

Rotary

NOVEMBER 2025

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Let us give with gratitude

This November, as we celebrate The Rotary Foundation, I invite you to consider not only what we give but why we give. The Foundation is more than a fund for projects. It is the beating heart of our promise that service, rooted in trust and friendship, can create lasting change.

Our Action Plan calls us to increase our impact, and the Foundation is how we make this vision real. Since 1988, Rotary and our partners have immunized nearly 3 billion children against polio. We have committed more than \$2.6 billion to this cause, and last year alone we directed \$146 million toward the final push for eradication. These numbers are significant, but the true impact is not in statistics — it is in the lives of children who will never again fear polio. It is in the hope restored to families and the peace built in communities once defined by disease.

But polio is only one story among many. Each year, Rotary Peace Centers train new generations of leaders who will transform conflict into dialogue and division into understanding. In 2023-24, nearly 100 new fellows began their studies, continuing a legacy of more than 1,800 peacebuilders from over 140 countries. When we invest in them, we are planting seeds of peace that will bear fruit for decades to come.

The Foundation also touches lives through

district and global grants, supporting projects large and small. A clean water well for a rural community, scholarships for young professionals, medical care in the wake of disaster — these are not temporary gestures, but steps toward dignity, resilience, and opportunity. This is how Rotary service becomes lasting impact. And when natural disasters strike, our Foundation allows Rotary to act quickly with disaster response grants.

Our Foundation is not about what we can do alone but what we can do together. Each contribution, no matter its size, joins with others to create a collective act of faith in humanity and in the future.

The last mile of any great journey is always the hardest. We see this in our final steps toward ending polio, in our work for peace, and in every project that seeks to lift people out of despair. Yet every time we give, we declare that our work will continue regardless of the challenge.

This November, let us give with gratitude, with joy, and with hope. Through our Foundation, we *Unite for Good*, and in doing so, we leave behind not only projects but a legacy of peace, trust, and Service Above Self.

FRANCESCO AREZZO

President, Rotary International





YOU ARE HERE: Colombo, Sri Lanka

GREETINGS: Ayubowan (in Sinhala);
Vanakkam (in Tamil)

HIDDEN GEM: Tucked away in a commercial district of Colombo, the temple of Sri Ponnambalam Vanesar Kovil lies hidden inside a walled compound. Dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, the temple was founded in the mid-19th century and rebuilt entirely of granite in 1912. Its cavelike interior features ornate carvings of birds, flowers, and Hindu deities. The temple's design reflects the Hindu belief that the human body is a microcosm of the universe. The main shrine represents the human heart, or the center of the universe. Smaller shrines symbolize other human organs. Devotees move through the temple like blood circulating through the body.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER: While visiting in 2024 for an early childhood education project, Helena Dahlin, of the Rotary Club of Goleta, California, captured this image of light penetrating the temple's dark interior.

THE CLUB: Chartered in 1929, the Rotary Club of Colombo is Sri Lanka's oldest and has more than 100 members.

Rotary

MAGAZINE

November 2025

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ROTARY FOUNDATION MONTH

November is Rotary Foundation Month, a time to celebrate and support the life-changing work of our Foundation. Since The Rotary Foundation began, it has awarded more than US\$6.5 billion to help members transform communities locally and globally. We are deeply grateful to Rotary members like you who make Doing Good in the World possible.

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Common cause

The first fellows at Rotary's Istanbul peace center unite around a shared purpose

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Photography by Faid Elgizry

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An American chef eats his way through the Rotary Convention host city

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Sustained by donations from nursing women, milk banks provide a lifeline to vulnerable newborns

By Elly Fishman

Photography by Jeff Marini

On the cover: With help, one peace fellow can spark significant change: A new class of peacebuilders shares strategies.
Photograph by Faid Elgizry



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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.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Times of opportunity

May you live in interesting times! For years, this proverbial phrase was cited as an old Chinese curse. Having grown up in China, I had never heard it. Nor could I find a Chinese equivalent. Only recently did I learn it might have Western roots.

Robert F. Kennedy, the late American politician, contributed to this apparent myth. In a 1966 speech, Kennedy said:

“There is a Chinese curse which says, ‘May he live in interesting times.’ Like it or not, we live in interesting times. They are times of danger and uncertainty; but they are also the most creative of any time in the history of mankind.”

Despite the misattribution, I find Kennedy’s interpretation inspiring, particularly as we ponder recent unexpected events at Rotary: the passing of SangKoo Yun from Korea, who was to become the 2026-27 RI president, and before that the resignation of Mário César Martins de Camargo of Brazil three weeks before he was to take office as president.

Following the RI Constitution and Bylaws, the RI Board selected Francesco Arezzo of Italy to lead Rotary this year, and Olayinka Hakeem Babalola of Nigeria was chosen as RI president for 2026-27.

“Interesting times” can be challenging. They also spur new energy and creativity. As we grow our organization, let’s unite around our new leaders. — WEN HUANG

2026-27 ROTARY PRESIDENT

Olayinka Hakeem Babalola

Olayinka Hakeem Babalola, a champion of Rotary’s peacebuilding and polio eradication efforts, has been selected to serve as the 2026-27 Rotary president beginning 1 July.

A longtime member of the Rotary Club of Trans Amadi, Nigeria, Babalola will become the second African to lead Rotary, after Jonathan Majiyagbe of Nigeria, who served in 2003-04.

“Rotary transforms lives — not only through the projects we deliver but through the hope we share, the meaningful relationships we build, and the shared purpose we inspire,” says Babalola. “In a world that urgently needs dialogue and understanding, I’m committed to helping Rotary advance peace, expand opportunity, and support communities — and each of us — to grow and thrive.”

Babalola has supported peacebuilding and community development across Africa throughout his time in Rotary. He has been actively involved with the Rotary Peace Center at Makerere University in Uganda — the organization’s first on the continent — where he has helped peace fellows apply their training through local initiatives.

He has been deeply engaged in Rotary’s polio eradication efforts, serving on the End Polio Now Countdown to History Campaign Committee and advising the Nigeria PolioPlus Committee. The African region was declared wild poliovirus-free in 2020.

Babalola spent more than 30 years working in the oil and gas sector, including in senior leadership roles at Shell. He became involved with Rotary in 1984 through Rotaract and joined the Rotary Club of Trans Amadi in 1994. He has since held a number of leadership roles within the organization and currently serves as a trustee of ShelterBox UK, Rotary’s project partner for disaster relief.

He and his wife, Preba, support The Rotary Foundation through a named endowed fund and are members of the Arch Klumph Society. ■



Letters to the editor

DIVE RIGHT IN

Kudos on the wonderful article about Diveheart ["Making waves," August]! This is a well-deserved recognition of a great program.

As a longtime member of the Rotary Club of Darien, Illinois, I had the pleasure of meeting [Diveheart founder] Jim Elliott through presentations to our club and other Rotary events. I retired last year to Arizona and joined the Rotary Club of Phoenix. Last week I opened our regular meeting and used this article to show how Rotary impacts lives in so many good ways. I was delighted at how many members had already read the article and were aware of Diveheart.

Ronald J. Broida, Phoenix

NETWORK ACCESS

I was excited to read the article in the August issue that offered tips on networking and leadership development ["How to succeed in business ..."]. Suggestions included Rotary and Rotaract clubs, DACdb [District and Club Database], and even Rotary Action Groups.

Yet, poring over eight pages with detailed networking suggestions, I searched in vain for one of the best networking opportunities offered by Rotary International: Rotary Fellowships! While some fellowships are formed around leisure and hobbies, many others are concerned with business and vocations, offering great opportunities for connections.

Even more importantly, there is a fellowship whose core purpose is networking and leadership development. The Rotary Means Business Fellowship was formally approved in 2013 after almost a decade of development in California. Since then, it has become one of the fastest growing fellowships, with over 2,000 members and more than 200 chapters. RMBF members and chapters are located on every continent except Antarctica.

The fellowship's mission statement honors Paul Harris' original vision of Rotary: "The purpose of the Rotary Means Business Fellowship is to support the success of fellow Rotarians by doing business with them and referring

others to them in order to build stronger businesses, communities, members, Foundation, clubs and ultimately Rotary."

To find active RMBF chapters in their area, Rotary members can search the chapter locator map on the website rotarymeansbusiness.org. Or they can inquire at info@rotarymeansbusiness.org. If no chapter exists in their area, we will be happy to assist them in forming one.

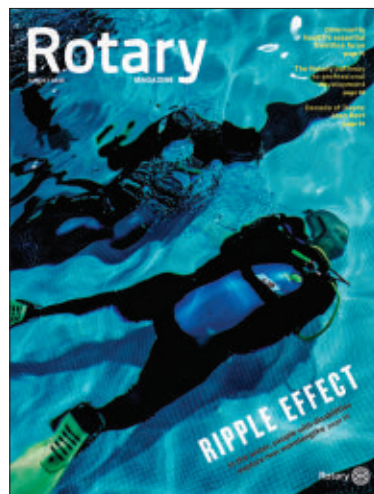
Please include fellowships in future articles covering the benefits of Rotary membership, and remember to include the Rotary Means Business Fellowship when the topic is networking.

Mark Burchill, Santa Rosa, California
Founder and chair emeritus, Rotary Means Business Fellowship

A LEGACY OF EMPOWERING GIRLS

The courageous and outspoken Afghan American educator Razia Jan died recently, leaving behind an impressive legacy of bringing the opportunity for all young people to learn. Razia was a fearless voice for young girls in Afghanistan despite threats from the Taliban and restrictions on the role of women, including in seeking an education.

Razia started the Zabuli Education Center for girls in a village 30 miles from the capital city of Kabul. She was a demanding principal, requiring her students to come to school with clean



OVERHEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Our August cover story focused on Diveheart, a program that helps people with disabilities build confidence and experience the joy of scuba diving. A short video about the program was posted on some of Rotary's social media channels. Watch the full video at [youtube.com/rotaryinternational](https://www.youtube.com/rotaryinternational).

Absolutely inspiring! This is a beautiful example of how Rotary opens up new possibilities through service and adventure.
Ehab Wageh
► via LinkedIn

This is such a great program. ... Thank you for what you do.
Wendy Lacroix
► via LinkedIn

CONNECT

clothes and brushed teeth. She had regular meetings with village leaders and fathers who were unwilling to challenge her demands for support. Every morning she would drink the water from the school hose to ensure it wasn't contaminated by the Taliban. With support from abroad and her Rotary colleagues back in Massachusetts, Razia expanded her school, increased her enrollment, and graduated young women with writing, reading, math, and science skills.

I had the distinct honor of hosting Razia at our home where she told her story of the importance of education for young girls and ending the limitations on providing the skills necessary to change a restrictive culture. Razia may be gone, but her school remains with a staff of brave teachers, and her commitment to break down the barriers of discrimination lives on. Thank you, Razia, for all you have accomplished for the girls of Afghanistan.

Mike Kryzanek, Whitman, Massachusetts

Editor's note: Razia Jan (1944-2025) was a member of the Rotary Club of Duxbury, Massachusetts, and later the Rotary Club of Los Angeles. In 2015, Rotary recognized her as one of six Global Women of Action as part of its People of Action Honors program.

IS IT THE TRUTH?

Rotary's Four-Way Test is meant to be used as a moral compass. This simple test, used for business decisions in the beginning, has become a key part of life choices for many Rotarians.

It is hard to justify a decision if it is based on falsehoods and untrue claims. It is hard to rationalize a choice if it will



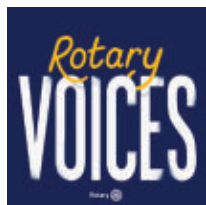
Razia Jan, a U.S.-based Rotarian who started a school for girls in her native Afghanistan, was honored at the United Nations in 2015.

not be beneficial to all concerned. It is most difficult to build goodwill and better friendships when the values of the first two rules are not met. And it is near impossible for anything to be beneficial to all concerned when no one is willing to adhere to the previously established principles.

These are the times that try the consciences of Rotarians in the United States. In our world today, there is a concerted effort underway to prevent anyone from getting the truth. For years we have heard claims that are based on false assumptions and nonexistent evidence.

If we are to be true Rotarians, then it is imperative that we ask for the unvarnished truth, even if the facts prove to be contrary to our own personal beliefs. There is a reason that “Is it the truth?” is the first rule of The Four-Way Test. Without the truth, we are left with a situation where chaos reigns over all we hold dear.

Steve Nye, Shelby, North Carolina



ON THE PODCAST

A recent episode of *Rotary Voices* highlights Rotary's work in organ donation, from addressing stigmas to increasing access. Meet the Rotary members championing this cause, hear their inspiring personal journeys, and learn how you can get involved at on.rotary.org/podcast.

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Born from the Rotary Club of Naples, FL, Meals of Hope has packed over 100 million meals across the U.S., addressing food insecurity while strengthening communities.

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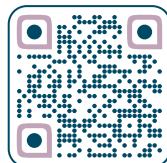


Build stronger bonds among members and the community.



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THE SPECIALIST

Every stitch counts

From runways to shelters, a dressmaker's work is put to good use

At 82 I'm retired now, but for years I designed and made wedding dresses and clothing for historical reenactments. I had a bridal salon where you could buy the dress, you could rent the dress (bridesmaids loved that), or you could have us make you a custom gown.

We lived in California then and got involved with a group that does American Civil War reenactments. I dressed the women. I didn't make costumes; I made clothing you could wear on the street. Men would come to get gift certificates for the ballgowns as their wives' Christmas presents.

I made a dress for a young woman who worked her way up to the Miss California pageant. She won first place in my dress. A couple of my brides have also

appeared in a fashion show for handcrafted clothing. When you're working, all you can see are the difficulty and the problems. When you see it six months later coming down the runway, by golly, that looks good!

By chance I learned about Days for Girls, an organization that makes reusable menstrual pads for girls and women in need. I wanted to get involved. I help out with sewing workshops. People who know how to sew bring their machines, but there are lots of steps where you don't have to know how to sew.

I first learned about the problem of textile waste from watching the HBO documentary *Brandy Hellville and the Cult of Fast Fashion*. That movie opened my eyes. You've seen the mess in the oceans. But nobody is talking about the mountains of textiles going into the sea.

Many of my friends sew. I tell them they're not allowed to throw out their scraps. I make something useful out of them. I take small scraps and make them into little girl dresses. With large pieces, I'm going to start making adult clothing. It can go to facilities that take care of women in recovery, women's shelters, things like that. Taking this fabric that would otherwise end up in a dump somewhere and making it useful makes me feel good. As a Rotarian, there's nothing that makes you feel better than doing something for somebody else. You give and the feeling comes back. ■

Vida Peterson
Rotary Club of
Port Moody,
British Columbia

Retired
dressmaker

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The greatest equalizer? Education

PEACEBUILDING

Can peace be measured?

Co-founded by a Rotary Peace Fellow, one research group is trying to do just that

Colombian 20-something Yuliana Andrea David Hidalgo's life has been defined by the crossfire in her nation's decades-long war between government and rebel forces, complicated by the violence of drug cartels and criminal gangs.

While a 2016 peace accord has taken tenuous hold, her country still ranks among the least peaceful places on earth in the Institute for Economics and Peace's 2025 Global Peace Index, based on nationwide indicators like numbers of deaths from conflict, incarceration rates, military spending, and public perceptions of criminality.

And yet, to listen to Yuliana and others in her village of Las Cruces, there are more immediate, quotidian ways to measure peace. Like kids hiding. "Before when you heard gunshots, everyone would run to hide under the bed or in some safe place in the house," she says. "Now kids hide under the bed or in safe places because they're playing hide-and-seek."

Her neighbors and compatriots have picked up on similar signals of returning stability and peace, such as being able to safely hold a traditional dayslong funeral; well-maintained roads; the humane treatment of stray animals; and not needing to sleep with boots on (once a reasonable precaution in case the need arose to flee in a hurry).

An innovative new approach to measuring and fostering peace is built around the insight that such everyday habits and behaviors can

tell you as much — maybe more — about the peacefulness of a place than high-level statistics on crime rates and arms imports.

Everyday Peace Indicators, a pioneering nonprofit organization, has started gathering hundreds of these seemingly ordinary and unremarkable data points in an attempt to better capture difficult-to-measure concepts of peace, reconciliation, and governance in areas affected by conflict. With this fuller picture of peace at a community level, the group hopes, people in power can make better decisions.

"We see ourselves as trying to be vessels, communicating everyday people's priorities to policymakers and to decision-makers," explains Pamina Firchow, EPI founding executive director and Brandeis University associate professor. She and professor Roger Mac Ginty from Durham University incubated the EPI concept after she completed a Rotary Peace Fellowship in 2005.

EPI's work is part of a "grounded accountability" movement that brings power, ownership, and decision making for peacebuilding to the communities most affected by conflict, says Carl Stauffer, a former United States Institute of Peace expert. "You can persuade people to sign [peace accords]," he says. "But if you haven't transformed relationships at multiple levels in society, more than likely that agreement is going to fall apart."

Firchow recognized the need for EPI early in her career when she worked in arms control policy far from the field and felt frustrated.

To learn more about Rotary Peace Fellowships, visit rotary.org/peace-fellowships.



The body of indicators “really tells you a story that peace is not just the end of violence. Peace is so much more.”

“Recommendations on what were do’s and don’ts in arms control came from the Global North without much, or sometimes any, consultation,” she says, noting that a more bottom-up approach could have prevented mistakes. For example, in some disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs, she explains, ex-combatants returned only broken guns and kept working ones but still received benefits; or ex-combatants who gave up their arms were targeted and killed because sufficient protection wasn’t offered.

Instead of allowing outside experts to determine the terms of peace, wouldn’t it be better, Fircchow wondered, to ask people in areas affected by conflict what peace looked like to them?

Over the past decade and a half, Fircchow — often collaborating with other Rotary Peace Fellows — has done just that, bringing this “everyday peace” approach of community-level assessment to countries such as Colombia, Sri Lanka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, South Africa, Uganda, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Afghanistan. EPI, formally incorporated as a nonprofit in 2018, has also worked in Oakland, California, on public safety reform. The body of indicators collected, says Fircchow, “really tells you a story that peace is not just the end of violence. Peace is so much more.”

EPI partners with peacebuilding groups looking to design effective projects. The organization’s data gathering is an intimate process



with community members in small groups generating long lists of how people measure peacefulness for themselves. Working with a wider group of people, EPI refines and ranks items on the lists. Then those data points are used to help design programming that will sustain and build the peace envisioned by local people. The same data is then used to measure the effectiveness of the programming — whether it worked or needs refinement.

From top: Peacebuilders in Atiak, Uganda, help Everyday Peace Indicators pilot its approach; a participant in an EPI project in California displays written peace indicators.



The EPI team poses for a photo in 2023 in Sumapaz, Colombia. The organization has done some of its most defining work there, including a report to magistrates hammering out the nation's war reparations process.

BY THE NUMBERS
\$20 trillion
 Impact of violence on global economy in 2024

98
 Countries involved in external conflict in last 5 years

13%
 Share of conflicts that end with peace deal or clear victory

Source: Global Peace Index 2025

EPI's work can help funders drill down to community-defined needs for safety and social cohesion, like clean water, safety for motorcycle taxis, or secure education for girls.

This zoomed-in approach adds to the higher-level data analysis by groups like the Institute for Economics and Peace, which has produced its annual Global Peace Index rankings of countries since 2007. It also builds on work that the institute, Rotary, and others have done to promote Positive Peace, the concept that sustainable peace requires conditions like good relations with neighbors and more equitable distribution of resources, not just the absence of violence.

Some of the EPI's most defining work is in Colombia. The group's executive director for that country, Eduardo González, says findings there have "revolutionized" the understanding of peace from a policy perspective. He points to EPI's recent report to the magistrates hammering out the nation's war reparations process. Thousands of indicators were gathered across dozens of communities giving nuanced definitions of reparation, truth, and justice.

Based on such findings, war vic-

tims don't necessarily want international tribunals or even prison for perpetrators. Sometimes restorative justice can be more useful to them. "Day-to-day knowledge, wisdom, and experience" related to the violence of war, González says, reveals a yearning for "a more expansive vision of truth ... emotional truth," beyond just the "little bit of reality" of forensic truth in traditional retributive justice proceedings.

He describes feeling moved by some people's definition of justice for those who committed war crimes in their village. They told him they wanted to see the perpetrators "sweat." "They wanted to see people doing actual works in the community, where these things happened," González explains, "so they will build a school; they will build a road; they will build a hospital."

In Colombia, EPI has adapted a research method known as photovoice in which participants use photography to identify and discuss community issues. Yuliana, the young woman from Las Cruces, captured a haunting image of two little kids peering out from under a bed. Its ambiguous depiction — fun or fear — illustrated the peace

indicator she identified of whether people need to hide for safety.

In Nepal, Rotary Peace Fellow Yvette Selim's research echoed a core EPI principle: Real understanding of peace comes from listening to those living it every day. On one occasion, an upper-caste interpreter suggested to Selim that the "poor, simple" Nepalese she was interviewing about peace and post-conflict justice would not understand her questions. That turned out to be far from true. "I believed that people, whether they were illiterate, educated, or otherwise, would have opinions on these matters, all of which were valuable and valid," she says.

Selim, who is now EPI's research and communications adviser, says Rotary members, too, can incorporate the EPI approach into the community needs assessments clubs carry out before designing service projects. It puts the community at the center of solutions. "Community members are experts in what matters to them," she says. "Finding ways to understand peace at a local level ensures that top-down and bottom-up efforts complement each other." — CLARA GERMANI

Short takes

This past summer, the World Health Organization certified Suriname and Timor-Leste as free of malaria. Suriname is the first malaria-free country in the Amazon Basin.



This month, district Rotary Foundation chairs can nominate Rotary members to receive The Rotary Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service. Learn more at rotary.org/awards.



PROFILE

Float on

Ray Bushnell spreads Rotary's story through the Rose Parade

Ray Bushnell
Rotary Club
of Arcadia,
California

Since 1890, the Rose Parade has rolled through Pasadena, California, now attracting hundreds of thousands of attendees with millions more watching from home. Growing up, Ray Bushnell recalls his mom parking him and his sisters in front of their black and white television every New Year's Day to view it.

These days, Bushnell still loves to watch the parade, but from a different vantage point. For 31 years, he has served on the Rotary Rose Parade Float Committee, where his job is to raise funds and make Rotary's float a memorable one.

"Our hope is that it's easy to understand, beautiful, and it'll have a little bit of something for everybody," he says. "If it inspires somebody to help with a park cleanup or eradicating polio, that's ultimately the goal."

The float committee begins preparing a year in advance — as one year's float passes by, Bushnell starts thinking about the next one. The parade's catch: Each float must be covered entirely with organic material, anything from coffee beans to pepper.

"There's so much creativity. A certain color may not occur in nature — or maybe the irises are too blue this year. They'll mix flower petals in a food processor or iron out corn husks," he says. "One year we needed something that would look like alligator skin, so we took brussels sprouts and cut them in half."

Bushnell has a professional background in fundraising, and after all these years he still enjoys expressing to Rotarians the parade's power to bring Rotary to new audiences. "It's a big part of what I do," he says. "They'll probably have to push me out and say, 'It's time for you to go out to the pasture, go enjoy life.'" — JP SWENSON

New short, shareable videos showcase the causes that Rotary champions and its impact around the world. Download them at on.rotary.org/causes-videos.

The annual West Africa Project Fair will be held 5-12 November in Lome, Togo. Register at rotarywapf.org.



World Interact Week is 3-9 November, celebrating Rotary's nearly 16,000 Interact clubs. More than 2,400 clubs formed in 2024-25.

People of action around the globe

By Brad Webber



United States

A talent showcase held by the Rotary Club of Carpinteria in California has raised more than \$325,000 since 2009. The club has used the funds for service projects, including purchasing about 300 musical instruments for children and awarding around 100 college scholarships. A sellout for the 16th straight year, April's showcase presented a range of entertainers, including dancers, musicians, storytellers, comedians, and jugglers. "All of our members play a role in one way or another" in organizing the show, says Club President David Powdrell. "Find what brings you joy and get involved" is our motto." Several participants over the years have gone on to become professional entertainers, including Will Breman, who found success on the television series *The Voice*, and magician Mark Collier.



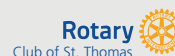
28

Seasons of the television series *The Voice*



Canada

When leaders at the Rotary Club of St. Thomas in Ontario noticed a lack of engagement, the club adapted by adjusting its schedule to allow more time for service. The result has been astonishing, with an energized mission and growing interest by prospective members, says Barbara Warnock, immediate past president of the club. "Meeting every week was a deterrent to new members, and we felt that we needed to have more active participation in local projects," says Warnock. The club now meets the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, with the other Wednesdays designated for volunteering at two local organizations: Grace Café, a street mission and soup kitchen, and Harvest Hands, which collects and distributes edible foodstuffs that would ordinarily have been discarded. "Our Rotarians have embraced this work to contribute to feeding those in need," Warnock says.



US\$18 million+

Value of food products rescued by Harvest Hands



1,978

Publicly funded
primary schools
in Scotland

Scotland

The Rotary Club of Elgin supports numerous initiatives for youth, including a Rotaract club, an Interact club, and several RotaKids clubs, which are a program of Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland to build citizenship and leadership skills in children under 12. At the Greenwards school, RotaKids clubs are a go-to activity, reports teacher Kirstin Mustard, one of four club leaders. In February, the RotaKids held a rummage sale, collecting about \$100 for The Rotary Foundation. In June, they sponsored a walk that raised about \$3,200 for Harry's Hat, a charity for the condition hydrocephalus, a buildup of water in the brain. That organization assisted the family of one of the youths. Stephanie Urchick, 2024-25 RI president, visited that month and was treated to a performance based on a history project. "It was truly inspiring to see the passion, creativity, and compassion shown by the pupils," she says. "Their community spirit shines through."



India

The Rotary Club of Coimbatore Cotton City designed a project to raise awareness about the illicit practice of caging and trading wild parakeets. Volunteers meticulously placed nearly a ton of millet grains in a 1,200-square-foot artwork depicting the clipping of a parakeet's wings. "Each grain represents hope," says Niketu Shah, a club leader who directed the project, part of a larger effort by an animal rescue organization and supported by the state forest department. The artwork was completed in May at a shopping center. Last year, the club helped provide the forest department with an X-ray machine for birds. In captivity, many birds suffer from disease and stress that reduces their lifespan.



11

Native wild
parakeet
species
in India

\$525

Monthly salary
of entry-level
schoolteachers
in the Philippines

Philippines

Many people in the Philippines lack access to affordable dental care. To address the problem, members of the Rotary Club of Bacolod Central launched Project Smile, which provides dental care to teachers at public schools. Rotarians screen recipients and schedule extractions, fillings, and fittings. The club pays the costs not covered through the volunteer care of the Negros Occidental chapter of the Philippine Dental Association and supplemental funding from the local congressional office. Thus far, the project has delivered 55 dental makeovers. "These dedicated heroes often choose to spend their own money to supplement their teaching needs rather than on their personal health and well-being," says club member Maria "Toks" Lopez.



GOODWILL

A crash course on club growth

Virginia Rotarians promote satellite clubs to find new members

By Arnold R. Grahil



Four-and-a-half years into a campaign to promote innovative club models, District 7600 in Virginia had formed exactly one new club.

"That's a lot of effort to form one club," recalls Rich Salon, Zone 33's advocate for innovative member pathways and chair of the district's new club development committee. "I told myself, we've got to do something different. We're kind of banging our heads against the wall."

In response, the district held a tournament-style competition between clubs that resulted in nine new satellite clubs and an annual membership gain in the district for the first time in more than a decade. The competition spurred the interest of club presidents but went further, with district leaders backing it up with a solid plan to get support from current and prospective members.

One of the first hurdles district leaders had to overcome was resistance to the term "satellite club." "We've learned that if we go into clubs and say, 'Hey, we want to start a satellite club,' they usually would light torches, grab pitchforks, and chase us out of town," says Tracy Lego, chair of the district's membership committee. "They look at that as, 'Oh, you're just going to steal our members for that satellite club, and they're going to become their own [independent] club. We need to add members not just create more clubs to have thinner clubs.'"

Instead, the district promotes the concept of companion clubs, which are a type of satellite club that has no intention of ever spinning off as its own club. As with

other satellite clubs, a companion club is part of the sponsor club, but it has its own meetings, projects, bylaws, and board that are managed in collaboration with the sponsor club.

The district then held several Discover Rotary events, which are special meetings designed to give a small group of prospective members a crash course on everything they'd need to know about Rotary.

"It's a cut and dry meeting," Lego explains. "They learn what Rotary is, what we are about as an organization, what the club is, what the dues are, and what the club does."

Each event has been bringing in from 12 to 15 new members. Because these new members know exactly what to expect, they often hit the ground running and are willing to take on leadership roles.

"One of the myths is that those who are joining the satellite clubs are only joining to meet and do service, they're not really there for leadership. I can tell you that is absolutely 100 percent false," notes Lego, who himself has served in multiple roles, including club membership chair, club president, assistant governor, and now district governor-nominee.

Salon says another key is to immediately ask incoming members to shape the format of their club. This includes when, where, and how often the club is going to meet and what type of club it is going to be — cause-based, interest-based, service-based, corporate, or passport being popular options.

"Involve new members. Give them a voice," Lego says. "If you empower them and make them feel their voice is heard and needed, they step up and they don't leave."

Salon and Lego offer the following additional tips on launching a membership drive.

- Promote innovation early and often. Salon took his message to many venues, including club presentations and district conferences.
- Approach club presidents with a video message. "All roads run through the club president," says Salon. He used Vimeo to record videos under 2 minutes that he sent to club presidents instead of emails in order to stand above all the other emails presidents receive.
- Choose the right time of year to launch a drive. Salon feels January through March is the best time in his area to challenge clubs to form new satellites because other months of the Rotary year are busy with leadership changeover, fundraisers, or award presentations.
- Neutralize barriers to membership. Lego feels the four classic barriers that keep people from joining are time, money, a lack of awareness, and bad club culture. To counter these, he suggests that you keep meetings efficient; forgo meals or otherwise keep costs low; hold informational events like Discover Rotary (the district has a slide deck presentation available for download); and involve new members in establishing the tone and atmosphere of the club. ■



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Water Summit 17 in Calgary
a success!



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Details and registration on the
WASH-RAG website: www.wash-rag.org



ESSAY

Dream girls

High-tech upgrades help students in India turn aspirations into reality

By Charlene Drummer and Jeff Krolík



Eighteen-year-old Hareesha has big dreams. She wants to go into medicine, eliminate the poverty that many people in her part of southern India endure, and lift up her community. That she's able to kindle such lofty hopes is thanks, first, to a promise: Her father pledged to provide her and her two siblings an education.

That's no small feat. Her parents struggled to feed Hareesha and her brother and sister. The level of desperation in their village is so extreme that some parents even sell their daughters into early marriages at age 14 or 15. When a wealthy family offered to buy Hareesha, her father refused. "He vowed to work hard and make sure we ate, even if he didn't," she says. "He promised to give us the education we deserved."

Girls living in the remote forest villages of Andhra Pradesh state have historically been deprived of access to a quality education. Because of that, they have almost no opportunity for economic advancement or options outside the home. These girls face numerous challenges, including low literacy rates, limited health care access, discrimination, and social exclusion. Being inadequately educated condemns these girls to a life of limitations.

Hareesha's father did not want that life for her. He encouraged her to get an education at one of the state's tribal schools ("tribal" is the designation adopted by the Indian government to recognize the Adivasi ethnic groups, who are considered to be the original inhabitants of the broader Indian subcontinent and comprise about 9 percent of India's population). In conjunction with the federal government, the state's Tribal Welfare Department has built such schools to alleviate poverty and prevent child marriages.

Hareesha's parents enrolled her at the Tribal Welfare Girls' Residential School and College of Excellence in Vissannapeta. About 640 girls, in grades five through 12, attend the school, where they receive a basic education, as well as food, clothing, and housing. However, the girls still face limited opportunities for advancement because the government lacks sufficient resources to provide a fundamental component that is crucial to being competitive in the

modern world: access to digital tools and resources.

Bobba Venkatadri found that disparity troubling. Born in Andhra Pradesh in 1943, Venkatadri had attended Zilla Parishad High School in Unguturu, India. He went on to graduate from college — the first in his family to accomplish that educational feat — and move to the United States, where he had a successful career in the pharmaceutical industry and as a venture capitalist.

But Venkatadri never forgot where his journey had begun, and 10 years ago, on one of his regular return visits to Andhra Pradesh, he focused his attention on his former high school. "When I went back and looked at the village, all the well-to-do kids had left my school and were now going to private schools where they have the computer labs, the STEM labs, and digital classrooms," says Venkatadri. "Those kids are getting ahead, getting into the better colleges, getting the better jobs. Whereas these poor kids are being left behind. These girls, because of the lack of education and personal growth opportunities, are forced to marry when they are 15 and 16."

Venkatadri decided to make it his mission to help transform the lives of children with disadvantages in his native country by equipping them with 21st-century digital learning tools. What's more, in July 2020, he joined the Rotary Club of Burlingame & Hillsborough, California, where we are also members. He'd soon realize how vital Rotary's vast global network and sterling reputation could be in helping him achieve his goals.

Venkatadri began by enlisting the club's international service committee to educate other club members about the challenges faced by girls from tribal communities in India. He explained how a digital education could help them. With that in mind, he developed a sustainable fivefold plan to provide schools with modern computer and STEM labs; train teachers to maximize those digital tools; monitor students' academic progress; promote parent and community involvement; and install solar panels and provide battery storage to ensure uninterrupted internet service in those remote villages.

The club began to implement its plan at Venkatadri's alma mater, the Zilla Parishad High School in Unguturu. With

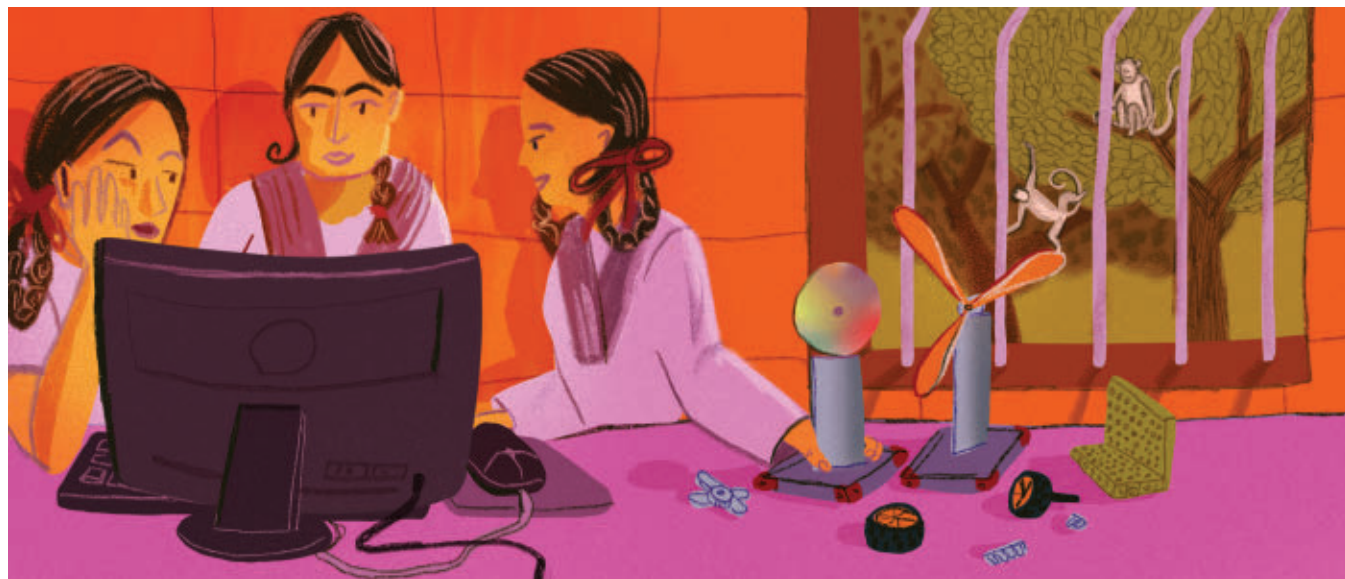
the Rotary Club of Vijayawada taking the lead in India, the team raised \$63,000, including a \$28,000 global grant from The Rotary Foundation. The members also allied with the Kakinada Engineering Alumni Trust for Service; founded in 2014 and known as KEATS, the organization, as its website explains, aspires to lift up vulnerable members of society "through knowledge, skill-building, and sustainable development programs in the areas of education, empowerment, and environment."

Together, the partners installed computer and STEM labs, provided the essential educational software, and trained and supported teachers at the Unguturu school as they adapted to the new digital learning environment. Collaborating with KEATS, the Vijayawada club also closely monitored students' progress. Since the project was launched in December 2022, the percentage of the school's students who graduate has climbed from 46 percent to 94 percent, and average test scores in key subjects have risen from 68 percent to 80 percent. The school administration reports that "the use of technology has enhanced teaching efficiency and facilitated better student engagement," while the local government in Andhra Pradesh has embraced the initiative and is committed to ensuring its sustainability in the years ahead.

Word of the project's success got around. The Rotary Club of Vijayawada Midtown reached out to Venkatadri and asked to partner with him and his team to help bring a tribal school for girls into the digital age. With KEATS and the Rotary Club of Burlingame & Hillsborough again on board, this new partnership added two additional allies: the Andhra Pradesh Tribal Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society, or APTWREIS, which manages schools, and the Andhra Pradesh Non-Resident Telugu Society (APNRTS), which coordinates the strategic use of resources of Indians living abroad.

And the school this newly assembled team identified to help was the Tribal Welfare Girls' Residential School and College of Excellence in Vissannapeta — the same school that Hareesha attends.

Once again a flurry of fundraising followed, raising more than \$90,000 from clubs and districts in California and India and netting a \$40,000 global grant. That money was used to provide teacher



training and equip the Vissannapeta school with two computer labs and two STEM labs.

As the Vissannapeta project progressed, the team recognized additional needs at the school. Internet connections and power sources were inadequate, available water was unsanitary, and monkeys routinely invaded the campus and interfered with the girls' learning. The team secured an additional \$132,700 from corporations, nonprofits, and individuals to provide infrastructure improvements, including solar power, clean water, and barriers to keep out the pesky monkeys. One significant donor, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, a multinational, India-based pharmaceutical company, affirmed that it was Rotary's participation in the project that led it to donate \$100,000 for infrastructure improvements.

The school inaugurated the new computer and STEM labs in December 2024. With Venkatadri and other members of the Rotary club looking on, Hareesha and her classmates celebrated the new improvements in a festive, dance-filled parade. She and her classmates were thrilled about the new labs and the opportunities now available to them. Their excitement was not merely something of the moment: Test scores at the school have already shown significant improvement.

Not resting on their laurels, that same team — the Vijayawada Midtown and Burlingame & Hillsborough clubs

and their alphabet-soup allies: KEATS, APNRTS, and APTWREIS — turned its attention to a third school in Andhra Pradesh, the Tribal Welfare Girls' Residential School and Junior College in Busarajupalle. The team raised \$117,000, including \$52,000 from a third global grant, and this fall the school introduced two new computer labs and two STEM labs. In 2026, Venkatadri and the Rotary Club of Burlingame & Hillsborough plan to get the team together yet again to replicate the three earlier initiatives at two additional schools in Andhra Pradesh.

"Education is the greatest equalizer between the rich and the poor," insists Venkatadri. His mission to transform the lives of 10,000 children in the same part of India that launched his life's journey is well underway. But as Venkatadri acknowledges, it is Rotary's strength and reputation, as well as its support for basic education and literacy — one of Rotary's areas of focus — that have made these projects not only possible but successful.

Evaluating these projects strictly from the perspective of fundraising, they have raised nearly \$725,000; donors included not only The Rotary Foundation but 24 Rotary clubs and three Rotary districts in the United States and India, as well as a conglomeration of corporations, nonprofits, and individual donors, all of whom, familiar with Rotary's reputation, knew that their investment would be wise and well spent.

The success of these projects, however, is not to be measured by the bottom line. Investing in these girls not only gives them a chance to find jobs and escape the cycle of poverty but also empowers them to serve others, become leaders, and effectuate widespread change.

Look no further than Hareesha for evidence of that. She shared her story with several of us from the California club when we attended the inauguration of the computer and STEM labs at her school. "My parents have high hopes for me," she told us. "I want to become a cardiologist because my niece passed away due to heart disease. If we had a doctor in the family, that child would have had a happy life. That is why I'm focused on pursuing a career of becoming a doctor."

Buoyed by the opportunities now available to her, Hareesha is looking beyond what she can do for her family and her village. "After I become a doctor, I want to eliminate poverty and see the country develop," she said. "I want to change the world around me. I know that will take time, but I will definitely do it. This is my dream."

And so Venkatadri's dream nurtured Hareesha's dream — a dream sustained, and given the possibility to become real, by Rotary. ■

Charlene Drummer and Jeff Krolik are members of the Rotary Club of Burlingame & Hillsborough in California.

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From vastly different countries and cultures, the first fellows at Rotary's Istanbul peace center unite around a shared purpose

COMMON

By
ETELKA LEHOCZKY

Photography by
FAID ELGZIRY







R

The 13 peace fellows in the first class at the new Rotary Peace Center in Istanbul have similar priorities, from supporting migrants to empowering women.

Rotary's new peace fellows converged on Istanbul's Bahçeşehir University from countries thousands of miles apart: Egypt, Bulgaria, Kenya, Jordan, and beyond. But they lost no time in finding out what they had in common.

"Where else on Earth would I have met with an Israeli participant and sat and talked and debated and laughed together?" says Suaad Abdo, a Yemeni fellow who now lives in Germany. "Having different opinions can enrich our discussions and expand our horizons."

Abdo is one of 13 fellows in the first class at Rotary's most recently opened peace center, the Otto and Fran Walter Rotary Peace Center at Bahçeşehir. Over the course of their yearlong professional development certificate program, which they began in February, the fellows are learning the theory and practice of sustainable peace, conflict resolution, and diplomacy. After 10 weeks studying together at the center, they returned home to carry out social change initiatives they designed.

This may be a vastly diverse group of fellows, but they have similar priorities: protecting children, empowering women, and — the most common concern — supporting migrant populations. The proximity of armed conflict is another reality

they share, making their time in Istanbul much more than a period of detached scholarship.

"Either they are coming from countries that are conflict-prone, or they're coming from other countries that are going to be affected as a result of conflicts in the Middle East-North Africa region," says Yüksel Alper Ecevit, the center's executive director. "The projects that our fellows are designing, each in their own areas of expertise, are going to be very important for the resolution of conflicts through peaceful means."

Suat Baysan, Rotary's host area coordinator for the program, got to know the fellows during a field visit to the area affected by the 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquakes and a concert featuring music from the fellows' home countries. He was impressed by their determination to recruit partners that could maximize their impact.

"Maybe just one peace fellow alone cannot do anything. But if they can convince governments and civilian organizations to get involved, they can start small initiatives which can grow," he says. "That's what they were all thinking: 'Yes, I am one person, but I might spark a huge change.'"

We caught up with five of the fellows to learn about their lives, their social change initiatives, and their hopes for the future.

SUAAD ABDO

YEMEN

Suaad Abdo first made the connection between education and women's rights when she was a university student. A girl in her neighborhood in Sanaa, Yemen's capital, wanted to attend college, but the girl's guardians refused to allow it.

"That got me thinking. I realized that the way I lived — the way my parents raised me — wasn't the same for everyone. The society I lived in had a different reality," says Abdo, 43.

It's no wonder then that Abdo has prioritized education in her own life. She's studied in Malaysia, Ethiopia, and Germany and holds two advanced degrees: an MBA and a master's degree in public policy with a focus on conflict studies and management. She was inspired to pursue the latter by the violence she witnessed in her home country during the Arab Spring uprisings of the early 2010s. She wasn't at the pro-democracy demonstrations that were targeted by government loyalist gunmen, but she felt the danger as she encouraged her neighbors, particularly her female neighbors, to vote in elections that followed.

The whole experience left her with new questions. "I wanted to understand: What does democracy mean?" she says. "When conflict happens, what kind of decision making is behind that?"

Abdo got a scholarship to study in Germany and planned to stay only long enough to complete her master's degree.

But while she was there, Yemen was once again gripped by political violence as the country's Houthi rebels seized control of the capital in 2014. She stayed on, learned to speak German, and came to see Germany as her home.

Abdo sought out work assisting the large numbers of migrants arriving in Germany in the mid-2010s. After volunteering as a translator at a government reception center and working at a nongovernmental organization that provided care to migrant children, she went on to lead a team at the International Organization for Migration that helped migrants returning to their home countries.

Abdo unites her two areas of interest — democracy and migration — in her social change initiative to forge relationships between female migrants and German women who act as mentors. The migrant women learn the basics of the German language along with computer and financial skills. The German women learn the migrants' stories.

"I wanted to create a space where they could ask uncomfortable questions like, 'You wear a headscarf. What does that mean to you?'" Abdo says. She quickly discovered they were inclined to talk about what they had in common.

"Women are women everywhere, regardless of where they come from," she says. "They talk about family, about kids, about love, about career. These issues are universal."



Suaad Abdo (foreground) poses with participants in a computer skills workshop for migrants in Germany that she organized as part of her social change initiative.

MORAD AL-QADI

JORDAN

Morad al-Qadi cultivates peace by cultivating people. Whether he's helping community groups write grants or bringing refugees and local leaders together over dinner, he's always seeking to awaken untapped potential. He's even staged interactive theater productions that make the audience part of the show — to prove that no one should be sitting on the sidelines.

"I'm not a professional actor, but I participated in five interactive plays that promoted peace. We'd present a story and then ask someone in the audience, 'If you're in my shoes, what are you going to do?'" says al-Qadi, 37. "Then we'd ask the audience, 'OK, what do you think about what they did? Could you suggest a different solution?' And people would start coming up with better solutions to peacefully resolve the conflict."

For his social change initiative, al-Qadi is training 10 young journalists to hone their media literacy skills. Then he plans to guide them in developing an online awareness campaign and other tools to educate the public about media literacy.

"This awareness campaign can be promoted widely in Jordan, addressing hate speech, misinformation, disinformation, and fake news," he says. "It will show people how these problems affect social cohesion, social stability."

In his previous work, al-Qadi addressed an issue of importance to many of the other peace fellows: unrest in response to influxes of migrants.

In Jordan, he has helped people who fled the civil war in neighboring Syria. One of his most pivotal projects was teaching conflict resolution to more than 100 community leaders and police officers around Jordan. All the leaders had dealt with escalating tensions. Before al-Qadi came along, they usually just called in the police.

"The police were like, 'OK, what should we do? Send them back to their country.' That was almost always the decision: If there's a Syrian involved in a conflict with a Jordanian, just send the Syrian back," al-Qadi says. "It was like sending them to their deaths."

Al-Qadi has also traveled to Turkey for an initiative that helped Syrian community organizations function more effectively. He showed eight small organizations how to apply for funding, develop long-term plans, and organize peacebuilding activities. One such project, Arts for Peace, brought Arab and Kurdish musicians together. Each group of musicians taught the other how to play traditional instruments, and the project concluded with a joint concert.

Even as he witnessed inspiring moments like this, al-Qadi sought to teach a crucial, uncomfortable lesson.

"Unfortunately, most of these organizations think that they will come up with an intervention and then peace will happen, which is not true," he says. "They need to understand that sustainable peace is not a short-term process. It's continuous."





For his social change initiative, Morad al-Qadi is using media literacy training to address hate speech, misinformation, and disinformation.

CAMPUS EXPERIENCE

Highlights of the
fellowship's
first 10 weeks
at Bahçeşehir
University



- **Coursework:** sustainable development; conflict resolution; and diplomacy, mediation, and cooperation
- **Workshops:** conflict resolution simulation and an interactive roundtable on peace in the Middle East-North Africa region
- **Training:** specialized sessions on leadership and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through Bahçeşehir's International Leadership Research and Application Center and CIFAL Istanbul at the UN Institute for Training and Research
- **Field visits:** to the Turkish capital of Ankara, the Black Sea coast, and earthquake-affected areas to learn about government policy, sustainable agriculture, cultural heritage, and disaster management and recovery
- **Community engagement:** exploration of arts and culture, including food customs, Anatolian weaving, and perfume making traditions

SHEE KUPI SHEE

KENYA



As the son of a Kenyan mother and a Somali father, Shee KUPI Shee is committed to helping refugees integrate into Kenyan society.

Shee KUPI Shee knew from childhood that he wanted to help refugees. You could even say it's in his blood. In Kenya, border communities like Shee's hometown of Kiunga have long seen influxes of Somalis seeking relief from conflict and drought-induced food shortages. As the son of a Kenyan mother and a Somali father, Shee identified with the native residents *and* the refugees. He got a close-up view of the hardships the migrants faced.

"At 5 years old, I saw my aunt being treated as a refugee," says Shee, 40. "She was not allowed to mix with us. She was not allowed to talk to us. She was confined to a camp close to the border. Once, I was taking her a plate of rice and fish and I was told, 'No, you can't come at this time. Come tomorrow.' So I saw a lot of indifference."

Shee's neighbors stigmatized the newcomers, saying they were probably criminals. But Shee disagreed.

"There's no difference between me and a refugee," he says. "We're all human beings. We have one blood. We are all created by God."

That view is still tested today in his home region near the Somali border, where Shee works for the local government. The area experiences frequent incursions by the Somali militant group al-Shabab. That sometimes makes it impossible for Shee to do his job of connecting far-flung communities there with government services.

Militants have planted land mines on the roads, requiring Shee to get creative to help his constituents, particularly the region's Aweer people, whose traditional hunter-gatherer way of life is under threat from the spillover of conflict. He's flown in Kenyan military helicopters to deliver supplies to them and accom-

pany teachers coming from other areas. In 2017, a military vehicle carrying children to school hit a roadside bomb, killing eight people.

Shee had the idea of renting a boat to carry children to school instead. The plan didn't prove sustainable, but that didn't dissuade Shee from his determination to help the remote community.

"They have a right to have their say," he says. "They have a right to development, and they have a right to have their voices included in government decision making."

Shee also remains committed to helping Somali refugees integrate into Kenyan society. His social change initiative aims to foster understanding between native Kenyans and Somalis in Kiunga village. By teaching the two groups about each other's culture and showing them what they have in common, he hopes to prevent conflicts over the area's scarce land, food, and water.

"I want the word 'refugee' to be ripped out of the vocabulary of Kiunga," he says. "Every person should be called a sister, a brother, a cousin — not a refugee."

"There's no difference between me and a refugee. We're all human beings. We have one blood. We are all created by God."

Angela Antonova brims with infectious enthusiasm. Back in 1995, that enthusiasm helped her create Bulgaria's first professional organization for social workers even though the former communist country hadn't had them for many years.

"Social work was a totally new profession for countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the former socialist countries," says Antonova, 58. "Raising awareness and building public understanding of the role and value of social work, including in building peace and preventing conflicts, is essential for the profession's success."

In 2023, her enthusiasm fueled the launch of a program to provide psychological support to health practitioners working with Ukrainian refugees. "These people started to experience the symptoms of their clients," she says. "When you are working constantly with traumatized people and you're being bombarded with horrific news, you're vulnerable to vicarious trauma." The program included an anonymous helpline so practitioners could reach out without fear of being stigmatized.

And this year, Antonova's enthusiasm propelled her all the way to the Rotary Peace Center in Istanbul. "Please write with big, big, big letters how thankful I am to all the Rotarians who made this opportunity possible for me," she says.

She's already on the hunt for funding to expand her social change initiative, which helps Bulgarian children separated from their parents develop resiliency and coping skills. "We call the phenomenon self-parenting children," she says. "These are children who are left behind. Their parents leave Bulgaria for the United States or Germany, somewhere they can work for higher incomes, but their children remain without parental support."

"Please write with big, big, big letters how thankful I am to all the Rotarians who made this opportunity possible for me."

Without that guidance, those young people may turn toward crime or radical militancy as adults, or they disappear altogether, she says. About 47 child migrants disappear every day in Europe, according to the group Lost in Europe.

Antonova's project aims to forestall these dark outcomes with a simple strategy: It sends the children to school. In specialized classes the children learn skills to function in society. Perhaps as important, they also get the chance to socialize with other children. One of the classes' most popular offerings is the "love bank," where the children can deposit envelopes containing affectionate messages for one another.

Antonova says that about 150 children have officially completed the program, while many more have turned up for the classes without being enrolled. She hopes to expand the program if she can find other funding sources or other NGOs with which she can partner.

"These young people are vulnerable to antisocial behaviors and radicalization," she says. "This gives them an alternative. They see that they can fulfill their dreams without using violence."

Buoyed by early success, Angela Antonova plans to expand her social change initiative, which helps Bulgarian children separated from their parents.



ANGELA
ANTONOVA

BULGARIA

MARIAM EL MASRY

EGYPT

Mariam El Masry knows that making an impact sometimes means recognizing opportunity when you see it. While launching her social change initiative, which involves teaching Sudanese refugees how to make and sell handicrafts, she met some migrants who instead hoped to learn a different skill.

“I found a group of young men and women who’d either worked in the media before or were simply interested in learning about film directing,” says El Masry, 51. “Their goal was to make short films documenting their daily lives in Egypt. I found this idea very new and pertinent.”



So she took that on as well. And while grappling with the practicalities, she happened to meet a director. “He teaches filmmaking for very reasonable prices, sometimes even for free,” she says. “So now this will be a little side initiative beside my big one.”

El Masry chose to help Sudanese refugees in particular because Egypt and Sudan, besides sharing a border, are close historically and culturally. “They are the most numerous refugees in Egypt today after the [onset of] war in Sudan, and they face many difficulties,” she notes. “Refugees today represent the most serious humanitarian crisis.”

This is the first time El Masry has spearheaded a project — or projects — involving this much fieldwork. She has spent nearly two decades working at the Arab League, with a break when she got a scholarship to complete a master’s degree in Middle East politics at the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies.

At the Arab League, El Masry worked for a time in the disarmament and nonproliferation department, where she reported on the Iranian nuclear program. Currently she monitors the politics of West African countries and the creation of a new African-Arab



New to large-scale field projects, Mariam El Masry enjoys collaborating and exchanging ideas with other fellows over their WhatsApp messaging group.

center for exchanging information on migration.

As someone who spends much of her time “writing reports and attending meetings,” El Masry was thrilled and a bit nervous to undertake her social change initiative, not to mention launching the second one. She has found the other peace fellows to be invaluable sources of advice and encouragement, especially the indomitably outgoing Suaad Abdo.

“At the beginning I was a bit lost,” El Masry says. “I got a lot of opinions from my friend

Suaad, because she’s doing something similar. We encourage each other. All the fellows have a WhatsApp group, and we exchange ideas.”

Staying in touch with the other fellows has emboldened El Masry. She hopes to launch a third initiative that would train Sudanese refugees who are lawyers to advise other refugees about their legal rights.

“At the beginning I thought, ‘The easy way out is to just stick to one thing,’” she says. “But then I said, ‘Why not, if I have the opportunity?’” ■

MEET THE OTHER BAHÇEŞEHİR PEACE FELLOWS



**Musferah Mehfooz,
Pakistan**

Engaging religious leaders for social change and addressing climate-driven gender-based violence



**Jenna-Lee Strugnell,
South Africa**

Peacebuilding in Somalia through social media and digital dialogue facilitation training



**Md Harun Or Rashid,
Bangladesh**

Empowering youth through peace education, community service, and leadership training



Nasreen Memon, Pakistan

Increasing access to quality education and mentorship for youth and girls with community-led solutions to stop child marriage



Mohamud Ahmed, Somalia

Building social cohesion among youth affected by conflict through community dialogue, educational and psychosocial support, and peacebuilding skills



Gabriel Bell, U.S./Israel

Mobilizing resources and partnerships for the care of vulnerable street children in Senegal



Karla Jordan-Youns, U.S.

Facilitating peace skills workshops and structured dialogue for youth and families in post-conflict Iraq



Havva Şeyda Bodur, Turkey

Helping women from Syria and the Middle East-North Africa region enter the labor market

2026 CONVENTION



TASTES OF TAIPEI



Photography by I-Hwa Cheng



From night markets to tea plantations, an American chef leaves no avenue unexplored as he tastes his way through Taipei. Find out what flavors he'll never forget. Then, get ready to pick up the culinary journey yourself during the 2026 Rotary International Convention.



By Rick Bayless



FOOD STALLS FAMOUS FOR QUALITY

I was a few steps into the Ningxia Night Market when the sweet potato balls caught my eye. The golden and purple spheres glistened as the cook pulled a tray from the hot oil and hoisted them into a stainless steel bowl the size of a kid's bathtub. The problem was I couldn't figure out how to extract myself from the human river that bore me along so I could order a bagful of what my gut told me I would likely never forget.

Now, sweet potatoes might not be top of mind when you think of Asian cuisine. But from their birthplace in the Americas, the tubers boarded huge galleons as early as the mid-16th century, traveled across the Pacific to Manila, and then slowly wandered from one Asian culture to another, finding warm — if not celebrated — welcomes nearly everywhere. That diffusion reached Taiwan, where the potatoes now attract long lines when cooked, mashed, mixed with other tuberous starches, and transformed into those shiny little balls.

Once I extricated myself from the enthusiastic crowd, I discovered what I can only describe as pure delight. Those

pingpong-sized spheres, known as di gua qiu, were unexpectedly hollow and lightly sweet, with a hint of the sweet potato's characteristic earthiness. I laughed a little as I popped another and then another into my mouth.

The Ningxia Night Market is famous for the quality of its food stalls. Head of the list, at least in my opinion, is Yuan Huan Pien Oyster Omelet. I could watch the ballet of red-aproned cooks working the circular griddles for hours. The briny sweetness of the oysters, the chewy-tender texture of the batter, the richness of the egg, the lightness of the greens — it was obvious why locals line up for hours to tuck into one of these beauties.

The next hour was a blur of fried taro balls with preserved egg yolk and pork floss, perfect mochi with pulverized toasted peanuts and sesame for dipping, and those pork belly-filled, fold-over steamed buns (here called gua bao) that have become popular across the United States. Though everyone had warned me away, I fell in love with — or maybe it's more accurate to say I had a momentary crush on — stinky tofu. I contend that anyone who's taken with punchy blue cheese like Roquefort will like this medium-firm tofu that's been marinated in a complex fermented brine.

DIHUA STREET

For the sheer pleasure of it, I've practiced cooking Asian food all of my adult life, relying on well-respected guides like

the Wei-Chuan Cooking Books for the techniques to a perfect stir-fry. My wife, Deann, brought back our home's copies of *Chinese Cuisine* and *Chinese Snacks* from her year teaching English in Taiwan back in the 1970s.

What I didn't know is that the soy sauce the books were likely calling for has a different taste than others. Better. The artisan local soy sauce is made from black — not the typical yellow — soybeans that ferment for months. Tasting Taiwanese soy sauce for the first time is like that first taste of Pappy Van Winkle's 23-year-old bourbon when you've only been used to Jim Beam 4-year. Rich and round, complex and satisfying.

I discovered my favorite artisan soy sauce in, of all places, a meat-product store along Dihua Street. I loved wandering the area's lively shops, their goods spilling out onto the sidewalks. Piles of tropical fruit, thousands of spice packets and jars, a variety of dried seafood that made my head spin. That was where I found the famous tree-grown mountain pepper (maqaw) that seasons many Taiwanese dishes. And that was where I found the great soy sauce, in Jiang Ji Hua Lung, a nationally renowned store owned by Rotarian Hsien-chiao Chiang. The store specializes in cured, dried pork — think of it as pork jerky — that's gently seasoned with soy and sugar. I found the compressed heart shapes formed from chopped jerky and the pork "paper" — so thin it crunched like a sweet, salty potato chip — to be wondrous.

Above, from left: At Taipei's markets, you'll find crab, fried taro balls with preserved egg yolk and pork floss, and oyster omelets; a Japanese tea ceremony; chef Rick Bayless (in blue) tours a tea plantation. **Right:** Bayless inspects lobsters at a seafood restaurant.



TEA AND TRUFFLES

Driving southeast from Taipei, we wound our way through mountain peaks and past farmhouses with adjoining rice paddies before descending into Yilan County. As far as my eyes could see, the earth was filled with cabbages. Straight row after straight row, field after field, creating a haphazard patchwork of brassicas.

Clearly, in a world of supply and demand, Taiwan appeared to have enough cabbages, which led one local farmer, Jinrong Huang, an Indigenous village chief, to work with Rotary on an outside-the-box idea. At Jinrong's farm, nearly a decade before, he had planted a grove of oak trees, and, for the last few years he's been inoculating the earth beneath them with spores he hoped would grow into truffles — an agricultural product with vastly more value than the overplanted cabbages.

Jinrong got out of his car wearing heavy leather boots and a resolute look. His two squirmy dogs shot into the trees like they'd been exploded from a gun. One dog went straight to the base of a tree and, with a constant, fast whimper, wagged his tail so forcefully that I thought he might hurt himself. These were the dogs he was training to hunt the truffles.

A few more minutes down the valley, we came to Yaba's Mountain guesthouse. Nestled in a bend of the road, the simple two-story structure kept watch over the dozens of long, tightly packed rows of jade-color tea bushes that rose high up the mountain. We piled into the back of a small four-wheel drive truck and then bumped our way up the rutted road to the top.

Other than the beautiful vistas and the thrill of running your hands through the

Rick Bayless is the chef and co-owner of award-winning restaurants including Frontera Grill and the Michelin-starred Topolobampo in Chicago. He is the host of public television's Emmy-nominated *Mexico: One Plate at a Time*, an award-winning author, a philanthropist, and a YouTube creator.

small, densely packed leaves of the camellia plants — tea is in the camellia family — visiting a tea plantation is less exciting than visiting a place that grows, say, berries or peaches. There's nothing fresh to taste. As with coffee and vanilla, tea's brilliant flavors develop during the fermenting, drying, and/or roasting process.

Back down at the guesthouse, we watched our host give a quick rinse to a big cup he'd filled with the balled-up dry leaves of lightly fermented, high-mountain oolong tea from the fields we'd just seen. Then he filled the cup, let it steep a minute or so, and strained the liquid off into porcelain cups for us to taste. It was richly complex, fresh, and gently floral with a hint of bitter, a hint of sweet. Working over a perforated stainless steel box to catch splashes, our host was fast and slapdash, re-steeping and straining the leaves, round after round, for us to taste how the flavor evolved. (My favorite was the second steeping.)



🔊 Rick Bayless talks about his community projects and culinary diplomacy in this 2023 episode of the Rotary Voices podcast: on.rotary.org/bayless-podcast.



The flavors hovered in my head like the fading notes of an unrivaled string quartet. It was unlike any tea I'd tasted.

Q TEXTURE

We hadn't been more than three hours off the plane when we found ourselves descending the stairs at the Regent Taipei hotel into the open dining room of the Azie restaurant, where we met our hosts, Rotarians Jimmy Chih-Ming Lai and Wenny Lin. We were there to eat beef noodle soup, one of Taiwan's standout dishes. While beef noodle soup sounds commonplace, the Taiwanese version is unique, even thrilling. Brought by immigrants to the island in the middle of the 20th century during the Chinese Civil War, it is considered emblematic of the island's cooking. There's a simpler, clear version that is rich with beef bone broth, and there's a thicker, richer version that's seasoned with spicy Sichuan fermented fava bean paste (doubanjiang) and, if you wish, Sichuan peppercorns.

We drank a remarkable cold sparkling oolong tea as we tucked into the steaming bowls of goodness. For me, all that deliciousness was almost eclipsed by the noodles themselves. These weren't like the typical wheat-flour noodles I was expecting. Instead, they had a slight chewiness to them, a little resilience, a little bounce. I asked to speak to the chef. They were made partially with yam flour, he said.

That's when I began to understand what the Taiwanese call "Q texture." People on this island are obsessed with texture, and one of their favorites is that brilliant spot between resilient and soft, chewy and tender, sticky and gummy. I encountered it, too, in the night market's spectacular oyster omelet and celebrated mochis.

TAIWANESE BREAKFAST

When my wife lived in Taichung in the 1970s, she fell in love with Taiwanese breakfast. She has told me about sitting in roadside stands, dipping the crullers called youtiao into warm doujiang (soy milk) and relishing every minute of it.

So, when Henry Hsieh, an energetic young Rotarian with a food-centric Instagram account, picked us up one morning for a visit to the Binjian Market, I was secretly hoping that breakfast would be the first stop. Not only was he planning breakfast, he was planning it at the legendary Fuhang Soy Milk, the

Michelin-recognized spot that draws more than 5,000 people on some days.

The line of people patiently waiting to get into Fuhang stretched for more than a city block. "People start lining up at 5 a.m. for their 5:30 open," Henry laughed. With a swift grin, he said, "Follow me."

Like a school of salmon swimming upstream, we worked our way through the crowd. We followed Henry toward a kitchen on one end of what appeared to be a food court. A young guy with a backward baseball cap gave Henry a joyful hug, then waved us into the kitchen. Turns out Henry's friend is the grandson of the people who started Fuhang.

We watched as cooks rolled out thick, rectangular breads and passed them to others to slap on the sidewalls of barrel ovens, cooking them to a rich golden brown. Other cooks coated thinner rectangles with sesame. Further on, cooks deeply creased strips of yet another dough to fry into youtiao. The rhythm was captivating, the production astounding. The scene felt almost operatic.

The young man handed Henry a bag and we made our way back to the car. We couldn't cut the hour-long line, but we could get takeout. I hadn't imagined that my first taste of the legendary Fuhang restaurant would be in the back seat of a sleek, late-model black sedan, but I couldn't wait to dip my crunchy-fresh youtiao into warm soy milk — some of the best, nuttiest I've tasted.

QUICK FOOD OPTIONS

7-Elevens Numerous locations

Try one of the many packaged entrees that you can warm in the provided microwaves and enjoy in the shops' dining rooms.

Nanmen Market Da'an District

Find more than 200 vendors across four floors, including a popular food court serving Taiwanese specialties.

Above, from left: Tea is served with an assortment of complimentary snacks; Bayless and his wife, Deann, enjoy beef noodle soup; a bounteous sampling of the island's seafood; preparing crunchy breakfast youtiao; Bayless, Henry Hsieh, and his mother, Catherine Hsieh, at the market; Bayless puts the finishing touches on his creatively flavored chicken thighs. **Right:** Bayless chats with the chefs at Wildwood, where wood-grilled fish and steaks are the house specialty.



KITCHEN COMRADES

Henry had arranged for me to cook with a couple of other chefs at his restaurant Wildwood, a sleek, comfortable spot that specializes in wood-grilled fish and steaks. Preparing food alongside chefs in another country is an opportunity I jump at. Even when we don't share a language, the communication through food — the way we handle it, the way we combine flavors, the way we work with fire — is fluent and full.

Jarry Liu, Wildwood's chef de cuisine, built a wood fire for us to cook on. Rotarian Jay Liu had driven up from Taichung to be my other comrade in the kitchen and attend the Rotary meeting happening at the restaurant later that night.

I thought chef Jarry was going to grill some fish to show off a specialty at Wildwood, but he couldn't stay away from the chicken cockscombs I'd found at the Binjian Market. Before I knew it, he'd started braising the fleshy crests from the birds' heads, and then he gave them a brief tour on the grill and a lively adornment with pickled red onions and cilantro. They were spectacular.

By the time I started grilling my chicken thighs to flavor with a blend of herbs, roasted garlic, green chile, and lime, chef Jay was deep into another poultry dish, the famous Taiwanese three-cup chicken. Its preparation involves braising the chicken with sesame oil, rice wine, and soy sauce. Then you sweeten the reduced cooking liquid to a shiny glaze and garnish the dish with Thai basil and red chiles.

We talked fire and its infinite possibilities. We talked ingredient proportions and history and the role of food in

cultural identity. We talked childhood and how our tastes are crafted by family and community, about how those tastes become so deeply rooted that they feel like the very fabric of our beings.

FOOD FROM THE HEART

Of all the brilliant food we'd enjoyed, the meal we ate at a food kitchen established by Rotarians in Taipei was one of the most memorable. The enterprise started out in 2016 as a service project to reduce food waste by salvaging leftover produce and turning it into meals for low-income families, older adults living alone, and others. Through a Rotary Foundation global grant, the members transformed an unused city building into a gleaming stainless steel kitchen where they teach unemployed people to make box lunches,



To register for the convention, scan the QR code or visit convention.rotary.org.

and, with the help of volunteers, get them delivered to those in need.

We climbed the stairs to the second-story meeting and teaching facility and found spots around the table. When I opened the paperboard box that was set in front of me, the careful beauty the cooks had created greeted me like a broad smile. The flavors were so simple, so homey, so perfect. They nourished and filled me with happiness — a happiness particular to all food made with love. ■







A mother's gift

Sustained by donations from nursing women, milk banks provide a lifeline to vulnerable newborns

By Elly Fishman



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF MARINI

The morning Typhoon Haiyan made landfall in 2013, the sky above Manila turned a bruised gray. At the Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital in the Philippines' capital city, phones started ringing. Dr. Estrella "Star" Jusi, then head of the hospital's milk bank — one of the first in the country — picked up one call after another about its stores of donated breast milk. The city of Tacloban had been devastated by one of the most powerful typhoons ever recorded. Power was out. Water was scarce. Newborns in the city's neonatal intensive care units, especially the smallest and sickest, were in critical need.

The Department of Health needed donated breast milk fast. Jusi mobilized. She called the country's other milk banks to pool reserves. Coolers were packed and labeled. With roads blocked and commercial flights grounded, she worked with military officials to secure space on an armed forces transport plane.

A neonatologist from Jusi's team volunteered to accompany the frozen milk. Over multiple trips, the milk bank delivered 86 liters of pasteurized donated milk — liquid survival for babies with no other lifeline.

MILK BANKS EXIST TO MEET A NEED that often goes unspoken: What happens when a mother can't breastfeed her newborn? Maybe the baby came early, too small to latch. Maybe the mother is recovering from surgery, or her milk hasn't come in. Maybe it's the first chaotic week of life, and nothing is going to plan.

Formula can be a safe alternative for healthy, full-term newborns. But for fragile infants, milk donated by nursing women who produce extra to share with other moms is often the safest, most viable option available. Breast milk has been shown to lower the risk of life-threatening conditions, including necrotizing enterocolitis, an intestinal disease common in preterm babies. The World Health Organization and UNICEF recommend donated human milk as the preferred feeding option for an infant when a mother's own milk is unavailable, especially for low-birth weight and preterm babies.

Even before the typhoon hit, malnutrition was a critical concern in Tacloban and across the Philippines, especially among premature infants. According to WHO, more than 1 in 4 Philippine children under 5 are stunted, a condition caused by chronic undernutrition that can impair physical and cognitive development. Among low-birth weight and preterm infants, lack of access to breast milk further increases the risk of infections, developmental delays, and death.

"We want to ensure that the babies will be given or will have the best start in life, even if they are premature and sick," Jusi says.

In the last decade, the Philippines has built one of the most robust human milk bank networks in Southeast Asia. What began as a single Rotary club's experiment has grown into a model replicated in 39 hospitals across the archipelago, supported by more than 30 Rotary Foundation global grants.

The idea took root in 2013, when Renato Cantos, then president of the Rotary Club of Timog-Quezon City, was searching for a signature project. A fellow Ro-

tarian's wife suggested members visit Fabella Hospital. There, they met Jusi, who had been running a milk bank since 2008. "It was the first time that I heard about a human milk bank," Cantos says.

That year, his club helped secure a global grant to purchase a new pasteurizer, allowing the milk bank to continue operating after its original machine began to fail. Since then, the club has helped establish milk banks in several additional hospitals and supported other area clubs as they've embarked on similar projects. Rotary clubs' support, along with that of private donors and the Department of Health, has helped expand the number of facilities from five to 39. One 2019 master's thesis by a student at De La Salle University in Manila even proposed a standardized Rotary global grant template for milk bank projects.

THE CONCEPT OF MILK SHARING is centuries old, rooted in the historical practice of wet nursing when women breastfed another person's child. But formal breast milk banks only began to appear in the early 20th century. The world's first was established in Vienna in 1909, followed shortly after by one in Boston. For decades, milk banking quietly served a niche role in neonatal care, until the AIDS crisis of the 1980s shuttered many programs over fears the virus could be transmitted through donors' milk.

In the decades that followed, renewed research and new safety protocols revived the practice. Milk banks began to adopt standardized methods such as pasteurization that heats milk to a precise temperature for 30 minutes to eliminate pathogens while preserving nutrients. They also implemented rigorous donor screening processes to ensure safety, similar to when people donate blood. These protocols reassured clinicians and public health officials, helping reestablish trust in donated milk as a viable and safe feeding option.

In Western Australia, the Rotary clubs of Belmont and Thornlie, along with Belmont Rotarian Stan Perron, were behind the establishment of the country's first modern milk bank in 2006, decades after informal milk sharing within towns' maternity wards had faded. Similar timelines have played out in countries around the world.



The Rotary Foundation has awarded nearly **100 global grants** toward human milk bank projects.



Left: At the Mothers' Milk Bank of the Western Great Lakes, a small sample of milk from each donor is tested for the presence of harmful bacteria. **Right:** Milk from multiple donors is pooled to ensure nutritional consistency and a robust antibody profile.

Today, Brazil is widely considered the global leader in milk banking. Two dozen Rotary Foundation global grants have supported some of the 200-plus centers across the country. The Brazilian model, built into the public health system, has inspired similar efforts across Latin America, including in Colombia and Mexico. South Africa has developed a network of milk banks, often tied to hospital-based neonatal units. Still, in most low- and middle-income countries, milk banks remain rare.

North America, too, has seen a rise in milk banking. In the United States and Canada, 11 million ounces of donated breast milk were distributed in 2024 — a 10 percent increase from the previous year, according to the Human Milk Banking Association of North America, which sets guidelines for pasteurized donor milk.

The Mothers' Milk Bank of the Western Great Lakes is one of the more than 30 nonprofit milk banks accredited by the association. Co-founded by a former Rotary staff member and supported with donated funds from multiple Rotary clubs over the years, the Chicago-area milk bank serves more than 90 hospitals in Illinois and Wisconsin. The organization has seen explosive growth since it opened its first processing facility in 2015, going from three employees to 25 and moving last year into a new facility, one of only two in North America with a bottling conveyor belt.

Prescreened mothers drop off their milk for donation at “milk depots” throughout the region, where volunteers ship it frozen in insulated containers to the milk bank for processing and pasteurization. “Some of

our moms make tons of milk,” explains Susan Urbanski, the milk bank’s program manager. “Nobody wants to see something so precious go to waste.”

Urbanski says that some moms needed donated breast milk when their own babies were first born, but after receiving lactation support, they went on to successfully breastfeed and want to give back. In that way, milk banks don’t replace breastfeeding — they support it. Some moms discover their baby is intolerant to something in their diet. Their milk is still good, just not for *their* baby. And some moms donate after a loss through bereavement programs like one offered by the Chicago-area milk bank. “That’s a really special part of nonprofit milk banking that sometimes gets overlooked,” Urbanski says. “The goal is to honor the baby’s legacy, to make meaning out of a devastating situation.”

IN CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND, the idea began with frustration. Yvonne Hiskemuller, a midwife and member of the Rotary Club of Garden City Christchurch, had worked with the milk bank at a hospital in town, but she quickly saw its limits. The service didn’t extend beyond the neonatal intensive care unit, and there was no plan to support mothers once they left the hospital. “It was clear that was never going to happen,” says Hiskemuller. So she turned to Rotary.

Liz Courtney, then a district governor, immediately saw the potential. As a mother of five, including a set of triplets, Courtney knew firsthand the complexity of early feeding. Together, she and Hiskemuller gathered a small group of committed women — Rotarians, lactation experts, other volunteers — and spent the next four years fundraising, navigating bureaucracy, and slowly building a community-run alternative.

The result, launched in 2018, was a community breast milk bank hosted at a different Christchurch hospital, St. George’s. The repository runs on a lean infrastructure: three freezers, a pasteurizer, and a small army of volunteers, many of them Rotarians, midwives, and nurses. But its reach has been immense.

On any given day, the milk bank is a flurry of motion. Donors drop off bags of frozen breast milk, each labeled, tracked, and stored meticulously. Screening is rigorous, involving questionnaires, blood tests, and freezer logs. Volunteers pasteurize an average of 8 liters per week, a process that takes six to eight hours and requires sterile gowns, temperature checks, and detailed logs.

The recipients are typically newborns in fragile health or born to people who are recovering from surgery or have delayed milk production. One baby, too frail yet for heart surgery, needed milk at home in a rural community about 150 miles north of the Christchurch milk bank. Her doctors believed that if she was fed formula, she wouldn’t survive long enough to reach the operating table. The only option was to feed the baby donated breast milk.

A nurse sent word to the Rotary club-supported milk bank in Christchurch, and the team there said yes immediately, even though the request fell outside the typical service area. A refrigerated truck company, Big Chill, transported the frozen milk free of charge.

Courtney recalls other people who were diagnosed

with cancer during their pregnancies, preparing for surgeries when their babies arrived and unable to breastfeed. The milk bank stepped in, providing milk for those critical first days.

Over time, the bank has become a hub not just for milk but for knowledge. With Rotary clubs’ help, a longtime midwife who volunteers at the milk bank got trained as a certified lactation consultant and began offering breastfeeding classes for expectant mothers. The sessions, hosted at St. George’s Hospital, are free and growing.

The milk bank now supports the entire Canterbury region that’s home to Christchurch. As of June, it has provided safe donated breast milk to more than 2,700 babies. And perhaps more importantly, it has changed the way people in the community talk about feeding, need, and new motherhood. “Now that there’s an alternative to formula,” adds Hiskemuller, “there’s been quite a big groundswell of movement to recognize that donor breast milk is a far superior choice.”

THE STORY OF HUMAN MILK BANKING, at its core, is a story about people. About the mothers who donate milk they’ll never see consumed. About doctors and midwives who reroute their days to hand-deliver supply. About local volunteers who track every ounce, label every cooler, and field every emergency call.

Perhaps that’s why looking back on the past decade of work in the Philippines can be an emotional experience for Renato Cantos. What began with a grant application has helped transform not just hospitals but a culture. One that treats mothers not merely as patients or providers but as partners. One that sees babies, even the tiniest and sickest, as worthy of care, of investment.

“This was the first project that I did, and continue to do, because of the love for it,” Cantos says, “realizing the impact that it provides to those who are in need.” ■

What began with a grant application has helped transform not just hospitals but a culture.

From right: Liz Courtney and Yvonne Hiskemuller speak with a nursing mother donating breast milk at a Rotary club-supported milk bank.





OUR CLUBS

VIRTUAL VISIT

From the ground up

Rotary Club of Global ROOTS – District 2101, Italy

As a teenager in southern Italy in 2005, Maria Vittoria “Mavi” Gargiulo was “kind of forced” to join an Interact club that her father’s Rotary club was trying to reestablish. The students wore suits (or at least coats and ties), and the atmosphere was very formal. “Everybody was pretending to be adult while I just wanted to be 15,” she recalls.

She quit as soon as her father was off his club’s board, but she reconnected with Rotary while attending the University of Salerno when she found a “more chill and relaxed” Rotaract club.

There, her Rotaract career took off. In 2022, she decided to also join a Rotary club at the urging of her closest friend, whose father was serving as president. It was what she calls a “legacy club,” focused on lunch meetings and weekly speakers. The dues of 1,400 euros amounted to her entire salary as a post-doctoral student. “They were a good club, and a lot of district governors come from it,” Gargiulo says.

“Some people really look forward to that kind of social gathering every Thursday, which is fair — that’s the experience they want. That’s just not the experience I like.”

So she created the club she wanted to belong to instead. The result was the Rotary Club of Global ROOTS – District 2101, which chartered in April and has become a space for Rotaract members and others who had expressed interest in Rotary but hadn’t found a club where they fit in.

Including “global” in the name reflects the club’s desire to have an international membership and reach. ROOTS stands for resilience, outreach, opportunity, tradition, and sustainability, all values that founding members agreed were important during workshops to draft the club’s constitution.

Gargiulo explains a second meaning of the name: “Roots also ground trees. And that is precisely what we want — to be deeply rooted in the founding values of Rotary, while also capable of projecting them into a changing world.”

Already, the club has achieved an impressive diversity. Its membership crosses generations and professions, with 66 percent women and 76 percent younger than 40. More than half of the club is new to Rotary, while a quarter also belong to a Rotaract club. Many of the initial members are from the Campania region of Italy, but some live in Rome, Milan, or as far away as the Netherlands. Even though most members speak Italian, the club language is English.

Alfonso Toraldo, the club’s executive secretary and a lawyer in training to be a notary, is a dual member of the Rotaract Club of Afragola-Frattamaggiore “Porte di Napoli.” He says he has always been in-

One of the priorities of the Rotary Club of Global ROOTS is a flexible hybrid format that is convenient for everyone. The board is investing in a videoconferencing setup to ensure an equally engaging experience whether you attend in person or remotely.

“The way we meet — in person when possible, but always with an inclusive hybrid approach — is a big part of the club’s identity,” says Gargiulo. “It really matters to us that both in-person and online members feel equally comfortable and valued, and we’re trying to be very intentional about that from the ground up.”

Here are some tips for facilitating hybrid meetings from the University of Toronto:

- **Create and share a clear agenda and all meeting materials in advance.**
- **Create and share meeting etiquette and expectations, such as whether all participants, both in person and remote, will be expected to raise hands or virtual hands and if the online chat function will be used.**
- **Have a person attending remotely co-facilitate by helping plan and run the meeting.**
- **Call on participants by name or ask participants to identify themselves by name when they are contributing so everyone is aware of who is talking.**

Find more tips at onlinelearning.utoronto.ca/hybrid-meetings.



Members of the Rotary Club of Global ROOTS – District 2101 (from left) Lorenza Parente, Maria Vittoria Gargiulo, Raffaele Dell'Anno, and Raffaella Russo on the waterfront in Salerno, Italy.

terested in international projects, having volunteered multiple times in Zanzibar, the African island, through an organization for children. He was attracted to the Global ROOTS club by the prospect of more service opportunities.

“She told us, We will take all the good parts of Rotary, and we will make big projects, and we will optimize our time,” Toraldo says, describing Gargiulo’s pitch. “This was her presentation, and I couldn’t say no. It was amazing for me, as a volunteer, knowing that there is a reality that is going to form into a pattern of service.”

Irene Petraroli joined the charter effort after meeting Gargiulo at a conference on disaster risk reduction, a field in which they both work. She was sold on the promise of deep inclusion and open communication. “The convincing part was when she discussed the idea that the group would be dedicated to engagement and community service project ideas,”

says Petraroli, a native of Italy who is in the Netherlands on a fellowship at the University of Twente. “That was the real selling point for me.”

To attract young adults and respect their time and money, the club keeps costs low. Members under 30 years old pay about 300 euros a year, which includes the club’s fees to Rotary International and the district, plus 150 euros for The Rotary Foundation. Those over 30 pay some additional costs (but never more than an additional 175 euros) for club administration, a website, and videoconferencing, plus seed money for projects chosen mutually.

The club decided to collect a donation for the Foundation from every member to impart an appreciation of Rotary’s larger reach. The board frequently shares with members international club projects from Rotary’s website or in *Rotary* magazine. Every new member is paired with a mentor who has more experience in Rotary.

Luigi Riello, an attorney general emeritus of the city of Naples and longtime Rotarian who joined the club as its oldest member at age 71, enjoys this group for its fresh approach and potential. “For me, taking part in the founding of the Global ROOTS club has represented not merely an opportunity, but a true responsibility,” he says. “Together with women and men of diverse ages, backgrounds, and sensibilities, we have given life to a club unbound by geographical affiliation yet profoundly rooted in the principles of Rotary International.

“Ours is a Rotary that seeks to return to its very essence: to tangibly promote peace, to combat global hunger, and to oppose every form of injustice. We are not drawn to social formalities, elegant dinners, or repetitive rituals. What inspires us is a determination to act — with practical tools, well-defined projects, and measurable objectives — in pursuit of social justice and human dignity.” — ARNOLD R. GRAHL

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Lessons from the ER

A doctor applies his medical training to big community challenges



Pretty grueling and stressful.

That's how Dr. James Ham describes his job as an emergency room physician in Honolulu, Hawaii's capital and largest city. Yet most weekends he's not to be found among those recovering at the beach or hanging out with friends. "Maybe I should be doing that more often," he acknowledges. "But I just feel like I can't turn off the 'wanting to serve' kind of a thing. You know?"

Talking to Ham, whose drive to serve led to his recognition as a 2021 Rotary People of Action honoree, you get the sense that he rarely pauses to breathe, let alone rest. During an interview in August, Ham, without waiting for a question, launched into a detailed account of an annual volunteer project he'd just returned from in Papua New Guinea. Since 2013, he's traveled to the South Pacific island nation almost every year with medical supplies and other volunteer doctors to provide training to health care workers.

On that first trip alone, Ham led trainings in trauma care and cardiac life support and fitted prosthetic hands. And when he learned of the need for clean water and sanitation, he went on to address that too, even starting a nonprofit called Water Hands Hope. "It's sad when you have people who have access to Facebook but not access to toilets," he says.

Papua New Guinea is also where Ham attended his first Rotary meeting. Two years later, in 2015, he joined the Rotary Club of Honolulu Sunset, where he could channel and amplify his ardor for service.

Not long after, the former U.S. Army surgeon and current emergency physician at Honolulu's Straub Benioff Medical Center began volunteering with the Hawaii HOME Project, which provides free medical services to homeless individuals at clinics run with the help of medical students.

Oahu has Hawaii's largest concentration of homeless residents. While the overall number has remained steady at around 4,500 peo-



Celebrating 10 years of People of Action Honors

ple, the share of them who are unsheltered and sleeping on sidewalks, in parks, or in cars has grown over the past decade. Homeless residents often turn up at the ER, though Ham feels constrained by how much he can help there since there's no social worker on duty at night, when he usually works.

At the HOME Project clinics, however, he and other volunteers can offer basic supplies and services such as nutritious food, water, clothing, counseling, and, of course, medical treatment. In addition to seeing patients, Ham helps fundraise and recruit new volunteers, including from his Rotary club, which donates annually to provide medical equipment and supplies. He has also recruited other Rotary clubs to help turn a large van into a mobile clinic complete with toilet, sink, exam room, and storage.

Ham grew up in Paramount, California, in the Los Angeles area. His parents, Korean immigrants, ran a small grocery store, and when he was 4 his mom was held at gunpoint by a teenage boy. As Ham tells it, she told the teenager that he had three choices: He could shoot her and go to jail; she could call the cops and he'd go to jail; or she could call his grandmother, whom she knew, and she'd come and get him. The boy chose to call his grandmother. Appreciative of the second chance, the teen would even drop by the store sometimes to check in on Ham's family.

Eventually, Ham's parents moved the family to Centralia, Washington, where he remembers being one of the only Asian kids in his high school. He attended the University of Washington and went to medical school in Chicago's northern suburbs.

After completing his residency in emergency medicine, Ham moved to Hawaii to serve as lead physician for the Army's 130th Engineer Brigade, where he was responsible for the medical readiness of more than 3,000 soldiers. He says Army training informs his day-to-day volunteer work. "This helps me work with patients who might not want to be admitted or even go to the hospital and might need two or three different ways of dealing with their health or social program," he says.

Ham says his People of Action recognition allowed him to network with Rotary clubs around the world, including one in Korea that sought his advice on ways to serve Seoul's unsheltered population. Professionally, he thinks the recognition may have even helped him get promoted to his current position as division chief of emergency medicine for Hawaii Pacific Health, the network that includes the Straub Benioff Medical Center. And it opened more volunteer opportunities. Ham is now board president of the Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii and president-elect of the Hawaii chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians.

Through it all, Ham has been guided by some advice he received as a recent college graduate in the early 2000s from then-Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber, a former ER doctor, during a chance encounter. "He firmly believed that the emergency medicine residency trains you to tackle more than just life-threatening health emergencies for individual patients but also larger-scale and longer-term threats to communities," Ham says.

Case in point: homelessness. The work Ham and other Hawaii HOME volunteers do helps in some unexpected ways too. Ham likes to tell the story of a man who turned up at a quarantine center during the pandemic. The man approached Hawaii HOME team members there to get Band-Aids for his feet, and they noticed he had a South Asian accent. "We learned he was a New York City cabdriver who lost his job and was trying to return home to Bangladesh when his flight out of Honolulu was canceled," recalls Ham. His belongings, including his passport, had been stolen, and he'd ended up in the quarantine center. Hawaii HOME found him a social worker who was able to help him get a new passport — and find his way home.

— HANNAH WALLACE

This story is part of an occasional series celebrating Rotary's People of Action honorees. Learn more at rotary.org/rotary-people-of-action.



James Ham

- Co-founder, director, **Water Hands Hope**, 2014-present
- **People of Action: Champions of Health**, 2021
- **Division chief of emergency medicine, Hawaii Pacific Health**, 2022-present

Hawaii HOME Project volunteers and Rotarians from District 5000 provide meals to homeless residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

HANDBOOK

The liaisons

The Rotary Representative Network keeps us connected to the UN and beyond

Rotary and the United Nations have been partners since the beginning. Rotary consulted in the drafting of the organization's charter back in 1945, and shared values are written into the document, explains Cyril Noirtin, dean of the Rotary Representative Network, RI's volunteer liaisons to the UN. "Rotary and the UN have shared goals. We call them our areas of focus, and the UN calls them Sustainable Development Goals, but we're all trying to resolve humanity's most pressing challenges," he says.

Noirtin and about 20 other members of the Rotary Representative Network liaise with UN agencies and other international organizations. This year, the network includes three Rotaractors.

Appointed annually by Rotary's president, the representatives have a multifold purpose: They promote Rotary, monitor UN agencies' work and report back, and build connections between Rotary clubs and the technical experts within these agencies.

Noirtin is the representative to UNESCO, which is based in Paris. He attends meetings such as UNESCO's General Conference. "The past two editions, I was invited to take the floor for three minutes in front of all the country leaders, and I was able to speak about Rotary and what we do," he says. "We can have coffee, we can have lunch, and we connect people."

One outcome has been the development of shared programs. After Rotary Day at UNESCO in 2006, for example, Rotary and the IHE Delft Institute for Water Education (which operates under the auspices of UNESCO) developed a strategic partnership to provide educational fellowships for water experts. "What is interesting is that now the project has ended, but local clubs are continuing," Noirtin explains.

Get in touch with a representative to find out how you can collaborate with key international organizations: rotary.org/rotary-representative-network. "The network is one of the best-kept secrets of Rotary," Noirtin says.

UNICEF

In 2022, Rotary and UNICEF debuted the Local Collaboration Framework, which provides guidance on working together. Projects resulting from the framework include a nine-country vaccination campaign in the South Pacific, a humanitarian aid program in Sri Lanka, and school violence prevention work in Nairobi, Kenya.



UN Environment Programme

Following Rotary Day at the UN in 2018, UNEP and Rotary District 9212 established the Adopt a River for Sustainable Development pilot program, which evolved into Rotary and UNEP's official partnership: Community Action for Fresh Water.





Commonwealth of Nations and European Union

The advocacy work of Rotary representatives has contributed to multimillion-dollar commitments in support of polio eradication from governmental organizations such as the European Union, the Commonwealth of Nations, and more.



1 NEW YORK

UNICEF
UN headquarters

2 WASHINGTON, D.C.

Organization of American States
World Bank

3 PARIS

UNESCO
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

4 LONDON

Commonwealth of Nations

5 BRUSSELS

European Union

6 GENEVA

UN office at Geneva
World Health Organization

7 ROME

World Food Programme
Food and Agriculture Organization
International Fund for Agricultural Development

8 CAIRO

League of Arab States

9 ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

African Union
UN Economic Commission for Africa

10 NAIROBI, KENYA

UNICEF in Kenya
UN Environment Programme

Rotary will commemorate the UN's anniversary with an event on 11 December at the San Francisco War Memorial building — where the UN charter was signed 80 years ago. Register at rotaryun80.org.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANDREA DEKROUT, MARK LEHN, THIES IBOLD



TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Undeniable impact

Many of you will remember the theme I chose as RI president in 2020-21: *Rotary Opens Opportunities*. I remain passionate about these opportunities and I know you do too.

As we celebrate Rotary Foundation Month, let's reflect on the many ways the Foundation makes the world better. Rotary is extraordinary, and the Foundation amplifies that impact.

I encourage all of you — in Rotary and Rotaract clubs — to discover this for yourselves. Go beyond the local level and engage with The Rotary Foundation globally. You can partner with clubs to boost literacy in Guatemala or fight malaria in Zambia. You can make a difference with clean water initiatives reaching millions or maternal health programs saving lives across continents.

It doesn't stop there. Through major impact projects like Programs of Scale, we're pursuing bold initiatives that push Rotary's potential to create lasting change further. Greater impact and greater visibility: this is our path forward.

Many of you have asked about the status of Rotary's biggest impact project in history — our long-term commitment to polio eradication. Recently, RI President Francesco Arezzo, International PolioPlus Committee Chair Michael McGovern, and I met with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the army leadership of Pakistan. Everyone is fully committed to eradicating

polio once and for all. We were absolutely convinced by the work of Pakistan's emergency operations centers, where experts plan and coordinate vaccination.

While some governments scale back support for polio eradication, Rotary remains committed to its pledge to raise \$50 million again this year. This meeting reaffirmed our unwavering commitment to finishing this historic mission.

What excites me most is seeing how each of us can make a real difference through our Foundation. I urge everyone — especially newcomers to Rotary — to explore these opportunities. Find your passion among our areas of focus and discover projects to support, especially through global grants.

We members fund, sustain, and deliver these projects. That's why the Foundation consistently earns top ratings from Charity Navigator. If you don't want to lead a project, you can still be part of the Foundation through annual support.

Our fundraising goal for 2025-26 is an ambitious \$500 million. Your gift this month will create countless opportunities.

We have incredible opportunities before us, and the impact we achieve together through The Rotary Foundation is exponential. The proof is undeniable.

HOLGER KNAACK

Foundation trustee chair

SERVICE ABOVE SELF

THE OBJECT OF ROTARY

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

First The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;

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

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

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

THE FOUR-WAY TEST

Of the things we think, say or do:

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

ROTARIAN CODE OF CONDUCT

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

As a Rotarian, I will

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

CALENDAR

November events

LACE UP!

Event: 5K Run/Walk

Host: Rotary Club of Little River, South Carolina

What it benefits: Local nonprofits and scholarships

Date: 1 November

Runners of all ages and abilities can start the month off on the right foot at the club's 17th annual 5K race. The route has only a few turns and ends on the waterfront of the Intracoastal Waterway. The race is part of a "holiday challenge" held in conjunction with the nearby Rotary Club of Conway; participants who also compete in the Conway club's Rivertown Reindeer Run 5K in December receive a special gift.

A NOVEMBER TO REMEMBER

Event: Novemberfest

Host: Rotary Club of Alvin, Texas

What it benefits: Local nonprofits and scholarships

Date: 8 November

In its 21st year, this free festival features an array of activities and attractions at Alvin's National Oak Park. The car and bike show awards over 125 trophies and plaques to owners of antique and modern cars, trucks, motorcycles, and other vehicles. Other highlights include an arts and crafts show, food vendors, live music, a kids' zone, and a tribute to veterans.

SEE THE LIGHTS

Event: TOAST to the Holidays

Host: Rotary Club of Clemmons, North Carolina

What it benefits: Local projects, nonprofits, and scholarships

Date: 9 November

The holiday season in Clemmons kicks off with this event, which draws families



MOVE YOUR FEET BEFORE YOU EAT

Event: Turkey Trot

Host: Rotary Club of Perry Township (Canton), Ohio

What it benefits: Local nonprofits

Date: 27 November

Each year, hundreds of families in the Canton area turn out on Thanksgiving morning for this event at Central Catholic High School. The main race is a 5K run/walk, while the Little Gobbler Run offers a shorter course for kids under 10 years old. Awards are given to the top three male and female finishers overall and in various age divisions.

to Tanglewood Park to view the elaborate illuminated displays that make up the Festival of Lights. (TOAST stands for Totally Outstanding Awesome Stroll through Tanglewood.) Children and adults alike can meet Santa and Mrs. Claus, enjoy music played by a DJ, and nosh on fare from more than a dozen food trucks.

JOG FOR JULIE

Event: Turkey Trot

Host: Rotary Club of Lynnfield, Massachusetts

What it benefits: Local scholarships

Date: 23 November

A popular pre-Thanksgiving race since 2009, this 5K has in recent years honored the memory of Lynnfield resident Julie Routhier, who died of cancer in 2022. The club partners with the Julie Routhier Foundation to sponsor the event, which starts at Lynnfield Town Hall. Among the

scholarships that the club funds with the proceeds is one in Routhier's name that is awarded to a high school senior pursuing a career in teaching.

YULE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Event: Yule Feed Families

Host: Rotary Club of Lake Country-Hartland, Wisconsin

What it benefits: Five local food pantries

Dates: 26 November to 31 December

This holiday fundraising and food drive was founded in 1991 by longtime club members Gary Jasiek and Scott Peterson and for many years was organized in partnership with the newspaper they both worked for. Since its inception, the annual campaign has collected more than \$1 million in donations and tens of thousands of grocery items for food pantries in the Lake Country area of Waukesha County. This year, the club hopes to raise at least \$55,000.

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.

THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

Arch Klumph Society 2024-25 honorees

Named for the founder of The Rotary Foundation, the Arch Klumph Society was established to recognize the Foundation's most generous donors — those who have contributed \$250,000 or more.

This distinguished society includes about 1,700 supporters from more than 50 countries and geographical areas. Their generosity enables the Foundation to continue its mission of advancing world understanding, goodwill, and peace through the alleviation of poverty, the support of education, and the eradication of polio.

The members listed below were recognized in the 2024-25 Rotary year through a formal induction or elevation ceremony.

Recognition levels as of 30 June 2025;
locations according to club affiliation

PLATINUM CHAIR'S CIRCLE
Contributions of \$5,000,000-\$9,999,999

Ravishankar and Paola Dakoju, India

FOUNDATION CIRCLE
Contributions of \$1,000,000-\$2,499,999

Charles and Ann Eisemann,
United States

Gloria Ann and Carl C. Evans,
United States

Daniel O. Joraanstad and Robert E. Hermann, United States

Antonio I-Tson and Addie Soo, Taiwan

Bruce and Pat Williams, Canada

Ching-Hua Yen and Shu-Fen Lai,
Taiwan

CHAIR'S CIRCLE
Contributions of \$500,000-\$999,999

David Saint John and Maureen C. Anderson, United States

Rick and Totney Benson, United States

Huang-Chia Stephen Chang and Yu-Fen Yang, Taiwan

Kochouseph Chittilappilly and Sheela Kochouseph, India

Toyoaki and Naomi Fujibayashi, Japan

Ron Harris, United States

Mahinder K. Jain and Sarita Jain, India

Roger and Lorri Kaufman,
United States

Sourabh Khemani and Joshita Davar Khemani, India

Sashi and Urmila Pandey, Nepal

Rick and Nikki Powers, United States

Shobana and Ravi Raman, India

Christopher H. Schneider and Ute A. Schneider, United States

Preston Seu and Donna Shaver,
United States

Lyn and Alex Stroschin, Canada

James Carl Thompson and Janice Ann Thompson, Canada

Mark Daniel Maloney, 2024-25 Rotary Foundation trustee chair, and his wife, Gay, address an Arch Klumph Society ceremony at One Rotary Center in Evanston, Illinois.



PHOTOGRAPHS: JOE UNDERBAKKE

Oakley and Dena Van Slyke,
United States

Tonya L. Watson and Stephen K. Cervantes, United States

Kevin and Jennifer Weist, United States

TRUSTEES CIRCLE

Contributions of \$250,000-\$499,999

Samir and Alka Ahuja, United States

Dave and Susan Amankwah, Ghana

David F. Arnn, Sr. and Carol B. Arnn,
United States

Linda and Jim Bauer, United States

Hemant and Gitanjali Bhasin, India

Lars Borgestrand, Norway

Marco Cecala and Rebecca Wilks,
United States

Heewoo Chae and Eunkyung Ko,
Korea

JungFa Chang and BiHua Jhang,
Taiwan

Chang Sen, Taiwan

Chao, Tien-Shin Falton & Chao, Fang Ching-Cheng, Taiwan

Case, Chen Chang and Chao Ti Lin,
Taiwan

Chi-Hua Cheng and Ying-Tzu Tsai,
Taiwan



Arch Klumph Society honorees visiting One Rotary Center explore a gallery that features etched-glass portraits of the society's members.

Basker Chockalingam and Malathi Basker, India

Gil G. Chua and Grace P. Chua,
Philippines

Venson Chuang and Yueh Mei Chan,
Taiwan

Marjorie A. Cole, United States

Ligia I. Corredor, United States

Pamela A. and D. Paul Crawford,
United States

John E. and Jane W. Curtis,
United States

Chikako Demura, Japan

Milind Deshpande and Meera Deshpande, India

Patrick and Kristen Eakes,
United States

R. Mark and Kit Fields,
United States

Suzanne and Charles Fienning,
United States

Charles and Alicia Foster,
United States

Joseph P. and Martha Ely Goralka,
United States

Myeong Ho Ha and Keum-Hee Jang,
Korea

Hyung Soo Han and Ok Soon Lee,
Korea

Joo Hee Han and Jongmin Lee, Korea

Seunghun Han and Suyeon Bae,
Korea

James R. and Anita R. High,
United States

“My connection with Rotary has given my life great meaning. Through service to my community, I have experienced firsthand how small acts of kindness and generosity can make a significant difference.”

— *YoungSun Park and MiTae Kim, Korea*

“It’s the lives that we change; it’s the things that we accomplish. That’s why I say that Rotary is the vehicle. We have the steering wheel; we have the vision. The Foundation is the fuel that makes good things happen in the world.”

— Gloria Ann Evans, United States

Dong-Lung Hsieh and Shu-Yen Ko, Taiwan

Benison Hsu and Joyce Liou, Taiwan

Shirley S. Hu and Hsiao T. Hsia, United States

PH Huang and Maggie Lai, Taiwan

M.R. Jaishankar, India

Masahiro and Atsumi Kanno, Japan

CheonSik Kim and SoonJeong Yoon, Korea

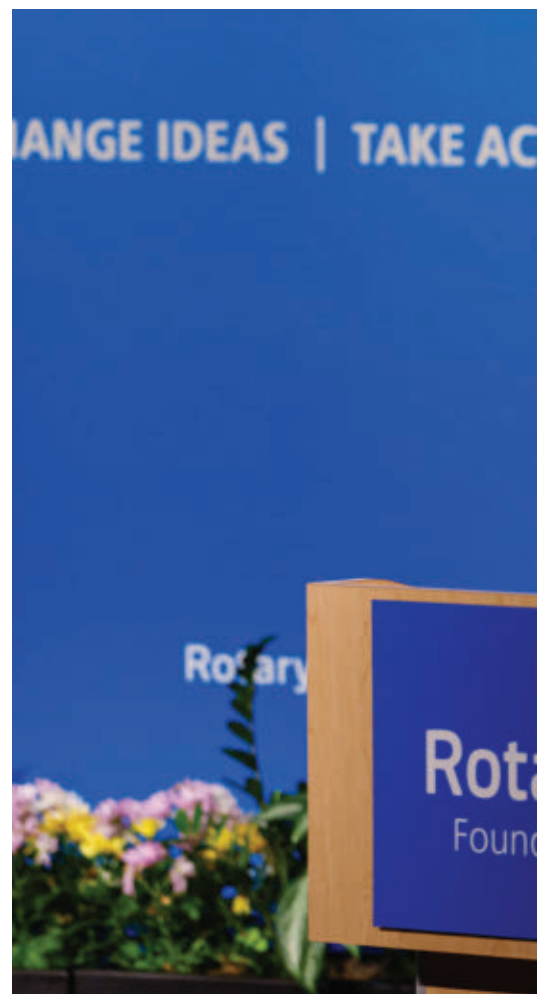
Eung Seo Kim and Kyung Hee Kim, Korea

Kwang Tae Kim and Juseon Byun, Korea

PHOTOGRAPHS: JOANNA BIBANGCO, JOE UNDERBAKKE



Above: Arch Klumph Society honorees await the start of a ceremony at Rotary headquarters in May. **Right:** Tonya L. Watson and Stephen K. Cervantes receive a society membership certificate from Rotary leaders Mark Maloney and Stephanie Urchick at a June donor summit in Calgary, Alberta.



P.H. Lai and Sally, Taiwan

Lee Ji Won and Jeon Yoon Hee,
Korea

Li-Hsin Liao and Hung-Jung Chin,
Taiwan

Wen-Ta Liao and Hui-Shen Liang,
Taiwan

Ronald L. and Sandra S. Mabry,
United States

Meera Tina Markanda, United States

Darrel and Edith Martin, Canada

Hideo and Naomi Matsuda, Japan

Navas Meeran and Shereen,
India

Felipe and Rocío Meza, Mexico

**Krishnan G. Nair and Rajashree V.
Nair**, India

YoungSun Park and MiTae Kim,
Korea

Vicki and Timothy Puliz, United States
and Scotland

S. Gautami and Venu S. Rao,
United States

Glen and Jeanette Richardson,
Canada

**Thomas R. and Elizabeth Miller
Roesel**, United States

Brian and Gwen Rothwell,
Canada

Mark G. Scolnick and Irma Cole,
United States

Verne P. Seehausen, United States

Young Jin Shin and Kyung Sim Lee,
Korea

Byongsik Soh and Wonok Lim, Korea

Michael and Donna Steffenson,
United States

**Lalitha and Narasimhan
Subramanian**, India

Hsin-Chuan, Tsai, Taiwan

Rich Turnbull and Marie Turnbull,
United States

James and Naomi Williams, Canada



Left: Chair's Circle member Shobana Raman shares a moment of joy with the audience at the May ceremony in Evanston. **Above:** Honorees gather with Maloney in the Arch Klumph Society Gallery in October 2024.

IN MEMORIAM

A passion for service

SangKoo Yun, 1949-2025



SangKoo Yun, a consummate Rotary leader and businessman who had been selected to be Rotary International's president for 2026-27, died 5 September, after months of treatment for pancreatic cancer. He was 75. A member of the Rotary Club of Sae Hanyang, Korea, Yun resigned as president-elect in August to focus on his medical treatment.

"SangKoo's passing is a great loss to the global Rotary family," said RI President Francesco Arezzo. "Yun's vision and contributions to Rotary will continue to inspire and motivate me and others. His legacy lives on in the hearts of Rotary friends and those whose lives were touched by his dedication to Rotary service."

Yun grew up in Seoul. His father served as the Korean president in the early 1960s. Instead of following his father into politics, Yun traveled to the United States to pursue his interest in architecture. He received bachelor's and master's degrees in architecture from Syracuse University.

After returning to Korea in the 1980s, Yun founded Dongsuh Corp., which engineers and markets architectural materials. He later started Youngan Corp., a real estate and investment venture.

He was a humble servant with honesty and fairness at his core and a leader who always led through action, said Past RI President Dong Kurn "D.K." Lee, who shared a Rotary district with Yun. "We were close like brothers and it is difficult to bear this grief. Every step he took opened new paths, and every seed he planted has grown into a tree of hope. We will never forget him."

Yun joined Rotary in 1987, when he helped charter the Sae Hanyang club. He worked to promote Rotary Youth Exchange and served on his district's

scholarship committee. These interests evolved into a lifelong passion for service, especially international service. He traveled the world to visit dozens of Rotary Foundation grant initiatives he either led or helped organize.

One of these projects was Keep Mongolia Green, for which Yun served eight years as co-chair. The initiative planted windbreak forests in the Gobi Desert to alleviate dust storms, which frequently affected nearby regions of Mongolia, China, and Korea. Its success helped inspire the Mongolian government to take further action to counter desertification. Yun received a Friendship Medal from the president of Mongolia for spearheading the innovative project.

Yun served Rotary as a director and trustee as well as a member of numerous committees, including chair of the Foundation's Executive Committee and Programs Committee. Together with his spouse, Eunsun Yang Yun, he was a Rotary Foundation Benefactor, a Major Donor, and a member of the Arch Klumph Society, the Paul Harris Society, and the Bequest Society. He also received the Foundation's Distinguished Service Award.

Yun anticipated that his term as RI president would offer the opportunity for him to preserve and amplify Rotary's long-standing traditions.

"I do not see myself as a lone leader, but as one link in a strong, unbroken chain — a chain forged by the wisdom and dedication of those who came before me, and held firm by the strength of those who stand beside me today," he said in a recorded address to members attending the Rotary Convention in Calgary, Alberta, in June.

Yun is survived by Eunsun, two adult children, and several grandchildren. ■

With deep regret, we report the death of **Genshitsu Sen**, Kyoto, Japan, who served RI as Rotary Foundation trustee in 1998-2002, director in 1988-90, and district governor in 1975-76.

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

Arthur C. Clough Jr.
Meredith, New Hampshire, 1986-87

Lou Gerard
Redding, California, 1994-95

Ryotaro Ishii
Matsudo East, Japan, 1995-96

Michael Hill
Henderson, New Zealand, 1999-2000

Ross White
Nanaimo, British Columbia, 2002-03

Joe Pratt
Raymond Area, New Hampshire, 2003-04

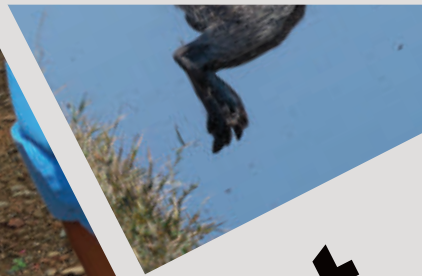
Ken Linkhorn
North Shore, New Zealand, 2004-05

David Haradon
Longwood, Pennsylvania, 2016-17

John Weiss
Morro Bay, California, 2017-18

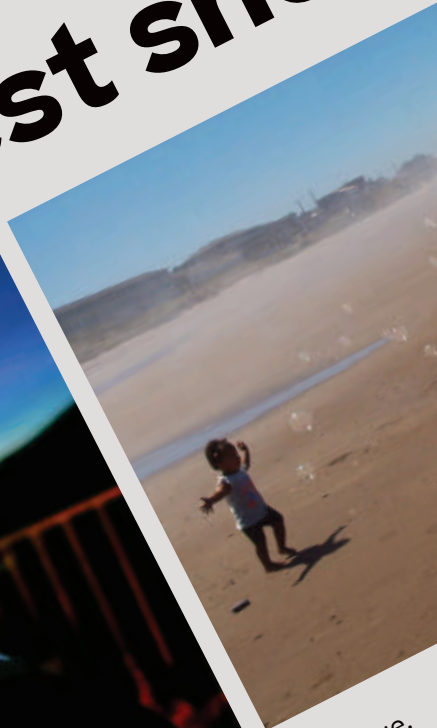
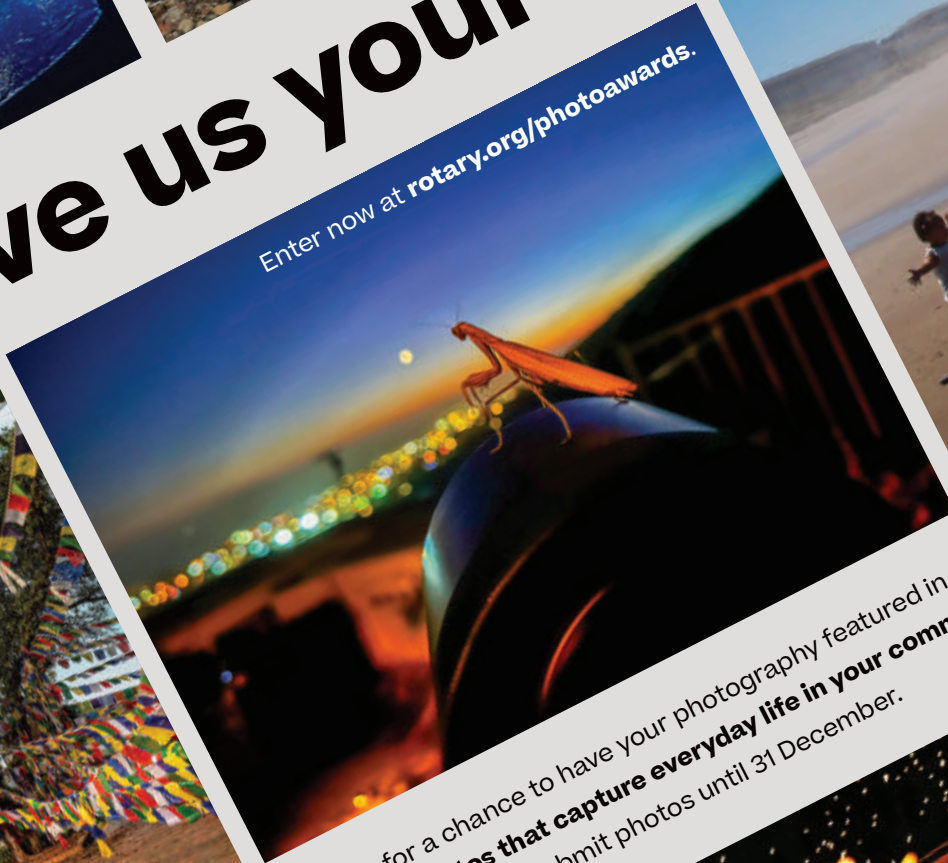
David Anderson
Wausau After Hours, Wisconsin, 2022-23

2026
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2026 CONVENTION

A first-timer's guide

When you arrive in Taipei for your first Rotary International Convention, you might feel momentarily overwhelmed — in a good way — among thousands of members from all corners of the world.

“Entering the convention, we’re all bright-eyed. We’re all looking around like, Whoa, there are so many people,” said Charvi Shah, of the Rotaract Club of the University of Calgary, at her first convention, in her Canadian hometown this year. She was excited to learn from younger members leading breakout sessions and to greet in person the global Rotaractors she networked with over the years — a group of them met up at a Calgary arcade one night.

People often head first to the House of Friendship to explore festive displays and interactives. It’s the convention’s Main Street, and a friend is waiting on every corner. Learn about clubs’ projects, partner organizations’ offerings, helpful tools from Rotary

staff, and many options to pursue your passion.

The event that many members say gave them their first sense of their place in Rotary’s gigantic family is the opening ceremony and its flag ceremony tradition when each Rotary country has its moment on-stage. Cheer your loudest!

To learn what the convention is like, ask a member who’s been. Many first-timers say they didn’t want to miss out after friends’ enthusiastic descriptions from Singapore, Melbourne, Houston, and on and on from their years of conventions.

In Calgary at his first convention, Anthony Agama, of the Rotary Club of Ngara in Uganda, registered right away for the next one, 13-17 June in Taipei. “You get to be part of a congregation of like-minded people who treasure change in their communities,” he says. “The Rotary Convention is a must-attend for everyone to celebrate love — love for humanity, love for progress, love for service.” ■

Learn more and register at convention.rotary.org.

CROSSWORD

Prez braces for duty

By Victor Fleming
Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas

ACROSS

- 1 Arrangement of the hair
- 5 Bit of brandy, say
- 8 Army identification
- 14 With 35-Down, 39-Across's spouse
- 15 Offshoot of punk rock
- 16 Interweave
- 17 ___ and groan
- 18 "Guess ___?"
- 19 Erupted suddenly
- 20 2025-26 RI presidential message
- 23 "Breaking Up Is Hard to Do" singer Neil
- 24 "A long time ___"
- 25 Audiophile's collection
- 28 Affixes (to)
- 31 Imam's book
- 33 It might be induced
- 37 Saving Private Ryan craft (abbr.)
- 38 The "D" in FDR
- 39 2025-26 RI president
- 42 The Far Side cartoonist
- 43 Ben-___
- 44 Plane assignment
- 45 Completely foreign

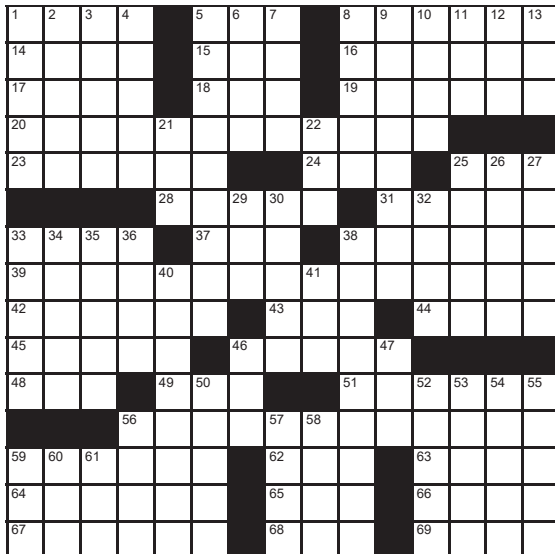
46 ? and !

- 48 "___ for Two"
- 49 Alehouse fixture
- 51 Daiquiri alternative
- 56 Profession of 39-Across
- 59 "Help me out here"
- 62 Certain church lady
- 63 Ancient Andes native
- 64 With 55-Down, 39-Across's home
- 65 "It's no ___"
- 66 Aquatic mammal
- 67 Bikini Atoll activities, once
- 68 Wild blue yonder
- 69 "___ with my little eye ..."

DOWN

- 1 The Stranger author
- 2 All ___ page
- 3 Grant-___
- 4 Brand of soda
- 5 "The moon on the breast of the ___ snow"
- 6 "As I see it," in texting
- 7 Flimsy, as an excuse
- 8 Clear, as a windshield
- 9 Spectator
- 10 Contented
- 11 Black gunk
- 12 11-pointer in blackjack

- 13 A H.S. dropout might earn one
- 21 Cardiac readout, briefly
- 22 Argon or neon
- 25 Hot trend
- 26 Tony of Taxi
- 27 Nose, slangily
- 29 Battleship initials
- 30 ___ Sketch
- 32 Barcelona cheers
- 33 B's musical equivalent
- 34 Papal cape
- 35 See 14-Across
- 36 L'___ aux Meadows (Canadian historic site)
- 38 Certain funds used for political purposes
- 40 Stark unlikeness
- 41 Flags of ___ Fathers
- 46 Speedometer reading (abbr.)
- 47 Word with Jose or Juan
- 50 Book full of legends?
- 52 "Who's there?" answer
- 53 Food spears
- 54 BMI alternative
- 55 See 64-Across
- 56 Bach composition
- 57 Big burden
- 58 Nightfall
- 59 Lingerie buy
- 60 "Dig in!"
- 61 Get on in years



Solution on opposite page

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The name says it all

Saltimbocca is Italian for ‘jump in your mouth.’ Yes, it’s that good.

Juli Lederhaus grew up in California, but for her, comfort food is inseparable from her grandparents’ Italian homeland. When she was asked to teach a cooking class on Zoom for her Rotary club during the pandemic, the longtime chef chose one of her favorites: chicken saltimbocca. “Saltimbocca means ‘jump in your mouth.’ It’s called that because it is so good you want it to jump right into your mouth,” she explains.

The dish is made from a thin piece of chicken breast topped with chopped fresh sage leaves and a piece of prosciutto. It’s browned prosciutto-side down, flipped, and finished with a wine-infused pan sauce. “Once you learn it by seeing it, it’s really easy,” she says. And since her fellow members were at home after their online class, they all had their chicken saltimbocca for dinner.

ON THE SIDE: Lederhaus continues to teach cooking classes, including how to make San Francisco’s famous sourdough bread. Drawing on her Italian roots, when she demonstrates saltimbocca, she often pairs it with risotto. Among Italian restaurants in the U.S., “99.9 percent” don’t cook the rice dish correctly, she says. “I introduce people to risotto made the right way.”

EPICUREAN EPICENTER: Petaluma, about an hour’s drive north of San Francisco, was known in the early 20th century as the “egg basket of the world” and still has a thriving egg and poultry industry. Located on the southern edge of California’s Sonoma County, it’s also premier wine country and a foodie haven. “There’s lots of dairies, cheesemaking places, great produce, fabulous seafood,” Lederhaus says. “I couldn’t have landed in a better place to be semiretired.” — DIANA SCHOBURG

Juli Lederhaus
Rotary Club of
Petaluma Valley,
California

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