to evolve as leaders and let others know what Rotary and Interact are doing for the society — not only with our community projects, but also how we develop ourselves in meetings and projects, how family-like our club feels, how we can find help and support in people that we never imagined, and how we can help people that we never thought would need our help.

— Eduarda Azeredo Bufalari, Brazil

Find more information about working with Interact clubs in the Interact Guide for Rotary Club Sponsors and Advisers, available at rotary.org/get-involved/interact-clubs/details.

OUR CLUBS

VIRTUAL VISIT

Into the metaverse

Rotary Club of Metaverso
District 2203, Spain

Last year, Tana Serrano Marín decided to enter the metaverse.

The family law attorney in southeastern Spain kept hearing about the vast possibilities of the immersive, 3D online world where everyone from gamers to harried parents seeking an escape interact via cartoonlike avatars.

First, a guest speaker at her husband's Rotary club meeting extolled the virtues of the metaverse. Then, a person on the district's membership committee brought it up. And she watched with interest as brands and businesses adopted the technology to reach customers. Could it catch on with Rotarians? Serrano Marín and her husband decided to find out.

They started dabbling with Spatial, a platform to create virtual spaces. As interest grew, they took the idea to district officials and lined up club officers. They attended an in-person training session, and the Rotary Club of Metaverso (metaverse in Spanish) was chartered 28 November with a membership roster of 14 women and six men. Most, like Serrano Marín, are from the city of Murcia, near Spain's Mediterranean coast.

"What makes this platform so immersive is that after just a few sessions, people identify with their avatars online and the experiences become personal," says Serrano Marín. "It's quite different from just taking part in a videoconference."

So what's a Rotary club meeting in the metaverse like? To find out, I planned a visit in January and got to work creating an avatar on Spatial. You can choose one that's lifelike or experiment with a different look, as did the club member who appeared as Elvis in the meeting space. I chose the former option.

When the meeting day arrived, I watched my avatar drop into a pink-purple room with a gaming vibe. I was greeted by club member Antonio Carrión Serrano, who acted as my guide and interpreter, as the club language is Spanish. On a computer, keyboard strokes allow you to move, but the skill can require some finesse. On my early attempts, my avatar appeared to walk through others. Another keystroke sent my avatar floating in air with strange motions that looked like swimming.

Another quirk to the club's meeting space is that there are no private conversations; everyone can hear you. But that allowed me to meet another newcomer to the metaverse who joined the meeting as a guest, Michel Jazzar, a past district governor from Lebanon. "This is my first time," confessed Jazzar. "It is something new. As we say in Beirut, 'New is beautiful.'"

That people can attend easily from anywhere and fit meetings around busy schedules is a strength of the platform. Member Juanjo Morales Aragón, for instance, says he had heard of Rotary before

but had not been able to join because his work schedule prevented him from attending an in-person meeting every week. "It is a format with an enormous capacity to give greater visibility without limits, making the Rotary experience available to everyone," he says.

Another plus is the fact that it is more immersive than videoconferencing, says Carrión Serrano, a 20-year-old law student and the son of club founder Serrano Marín. "This is a new concept, quite attractive to young people."

He is adamant that the metaverse is not a fad, noting that Nike has a space on a platform called Roblox where participants can play games and dress their avatars in Nike apparel. "There are a lot of big projects involving the metaverse. Businesses are here," he says. "It's a different way of viewing life. And it's wonderful for Rotary to be here."

He led me into the Sala Paz (Peace Room), where posters on the walls discuss Rotary's Action Plan, mission, and causes. At the far end of this long rectangular space, a walkway proceeded out over a sea of magenta water. The sky teemed with indigo clouds. I knew it wasn't real, but I couldn't avoid feeling that one false move would plunge me headfirst into a pool of lava.

A virtual bell on stage rang to begin the meeting. I entered the Sala Paul Harris, an auditorium splashed in a deeper shade of purple. On the front wall, a large screen allowed people to share presentations. The auditorium sloped downward with rows of short square seats on either side of a center aisle. Eventually, I figured out



SO YOU'RE READY TO JOIN THE METAVERSE

At least two Rotary clubs are meeting in the metaverse, drawn by a flexible, innovative meeting format with potential to attract a young and diverse membership. But OK, how does one enter the metaverse exactly?

Choose your avatar

You can create your look in a platform like Spatial, choosing a virtual you that looks like, well, you. Some systems allow you to upload a photo of yourself to generate a look-a-like. Or you can get adventurous and change up your look entirely.

Don't worry about fancy gear

This immersive version of the internet is best experienced with a virtual reality headset, but there's no need to buy one, or any fancy gear. You can still get a great sense of what it's all about from your computer or smartphone screen.

Keep an open mind

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us have gotten familiar with Zoom. And Rotary members have chartered e-clubs. The metaverse, proponents say, is just another step into a virtual realm with the power to connect members from across the world.

how to click on a seat and sit. A regional expert discussed mediation and ways to settle disputes peacefully. Occasionally, applause broke out, sending streams of red hearts soaring into the air.

Serrano Marín says that the club plans face-to-face meetups in addition to its regular virtual meetings. Members carry out service projects in the real world, like any other club. One of their first projects solicited contributions from 17 companies, which received advertising space in one of the rooms. The contributions were used to buy coats for 17 children in El Palmar, a village near Murcia. Serrano Marín says

members also plan to explore causes they can address in the virtual space.

At least one other club meets in this new domain, the Rotary Club of Taipei Metaverse, which chartered in June 2022 in Taiwan and has nearly 40 members. The idea seems to have appeal, judging from the enthusiastic comments from across the world on a *Rotary Voices* blog post that Serrano Marín wrote in January. And Jazzar, the past district governor from Lebanon, says his own district is discussing a similar club. "The metaverse is the future," says Serrano Marín. "Rotary must be there." — ARNOLD R. GRAHL

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The healer

The 2022-23 Rotary Alumni Global Service Award winner is changing health care in sub-Saharan Africa



Gregory Rockson co-founded mPharma to improve the medicine supply chain in Africa.

Growing up in Ghana, Gregory Rockson always figured he'd become a doctor. At least, that's what his parents expected.

"There's this African thing," he says, "where every family wants at least one of their children to be a medical doctor."

The youngest of five, he believed that medicine was his calling. But in college, he embarked on a global and academic adventure, supported in part by a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship, that revealed a different path — one where he would make a bigger impact than a single doctor ever could.

His college adventure began in perhaps the most unlikely of places for an 18-year-old from West Africa: Fulton, Missouri, population 12,000.

His sister had encouraged him to attend college abroad and offered to pay for it. At the time, Rockson was going through a Winston Churchill phase, and the British prime minister had given a famous speech about the Iron Curtain in Fulton on the campus of Westminster College, where there's now a museum in his honor. "There was all this history and excitement about history in one place," says Rockson. He enrolled in 2009, expecting to go the pre-med route.

As part of the core curriculum, he took an early U.S. history course and loved it. "I was the best student in the class, which was very weird for a Ghanaian," he says with a laugh. It changed everything. With the encouragement of his professors and his adviser, Carolyn Perry, Rockson realized he did not want to become a doctor, which would mean spending another decade in school. Instead, he switched his

Gregory Rockson

- PPIA Junior Summer Institute Fellow, Princeton School of Public and International Affairs, 2011
- Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar, University of Copenhagen, 2011-12
- Bachelor's in political science, Westminster College, 2012

major to political science and pursued every opportunity he could find: He served as a legislative intern for the New York State Assembly, participated in a Public Policy and International Affairs fellowship at Princeton University, completed an internship at the Center for American Progress in Washington, D.C., and interned at a think tank in San Francisco.

Between those programs, he came across another opportunity, the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship. He applied through the Rotary Club of Fulton and was soon bound for Denmark, where he would attend the University of Copenhagen, hosted by the Rotary Club of Copenhagen International. There, he organized an initiative called Six Days of Peace in reference to the Six-Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbors in 1967. The initiative, which included a meeting between Israeli and Palestinian diplomats, garnered so much attention that Rockson was selected to join the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers Community and invited to speak at the organization's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. He didn't know it at the time, but he was laying the groundwork for his career.

When Rockson graduated from Westminster in 2012, his mind was on fire. The U.S. — and the San Francisco Bay Area, where he'd spent time working — was in the middle of a tech revolution, and he was eager to use his newfound skills and network to solve problems, starting with health care challenges in Ghana.

Growing up, Rockson suffered from a number of medical conditions and spent a lot of time in the hospital. His mother, a teacher and the family's main breadwinner, borrowed money from friends to afford his medicine. As Rockson grew older, he learned that cost wasn't the only challenge. The drug supply chain was broken. Pharmacies often couldn't keep critical medicines in stock, and there was no pricing transparency or infrastructure connecting patients, hospitals,

and pharmacies. A doctor could prescribe a medication to a patient, and the patient would visit multiple area pharmacies in hopes that the medicine was in stock and not too expensive; at one pharmacy a drug could cost twice as much as at another, because there was no pricing regulation.

At 22, he co-founded mPharma to improve the drug supply chain by working with a network of pharmacies to negotiate better prices from pharmaceutical companies and make drugs available where and when patients need them. "If consumers have access to information, that allows them to decide not to be a customer of a particular business," he says. "Businesses feel that, and it forces them to change."

To help fund the business and gather advice, Rockson reached out to contacts he'd met at the World Economic Forum. They immediately saw the potential. In time, some major pharmaceutical companies did as well, along with other investors. Today, through mPharma, more than 1,000 hospitals and pharmacies in nine African countries have helped more than 2 million people save on medications. "Without the Rotary scholarship that took me to Copenhagen, none of this would have happened," says Rockson.

It was just the start. Through his work with mPharma, Rockson saw that people were using pharmacists for basic health needs. "The pharmacist is actually the most accessible health care worker in the community," he says. His next idea: What if people could see a doctor or nurse within their neighborhood pharmacy, similar to clinics at CVS or Walgreens? His team launched a franchising model in 2018 called

"My life journey has always been about people who've taken bets on me, who have seen things in me I didn't even know about myself."

QualityRX, which invests in renovations so that pharmacies can provide complimentary health care via a nurse and virtual doctors, and patients simply pay for prescriptions. "Today, we've become the largest operator of community pharmacies in sub-Saharan Africa," he says, "and we deliver medical care to over 250,000 patients each month."

Rockson is as modest as they come, even as his work is heralded internationally, with honors and awards from Bloomberg, the Skoll Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and most recently, Rotary with its Alumni Global Service Award. "My life journey has always been about people who've taken bets on me, who have seen things in me I didn't even know about myself," he says. "Even when I didn't think I was worthy of their support, they still gave me that support because they saw something in me I didn't see."

Now, he works to find that spark in others. "We have well over 1,200 employees in the company, and it has always been my joy taking the young, new employees and giving them opportunities to grow," he says. "Because that has been the story of my life."

But perhaps his greatest joy is the impact that he's had on the health of friends, family, and hundreds of thousands of people in Africa. He says his aging parents are two of his most important patients. "We have two programs for chronic disease management, and my mom and dad were among the first patients enrolled," he says. "I always tell people, I am the No. 1 user of my own services."

He may not be a doctor. But he has no regrets. — KATE SILVER

Hear Rockson speak at the 2023 Rotary International Convention in Melbourne.

Register now at **convention.rotary.org**.



ROTARY IN THE NEWS

Shining a light on the good we do



Rotary President Jennifer Jones assists an agricultural expert from National Ilan University as he explains soil requirements for growing truffles during a press conference in northeastern Taiwan.

On a chilly afternoon in December, a small convoy of cars stopped by a small, wooded area outside the mountain village of Siji in northeastern Taiwan. The village, 3,000 feet above sea level, is home to the Atayal people, a Taiwanese Indigenous group. When Rotary President Jennifer Jones stepped out of her car, local government officials, journalists, and Rotary members greeted her while the village chief led her to his farm to showcase the new chestnut trees and truffles he had planted as part of a sustainable agriculture project.

For generations, villagers relied on a staple crop, cabbage, which is sold in cities across Taiwan. However, in recent years, climate change, pesticides, and soil degradation have threatened their livelihood and endangered the water supply. With the help of a global grant, Rotary members from District 3490 partnered with the local government and National Ilan University to help the community develop alternative crops and more sustainable farming practices to improve their living

standards and preserve the environment.

Jones used the opportunity to publicize Rotary's efforts to support community economic development. An on-site press conference and follow-up interviews resulted in more than 40 news stories in outlets such as FTV News, Mirror TV News, and Radio Taiwan International.

Jones' trip to Taiwan was one segment of her Imagine Impact Tour, during which she connected with government officials, Rotary's nonprofit partners, celebrity entertainers, journalists, and social media influencers to share lessons from collaborative projects that can potentially be scaled and replicated for more impact.

On a tour stop in Guatemala in February, Jones was joined by Gaby Moreno, a Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter and producer who is originally from the country. Together, they highlighted the Guatemala Literacy Project, a Rotary initiative that has benefited students for over 25 years. From attending classes and singing with students during an assembly, to visiting students' homes and observing

young people studying in a computer lab, Jones and Moreno immersed themselves in the school environment and communicated with audiences beyond the Rotary world. A joint press conference attracted top national media outlets, including *Soy502*, *Diario de Centro América*, *Prensa Libre*, and *Noticiero Guatevisión*.

In Pakistan last summer, Jones met with female health workers who are playing a vital role in ending polio in one of the last two countries where wild poliovirus remains endemic. She interviewed Hamid Jafari, director of polio eradication for the World Health Organization's Eastern Mediterranean region, for Rotary's social media channels. Jones' trip was reported on by *The Nation* newspaper, Associated Press of Pakistan, and *Business Recorder*.

Jones promoted Rotary's first Programs of Scale grant during a stop in Zambia. In partnership with World Vision U.S. and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the initiative aims to significantly reduce malaria cases in 10 districts in Zambia's Central and Muchinga provinces. *Lusaka Times* detailed Jones' visit.

In Uganda, Jones invited Zimbabwean actress Sibongile Mlambo to visit the Nakivale refugee settlement, where entrepreneur and Congolese refugee Paul Mushaho established a Rotaract club and spearheaded economic development and youth empowerment initiatives. While visiting the Rotary Peace Center at Makerere University, where Mushaho was a peace fellow in 2021-22, Jones talked with the media, resulting in extensive coverage by news outlets such as *New Vision*, *Nile Chronicles*, UBC TV Uganda, and Urban TV.

Jones' last stops on the tour were to Kiribati and Fiji, which are among nine Pacific island countries and territories where Rotary Zone 8 is partnering with UNICEF and local governments to immunize 100,000 children against rotavirus, pneumococcal bacteria, and human papillomavirus. Jones' visit has garnered wide attention from local media and outlets in Australia and New Zealand.

CALENDAR

May events

THE RUN FOR THE ROSES

Event: DeLand Derby

Host: Rotaract Club of DeLand, Florida

What it benefits: Local charities

Date: 6 May

For the third year, the club hosts a Kentucky Derby watch party for horse-racing fans ages 21 and over. In addition to a livestream of the “greatest two minutes in sports,” the event features a food buffet, drinks, a DJ, lawn activities, and red carpet photos. The club encourages attendees to wear their finest derby outfits, and prizes are given for best dressed and best hat.

HANG WITH THE RAT PACK

Event: Mineral City Celebration

Host: Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

What it benefits: Local charities and international projects

Date: 13 May

Guests at this Rat Pack-themed charity gala will be transported to the 1960s, when Frank Sinatra and his pals ruled the Vegas Strip. The event includes a cocktail hour, dinner, music by a Sinatra tribute artist, and a raffle to win a luxury trip. The club will present its annual Rock of the Community Award, which honors a local resident who personifies Service Above Self, to Hall of Fame football player and philanthropist Tony Boselli.

CUTEST PARADE EVER

Event: Pet Parade

Host: Rotary Club of the Torrington and Winsted Areas, Connecticut

Date: 20 May

Nearly every year since the 1930s, children of all ages have marched through downtown Winsted with their pets,



WHEN THE BUDS BREAK

Event: Budbreak Wine and Craft Beer Festival

Host: Rotary Club of Mount Airy, North Carolina

What it benefits: Local charities and local and international projects

Date: 6 May

This annual festival in downtown Mount Airy celebrates the spring budding of grapevines. More than 12,000 people are expected to turn out to sip libations from regional wineries and craft breweries, nibble on food from local eateries, and listen to live music. Tickets for those who wish to sample wine and beer include a commemorative wine glass, and general-access tickets are available for a reduced price.

including dogs, cats, horses, and donkeys. The parade ends at a park where organizers serve refreshments and give out awards in several categories. A contest held in conjunction with the event recognizes parade-themed posters designed by elementary school students.

HIT THE LINKS

Event: Charles Phillips Memorial Golf Scramble

Host: Rotary Club of Harbor Beach, Michigan

What it benefits: End Polio Now and local projects

Date: 20 May

This annual golf event was started in 2005 by a longtime club member and polio survivor to raise money for The Rotary Foundation's polio eradication efforts. After he died in 2015, fellow Rotarians named the outing in his memory.

Cash prizes are awarded to the top three teams, as well as to the winners of two “closest to the pin” competitions.

GOBS OF LOBSTER

Event: Tustin Lobsterfest

Host: Rotary Club of Tustin/Santa Ana, California

What it benefits: Local projects and scholarships

Date: 20 May

This outdoor festival, first held in 2010, returns after a three-year hiatus. The main attraction is all-you-can-eat whole lobster with butter, alongside tri-tip beef, salads, baked potatoes, and desserts. A band will perform music from the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. In addition, attendees can buy tickets that correspond to balls that will be dropped from the ladder of a fire truck. The person whose ball lands closest to a target on the ground wins \$1,000.

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.

HANDBOOK

Building toilets? Make them period-friendly

Done right, hygiene and sanitation projects can help address period poverty

Amanda Southwell recalls visiting a school in Uganda where the toilet was a hole in the ground surrounded by “a bit of tin.” “What would I do if I had my period?” she wondered. In Nepal, she remembers talking to a woman who, without access to a toilet at school, would walk home with menstrual blood running down her legs.

Around the world, period poverty is defined by a whole lot of lacks: lack of access to menstrual supplies, lack of water and sanitation, lack of privacy, and lack of education for girls and boys about what periods are, she explains. “There’s still an enormous amount of shame and taboos around periods, particularly in the developing world,” says Southwell, a member of the Rotary Club of Box Hill Central, Australia. She chairs the club’s Operation Toilets initiative, which builds toilets and provides hygiene education at schools in developing countries.

In India, 23 percent of girls drop out of school because of period poverty, and a study of high school girls in Ethiopia found that about half missed one to four days of school each month. Even if students don’t drop out, without a period-friendly toilet, they’ll likely need to wear the same pad all day, change it outside in the bushes and risk assault, or go home partway through the day and not get back in time to finish their classes. And don’t forget teachers who may need to stay home when they are menstruating if there aren’t proper facilities.

For Menstrual Hygiene Day on 28 May, we looked at some elements to consider when your club is building toilets that girls will use. In addition, Southwell notes that materials and supplies are only part of the equation. “We can’t just build toilets for girls. We need to put in education,” she says. “You have to change community attitudes. The community has to be empowered to make the changes.”

— DIANA SCHOBERG

PERIOD-FRIENDLY TOILETS



Number

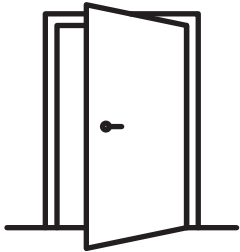
Females have different needs than males for their toilets due to factors including menstruation, social and cultural norms around modesty, and safety and sexual violence.

Girls need more toilets than the same number of boys. “If you’ve got a line of students waiting for that toilet,” Southwell says, “they’re missing out on school.”

MENSTRUAL MATERIALS

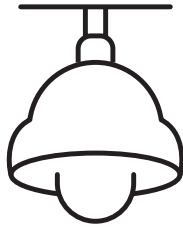
Which menstrual care materials you choose for a project will depend on many factors, primarily the preferences of the girls and women who will be using them. Other considerations include the climate (Is it rainy? How fast will reusable products dry? If it’s a dry climate, is there enough water to adequately wash reusable products?) and setting (Are there private spaces for washing and drying reusable products?). A needs assessment will help you determine what’s best for your project.

And consider this comparison of the waste from three types of menstrual products, from nonprofit WaterAid that works on WASH projects:



Separation

Girls should have their own area away from boys' toilets. "The anxiety around menstruation will be exacerbated by people knowing they are menstruating," Southwell says.



Light

People who are menstruating need to be able to see well to change pads adequately and check if there has been any leakage.



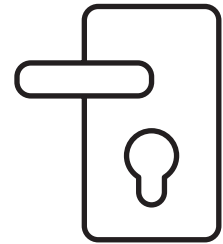
Place to dispose of pads

Provide a trash receptacle or a way to bring reusable cloth pads home to wash. Young people may find it shameful to walk outside of the toilet block to dispose of a used menstrual product because then others know they are menstruating.



Soap and water

Make sure there's a place for girls to wash themselves and menstrual materials.



Doors and locks

"Women deserve privacy," Southwell says.

Disposable pads

15

pads per menstrual cycle

6,120

pads in a lifetime

Reusable cloth pads

6

cloth pads per cycle

136

pads in a lifetime

Reusable menstrual cups

1

menstrual cup per cycle

7

cups in a lifetime

The art of Rotary

It all started back in 1990. The democratic changes that were sweeping Eastern Europe offered the opportunity for Rotary to return to Bulgaria. Like-minded business leaders and professionals eager to restart Rotary clubs in Bulgaria's cities began searching for information about the organization or locating surviving members after a hiatus of about 50 years.

I live in Plovdiv, the country's second-largest city — we pride ourselves on being both the cultural capital of Bulgaria and one of the chosen cultural capital cities of Europe for 2019. One day, when my friends and I were gathered inside one of the beautiful houses in the city's Old Town discussing the next steps in bringing Rotary to our city, an intruder “crashed” our party. He introduced himself as a Canadian Rotarian and said he learned about our meeting by chance. The few Bulgarian words he spoke were endearing ones: “friends” and “cheers.” We quickly learned that he was married to a Bulgarian woman in a village not far from the city and had come

to help us and tell us about Rotary.

That's how I met Arthur Wing, whom everyone just called Art. He is a member of the Rotary Club of St. Catharines, Ontario. I considered Art my teacher in Rotary. Our friendship laid the foundation for the creation of the Bulgarian-Canadian Intercountry Committee.

Soon after our meeting, Art's wife passed away, but he continued to visit Bulgaria. During each visit, he would bring an idea for a Rotary project, not only in Plovdiv but for other towns, such as Samokov and Pazardzhik, where we had already established clubs. With the steadfast support of his club in Canada, we implemented many of his projects. Thanks to the help of Art and many other Rotary friends around the world, new clubs were sprouting all over Bulgaria. In December 2001, we set a record when then-Rotary President Richard King visited us; we officially chartered 14 Rotary clubs, as well as 12 Rotaract and two Interact clubs in one night.

As Rotary flourished, we were able to separate from District

2480, which encompassed several nations in the Balkans, and form a district (2482) in Bulgaria. I had the honor to serve as the inaugural governor in 2007-08. Art, who had already served as a district governor, suggested that we celebrate my appointment with a joint Bulgarian-Canadian project. “Since you serve during the year of RI President Wilf Wilkinson, a fellow Canadian, we'll do a Group Study Exchange for young professionals,” he said.

What happened next was like fate. As I was getting training with more than 500 district governors-elect from around the world at the International Assembly in San Diego in 2007, I found myself sitting next to Robert Leake, the governor of District 7090, which covered parts of the Canadian province of Ontario and the western part of New York state in the U.S. Looking at each other with disbelief, we knew that the Group Study Exchange program had to happen, and we were happy to fill out the paperwork. “What will be the theme of our GSE?” I asked. “How about

➔ More than 1,200 Rotarians, Rotaractors, Interactors, and their families participate in a ceremony to mark the chartering of Bulgaria's District 2482. The event was held in 2007 at an ancient Roman amphitheater in the city of Plovdiv.





Rotary in Bulgaria

winemaking?" Leake responded to my surprise. "Do polar bears make wine?" I said jokingly, without realizing that Canada had a robust winemaking industry.

"You'll see!" he responded with a smile before we hugged each other.

The beginning of my term coincided with the chartering of Bulgaria's new District 2482. It was an emotional moment. The ceremony in 2007 occurred at an ancient Roman amphitheater in the center of Plovdiv, formerly the ancient Roman city of Philippopolis. More than 1,200 Rotarians, Rotaractors, Interactors, and their families participated. As all the attending Rotary members in Bulgaria pledged three times to "loving, serving, and sharing Rotary," Art sat by my side with his second wife, the late Jacqueline Herman-Wing.

Subsequently, Wilkinson, the 2007-08 Rotary president, visited Bulgaria twice during my year as governor to attend a conference in Sofia under the motto "peace is possible in the Balkans" and to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of Rotary in Bulgaria.

My year ended with the completion of the Group Study Exchange. Four young women came from Canada, led by Robert Morrow, a member of the Rotary Club of Dundas Valley Sunrise, Ontario. The group members labeled themselves as "four wine experts and a connoisseur." Meanwhile, several clubs in District 7090 sent money for a

joint youth project with my club, the Rotary Club of Plovdiv-Puldin. With an additional district grant, we renovated a school in Plovdiv for children with impaired hearing.

At our district conference in 2008, as guests from around the world were offering congratulations on our first year as a Rotary district, the Canadian Group Study Exchange members strutted onto the stage. At the same time, Leake, the governor of District 7090, and other Rotary members in Canada appeared on a big screen by conference call. Morrow, the GSE team leader, thanked us for the wonderful and fruitful days in Bulgaria while presenting all the Rotary members in Bulgaria with a "dream hunters" totem, urging us to share the Rotary dream with the world.

I became the publisher of Rotary's regional magazine that serves Rotary countries in the Balkans. Ever since I met Art, I had wanted to visit Canada. My dream came true in 2009. I was able to reunite with all my Canadian friends I've told you about while I attended a meeting for Rotary's regional editors. At the end of last year, Art came to Bulgaria again, this time with his son, his three grandchildren, and his nephew, a doctoral student in Belgium and a specialist in organic foods. We were lost in memories, and Art said that this was his last visit to Bulgaria, a sort of goodbye. For the first time, I didn't believe him!

— NASKO NACHEV

Rotary reached Bulgaria in southeastern Europe in 1933 when the first club was chartered in the capital city of Sofia. Within a short time, Rotary attracted a group of well-known entrepreneurs, financiers, scientists, and intellectuals in Sofia and began expanding to other cities, such as Varna, Rousse, Bourgas, Pleven, Gorna Oryahovitsa, Veliko Tarnovo, and Plovdiv. By 1939, the Rotary movement was growing so fast that Rotary International granted permission to establish a new Rotary district in Bulgaria. In the ensuing years, four RI presidents visited the country, and King Boris III awarded Past President Maurice Duperrey (1937-38) a medal in recognition of Rotary's contributions to the integration of Bulgaria to the world and to the country's economic and cultural development.

In December 1940, the Bulgarian government, under pressure from Nazi Germany, adopted a law that put Rotary on the list of prohibited organizations. Subsequently, under the rule of communism, many Rotary members were killed or displaced. In 1951, when the political environment made it impossible to operate, Rotary terminated its activities in Bulgaria.

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 marked the end of the Cold War, leading to democratic transition in Bulgaria and paving the way for Rotary's revival. In 1991, the Rotary Club of Sofia was reinstituted. In the three decades since, Rotary has developed quickly in the country. At present, there are 89 Rotary clubs in Bulgaria in almost all major cities, with over 2,000 members.

↑
Arthur "Art" Wing (left) with Nasko Nachev. Their friendship laid the foundation for the Bulgarian-Canadian Intercountry Committee. "I considered Art my teacher in Rotary," Nachev says.



TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Our limitless potential

“Do all the good you can, to all the people you can, in all the ways you can, as long as ever you can.”

While we don't know its exact origin, this widely quoted saying summarizes what Rotary and The Rotary Foundation are all about: We do quite a lot of good, serving people around the world in myriad ways, and we are in it for the long haul.

How many other charities do so much good in so many ways for so many as The Rotary Foundation?

Not only do we, the volunteers, fund most of our projects, but we often contribute significant volunteer hours in organizing and executing them. The “regional offices” of our charity — also known as Rotary and Rotaract clubs — are our reliable go-to partners in the more than 200 countries and geographical areas in which we operate. And when we lack expertise in an area, we partner with outside organizations whose trust we have earned, such as the World Health Organization, to deliver results on the ground that truly change lives.

Unlike some charitable organizations, we don't take the “parachute approach” to humanitarian work. We solve problems in a sustainable way. Before we lift a shovel to start any Foundation project, we conduct community needs assessments and work closely with members of the community. The Foundation

also acts quickly when needed, such as through our disaster response grants, as we did with the recent earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

Accountants like me and business and community leaders like you pay close attention to the numbers, and in this area, the Foundation is a cut above. In funding projects, we apply Rotary's traditions of fiscal responsibility and ethics to ensure the best use of the resources of our fellow members. We in Rotary are excellent stewards of our grants, with most of the funds going toward humanitarian support itself and relatively little going to grant administration costs. This is why Charity Navigator has consistently given its highest rating to The Rotary Foundation, year after year.

Because our worldwide operation is dedicated to seven areas of focus, volunteers and donors alike have ample opportunities to make a difference where help is needed most. Indeed, the potential to help through the Foundation is limitless.

So, if you are looking for a great charity to support or a way to do all the good you can, look no further than The Rotary Foundation. It is truly one of the greatest charities in the world, and it belongs to you.

IAN H.S. RISELEY

Foundation trustee chair

SERVICE ABOVE SELF

THE OBJECT OF ROTARY

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

First The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;

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

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

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

THE FOUR-WAY TEST

Of the things we think, say or do:

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

ROTARIAN CODE OF CONDUCT

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

As a Rotarian, I will

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

IN BRIEF

Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award winner takes a global approach

Chin Mei Lu, who has spent more than 30 years working on behalf of women, girls, and others around the world, has won Rotary's first Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award. Her selection was announced in March on International Women's Day. Lu, a member of the Rotary Club of Taipei Taimei, Taiwan, has helped educate girls in Nepal, immunized children in India, supported the menstrual health of girls in Uganda, and helped people in Taiwan who are blind.

The Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award honors one Rotary member each year who has worked to advance women in Rotary. "We as Rotarians are like lantern-carrying people in the dark corners of society, bringing light to others and helping make the world a brighter place," Lu says.

The award is named for the first female Rotary club president, who went on to lead change for women around the world through Rotary. A group of Rotarians originally established the award before the Board of Directors voted to make it an official RI award.

Lu, a Rotary member since 1991 and a past district governor, traveled to Nepal and India in 2006-07 to assist with a project that enabled girls who didn't have housing to attend school. She cooperated with local agencies to obtain supplies, food, uniforms, and sponsorship funds for the girls, many of whom were at risk of being trafficked into sex work or child labor.

"Three years later, there were girls who were once helped by Rotary going back to assist other girls in need," says 2014-15 RI President Gary C.K. Huang, who nominated Lu.

She has promoted a service project in Uganda begun by her son, Kelvin Wang, who is a member of the Rotary E-Club of Taipei Midtown. Rotary members in Taiwan sent fabric menstrual belts to Ugandan girls, many of whom couldn't attend school because they lacked these supplies. The project provided sewing machines, taught girls how to sew belts for themselves, and promoted menstrual health overall.

Lu has a particular interest in assisting people who are blind or have partial vision. She is a senior member of Taiwan's Arts Promotion Association for the Disabled, which offers educational and employment assistance. She has set up rural medical centers and made it possible for musicians who are blind or have partial sight to buy instruments. Many don't have the funds to buy new instruments for practice, Lu says. "I proposed a Rotary Foundation grant helping them to replace old



musical instruments with new ones. Our action has had an enduring impact in the community."

While in Nepal and India, she collaborated with Rotary clubs on clean water and sanitation projects. In 2011, she returned to India to join local volunteers in campaigns to immunize children against polio and other diseases that can be prevented by vaccines. Outside Rotary, Lu's philanthropic efforts include working with World Vision International in Romania to provide school supplies and visit children she has helped.

Lu has served as a world vice president of the women's business group Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises Mondiales, vice president of the National Council of Women of Taiwan, and president of two local business groups. She has received numerous national and international awards, including the International Alliance for Women's World of Difference Award and *Acquisition International* magazine's Influential Businesswoman Award.

Nominations for the Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award are open from 1 August to 30 September each year. Any member can nominate another member in good standing.

— ETELKA LEHOCZKY

↑
Chin Mei Lu is the first recipient of the Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award, which honors a Rotary member who has worked to advance women in Rotary.

2023 CONVENTION

See you in Melbourne



The virtual reality experience at the 2022 convention's House of Friendship.

From **big-name speakers** and breakout sessions to the flag ceremony and the House of Friendship, the 2023 Rotary International Convention in Melbourne will be full of pageantry and inspiration.

In Melbourne this month, listen to Nobel Peace laureate Leymah Gbowee of Liberia tell her story from the convention mainstage about empowering girls. And for ideas you can take back to your club, choose from dozens of breakout sessions. Rotary members and experts will share tips on how to live the Rotary Action Plan, do what you can to address the world's biggest challenges, polish your leadership skills, grow club diversity, and interest newcomers.

Then, check out the House of Friendship to learn about projects by clubs, fellowships, action groups, and partners that

will energize you to expand your club's impact. For example, step inside a sample emergency shelter from project partner ShelterBox.

Rebecca Fry, charter president of the Rotary Club of Social Impact Network, Australia, says the House of Friendship is "a true festival of Rotary" and one of the best ways to get a sense of Rotary's global reach.

The exhibition floor is a prime spot to meet up with friends, bump into new people to add to your Rotary network, and seek out leaders of projects that spark your interest.

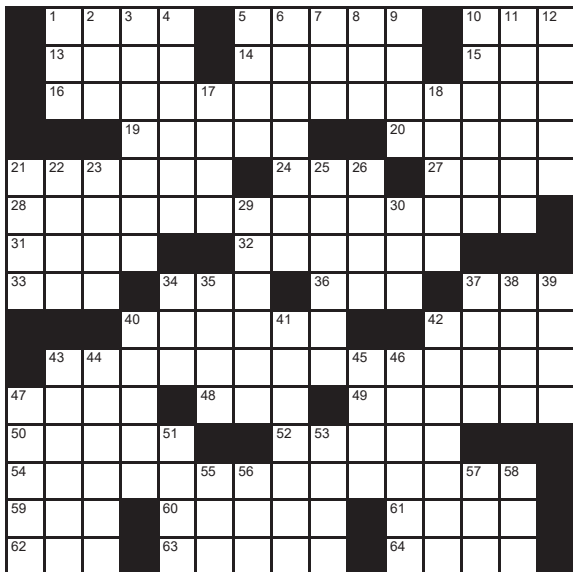
Plus, it's a lot of fun. Past highlights include Chinese lion dancers and a virtual reality experience about a coral reef restoration project. The expo is at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre every day of the convention 27-31 May. ■

Learn more and register at convention.rotary.org.

CROSSWORD

Advance planning

By Victor Fleming
Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas



Solution on **page 10**

ACROSS

- 1 They grow from acorns
- 5 Inedible orange
- 10 Mich. neighbor
- 13 "Just ____!"
- 14 1994 Nobel Peace Prize laureate
- 15 Black cuckoo
- 16 Start of an observation
- 19 Fancy feather
- 20 *Paradise* Lost figure
- 21 Phrase of desperation
- 24 Sox's city, on scoreboards
- 27 Acquires
- 28 Part 2 of the observation
- 31 Word with court or point
- 32 When happy hour might start
- 33 It may precede "A mouse!"
- 34 Apprehend, as a perp
- 36 Depot (abbr.)
- 37 Baton Rouge sch.
- 40 Containing salt
- 42 Some tavern regulars
- 43 Part 3 of the observation
- 47 Child support?

- 48 U.S. defense advisory grp.

- 49 Birdseed holder
- 50 Balance sheet plus
- 52 Chick of jazz
- 54 End of the observation
- 59 Dress line
- 60 Botanical seed-to-be
- 61 Competent
- 62 Orangutan or gibbon
- 63 Produce, as a show
- 64 Sailing ropes

DOWN

- 1 Mudder's morsel
- 2 Campfire remnant
- 3 Preclude from entering
- 4 Carve, as a statue
- 5 Beehive State city
- 6 Cinch
- 7 *Aladdin* monkey
- 8 Early Mets manager Hodges
- 9 *The Lord of the Rings* creatures
- 10 Aspiring actor, often
- 11 Congenital
- 12 Capricorn and Taurus
- 17 Tallow source
- 18 Dutch government seat, with "The"

- 21 Application form blank
- 22 Bassoon's kin
- 23 ____, line, and sinker
- 25 Compensate for
- 26 Clubs or hearts
- 29 Nuns' garb
- 30 Agcy. founded in 1933
- 34 "Count me out"
- 35 Alda or Ladd
- 37 "Get a ____ of that!"
- 38 Eye affliction
- 39 Bloc that dissolved in 1991
- 40 Animal in a roundup
- 41 Paganini or Machiavelli
- 42 Firmly believe in
- 43 Harmonious
- 44 "Open ____" (magical command)
- 45 Big hairdo, often
- 46 Watch with a sidelong glance
- 47 Buckwheat groats
- 51 'Vette roof option
- 53 Augural sign
- 55 *Law & Order* spinoff, casually
- 56 "King ____" (1978 novelty hit for Steve Martin)
- 57 Shout to a matador
- 58 Scream director Craven

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Soup with a sense of belonging

In New Zealand, boil-up is all about the shared experience

Rodney Wong and his wife, Angie, have been working with the Rangitāne, a Māori tribe, on projects in the Awapuni area for more than two decades, both on their own and through their Rotary club. So when he was thinking about the kind of food he would like to share with the Rotary world, the Māori concept of whanaungatanga — a sense of belonging that comes through shared experiences — came to mind, and with that, a traditional broth soup called boil-up.

“It’s one pot, and everyone eats from that same pot,” Wong says. “It’s shared, it’s wholesome, it’s not pretentious. It’s all those things that demonstrate that it doesn’t matter which country you come from, which city, which culture. You share one dish, and it has all the goodness in it that they could forage and put on the table at that time.”

WHAT IT IS: Traditionally, boil-up is a seasonal dish made from ingredients grown or foraged in a particular area. The soup typically includes meat, greens, and root vegetables, such as kūmara, New Zealand sweet potato. It can also include dried ingredients, such as shellfish, karengo (seaweed), and poaka (pork). While many people pair wild pork and pūhā (thistle), others use pork bones and watercress collected from streambanks.

FUSION FOOD: Wong says the dish reminds him of a typical Cantonese recipe that uses similar ingredients. “It isn’t that far off,” he says. “The addition of the sweetness of kūmara gives it a different taste.” Wong adds sliced ginger and dried orange peel to his soup to give it a southeastern Chinese flair. — DIANA SCHOBURG

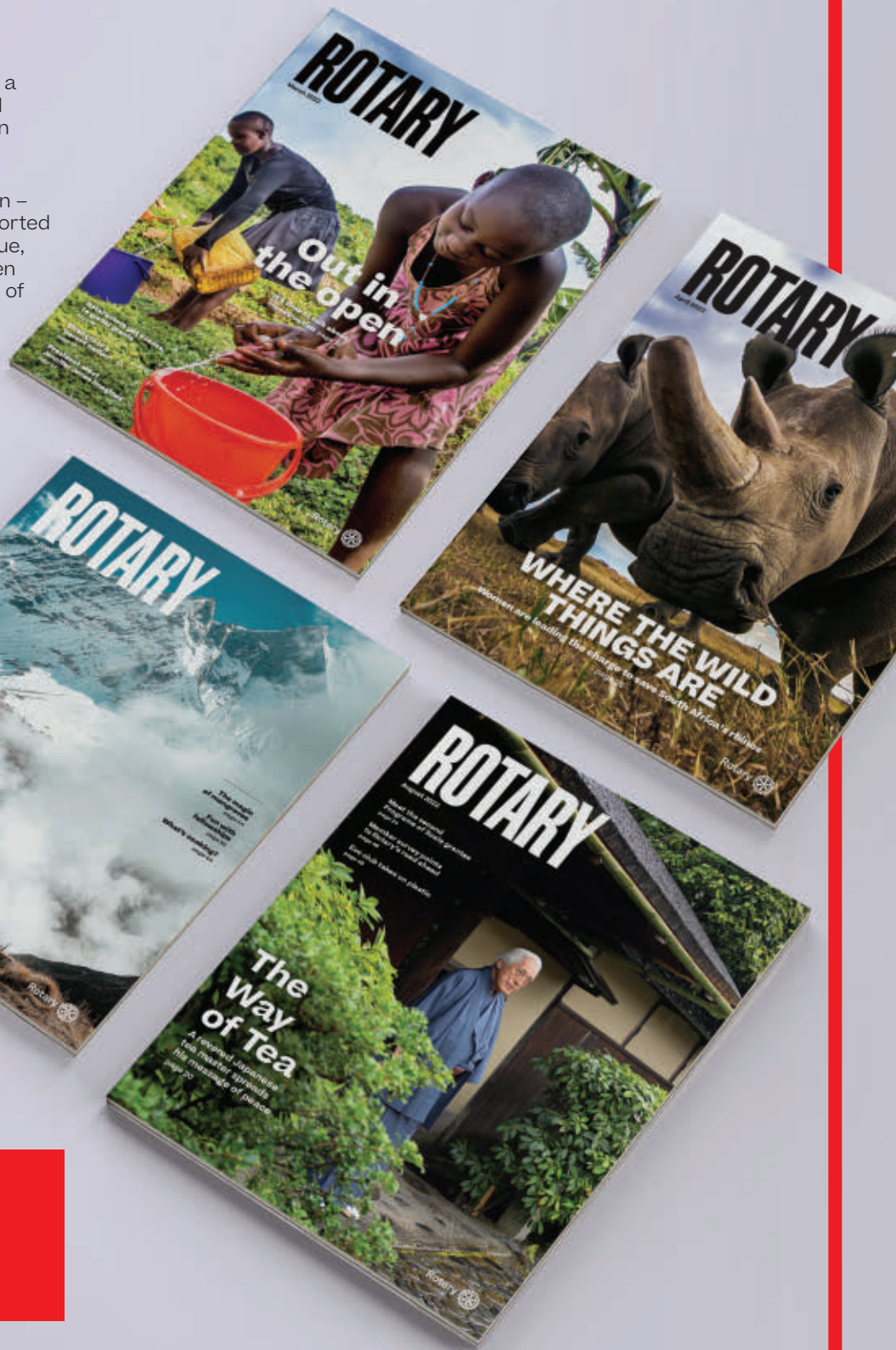
Rodney Wong
Rotary Club
of Awapuni,
New Zealand

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MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA
27-31 MAY 2023



MELBOURNE
2023

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