

# Rotary

MARCH 2024

MAGAZINE

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# Recruit Peace and Development Leaders for a Rotary Peace Fellowship



Selected fellows receive full funding for a master's degree or postgraduate diploma in disciplines related to peace and development. Our fellows lead peacebuilding efforts worldwide. Rotary members play a key role in recruiting candidates from their communities!



## Think like a Rotary Peace Fellow

**T**here are many pathways to peace, and in Rotary, we are fortunate to have Rotary Peace Fellows who demonstrate this truth time and again.

Each year, Rotary awards up to 130 fellowships for leaders around the world to study peace and development, and what these peace fellows learn prepares them to work in conflict prevention and resolution and promote Positive Peace. Here are a few examples of the creative ways peace fellows advance peace:

### Promoting sustainability

Alejandra Rueda-Zarate combined her Rotary Peace Fellowship in peace and conflict resolution with her master's degree in energy and resources to support her dream of protecting the Colombian countryside.

She founded the organization NES Naturaleza in 2011 to help farmers in Colombia and across rural Latin America gain access to knowledge and training to uphold sustainable farming standards. That support has improved the lives of nearly 4,500 farmers, inspiring many of them to become entrepreneurs. And it's helped promote both natural and social sustainability throughout Latin America.

### Ending racism

Peace fellows Geoffrey Diesel and Kathy Doherty have applied their fellowships in peace and development studies toward co-founding the Racial Equity Project, a subcommittee of Rotary Positive Peace Activators in North America committed to studying ways to create a more peaceful society through anti-racism efforts.

The Racial Equity Project takes a deep look into how the eight Pillars of Positive Peace could support efforts to address racism, and it works to spread this message to communities across North America. The organization initially grew from Rotary's strategic partnership with the Institute for Economics and Peace, a global think tank dedicated to promoting Positive Peace.

### Managing disasters using data

Through a Rotary Peace Fellowship, Jamie LeSueur earned a master's degree in social science within peace and conflict research. He now leads emergency operations for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, setting a management and operational framework for agency collaboration in emergency response situations.

Jamie has found that research data is a powerful tool to bring calm to the complex world of disaster response. No matter what an organization's protocols might entail, letting research be the foundation for decision making helps clarify even the most complicated emergencies.

These stories — and hundreds like them — show how Rotary is creating a generation of leaders ready and able to build peace worldwide. Nearly 1,800 peace fellows have graduated from Rotary Peace Centers, and they are applying their craft in more than 140 countries.

May the continuing work of peace fellows and the Rotary members who support them inspire you to continue to *Create Hope in the World* through service, fundraising, and creative thinking.

**R. GORDON R. MCINALLY**

*President, Rotary International*



# WELCOME



**YOU ARE HERE:** Plymouth, England

**GREETING:** Alreet bey/maid?

**MAYFLOWER STEPS:** At Plymouth's historic harbor, a district of cobblestone streets and Tudor and Jacobean buildings, the religious dissidents known as the Pilgrims boarded the Mayflower on 6 September 1620 and embarked on their 66-day transatlantic journey to the New World.

**PLYMOUTH COLONY:** The Pilgrims intended to reach an area near the mouth of the Hudson River. Instead, they landed 220 miles to the northeast at Cape Cod in present day Massachusetts, before crossing the bay and founding Plymouth Colony, the first English settlement in New England.

**GATEWAY:** In England, a stone archway marks the Mayflower's approximate departure point. Nearby plaques commemorate the departure of ships in the 19th century during waves of migration to Australia and other parts of the British Empire, as well as the arrival in 1919 of the first transatlantic flight.

**A PAIR OF CLUBS:** The Rotary clubs of Plymouth Mayflower, England, and Plymouth, Massachusetts, became sister clubs in 2004.

# Rotary

MAGAZINE

March 2024

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EVERY  
ROTARIAN  
EVERY  
YEAR

## **YOUR GIFT CAN PROVIDE CLEAN WATER**

Clean water, sanitation, and hygiene education are basic necessities for a healthy environment and a productive life. Your donation to our Foundation's Annual Fund provides these essentials in communities close to home and around the world.

**GIVE TODAY:** [rotary.org/donate](https://rotary.org/donate)



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Members of a Korean Rotary club adopt a pup-friendly service project

Photo essay by Seong Joon Cho

**On the cover:** Benji Astrachan, who started a volunteer program to glean passed over produce from farm fields, began his work to improve food access with Harvest Against Hunger, a long-standing program of Rotary District 5030 in Greater Seattle.  
Photo by Mike Kane



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ILLUSTRATION: WHOOLI CHEN; PHOTOGRAPH: (OPPOSITE) SEONG JOON CHO





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STAFF CORNER

## Erica Gwynn

*Area of focus manager, water and sanitation*

**I grew up in a suburb of Detroit.** I used to swim, sail, and fish in the Great Lakes and the Detroit River along the U.S.-Canadian border. It's no surprise that I became fascinated with water at an early age and attended many ecology camps, wading through streams and rivers, collecting fish, and taking water samples.

**In college, I traveled to Toolik Lake,** above the Arctic Circle in Alaska, to conduct research at a biological field station. It was funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation's Research Experiences for Undergraduates program. For six months, we examined how melting permafrost adversely affects water quality. The melting also formed swamps that became breeding grounds for bugs; we could kill 300 mosquitoes with one slap.

**My international experience began in Kibale, Uganda,** where I volunteered at a health clinic in 2002 to investigate how public health issues such as diarrheal disease and malaria were linked to poorly managed water resources there. The trip reaffirmed my belief that the environment and public health are intertwined. It is difficult to have a healthy population without a healthy environment.

**I joined a public health initiative on the U.S.-Mexico border,** where environmental health issues, such as dengue disease, malaria, poor water quality, water scarcity, and disparities in access to quality health care existed on both sides of the border. During that work, we were detained for 48 hours by the Mexican authorities one time since we frequently traversed back and forth. It was scary but eye-opening to witness the corruption and the mistreatment of migrants.

**A Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship** sponsored by the Rotary Club of Farmington, Michigan, in 2007-08 allowed me to live and work in Jocotepec, a small town along Lake Chapala, Mexico's



- Bachelor's degree in biology and master's degree in toxicology and environmental health from the University of Michigan
- Languages: English, Spanish, and French

largest lake. I collaborated with national public health and water management institutions to investigate whether heavy metals and banned pesticides found in fish and water supplies were contributing to adverse health issues in the community. We shared the findings with local leaders, farmers, and affected women so they could advocate for better regulation. And we recommended ways of reducing contaminant levels to decision makers.

**As an area of focus manager at Rotary,** I offer technical advice to clubs and districts, helping them design projects and programs for greater sustainability and impact. Collective action — with multiple clubs and districts working together with public and private partners — is the best way Rotary can have measurable impact.

**As an avid semiprofessional salsa dancer,** I won various team and individual awards at international competitions. No matter where I travel, I always make a point to connect with the dance community. That's how I met my husband in Ghana in 2015. ■

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

## Letters to the editor

### PLANT POWER

I was very happy to see so many articles and information in your December issue on the importance of whole food plant-based living. Thank you for addressing the impact our food choices have on the environment.

Page 13 [“Consider your carbon ‘foodprint’”] references Project Drawdown’s research on various ways to reverse global warming, which include plant-based diets. The next page states that emissions from food systems create a third of human-caused greenhouse gases. Just imagine if Rotary made it a mission to change the world by promoting a plant-based lifestyle. Your impact would be enormous!

In the process, you would be helping people improve their health through fewer cases of diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and dementia. Additionally, you would help quell the mental health crisis we are experiencing in the U.S. and elsewhere; several doctors have published findings on how nutrition contributes to mental health.

Going to a plant-based lifestyle is the single biggest action any person can take to help better the environment. This has to be our future, if we want one.

**Mary Kaminski**, Houghton, Michigan

### PLEASE DON'T CONDESCEND

I have always looked forward to the magazine and read it cover to cover. I appreciate the information in it. But recently, I’ve wondered if the magazine represents the Rotary that I know and love.

I have been a Rotarian for almost 30 years, in Washington, Maryland, and Florida, and am presently the president of my club. We do so much with the manpower available and the support of the community: water and swim safety for area children, literacy programs for our elementary school, and much more. However, we struggle as a club to keep members engaged.

I find some of the magazine’s articles offensive and condescending. Please don’t tell me that words matter; I know that. I also know that “natural” disasters



do occur and that poor countries and less financially fortunate people always suffer more because they cannot rescue themselves [“Unnatural disasters,” President’s message, December]. And please don’t suggest that I or anyone else eat less meat to minimize our carbon footprint [“Consider your carbon ‘foodprint,’” December].

Diversity and different ways of thinking are what Rotary is all about. But choices regarding diet, travel, and lifestyle are personal. While we struggle to find places to meet, keep our aging members involved, and attract new members, these suggestions are not what I need to read to keep me engaged. They won’t keep me excited about being a Rotarian. Please focus on the good Rotarians are known for.

**Kathleen Rylander**, Longboat Key, Florida

### BLOWN COVER

I was quite taken aback by the [December] cover photo, especially with the sidebar headline “How to feed a hot, hungry planet.” I appreciate the coverage of Rotary’s “global palette.” However, I am ashamed to think that this photo represents Rotary to the world — the fine china, crystal, and jeweled hand.

### OVERHEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In November, we published an essay by the writer Greg O’Brien about his experience living with Alzheimer’s disease.

Thank you for this raw & real glimpse into #alzheimers and #dementia. This story hits my ♥. As a daughter who cared for a dad with dementia ... reading this surfaced some emotional moments for me. But, in facing the sadness, the soul heals a bit.

**Natalie Ziembra**  
▶ via Facebook

Helped me, an RN, understand what living with Alzheimer’s is REALLY like! ... A must-read for anyone who cares [about] or wants to understand Alzheimer’s.

**Yvonne Ferguson**  
▶ via Facebook



Singapore, the 2024 Rotary International Convention host city, is a culinary paradise. Tune in to the *Rotary Voices* podcast to hear an audio version of the November feature story in which *Rotary Editor in Chief* Wen Huang navigates the city's diverse food scene. Listen at [on.rotary.org/podcast](https://on.rotary.org/podcast).

I am trying very hard not to take this out of context, but it still leaves me with a somewhat sour taste.

**Bea Smith**, Kamloops, British Columbia

The cover of this issue portrays the fine and plentiful food available to Rotarians. Given the worst food insecurity problem seen in decades, even in prosperous North America, don't you think it portrays Rotary as somewhat insensitive to the reality that too many people are forced to live with today?

**George Venner**, Qualicum Beach, British Columbia

### RECIPES FOR SUCCESS

Awesome [December] issue! You should make this a tradition every year. I love the recipes from around the world ["A global palette"].

I have a suggestion. On page 54, there is a spread of dishes from clubs around the world ["What members are eating"]. What if you had a QR code in each of those boxes that would take readers to a site where they can get the recipe for what's pictured for a small donation to whatever cause that club is working on? It would be a fun way to share even more

recipes and raise some funds to support clubs making an impact.

**Adam Tucker**, Leesburg, Virginia

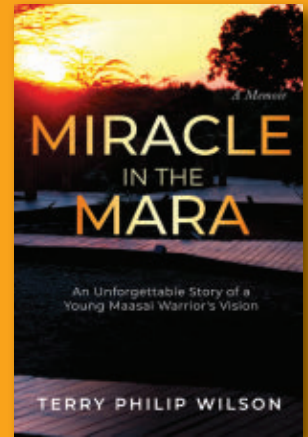
### GIFT EXCHANGE

As a Rotarian of long standing, I have had the pleasure of presenting at many events where I have received plaques, crystals, vases, and other gifts of thanks. I have also watched other presenters receive gifts. It is an admirable thing to say thank you with a gift. But Rotary and its Four-Way Test give us cause to ponder how we can better serve our ideals.

What if we took the funds that were spent on those gifts and the expense of carting or mailing them back home, and diverted the money to a cause supported by the presenter? How much better would the funds be spent providing food, clothes, health care, housing, education, or any number of needs existing worldwide?

Trophies are fine for competitions, and thanks for inspirational moments can be expressed in many ways beneficial to all concerned. But let us make this another way of serving our communities with action. We will all be richer and more thankful for the change.

**Sylvia Whitlock**, San Carlos, California



Stories from Rotarian visits to southwestern Kenya



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PHOTOGRAPH: JULIANA TAN



THE SPECIALIST

## The ‘barter baron’ of Syracuse

*Bernie Bregman has a deal for you*

**O**ne day in the mid-1960s, a salesperson walked into my paint manufacturing plant in Syracuse, New York, and urged me to join Barter Mart, a company that facilitated barter exchanges. With a one-time sign-up fee, participants, either individuals or companies, could exchange goods and services, with the company earning a commission on each transaction. I loved the idea and soon became a member. Once I managed to persuade a candle-maker to sign up. They ended up bartering for advertising.

**People barter all the time – with their lawyers, their accountants.** In later years, I became the marketing director for the Syracuse Trading Exchange, another barter company that allowed members to also trade for credits toward goods and services. I eventually

ran the company and part of my pay was in trading credits. I stayed in Las Vegas with my family on my barter credits. I’ve gotten a hot tub and works of art from trading credits.

**A local magazine gave me the nickname “barter baron”** in 1983 when I was with the Trading Exchange. As a former journalist, I know how to make a story. I once created a coupon book with unbelievable deals. A photo design company that belonged to my barter network designed the coupon book on a barter exchange. So, it didn’t cost me any cash. At a trade show, I dressed up in a jester outfit to promote the coupon books. I wore the same outfit for media appearances. The ploy worked.

**I’m 91 and bartering still gives me a high.** I’m now a member of a Wisconsin-based barter company. Each time I bring in a new member, I get \$100 in trade credits. Meanwhile, I have used my networking skills to help Rotary and have recruited more than 150 members over the years. I monitor local media and when I see a promising candidate, I reach out. I’m not afraid to cold call people and invite them to club meetings. Last year, I invited the Syracuse mayor to be a guest speaker at our club. During the speech, he declared 28 March to be Bernard B. Bregman Day.

— AS TOLD TO DYLAN FOLEY

**Bernie Bregman**  
 Rotary Club  
 of Eastwood  
 (Syracuse),  
 New York  
 President of  
 BBB Marketing

**15**  
The generous inventor

**18**  
The business of caring

**20**  
A new ending for Oppenheimer

## POLIO ERADICATION

# Polio mapping goes high tech

*Geotracking improves outbreak response targeting, ensuring fewer children are left behind*

**W**hen polio vaccinators fanned out across areas of the Republic of Congo last year to stop an outbreak, they carried a powerful new tool in their pockets: cell-phones that tracked their progress as they went door to door. Equipped with a mobile app, the phones sent data back to a command center where staff could see on a digital map if homes were missed and re-direct teams on the ground.

With support from the World Health Organization and other partners in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, the country is helping pioneer the use of what is known as geospatial tracking to stop polio outbreaks. Instead of relying on hand-drawn maps that are prone to errors, response team leaders can see with pinpoint accuracy where vaccinators have been and which homes they didn't get to. This happens in real time when a wireless connection is available. Such speed and precision are crucial to ensuring that a vaccine reaches each child and outbreaks are stopped.

"All you have to do is charge your phone and make sure you turn on the tracker when you are out on the streets. I just put it in my pocket and go from house to house," says Sandrine Lina, one of the WHO-trained vaccinators.

She and others hit the streets in June 2023 with hundreds of the phones after an outbreak of variant poliovirus type 1. The WHO African region was certified free of wild

poliovirus in 2020. But this other form of polio, known as vaccine-derived or variant poliovirus, remains a threat. These cases occur in rare instances when the live but weakened virus in oral vaccines circulates long enough through sewage in communities with low vaccination rates to mutate into a potentially dangerous form.

The key to stopping such outbreaks is a thorough vaccination campaign. Geospatial tracking is playing a crucial role, generating intelligent maps and models. "The platform provides an opportunity for us to identify settlements that have poor coverage, where we've not seen many tracks of vaccination teams, and we can download the information to guide processes," says Kebba Touray, the lead of WHO's Geographic Information Systems Centre for the African region.

An early generation of the technology was used in Nigeria beginning in 2012, helping lead to the region's certification as free of wild poliovirus eight years later. "That's what gave birth to this innovative idea of ensuring settlements are mapped," Touray says. It's also been used in Cameroon.

For the June vaccination campaign, led by the Republic of Congo's Health Ministry, about 500 smartphones were distributed each morning to vaccinators. Like a fitness tracker, the mobile app counts steps and plots the coordinates on a map, along with essential details such as dates and times. Vaccinators also can use the phones to collect field data such as settlement names,

To learn more about Rotary's work to stop polio and to get involved, visit [endpolio.org](https://endpolio.org).



Sandrine Lina (left) and other vaccinators hit the streets with cellphones that tracked their progress during an outbreak response campaign in the Republic of Congo.

household information, and reasons given by those refusing a vaccine.

That information feeds a database that operations center managers can supervise in real time. It's displayed on an online dashboard through a heat map that shades areas in green and red hues. "Green indicates that vaccinators have passed in these areas, and red areas indicate that, Oh, these areas were planned, but no team passed through," explains Derrick Demeveng, a data and geographic information systems analyst who worked with the vaccination response team.

At the end of the first day, the operations center team in the capital, Brazzaville, saw that a section of the city's Poto-Poto district had not been covered. Vaccinators were sent there first thing in the morning to find any children who had been missed.

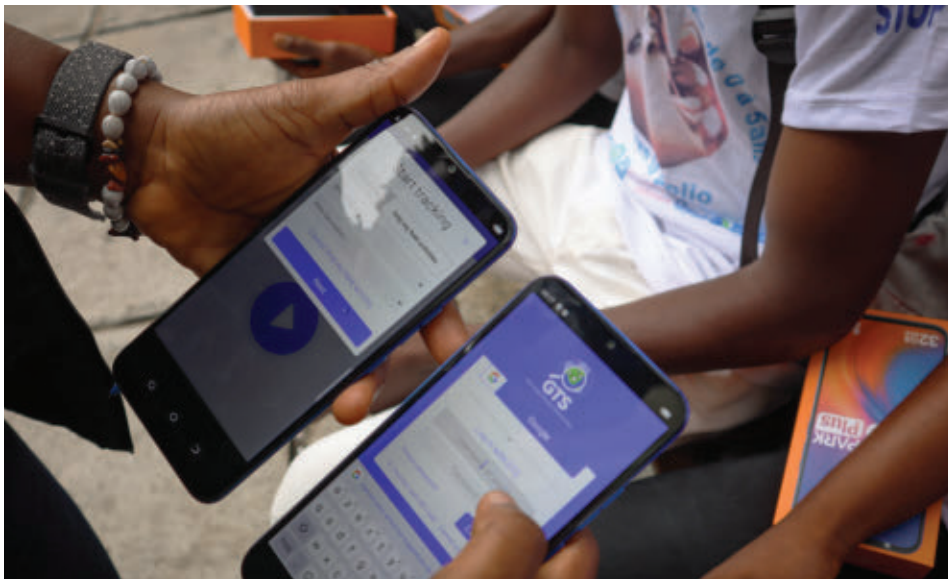
That ability to review data and make quick course corrections is critical. In the past, planners had to rely on maps drawn by vaccinators to prepare what are known as microplans. Inaccuracies were inevitable, and information often wasn't verified until after the campaign had ended. "The microplan is the critical component in preparing for outbreak response campaigns. You have to know where all the settlements are," Touray says.

Disease mapping in response to public health emergencies has a long history. In 1854, English physician John Snow pioneered one of the earliest uses of mapping in modern epidemiology during a cholera outbreak in London. In search of a pattern, Snow mapped cases and — because he believed contaminated water was to blame — the locations of water pumps,

and he found a connection. He was able to identify a single pump as the likely primary source, and when it was closed the outbreak ended.

Today, with a lot of computing power behind it, geospatial analytics is used in everything from weather modeling and sales trend forecasting to national defense, disaster response, and agriculture. The WHO is using geospatial technology to counter public health threats across the globe, from saving people in India from snake bite deaths to COVID-19 vaccine delivery in over 90 countries to polio eradication.

Geospatial technology is important for reaching members of communities who are often overlooked, says Rufaro Samanga, an epidemiologist who works at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, another GPEI partner. "Immunizations



Like a fitness tracker, the mobile app counts steps and feeds coordinates to a map, viewed at a command center (below) where staff members can see if homes were missed.



would be better served, especially in low- to middle-income countries, where you're already dealing with limited resources in some settings. Real-time data from these tracking systems allows us to identify parts of the population that are often missed," Samanga says.

The newest version of the technology, used in the Republic of Congo, has many improvements. "This one is lightweight, it's easy to deploy," Touray explains. "And

you are able to collect field information, especially concerning settlements, and to ensure that whatever information you are able to collect during an outbreak response campaign, you go back and use it to update your microplan" for future campaigns.

Demeveng says the technology solves the challenge of on-field visibility and incorporates a system of accountability, with supervisors able to monitor, direct, and advise

vaccinators in the field. When they return to the emergency operations center, an analysis of the day's outing is carried out.

While the Republic of Congo project was deemed successful, it did brush up against a familiar challenge: the digital divide. Despite advancements in digital inclusion, 2.6 billion people around the world remain unconnected to the internet, a considerable share of them in Africa, according to one recent analysis.

And a lack of strong internet infrastructure often disrupted the real-time upload feature of the geo-spatial tracking app. But the technology and the data collection are filling in the picture of polio and other public health challenges.

Touray and his WHO African team plan to implement these tracking systems elsewhere on the continent, including for purposes beyond polio. With the introduction of new technologies, though, one thing hasn't changed: All vaccinated children are still marked on a finger with ink they can proudly display. — TOLU OLASOJI

BY THE NUMBERS

500

Smartphones used to track outbreak response in the Republic of Congo

99.9%

Worldwide reduction in wild polio cases since 1988

2

Countries (Afghanistan and Pakistan) where wild polio remains endemic

Short takes

New Rotary Fellowships for educators, mental wellness counselors, and weather enthusiasts were recognized this past fall.



Rotary Peace Fellowship applications will be accepted through 15 May. Learn more at [rotary.org/peace-fellowships](https://rotary.org/peace-fellowships).







PROFILE

## Game on

*A generous inventor hits the Rotary bull's-eye*

**Chih-Hao Yiu**  
Rotary Club  
of Taichung  
East, Taiwan

**W**hen he was in his late 20s, Chih-Hao Yiu started his own business in Taiwan. An electronics engineering major in college, he especially liked to invent ways to improve the designs of existing electronic products. His company produced carbonation machines, PA systems, whistling key finders, and, one of Yiu's most popular items, an electronic dart board that provided instructions and announced scores.

Over the course of his career, Yiu was introduced to Rotary by a friend. "They told me about all the good things Rotary had done and the fellowship opportunities," Yiu says. He joined the Rotary Club of Taichung East in 2004 and subsequently served as club president and as an assistant governor of District 3461. He and his wife, Li-Hua Hsu, who joined the Taichung East club in 2018, are members of the Trustees Circle in the Arch Klumph Society.

Yiu sold his business in 2008 and retired. "I came from an impoverished family and benefited from the help of our community," he says. "Now I wanted to devote my full attention to helping others."

To accomplish that, Yiu came up with an ingenious way of doubling his club's membership. "I set up a plan to recruit 55 more members in three years," he says. He donated about \$50,000 to his club, and each time a current member brings in a new member, the club contributes some of Yiu's money to The Rotary Foundation in the current member's name. "This is really working," he says. "Everyone is feeling so motivated." Even in retirement, Chih-Hao Yiu could not stop inventing.

— WEN HUANG

The Rotary Foundation raised more than \$1.3 million in support of Giving Tuesday, 28 November.



A new video is available to help members promote the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards experience. Watch it or download it at [on.rotary.org/ryla-video](https://on.rotary.org/ryla-video).

A webinar about Programs of Scale grants and tips for applying will be held in two sessions on 21 March. Register at [rotary.org/webinars](https://rotary.org/webinars).

# People of action around the globe

By Brad Webber



## United States

Most North American plant species depend on insects, predominantly bees, for pollination. “Your whole food web is supported by bees,” says Dave Hunter, a member of the Rotary Club of Woodinville, Washington. The club leads a project that nourishes bees while beautifying the Seattle suburb. Members use donated wine barrels to construct planters to attract pollinators. Local businesses can sign up to have one placed at their storefront for a donation of \$150 a year to the club’s foundation. The planters have QR codes that take visitors to information on the club’s website about the program and pollinators’ importance. “We are not just putting planters out; we’re educating through them,” says Hunter, proprietor of Crown Bees, which sells bees, bee houses, and other materials. The club also partnered with the city, businesses, a garden club, and a nonprofit organization to host a Pollinator Fest in May that attracted about 500 people to hear the latest buzz on bees.



## Canada

The Rotary Club of Olds, Alberta, is livening up its process for awarding grants to community groups. In November, representatives of about a dozen organizations pitched their proposals at a contest modeled on *Dragons’ Den*, a CBC television program (much like *Shark Tank* in the U.S.) in which venture capitalists judge entrepreneurs’ proposals for investment. The organizations were allotted five minutes to make their pitch, followed by five minutes of questioning by a panel of Rotarian “dragons,” or judges. Club President Randy Smith concedes that the awardees would have received their share of the roughly \$10,000 regardless of who won. But he says the spirited affair gave the groups, including Interactors and fire department cadets, an opportunity to hone their presentation skills and showcase their creativity.



# 2 millimeters

Size of the smallest known bee in North America, *Perdita minima*

# 3.5 million

Number of entrepreneurs in Canada

### Hungary

When the operator of a summer camp for children with Down syndrome or other cognitive disabilities announced in 2021 that she could no longer run the weeklong program, the Rotaract Club of Kecskemét stepped up. The initiative to keep the program going has become “our club’s biggest and favorite project,” says Anna Antalfalvi. She and other members of the university-based club are education and psychology students. “Our aim is to help children develop through activities during the day. This allows parents to relax and work through their difficulties in support groups.” The club’s eight active members and a few volunteers run workshops, cook, serve, and clean. The camp, which is free for participants (17 children and their families in 2023), costs the club about \$3,100 a year. “Our sponsoring Rotary club helped for the first time this year, providing a day’s food and cooking a lunch on another day,” Antalfalvi says. “When they personally experienced the atmosphere of the camp and the importance of the work we do there, they decided to make it part of their annual fundraising goal to help fund the camp.”



# 419,000

Estimated number of people with Down syndrome in Europe in 2015

**Rotaract**  
Club of Kecskemét

### South Africa

What began with an enthusiastic health worker telling U.S. Rotarians about water scarcity in South Africa has blossomed into a partnership that has overhauled kitchens, bathrooms, and other sanitation facilities at nearly a dozen schools serving more than 7,200 students. It began with Julia Heemstra, who grew up in South Africa, speaking to a meeting of the Rotary Club of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in 2018. Club members decided to support her in providing handheld water filters — and were eager to do more. Heemstra connected the Wyoming Rotarians with the Rotary Club of Grahamstown, South Africa, which was at the time rehabilitating sanitation facilities at Ntsika Secondary School. “They had an inconsistent water supply. When the water is shut off, the schools have to shut,” says Stuart Palmer, a past governor of District 5440. “We were seeing the children shortchanged in their education.” The clubs partnered on a global grant to do that work, then a district grant to upgrade the water systems at 10 additional schools. Then, in 2022, the two clubs received a \$400,000 global grant to upgrade toilet and kitchen facilities at seven of the schools where they’d previously worked. “Seeing the incredible change — you not only have water, but you’re getting a face-lift on all these schools — it’s huge,” Palmer says.



# 728

South African public schools where pit latrines are the only toilet facilities



**Rotary**  
Club of Grahamstown

**Rotary**  
Club of Jackson Hole, Wyoming



### India

Monsoon rains regularly pummel Maharashtra state. With the support of a \$50,000 global grant, the Rotary Club of Mumbai Down Town Sea Land oversaw construction of five check dams that will help farming families manage flooding in the Palghar district. “The majority of the rainwater runs off the surface, as the land is mostly rocky and consists of hard soil,” says member Chandraprabha Khona, who directed the project in cooperation with the Rotary Club of Colombo, Sri Lanka. A nearly \$30,000 contribution from Shabbir Rangwala, a past president of the Mumbai club, was instrumental. The new concrete dams will allow farmers to expand irrigation and cultivate additional crops, as well as store water for sanitation and top off bore wells. Khona adds that the project will lead to “an exponential jump” in farmers’ income.

# 61.5 inches

Record for 24-hour rainfall at a site in India

**Rotary**  
Club of Mumbai Down Town Sea Land

## GOODWILL

# The business of caring

Arch Klumph Society members Johnny and Veronica Yu share what motivates them to give

**S**uccessful in business and philanthropy, Johnny and Veronica Yu of the Philippines have been involved with Rotary for decades. But it was the story of a 6-year-old boy in Japan that inspired them to boost their giving to The Rotary Foundation.

After Typhoon Haiyan ravaged the Philippines in 2013, the boy visited the Philippine Embassy in Tokyo to donate the money in his piggy bank to help victims, including those in the city of Tacloban, which was decimated. “A 6-year-old boy changed lives in Tacloban. Look at the power of love through donations,” Johnny Yu says. Today, the Yus are members of the Arch Klumph Society Chair’s Circle, which honors those who have contributed more than \$500,000 to The Rotary Foundation.

The Yus, who both worked as firefighters, met in 2000 on the scene of a fire. Today, Johnny is a disaster management consultant, and Veronica is the owner of a company providing protective equipment to firefighters. Both are members of the Rotary Club of Cubao, Quezon City. Veronica Yu has another feather in her crown: the title of Mrs. Universe Philippines, which she won in 2022, she says, by emphasizing her Rotary service. “They called me ‘the serving queen’ because of my lifelong dedication to service that extends to Rotary,” she says.

We checked in with the Yus to learn more about their support of The Rotary Foundation.

## What sorts of projects do you like to support and why?

We like to support the PolioPlus program as it started in our country, with the help of the only Filipino Rotary president, M.A.T. Caparas. We were also touched by the story of a woman from India who spoke at the 2017 Rotary International Convention in Atlanta who had donated more than \$10 million to The Rotary Foundation for polio eradication.

## Why are you inspired to give to The Rotary Foundation in particular?

Most of the great foundations around the world have been created by powerful and rich families, but The Rotary Foundation has been created by the giving and the goodwill of thousands of Rotarians. We are proud to call it our Foundation. Millions of people every day are touched by the magic of Rotary. This is only made possible by the service and dedication of Rotarians.

We have contributed more than \$500,000 to the Foundation as members of the Arch Klumph Society Chair’s Circle. Why? Because we are excited to see how Foundation-supported projects change lives. We don’t need accolades, positions, titles, or awards to be recognized as contributors to The Rotary Foundation; all we want is to see a better world. We give because we believe. We believe in hope, we believe in love, we believe in blessings, we believe in answered prayers, we believe in Rotary’s magic, we believe in the Foundation, we believe that we can eradicate polio, and we believe in God.



**Above:** Veronica and Johnny Yu are especially dedicated to supporting PolioPlus because it started in the Philippines.

**Below:** Johnny Yu distributes relief items after a fire in Quezon City in the Philippines.

## What would you tell Rotary members considering a gift to the Foundation?

The donation you give to communities through The Rotary Foundation will bring better lives to the children of those communities and to their children’s children. And the drops of polio vaccine we give to people, because of this, those children will grow up to walk, to run, to thrive, forever free of disease that once prevailed. This is the legacy that each one of you will leave behind, not in monuments of stone or marble but in the work we do and the people we help and the lives we change. ■

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ESSAY

# A new ending for *Oppenheimer*

A journalist who interviewed A-bomb scientists wonders if the Oscar favorite speaks to younger generations left to deliver the world from a nuclear wilderness

By Patrick Tyler



**I**n the summer movie season, when people seek escape with superhero sequels and action thrillers, I joined millions who flocked to theaters in 2023 for a deeply thoughtful history film that became a rare summer hit to go against the mold.

I watched *Oppenheimer*, the lead nominee for Oscars this month, with particular interest having interviewed two of the legendary physicists depicted in the movie about the U.S. government's secret creation of the atomic bomb during World War II. After a journalism career covering defense and foreign policy since the 1970s, I wondered whether younger generations would take away any new understanding of the nuclear dilemma they have inherited in the post-Cold War world. Do they know we are still living through the early stages of a fate-determining epoch bequeathed to us by Albert Einstein and his successors? Einstein didn't work on building the A-bomb but helped spark its development when he expressed a concern to President Franklin Roosevelt that the Germans might go nuclear after astonishing discoveries from 1934 to 1938 about the massive energy release from splitting the uranium atom.

The movie, which dominated the Golden Globe Awards in January and played in theaters around the world, magnifies the details of the Manhattan Project and the lives of lead scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer and the circle of physicists who coalesced around him on a windy mesa at Los Alamos, New Mexico, to build the first atomic explosive, Trinity, which lit up the desert on 16 July 1945. Armed with that success, they fabricated two bombs that could fit in B-29 bombers and dropped them over Japan on 6 and 9 August, killing 110,000 to 210,000 people, most of them civilians.

Many of my generation are familiar with the story of Oppenheimer, known as the father of the atomic bomb, a title he both embraced and abhorred. In truth, he was one of many physicists pulled out of classrooms under wartime pressure to exploit atomic breakthroughs. They believed that whoever converted atom-splitting energy into bomb-making could defeat any army and that its catastrophic potential could frighten the world into peace.

After the news came over the radio that Hiroshima had been leveled he led

colleagues in a celebratory rally. Director Christopher Nolan shows Oppenheimer preening before the crowd, shouting that he wished they could have delivered the same surprise to Germany before it surrendered. It is an unsettling scene.

Yet it is also true that for most of the rest of his professional life, Oppenheimer worked assiduously to convince American presidents, Congress, the public, and Western allies to put a lid on nuclear power by turning it into an international force for peace and economic development. He argued for strict international controls over the mining and enrichment of uranium and the production of plutonium, and he discouraged the development of the much more powerful hydrogen bomb. His opinions aroused suspicions and many questioned his loyalty to his country.

**STILL IT IS HARD TO JUDGE** where Oppenheimer's moral contradictions end and his rank ambition begins. The film portrays him as a brilliant, depressive, chain-smoking set of walking contradictions, and Irish actor Cillian Murphy captures Oppenheimer's flawed genius. We are always guessing about his character. He opposed the Nazi persecution of Jews in pre-World War II Germany and was drawn to the kind of intellectual salons frequented by Communist Party members. And of course, Oppenheimer endured a spectacular fall from prestige, stripped of his security clearance in a 1954 hearing during the McCarthy-era cleansing of purported communist infiltration in America.

Nolan, whose repertoire includes three Batman movies, indulges his love for dark superheroes by opening the film with an inscription laid across the big screen over a backdrop of nuclear fireball imagery: "Prometheus stole fire from the gods and gave it to man. For this he was chained to a rock and tortured for eternity."

He presents some of the backstories that shaped the nuclear arms race from the mid-20th century to the present, when Mother Earth hosts nine nuclear nations: China, France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

As I grew up, the subject of nuclear war was never remote. The panorama of ashes from Hiroshima to Nagasaki was familiar even to elementary school students who practiced hiding under their desks during my childhood in the 1950s and '60s just in case nuclear war came home. U.S. college students, ambitious for government jobs, took Russian language courses and memorized the minute-by-minute sequence of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis when the two superpowers came closest to nuclear confrontation.

As a young journalist, I arrived in Washington, D.C., in the late 1970s, when President Jimmy Carter was in office. I covered the world of nuclear weapons and documented procurement troubles for the country's nuclear submarine program. It was a world where legions of secretive military technicians stood guard over tens of thousands of atomic bombs in the arsenals of the United States and the then Soviet Union. Soon President Ronald Reagan was promising to use "Star Wars" technology to shoot down incoming Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles, or ICBMs, in any nuclear war. Around this time, I interviewed two members of the Manhattan Project, Hans Bethe, head of theoretical physics, and Edward Teller, the brilliant Hungarian-born physicist working under Bethe who pushed a design concept that became the hydrogen bomb.

As the movie depicts, Oppenheimer dismissed Teller's plea to focus resources on the "Super" bomb. After the war, as Oppenheimer advocated against U.S. progression on nuclear weapons, Teller testified against him in the closed hearing that sealed Oppenheimer's fate.

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They believed that whoever converted  
atom-splitting energy into bomb-making  
could defeat any army and that its catastrophic  
potential could frighten the world into peace.

By the time I met Teller during the Reagan administration, he was a frequent White House visitor as a proponent of the “Star Wars” systems that never panned out. In 2022, the Biden administration posthumously restored Oppenheimer’s security clearance, proclaiming that the 1954 decision was based on a “flawed process” against a loyal American.

At the end of the movie, I considered whether it speaks to younger people left to face the nuclear dilemma. To me, many people seem unaware that the threat from nuclear weapons still exists, invisibly to most of us, but the weapons are there, fewer of them to be sure, yet thousands spread across the planet and someday, perhaps, in space.

*Teen Vogue* educates its readers about the symbolic Doomsday Clock, maintained by a board of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, that represents how close we are to a human-made end of the world. The clock stands at 90 seconds to midnight. Yet today’s youths didn’t grow up with ingrained worries about possible nuclear disaster, as much as they have with fears of global warming and incessant conflicts.

Over the past decade, the U.S. has allocated hundreds of billions of dollars to upgrade its nuclear arsenal. The worldwide nuclear chain of command is connected by an invisible electronic web of hair triggers. And the only thing restraining the nuclear powers from unleashing a potentially planet-incinerating conflagration is a simple but dreadful theory that is as timeworn as many of the weapons gathering dust in their bunkers: Such a clash would result in the destruction of life as we know it.

I discussed the movie with Dennis Wong, co-founder of the Rotary Action Group for Peace, which advocates for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Wong was impressed with how Nolan parsed the stages of morality that we witness in the film. “Most of those scientists thought that nobody would use these weapons to destroy the world,” he says. “The bomb just might be a savior — a deterrent in neutral hands to be employed to prevent conflict and end wars.”

Once the bomb’s power had been demonstrated, the physicists returned to their universities and began talking about how to convert this devastating technology into a force for good, like building



nuclear-powered generators to produce cheap electricity across the globe.

“If you are looking for security, if your goal is the prevention of conflict with a kind of mutual assured security, they had to design some way to build goodwill and friendships by sharing nuclear power,” Wong says. The tragedy, he adds, is that the technology moved quickly in another direction. “Nuclear weapons are about power — power to stay in office and power to stay relevant,” he explains.

Oppenheimer’s life, and the scientific establishment he briefly governed, showed how geopolitical realities can pervert a great scientific achievement. One has to wonder what Oppenheimer would say about today’s nuclear conundrum: Russia has invaded Ukraine in the center of Europe and threatened America and the NATO alliance with nuclear fire if they intervene. Israel engaged in a war in Gaza after a terrorizing surprise attack by Hamas. Israel has a broad arsenal of nuclear weapons that experts believe it could employ against any state that threatens Israel’s existence. Iran, another

aspiring nuclear power, stands as Israel’s most pernicious antagonist. North Korea is the most recent nuclear power, whose actions are impossible to predict. Meanwhile, China has significantly expanded its nuclear arsenal in the past few years as Sino-U.S. rivalry intensifies.

Cinema shapes the narrative of history, but even Nolan’s important film does not help us through the nuclear wilderness in which we still find ourselves. We are in dire need of a thoughtful closing to the Oppenheimer era about how to construct a safe path forward, for a pandemic or climate change might deliver Earth a terrible blow, but nuclear war is in a league of its own, kind of like the arrival of the asteroid 66 million years ago — only now, we are the dinosaurs. ■

*Patrick Tyler is an author and former chief correspondent for The New York Times. His books include Running Critical, about the U.S. nuclear submarine program; A World of Trouble, a history of U.S. Middle East policy; and Fortress Israel, about Israel’s leadership since 1948.*





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# From farm



# to pantry

Harvest Against Hunger rescues a staggering amount of produce from Washington's farm fields and fruit trees to nourish hungry families. But it never works alone.

**By Allecia Vermillion ■ Photography by Mike Kane**



## ON A CLEAR AFTERNOON IN LATE SUMMER,

a dozen volunteers meet Benji Astrachan at River Run Farm in Sequim, Washington, a small town set between the snowcapped peaks of Olympic National Park and the Salish Sea that connects to the Pacific. He hands out green-handled harvest knives and leads the group onto one of the 100-acre farm's many fields alongside the Dungeness River. The land is still green with bush bean plants, though harvest crews have already come through. Today's volunteer turnout includes a few newcomers, so Astrachan explains the task before them — unearth the left-behind beans that hide beneath the leaves. As they set to work, the scene resembles an unhurried Easter egg hunt.

Afterward, in a nearby cauliflower field, the group circles around as Astrachan demonstrates how to push the leaves back and run the knife underneath each cauliflower head to cut the stem. Next, he flips the vegetable over to finish trimming. "You want to remove any florets that appear buggy or rotting," he says.

It's placid, steady work, but a race of sorts is playing out in slow motion. Each week, River Run Farm staff members tell Astrachan which beds have been recently harvested. Soon, the farm crew will come through with a tractor to turn those fields over to prepare to plant something new. Any beans or cauliflower — or Brussels sprouts, broccoli, lettuce, or chard — left unpicked would get mowed under along with the remaining stalks and leaves that enrich the soil for the next planting.

But Astrachan, a food access coordinator with a Washington State University agriculture extension office, and the volunteers are here to save as many of those vegetables as they can.

The faster the group works, the more produce it can rescue for nearby food banks. Sometimes Astrachan pleads for an extra half-hour before the tractor comes through, knowing how much a group can pick in a short time. During the late-summer peak of the Olympic Peninsula's long growing season, his team might harvest over 1,000 pounds of food each week.

Astrachan's work to improve Washington residents' access to food began through a Seattle organization called Harvest Against Hunger. The nonprofit, a long-standing program of Rotary District 5030 in Greater Seattle, connects residents experiencing food insecurity with local produce that might otherwise go to waste. Since its founding more than 40 years ago, Harvest Against Hunger keeps finding additional ways to fulfill this mission. But its roots lie in gleaning — exactly what Astrachan and the volunteers do on their weekly farm visits.

Gleaning is the act of collecting the crops that remain in a field after harvest. The vegetables might include a misshapen cauliflower that's perfectly good to eat, but not pretty enough to sell at a supermarket. Or the nutritious and flavorful broccoli shoots that remain after farmers harvest the heads. As produce



Benji Astrachan, a food access and recovery specialist, leads a weekly volunteer gleaning event at River Run Farm in Sequim, Washington.





prices fluctuate, it may not make sense for a farm to spend resources to pick, pack, and transport everything planted. Gleaning is a practice that's been around since ancient times. Today, Harvest Against Hunger and other nonprofits across the country consider it a vital tool to feed people, providing a missing link between farms and food banks, and reducing food waste.

The nonprofit Feeding America estimates that in Washington state 1 in 11 residents, and 1 in 8 children, face hunger. Surveys by the University of Washington and Washington State University found that food insecurity rates in the state dramatically increased after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and remain especially high among residents of color and households with children.

Meanwhile, the sort of nutritious food that could help address these needs often sits untouched in farm fields after crews collect crops for sale. According to the nonprofit ReFed, the United States generated 78 million tons of food waste in 2022, or about one-third of its entire food supply. That includes more than 12 million tons of unharvested produce.

Led by its famed apple-growing industry, Washington's agricultural sector turns out an abundance of produce, offering a powerful tool in fighting hun-

ger, as long as efforts are made to connect the food with people who need it. Glens led by Astrachan at River Run Farm, for instance, yield more than 15,000 pounds of food a year.

Astrachan arrived in Port Angeles, Washington, from his hometown in Maine in 2019 to begin a year-long stint with Harvest Against Hunger's Harvest Vista program, which embeds AmeriCorps members in food-system organizations. He was put to work at Washington State University's Clallam County Extension office, where he originally had a different assignment.

Every fall, apples stack up at the county's Port Angeles Food Bank. For part of the season, the facility was turning down this fresh fruit. Healthy, locally grown food was going to waste because the food bank had no way to preserve it by turning it into something like applesauce. Astrachan's task: "Figure out what to do with all those dang apples."

Eventually, the food bank moved into a larger facility with a processing kitchen, effectively resolving the issue Astrachan came to tackle. But along the way, he looked for other ways to meet community needs. He set up a public list of programs in Clallam County that distribute free food. He launched a program to set up Little Free Pantry boxes throughout the county, where

**This page:** Benji Astrachan's experience in Harvest Against Hunger's Harvest Vista program inspired him to start a gleaning program at River Run Farm that has rescued tons of produce. **Opposite:** David Bobanick, executive director of Harvest Against Hunger and a member of the Rotary Club of Seattle, helps out at the farm.



Gleaning is a vital tool to feed people, linking farms to food banks and reducing food waste.

people can give or take food. And he helped organize a weekly meal program in Port Angeles to fill a gap in community services.

The capacity Astrachan built demonstrated so much value, the WSU county extension office hired him after his Harvest Vista tenure came to an end.

The gleaning effort began soon after, a result of Astrachan signing up to work on River Run's harvest crew on his own time. He saw all the produce in River Run's fields — and knew the farm was too busy to put together its own recovery program. He saw possibility.

"At first it was just me harvesting stuff and chucking it into the back of my Subaru," Astrachan says. He quickly realized the power of a more organized effort. "There's almost bottomless amounts of food there." Through the extension office, he set up a farm gleaning program, which he's led since.

**Stories like Astrachan's** are a throughline of Harvest Against Hunger, says David Bobanick, executive director of the organization and a member of the Rotary Club of Seattle. Rather than create new infrastructure, Harvest Against Hunger aims to make and support connections that help its community partners wage their fight against hunger: "Our suc-

cess looks like making them successful," he says.

Harvest Against Hunger began in the early 1980s as a volunteer project among members of the Rotary Club of the University District of Seattle. Back then, the city was recovering from a major economic downturn; hunger was a common concern among residents. A club member named Norm Hillis realized all the food available for hunger relief at his church's volunteer-led food pantry was either canned, boxed, or otherwise packaged. There was no fresh produce, a common challenge at food pantries and throughout urban and rural communities known as food deserts.

Hillis brought the issue to the club. It set up a few small projects but wanted to aim bigger. Another member, Mike Shanahan, was chief of the University of Washington Police Department at the time. He sent out an all-points bulletin over the teletype, asking sheriffs and police chiefs to check with local farmers who might have extra food.

It wasn't a traditional use of the law enforcement broadcast system, but it worked. A call came in about 30,000 pounds of surplus onions, sitting at a farm in southeast Washington. The produce had cosmetic imperfections, so the farmer couldn't sell it. A Rotarian who worked in paving supplied a dump truck that



was delivering a haul in the area and otherwise would have returned to the city empty. Instead, it stopped at the farm, took on a truckload of the alliums, and transported them to a Seattle food distribution center.

This turn of events soon became an effective model, says Bobanick. Harvest Against Hunger works with farms and other agricultural operations — like packing houses and processors — to secure produce that might otherwise go to waste. Freight companies supply trucks that have extra space on their way to or from a delivery. These commercial vehicles can pick up produce for free, or at a small cost, and transport enormous loads directly to a food bank or other relief organization.

The arrangement addresses two interconnected problems: hunger and food waste. And with it, says Bobanick, Harvest Against Hunger doesn't have to buy its own trucks or run its own warehouse. "We can be additive to what already exists," he says.

Over the years, Harvest Against Hunger shared this model with Rotary clubs around the country. Because communities' needs differ, the organization determined that the best way for clubs to build on its success was not by replicating the model in its entirety, but by applying parts of it to support existing hunger relief efforts in their areas. Clubs in Colo-

rado and Louisiana adopted gleaning programs, for instance, and one in Florida focused on connecting transportation resources. Although Harvest Against Hunger has since scaled back its outreach activities, it regularly offers advice and technical assistance to Rotary members working on projects that address hunger and food waste.

Locally, Rotary members remain essential to the organization's work, putting in as many as 6,000 volunteer hours each year, says Kaj Pedersen, governor of District 5030. They have driven to farms and orchards to glean produce and have packaged items at distribution centers to be delivered to food pantries. And their fundraising has helped set up projects like Elk Run Farm, southeast of Seattle, where a former golf course grows produce for about a dozen hunger relief programs.

Today, Harvest Against Hunger still helps move truckloads of apples, carrots, potatoes, and other produce through Washington. Even amid challenges like a shrinking amount of available trucking, the organization delivered roughly 1.5 million pounds of surplus food to hunger relief organizations in fiscal year 2022-23. But several other significant programs now augment this core work.

David Bobanick inspects a head of cauliflower gleaned at River Run Farm. Gleaning has been central to the work of Harvest Against Hunger since the 1980s, when it was founded by Rotary members in District 5030.





## READY TO START A GLEANING PROGRAM IN YOUR COMMUNITY? CONSIDER THESE STEPS:

- **Find donors** at a farmers market or a community garden and persuade them to get involved. Or reach out to farmers directly during nonharvest months when they are less busy.
- **Prepare to glean.** Obtain sturdy crates or other reusable containers to transport food, and ask donors their preferred method of collection. Respect the produce by handling it with care.
- **Find a food bank, pantry, or soup kitchen** that has the capacity to accept fresh foods.
- **Set measurable goals** and track progress over time. Keep records of activities to help make the program sustainable from one year to the next.
- **Recruit volunteers** who can participate regularly and build relationships with the donors over time to help ensure the program's success.

*Adapted from a toolkit published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture*

**“Our success looks like making [our partners] successful.”**

— **David Bobanick**, executive director of Harvest Against Hunger

One of them is Harvest Vista, the program that brought Astrachan to Port Angeles. Every year, through a partnership with AmeriCorps, Harvest Against Hunger embeds up to 15 of the agency's Vista (volunteers in service to America) members in organizations that support local food systems. The Harvest Vista program is set up to build capacity, rather than to simply provide extra sets of hands for collecting or distributing food. When the program started in 2009, many members organized gleaning activities, helping to build systems that remain instrumental to feeding people across Washington.

Since then, the role of Harvest Vista members has evolved based on need. A member working with the nonprofit City Fruit in Seattle might organize volunteers to harvest apples from backyard trees. Another member working at the Northeast Washington Hunger Coalition across the state might coordinate with small local growers to set up purchasing relationships for nearby food pantries.

Additionally, Harvest Against Hunger manages a program that offers grants of up to \$5,000 to help food pantries purchase additional coolers, fix compressors, or upgrade equipment. After all, fresh produce can't do much good if there's nowhere to store it safely. “We knew of organizations that were turning down produce,” says Bobanick, because they didn't have a cooler. In 2022-23, grants worth more than \$225,000 helped 72 relief organizations increase their capacity and feed more people.

In the central Washington town of Leavenworth, the nonprofit Upper Valley Mend used grant funding to purchase a walk-in refrigerator to store food harvested through its gleaning program. A separate state Agriculture Department grant, which Harvest Against Hunger helped facilitate, paid for a refrigerated van. The ability to keep things cold for longer is imperative, says Bob Mark, Upper Valley Mend's human services

director. The gleaning operation is the only one he's aware of in that part of the state. “We're kind of the only show in town. And there's so much produce.”

Then there's the Farm to Community program: Harvest Against Hunger provides funds so that hunger relief organizations can buy food directly from small-scale local growers. This lets a pantry round out its donated food with purchases tailored to the community's needs. The program involves partnerships with Seattle farmers markets, a local grocery chain, and a government agency focused on natural resource management in King County. “Intentionally finding a space for those partnerships really helps to think about food systems in a different way,” says Bobanick.

These programs give Harvest Against Hunger multiple entry points into Washington's food systems. Or, as a farmer once put it to Bobanick, “You guys are like a benevolent octopus.”

**In Shoreline, north of Seattle**, shoppers line up outside Hopelink Market on a gray Tuesday morning, waiting for doors to open. Some people clutch backpacks or wheel suitcases to carry groceries home. The nonprofit Hopelink runs five food pantries, though like many similar organizations, it prefers the term “markets.” That choice is reflected in the space's layout: Clients push blue shopping carts through aisles of boxes and cans. The dairy cooler holds cartons of eggs and milk.

“Our intent is that a child coming here with a parent can't even tell the difference, that they're not in a grocery store,” says Elena Lavrushin, Hopelink's harvest program supervisor. Most of her work manifests at the long table that serves as Hopelink Market's produce section.

Here, two neat rows of blue and gray plastic crates hold a vivid rainbow of vegetables: Green and yellow zucchini poke out from two containers. Potatoes, big and

small, sit next to a box of hefty yellow onions. The crate of peppers is piled so high — with red, yellow, orange, even purple varieties — it nearly overflows. One shopper heaps yellow wax beans into a plastic bag. Another surveys a crate of robust greens, looking for the best bunch.

Lavrushin spends her entire workweek sourcing the contents of this produce table. She's the current steward of a gleaning program originally set up by Harvest Vista members who had been placed at Hopelink. She also uses grants awarded through Harvest Against Hunger's Farm to Community program to purchase local, organically grown produce to supplement the selection on the table. "I feel like Harvest Against Hunger is the reason I have a job," she says.

The impeccable tomatoes from a nearby organic farm constitute a cash crop, she explains, their sales essential to keeping the farm running. A farm may not want to donate those tomatoes, but a grant allows Lavrushin to buy them for Hopelink's clients to take home and enjoy. "Quality produce shouldn't only be for the rich," she says.

The grants also purchase produce that's culturally relevant to the communities Hopelink serves. Heirloom Chimayo and poblano peppers help families of Latino heritage prepare familiar meals. Asian American customers appreciate green vegetables like perilla, bitter melon, and Chinese broccoli. Lavrushin makes sure she has beets for the Russian immigrants who shop here. Even modest purchases for the market, like garlic, help clients transform a cooked dish from pure sustenance into a form of pleasure. After all, says Lavrushin, "What's a dish without garlic?"

Hopelink is just one example of that benevolent octopus at work — of how programs that Harvest Against Hunger built years ago can strengthen the food relief infrastructure, while newer grants and programs can target needs on a more granular level. Connective efforts like these are not always conspicuous; Bobanick acknowledges that people in the Seattle area are less likely to know about Harvest Against Hunger than about the organizations it works with. But for those who would not otherwise have access to the nutritious food it helps provide, its impact is clear in abundance. ■



Celia Thurman, a food program supervisor at Hopelink, talks with a patron at one of the nonprofit's five Seattle-area food pantries. Grants from Harvest Against Hunger's Farm to Community program help Hopelink provide people with locally grown produce.

# Produce

Frutas y Vegetales Frescos

Фрукты и Овощи

水果和蔬菜





A photograph of a person lying on their back on a floral-patterned futon in a room. The person's legs are bent at the knees and raised in the air. They are wearing a light-colored t-shirt and shorts. In the background, there is a window with a wooden frame and some clothes hanging on a line. The room has light-colored walls and a wooden floor.

# Out of isolation

At a retreat deep in the hills, *hikikomori* come together to cook, farm and, after years of seclusion, gingerly step back into the world

BY TIM HORNYAK

PHOTOGRAPHY  
BY MAIKA ELAN

Maika Elan, an award-winning photographer based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, produced this photo documentary on *hikikomori* in 2016 in Chiba, Japan.

# In 2017, soon after Kodai Yoshimura left his quiet hometown near the Sea of Japan for the bustling city of Osaka, something in his mindset began to shift.

His freshman year at Kansai University was supposed to be a time of new experiences and friendships. Instead, Yoshimura found himself losing interest in his studies. He began skipping class and started spending more and more time holed up in his apartment, where hours passed with him glued to his PlayStation 4, often until 3 a.m.

As first-person shooter games like *Call of Duty* absorbed his days and nights, he began avoiding people and venturing into public as little as possible. Within a few months, he had become a *hikikomori*, a social recluse. “It’s not like I was bullied or anything. I just didn’t want to see other students,” says Yoshimura at age 26, recalling those days of isolation. Soon, though, he’d find help in an unusual place and turn his life around in a matter of months.

Hikikomori are usually defined as people who isolate themselves at home for more than six months, rarely interacting with anyone other than their families, or sometimes no one at all. The term can refer either to the person experiencing this extreme isolation or the phenomenon itself, which has been observed most frequently in Japan. Over the past two decades, as the number of cases has grown, the phenomenon has become an increasing public concern in Japan, though the numbers are a tiny fraction of the population. Still, that concern has grown more urgent since 2020, when the pandemic swelled the ranks.

A recent government survey found that 20 percent of the working-age people experiencing hikikomori in Japan cite COVID-19 as a factor in their social reclusiveness. “It’s extremely rare for long-term hikikomori problems to be resolved through the self-help efforts of the

individual and their families alone,” University of Tsukuba psychologist Tamaki Saito, the author of *Hikikomori: Adolescence Without End*, told *Nikkei Gooday* online magazine.

A number of organizations have emerged — some run by former hikikomori — to help people reintegrate into society. The process is delicate and painstaking, sometimes unfolding over the course of months or even years. But the experience can be transformative.

Japan’s hikikomori often shut themselves off from the world to avoid others and immerse themselves in *otaku* (a Japanese term meaning passionate fan) obsessions with video games, anime, manga, or some other pop culture pastime.

While much of the focus is on adolescents and young adults, an estimated 1.5 million working-age Japanese (out of a population of 125 million) experience hikikomori. That’s about 2 percent of people between ages 15 and 64, according to a 2023 Cabinet Office survey based on responses from 11,300 people chosen at random. Women make up nearly half of those experiencing hikikomori. And some live with family members or even spouses yet are still cut off from society.

In a more focused survey, Tokyo’s Edogawa ward, population 690,500, found that it is home to nearly 8,000 hikikomori ages 15 and older. A third of them are in their 40s and 50s — age groups central to what the Japanese media have dubbed the “80-50 problem,” which refers to parents in their 80s who live with and support people with the condition in their 50s.

Many of these middle-aged hikikomori have been living reclusively since they were in their 20s, and what will become of them

when their parents die is a topic of anxious speculation. “Hikikomori was a youth problem in Japan until around the 2000s,” says Tadaaki Furuhashi, an associate professor in the department of psychopathology and psychotherapy at Nagoya University, noting that psychiatrist Yomishi Kasahara described a similar condition as “apathy syndrome” in the 1970s. “Today, in Japan, the prolongation and aging of hikikomori have become an extremely serious problem.”

As Japan struggles with rising welfare costs, labor shortages, and distraught family members of hikikomori, there is a growing desire to understand why a million and a half Japanese are living in isolation. Yet researchers have few answers. Even though hikikomori behavior has been identified in other countries — a recent *Scientific American* article about recognition of the condition in the U.S. declared that “COVID threatens to bring a wave of hikikomori to America” — its root causes remain poorly understood. An analysis in *Frontiers in Psychiatry* describes hikikomori as a “phenomenon,” not a specific mental illness, though underlying mental illnesses are thought to often be contributing factors. About half of hikikomori who are examined by

**It’s extremely rare for long-term hikikomori problems to be resolved through self-help efforts alone.**

— Tamaki Saito, psychologist



Hiroki Chujo, 24, has lived as a hikikomori for two years. He dreams of being a singer, but his family wants him to work in business.



Ikuo Nakamura, 34, is a hikikomori who has shut himself in his room for seven years.

health professionals are diagnosed with a mental illness, such as anxiety, personality or mood disorders, as well as schizophrenia or developmental disorders such as autism.

Furuhashi has examined the relationship between the internet and game addiction and hikikomori behavior and says that while they are not the cause of social withdrawal, they can be facilitators. “Several studies have shown a correlation between hikikomori and internet or game addiction,” Furuhashi says. “In my clinical experience, I can say that it is difficult for people who are immersed in the internet and games to get out of social withdrawal.”

There’s also some indication that social factors in Japan may play a part. Saito has observed that in countries where a comparatively high percentage of young people continue to live with their parents, there is a greater tendency toward

social withdrawal. He also notes that feelings of embarrassment or shame can prevent families in Japan from seeking help, along with the belief that hikikomori is a problem for families, not society, to deal with.

Complicating things further, as many as one-third of hikikomori responding to the Cabinet Office survey said they did not want any government help to reintegrate into society. Others might want help but aren’t exactly sure how to access it, or they need a nudge from people still involved in their lives to take the first step.

For Yoshimura, the Kansai University student, that nudge came from his family. Within months of starting school, his withdrawal from society began exacting a toll. With his sedentary lifestyle, he gained more than 20 pounds, and his absenteeism from classes dimmed his prospects for graduating. When he

finally visited his family the following summer, his parents suggested he leave school and try something different: a home for hikikomori in neighboring Okayama prefecture. After spending some time getting his driver’s license, Yoshimura decided to give the group home a try. So, in 2017, not knowing exactly how long he would be gone or what he would find once he arrived, Yoshimura packed his bags and headed for the hills.

He arrived at Hito Refresh Camp, a relatively new therapeutic concept aimed at helping hikikomori — it is part support home, part collective farm. Its Japanese name is Hito Okoshi, literally “person revitalization,” similar to *machiokoshi*, or “town revitalization,” a term often used in attempts to rejuvenate Japan’s hinterland communities. The camp sits deep in the wooded hills of rural Okayama, down a winding road that



## Rotary clubs in Japan make mental health a priority

Responding to a rise in suicides during the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan's prime minister in 2021 appointed a new Cabinet minister to address loneliness and isolation. Nonprofit and community-based organizations in Japan, including Rotary clubs, are also making mental health a priority. Here is a snapshot of some recent Rotary club initiatives.

### Flower therapy

The Japanese art of *ikebana*, or flower arranging, is gaining attention for its benefits to the mental well-being of people who practice the art form. In November, the Rotary Club of Kagoshima Johsei hosted an *ikebana* session for about 50 members of the public under guidance from a certified flower therapy instructor. A psychiatrist also delivered a presentation on the connection between this ancient art form and mental health.

### Suicide prevention

During Suicide Prevention Week in September, members of the Rotary Club of Nagoya-North gathered outside a local government building to distribute educational materials. The handouts included tips for recognizing the signs of mental illness and resources for finding counseling and other help.

Learn how your club or district can support activities that encourage mental health and well-being by visiting [rotary.org/initiatives23-24](https://rotary.org/initiatives23-24).

It's not like I was  
bullied or anything.  
I just didn't want to  
see other students.

— Kodai Yoshimura, former hikikomori



Hito Refresh Camp is a relatively new therapeutic concept aimed at helping hikikomori, like Kodai Yoshimura (top right), who turned his life around within months. At a minimum, residents are required to help cook and keep the house clean. When they're ready, they can participate in farm work, join parties, or go together on excursions.

branches off the expressway and wanders past sprawling fields and old farmhouses topped with glistening black roof tiles. Hito Refresh Camp is located over 90 minutes by car or train from any major city, lending it a sense of unusual remoteness in a country linked by excellent transportation infrastructure.

At the time of my visit, about 17 hikikomori were living there, each paying about 128,000 yen (US\$880) a month for a new start. Surrounded by lush rice paddies and forested hillsides, it's a peaceful place that encourages soul-searching, manual labor and — in baby steps — human interaction.

Stepping into the two-story male dorm, I'm shown the dining room, kitchen, and some of the quarters. The rooms are small but clean, each including a single bed, a desk, and space for storage. In the kitchen, a couple of residents prepare a pasta lunch together. They answer my questions politely but aren't eager to chat. The other residents are in their rooms, their doors closed. It's as quiet as a library.

Each resident — even the ones cooking together — seems to exist in their own world. But pretending you reside in isolation at Hito Refresh Camp is not allowed. At a minimum, residents are required to keep up the house communally, including taking turns cooking and cleaning. Beyond that, when they're ready, they can participate in collective farm work such as cutting grass. All of these activities involve interacting with staff, counselors, and locals who impart skills. Residents can join monthly parties or go together on excursions, such as visiting karaoke parlors, cherry trees in bloom, or the famous sand dunes of Tottori prefecture.

When he first arrived, Yoshimura did only what he was required to do and nothing more. Eventually, however, he started taking on more responsibilities. He began cutting grass, then he got a part-time job in a local nursing-care business. The turning point for him came

as he watched others preparing food in the kitchen. "There was a former manager who was very particular when it came to making curry powder, yielding great results, and I thought, 'Wow, I want to do that,'" says Yoshimura. "So I began researching recipes for my favorite dishes like sauteed chicken marinated in ketchup and gochujang paste. I realized that in cooking for others and having a part-time job, you develop a sense of responsibility, an awareness that people are depending on you — something I didn't have in university."

That responsibility for others, and putting it into practice day in and day out, eventually gave Yoshimura the confidence he needed to step further out of seclusion. Six months after he had arrived, he was in his room packing the same bags he had arrived with. He moved out of Hito Refresh Camp and rented an apartment nearby. He landed a full-time job in nursing care, spending his days caring for older adults, doing everything from bathing them to helping them access government services — a job that involves daily, intimate human interaction.

Five years into the job, Yoshimura is working toward becoming a care manager, a professional social worker who helps ensure the needs of older people are met. On his days off, he sleeps, goes to the gym, and plays table tennis at the sports center. He still considers himself a loner and says he doesn't have anyone he'd call a friend, but he rarely plays video games anymore and interacts with people regularly. His life, once lived behind walls, is now lived out in the world.

Yoshimura's stay at Hito Refresh Camp lasted six months, but the average stay is 11 months, and the home once had a resident stay for four years. Others live there for only a month or two before deciding it's not for them. Of the 17 residents living there during my visit, only two stay in their rooms all the time except for cleaning and cooking duties.

## It's hard to say if hikikomori can be 'cured.' What we do is help them live independently again by learning to live with others.

— Hirotsugu Noto, nonprofit director

About half of the residents have a mental illness such as depression or a developmental condition such as autism spectrum disorder, according to Hirotsugu Noto, representative director of Sanson Enterprise, the nonprofit organization that runs the shared house. When residents are ready to move on, Noto and other staff help them live independently with support plans for finding work and a place to live.

Originally a high school teacher and later a graphic designer, Noto moved to Okayama after the devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck near his hometown of Sendai in 2011. He became interested in rural revitalization, launching a project to draw dropouts and unemployed youth — sometimes referred to by the acronym NEET for "not in employment, education, or training" — to the depopulated countryside, where they could live in its many vacant homes. He co-founded Sanson in 2016, opening Hito Refresh Camp in a building that had once been staff housing for a nearby golf resort. He focused on hikikomori as a growing group in need of some kind of viable treatment.

Homes like Hito Refresh Camp aren't the only forms of treatment. Some hikikomori try individual and group therapy, or a combination of the two. In a recent *Frontiers in Psychiatry* paper, Furuhashi described a case study in which two Japanese hikikomori university students spent three years participating in outdoor activities like running, cycling, and sports, such as



New Start, a nonprofit in the city of Chiba, offers social activities for hikikomori.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health emergency, contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in the U.S. by calling or texting 988 or going to [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org). If you are outside the U.S., visit [findahelpline.com](https://www.findahelpline.com) to get connected with a service in your country.

badminton — activities that aren't threatening because their social interactions are controlled. They allowed the students to interact without triggering social fears, the researchers observed, adding that at the end of the intervention, "both had returned to normative levels of functioning." One student went back to university classes and the other found a new job.

Noto says Hito Refresh Camp's basic policy is founded on the experience and advice of its directors as well as doctors who specialize in fields such as medicine that addresses connected physical and psychological issues. Compared to the rules at other shared houses for shut-ins, Noto says those at the camp are quite lax. He has seen many hikikomori come and go and talks about some who have overcome their tendency for solitude and gone on to have romantic relationships.

One 18-year-old man moved into Hito Refresh Camp after falling out with his parents in Osaka. He was antisocial, staying in his room all the time, using abusive language toward others, and refusing to participate in cooking and housework duties.

Despite this, after living at the dorm for a few years he began dating a fellow resident. Eventually, they moved into an apartment together. The relationship didn't last, and the man eventually bought himself a cheap car and lived out of it for a while. He found work here and there as a day laborer to pay for food and gas but couldn't hold down a steady job.

Recently, the former resident, now 23, rolled up at Hito Refresh Camp on a motorcycle that his father had bought him. He announced he'd landed a full-time job as a forklift operator at an Osaka rail depot. It was ideal work: He'd always had

an otaku passion for trains, and the pay was good. On top of that, he patched things up with his parents, found a new girlfriend, and was saving up so they could live together. He was a far cry from the surly teen of five years earlier.

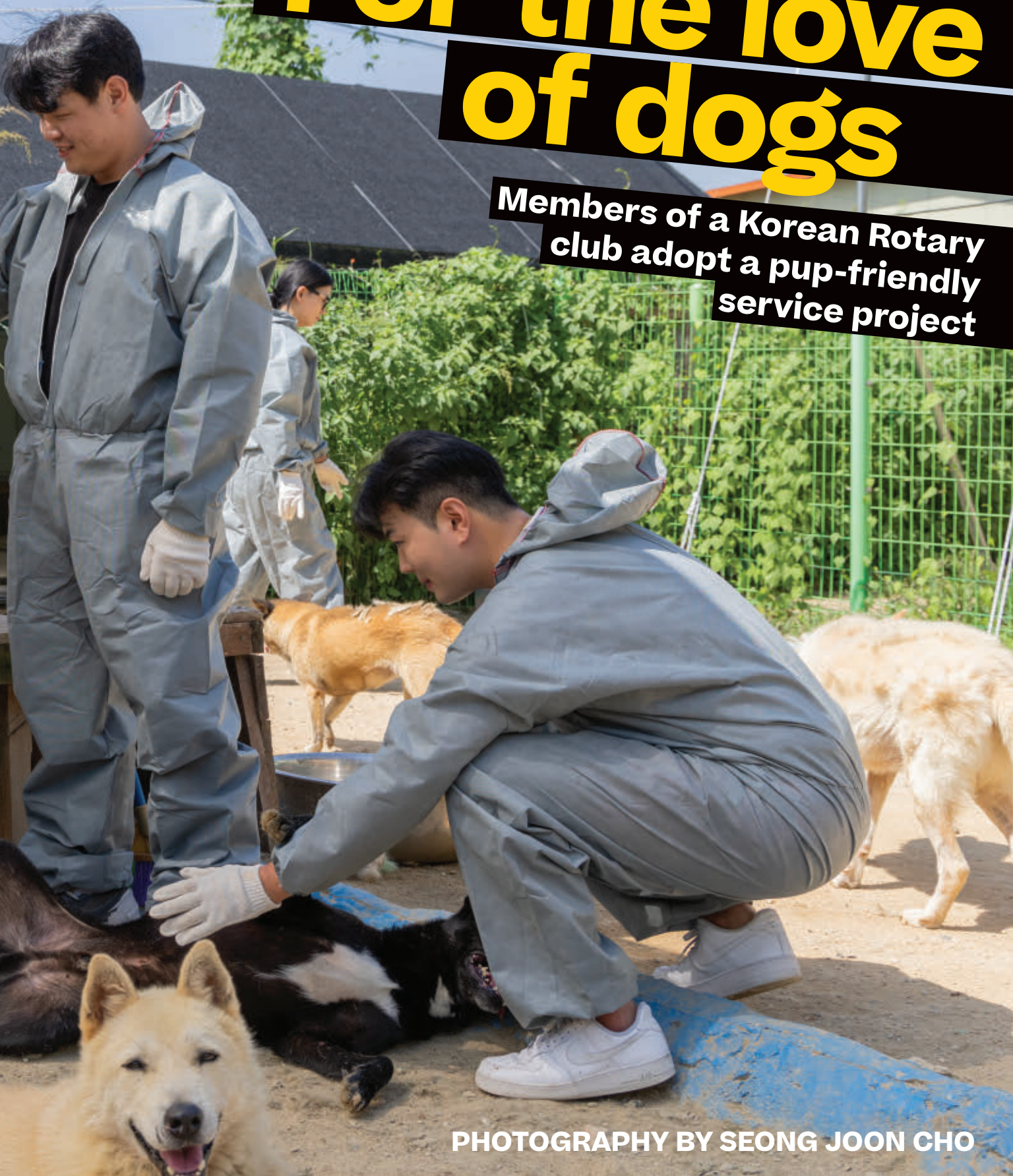
"We had lots of trouble with him, but little by little he turned his life around," says Noto. "It's hard to say if or when hikikomori can be 'cured.' What we do is help them live independently again by learning to live with others. They have loneliness in their hearts and a feeling that no one is looking out for them. We want to replace that with a sense of community, not only here but after they graduate." ■

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# For the love of dogs

Members of a Korean Rotary club adopt a pup-friendly service project



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEONG JOON CHO

**A**lthough it's early September, the morning sun is still hot in Gyeonggi province, Korea. Twenty young people wearing protective suits open the gate of a fenced yard and enter. Immediately, dozens of dogs swarm them. The animals wag their tails, lick people's hands, spin in place, and playfully nudge their heads against the visitors. At times, the dogs' overwhelming joy threatens to knock someone over.

"You must wear protective suits because these dogs love you so much," says Song-Hee Lim, the executive secretary/director of the Rotary E-Club of MZ, which has members from Icheon city. "They get so excited that their shed fur sticks to you, and sometimes your skin can be scratched."

The animal shelter in Icheon that club members were visiting is called Yugigyeon Soop (Korean for "forest for abandoned dogs"), and it specializes in large dogs, providing a home for around 100 of them. The shelter hosts a range of breeds: Korea's native Jindo dogs, shepherds, Siberian huskies, Labrador retrievers. Most, though, are mixed-breeds whose exact lineage is unknown. Many of the dogs have physical challenges, such as missing limbs or eye injuries.

Jun-Sung Park, the owner, initially ran a boarding kennel. Sometimes people abandoned dogs there, and Park began to take care of them. One dog became two, two dogs became 10, and eventually Park established an animal shelter.

"There are not many shelters that accept big dogs, especially dogs like the ones here. They have nowhere else, having been in fights or gotten injured," Park says. Although Park was initially able to find homes for a few of the dogs, most of the adopted dogs were eventually returned to the shelter. "I don't want them to go through that again," he says. "I just hope these dogs can live happily here until the end of their days."

It can be difficult to own large dogs in Korea, especially because most people live in apartment complexes. Yards and other open spaces are rare, leading to a high abandonment rate for bigger dogs. Finding new homes for them, even shelters or temporary foster situations, is challenging. Even those that are adopted from shelters are frequently returned — and often euthanized.

Though abandoned by their owners, the dogs at the Icheon shelter are friendly around people and enjoy their company. The club members clean the facility, change bedding, and donate supplies. Most importantly, they spend time with the dogs. "What dogs need most is human touch," Park says.

Today, the members have brought heartworm and parasite medicine for the dogs. They've also brought paper towels, garbage bags, and blankets and carpets they've collected. "We need lots of blankets. Even if we lay one down, it won't last a month before the dogs have torn it apart," Lim says. "Because it carries the scent of people, it seems to provide the dogs with emotional comfort."

The Rotary E-Club of MZ, named for millennials and Generation Z, was chartered in 2022 with members in their 20s and 30s and a focus on service. "Young people may not have a lot of money, but they have energy. Our club's motto is 'taking action for service,'" Lim says. "Learning that this animal shelter cares for dogs that have been abandoned multiple times until their last breath, we decided to volunteer here quarterly."

Kyungmin Park, a club member early on, says he appreciates that approach to service. "Before joining the club, I participated in a service project of making side dishes and delivering them to elderly people living alone," he says. "Doing hands-on volunteer work made me want to do more, which is why I joined Rotary."

As the owner of a plumbing company, he notes that members can also help with any maintenance needs the shelter might have. "Our club includes plumbing experts like me and interior specialists," he says. "There might be tasks that are easy for us but are essential for those who need them."

As the time draws near for club members to leave, there is a sense of sadness among the volunteers and dogs. The dogs gather near the club members, who extend their hands into the fence one more time to pet them.

"Moving forward, we will focus on increasing the engagement of our existing members," says Kyungmin Park, petting one of the dogs. "We need to meet in person and do hands-on volunteer work to attract young people. We've only just started, but we'll improve year by year." — SEOHA LEE



Jihye Yoo shares a playful moment with one of the dogs at the shelter where Rotary members volunteer.



Se-Ok Cha, president of the Rotary Club of Icheon Namcheon, Korea (left), and fellow club member Ji Eun Choi pose with their furry friends. **Opposite:** Rotary members get a reaction by offering treats.









**Opposite:** Ji Eun Choi offers a pat on the head while cleaning up.  
**Right:** A few dogs try to assist with taking down an awning.  
**Below:** Rotary E-Club of MZ President Byeongju Jeong gives a belly rub.



# OUR CLUBS

## VIRTUAL VISIT

### A cozy club with a global reach

Rotaract Club of  
Amsterdam Nachtwacht  
International

**On a chilly December evening off a narrow lane in Amsterdam,** about two dozen people sit around a huge table fashioning Christmas tree ornaments from cardboard tubes and jam jar lids. The smell of mulled wine and freshly peeled clementines hangs in the air of the community center as they chat and snack on homemade chocolate chip cookies. Conviviality is a hallmark of events by the Rotaract Club of Amsterdam Nachtwacht International, Club President Oliver Crazzolaro explains as he paints a toilet paper tube as Santa. He glances around the room, glowing with strings of lights. “I think tonight is particularly cozy.”

This Rotaract club isn’t characterized only by its friendly vibe. Its members have developed something of a specialty in hosting festive fundraisers to support causes around the world from South Africa to Lebanon to the Pacific. The small

club’s international reach is a product of its diversity: Most of the roughly dozen members are expatriates whose careers or studies have brought them to the Netherlands. “It’s, I think, the strength of our club,” says Jerson Ganza, who moved from the Philippines. “Everyone’s coming from different places, different perspectives, different ideas.”

Chartered in 2007, the club has benefited from the energy and ideas born of this cultural exchange and friendship among its international members. Other Rotaract clubs in the Amsterdam area function in Dutch. The Amsterdam Nachtwacht International club operates in English to serve the community of young expats, many of them drawn by the city’s universities and businesses. The metro region is a global hub, with more than 300,000 residents born outside the Netherlands.

At the holiday party, which attracted a crowd of club members and visitors, Romanian and Bulgarian crafters chat while painting paper towel tubes. People who grew up in Spain, the Netherlands, and Austria sip tea and mulled wine. The three organizers — who are Turkish, German, and South African — arranged for the group’s homemade decorations to festoon a Christmas tree donated to a care home in Amsterdam for older people.

Some of those who join the club have previous Rotary experience in their home countries, like Ganza, who was a Rotaractor in the Philippines and a member of the Rotary Club of Manila Bay before he moved to Amsterdam. He says the mix of past experiences and skills that members

bring from around the world shape the initiatives the club takes on.

When the club hosted a charity comedy night in 2022, Ganza drew on his background organizing events to find a slate of comedians. And he learned from a fellow Rotaractor about the cause he suggested supporting, the Give Every Child a Future project. The childhood immunization campaign across nine South Pacific island countries and territories is led by UNICEF and Rotary Zone 8. The 860 euros (about \$890) raised through the comedy night sponsored vaccinations for 32 children.

The club holds about three main fundraising events a year, usually benefiting timely causes that are often connected to a member’s home region. An annual summer boat party has raised money for people affected by the war in Ukraine and for earthquake recovery in Syria, and a 2023 tournament of the racket game padel supported earthquake recovery in Turkey. Members also teamed up with Rotaractors in Lebanon to raise money for the only suicide prevention hotline in the country.

“We look for a project that is happening somewhere on the globe where we feel like, OK, the money we’re putting into it is really benefiting maybe a small group of people, but those people really have a big benefit from it,” Crazzolaro says.

One of the club’s biggest fundraisers of 2023 went toward a cause that Past President Natasha Bailey knew of from South Africa, her home country. The Baby Box Project provides vulnerable mothers with essential items to care for newborns. The June party event, held in collaboration



Members of the Rotaract Club of Amsterdam Nachtwacht International, including (from left) Oliver Crazzolara, Carolin Vetter, Jerson Ganza, and Subhodip Banerjee, have developed a specialty in hosting festive fundraisers to support causes around the world.

with other local Rotaract clubs, raised about 1,700 euros (about \$1,800), enough to supply 64 baby boxes.

Bailey became involved with the club in 2021, having recently moved to the Netherlands and looking for a way to make friends and contribute to charity events. After the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it took a while for the club to find a stride, she recalls. Many previous members had left, and formal meetings every other week saw low attendance. So, the club swapped half of its meetings for social events, like dinners or bowling nights,

which attracted more people. Bailey sees the connections forged through fun events as an engine for the club's service projects. "If you start making friends and you get on with everyone, it's easy to put teams together," she says.

The club also helps members navigate life in the Netherlands. Members help each other find apartments in Amsterdam's competitive housing market and offer early career advice. Speaker events also support professional development. Alexia Fontalvo, a Rotaractor in Madrid before she moved to the Netherlands to

## HOW TO PUT THE 'FUN' IN 'FUNDRAISER'

Every year, the Rotaract Club of Amsterdam Nachtwacht International holds about three fundraisers, ranging from comedy nights to padel tournaments to summertime boat parties. The club strives to combine important causes with fun events. "Everybody likes to do good in the world," says Club President Oliver Crazzolara. "But people also really like feeling good while doing it." The club has these tips.

**Keep an eye on the money:** Make sure event costs don't eat into the funds for the charity. Finding a company to sponsor the event is a big help.

**Work with club members' strengths:** If members are interested in certain tasks, like marketing or coordinating, let them take the reins. "When a person is in the role that they really like, then things suddenly go so quickly, and the results are so astonishing," Crazzolara says.

**Choose a cause that members are excited about:** "Organizing fundraisers and activities is not easy," Club Treasurer Jerson Ganza says. "So you need to have some motivation."

study European law at the University of Amsterdam, got tips from a recent speaker on applying for internships to start a career in diplomacy.

For Crazzolara, who is half Dutch and grew up in Germany, the vibe of the group is well-captured by a Dutch word, *gezellig*, which roughly translates to "cozy." "It's just the feeling that you're in a place where you're not being judged, a place that you like to come back to," Crazzolara says. "It has something to do with friendship as well. It's nice people around you."

— ELIZABETH HEWITT

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

# The science of water

A Rotary scholar dedicates her education and expertise to providing an essential human need

**As a girl growing up in Caracas,** Isis Mejias was perplexed that she and her neighbors in the Venezuelan capital couldn't count on having regular access to water — and that when they did have water, it could cause diarrhea or other illnesses. "I felt like I needed to understand why certain things were happening in my country," she explains. "I was very curious about how science could help me figure out the reason."

Mejias inherited her love of learning and her passion for science from her father, an engineer. "My dad told us stories about picking cotton to buy his first uniform to go to school, of working from a very young age to buy pencils, papers, and books," she says. "But that was his dedication toward education, and he passed on all of those passions for studying to his children."

As a high school student in Houston, where her family moved in 2001, Mejias focused on chemistry with an eye toward its practical and altruistic applications. "I didn't necessarily know I was going to be studying something related to water specifically," she says. "But I knew I had that desire to help others, to work on human rights, and [ensure] that everybody had the things they should have access to."

At the University of Houston, Mejias followed her father's path and earned a degree in chemical and biomolecular engineering. ("The fruit didn't fall far from the tree," she says.) She also began working with Engineers Without Borders, a volunteer organization that helps communities find ways to provide for basic human needs. She co-founded a chapter at the University of Houston, and after she graduated in 2008, she spent three years working with the organization on a project in Kenya, where she helped provide a reliable water distribution system to a hospital.

While raising funds for the water treatment portion of the project, Mejias had a conversation with Bill Davis, a member of what is now the Rotary Club of Lake Houston Area. "We met at a Starbucks," she says. "He told me about Rotary: what it



Even in high school, Isis Mejias understood that she wanted to apply her science education to altruistic causes. "I had that desire to help others, to work on human rights, and [ensure] that everybody had the things they should have access to."

was and what they did in their areas of focus. I fell in love with it.”

Together, Mejias and Davis submitted a global grant application and secured \$61,000 to support the Kenya water project with a filter and chlorination system and a battery system for backup power. That experience was part of Mejias’ ongoing education in what she calls “the power of being part of an organization like Rotary, where you can turn your dreams into action.”

While working on the grant proposal, Davis asked Mejias about her plans. “That was a very important question,” Mejias recalls. “I was in the moment where I needed to figure out what to do with my life.” Davis told her about Rotary’s global grant scholarships, and Mejias jumped at the opportunity. Despite having only a few days to write her proposal and prepare for the interview, she secured the scholarship.

Mejias had already been accepted into a graduate program at the University of Houston; now, working with her adviser there, she arranged to use her scholarship to simultaneously study at the University of São Paulo in Brazil, where she intended to concentrate on environmental engineering and water treatment. “I thought about the real reason I wanted to continue my education,” she says. “Whatever came out of my [doctoral] research, I realized I needed to focus my solutions on those that needed it most:

people that can’t afford to pay for complex treatments of water.”

During two years of work in the field and the laboratory, Mejias created an inexpensive biofilter that uses bacteria to remove metals from water. While in grad school, she also engaged in Rotary projects that fostered collaboration between clubs in Texas and Brazil. “The goal of the scholarship, besides the academic work, was to build lasting relationships and expand the work of Rotary,” she says.

With PhD in hand, Mejias is now a consulting director at ERM, or Environmental Resources Management, which she describes as “the largest sustainability consultancy in the world.” She also started her own company, Global Wash, a nongovernmental organization that assists communities and groups as they implement essential water projects. “I wanted to pass along my experience in the planning, execution, and monitoring phase,” she explains. “We want to build sustainable projects that are owned and continued by the communities at large.”

Today, Mejias is a member and past president of the Rotary E-Club of Houston, which suits her travel schedule. “The e-club opened doors for me to continue in Rotary,” she says. “We were able to do wonderful projects while I was president.”

Chief among those was a project that enabled the diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases in

Barquisimeto, Venezuela. Backed by a \$36,000 global grant and working closely with the Rotary Club of Barquisimeto-Nueva Segovia, the Houston e-club established a partnership with a hospital in Barquisimeto and, especially, the Venezuelan Science Incubator (Incubadora Venezolana de la Ciencia, or IVC), an ambitious nonprofit devoted to the study of neglected tropical diseases.

Once underway, the project garnered praise from *Science* magazine. “With help from The Rotary Foundation,” the prestigious journal reported in its March 2022 issue, “IVC has just opened what co-leader Isis Mejias, an environmental consultant in Houston, bills as Venezuela’s ‘first state-of-the-art molecular diagnostics lab.’ ... It will help detect pathogens responsible for everything from Chagas’ disease and leprosy to leishmaniasis, Zika, Mayaro, and malaria.”

As if that weren’t enough, Mejias is also an ambassador for the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Rotary Action Group, and she frequently consults with clubs and districts on water projects. Her girlhood passion to put her scientific expertise at the service of humanitarian endeavors burns brighter than ever, as does her commitment to Rotary. “I don’t know what the future will bring,” Mejias says, though she does make one prediction: “I’m going to continue being a Rotarian until the day I die.” — GEOFFREY JOHNSON



#### Isis Mejias

- **Rotary global grant scholar,** 2012-13
- **Doctorate in environmental engineering,** University of Houston, 2014
- **Doctorate in sanitary and environmental engineering,** University of São Paulo, 2014
- **Member, Rotary E-Club of Houston,** 2016-present

In February 2019, Isis Mejias worked in Kalisizo, Uganda, on a global grant-supported project devoted to water, sanitation, and hygiene.

DISPATCHES FROM  
OUR SISTER MAGAZINES  
ROTARY MAGAZIN  
(GERMANY AND AUSTRIA)

## Mobile clinics transform health care in Ghana



*German Rotary Volunteer Doctors, a multidistrict association, has been working for 25 years to improve health care in Ghana, India, and Nepal. Editor Florian Quanz of the regional Rotary magazine serving Germany and Austria accompanied a group of the volunteers on a trip to Techiman, Ghana, to see the work up close.*

**The bus stops abruptly. There is not a village to be seen for miles.** Otto Dollinger looks at the driver. His wife, Barbara, takes a quick look at her watch. The two German doctors and a team of local health care workers have already been on the road for 2½ hours trying to reach four villages in central Ghana far from big cities.

“A truck got stuck ahead and is

blocking the road. We can’t get any further for the time being,” Felix Ofori explains. He is the manager of an eye clinic at Holy Family Hospital in the city of Techiman that has deployed the mobile health care team. Ofori knows exactly what to do. He reaches for his cell phone. After a brief phone call, he smiles at Otto and Barbara Dollinger. A pickup truck, small enough to maneuver around the blockage, will drive part of the team to the first two villages, he explains. Ofori can’t be stopped. He has experienced situations like this before and is well prepared.

Otto Dollinger is not fazed either. “You always have to be prepared for something like this here,” he says. It’s October, and the ophthalmolo-

gist, who is a member of the Rotary Club of Biberach, Germany, is traveling through Ghana on behalf of German Rotary Volunteer Doctors for two weeks with his wife, an orthoptist who works on problems with how the eyes move and work together. They are volunteering at the hospital in Techiman. It is not their first outreach assignment for the doctors association. “We set off this morning at 6 o’clock together with nine team members from the eye clinic. Our goal is to visit four villages today.”

With such mobile teams, the hospital provides health care that would otherwise not be available in remote regions. In the villages on the list for today’s mission, people were alerted a few days beforehand that a team from the eye clinic would be on-site and that anyone with eye problems should visit. “A single ophthalmologist is responsible for more than 1 million people here in the region around Techiman,” Dollinger says.

The Rotarian doctors group connects experts with people in need of services. In this case, doctors from German Rotary clubs with valuable knowledge and professional experience are helping address a chronic lack of medical care in Ghana, especially in rural areas.

“We split up into teams beforehand so that we can examine the people in all four villages at the same time,” Ofori says as the bus driver signals riders to get back on. The truck has been pulled out with the help of an excavator, and the road is cleared. Ofori calls off the pickup. Half an hour later, the bus reaches a small settlement. The team has reached its first destination.

Otto Dollinger takes his rucksack, which contains everything he needs for the examinations, to

↑ Joseph Bannor (left), an optometrist from Holy Family Hospital, examines a patient with the assistance of volunteer Barbara Dollinger, an orthoptist from Germany.





a small building. While pregnant women are examined in the left wing, he will be checking patients' eyes in the right wing. A local nurse is already waiting for him there. She will record patient information, including examination results, in writing.

One of Dollinger's first patients is an older man. Diagnosis: cataract in his left eye. Because the patient speaks only a little English, the nurse translates. "Can you come to the hospital today and stay there for two days?" The patient says yes, and Dollinger smiles.

Meanwhile, Barbara Dollinger is examining people in another village about 20 minutes away. With optometrist Joseph Bannor of Holy Family Hospital, she sets up an improvised doctor's office in a church. "This boy must be taken to a hospital for further examination," she explains to Bannor after examining a young patient with poor vision in both eyes and recurring severe headaches. Bannor writes the boy's name on a piece of paper.

Ultimately, the hospital staff members decide who will go right

↑ Joachim Teichmann explains the endoscopic image on the monitor.

↓ Patients who have received treatment are waiting for their postoperative exams.

away to the hospital by bus. "We can only make recommendations," Otto Dollinger explains. Cooperation can only be successful if projects are initiated together because then sustainability is guaranteed.

The day after, at the hospital, Dollinger checks on the patients collected yesterday. Joachim Teichmann, an internist, gastroenterologist, and endocrinologist from the Rotary Club of Lüdenscheid, Germany, is getting ready for two endoscopic examinations. In the days before, he trained a hospital employee in gastroenterological examination techniques.

Teichmann's two patients complain of stomach problems. While the hospital staff members in the endoscopy department are busy preparing everything, Teichmann is still having a preliminary discussion with a nurse in the office. Suddenly the door opens. "We're ready," a voice is calling. Teichmann gets up immediately and goes into the examination room.



"If in doubt, my colleagues can consult me," he explains. But that rarely happens. The staff members are now far too experienced. About 500 to 600 examinations of this kind are carried out here every year. The endoscopy room is built to German standards, Teichmann says. German Rotary Volunteer Doctors has played a major role in this. Much of the equipment was financed and procured by the group. "It is important to advance the clinic and its treatment options together with the staff," Teichmann says.

Back at the eye clinic, Osei Agyeman of Holy Family Hospital looks down with concentration. Every incision has to be precise. What is a routine procedure for the head physician at the eye clinic would not even be on the surgery schedule at a German clinic. "In Germany, the patient would have seen a doctor much earlier. Unfortunately, the only option now is to remove the right eye as a whole," Dollinger explains.

One operation follows another. The Rotary Club of Essen-Ruhr, Germany, covered the costs of building the eye clinic. The clubs from Lüdenscheid and Biberach together with the Rotary Club of Techiman, Ghana, financed the essential equipment through a Rotary Foundation global grant.

The man with the cataract also has his turn. His case is an example of what the hospital can achieve. On Wednesday, he was examined in his village and taken to the clinic in Techiman. On Thursday, he was operated on by Agyeman and his team. On Friday, the bandage over his eye will be removed. "This will be a very special moment for him," Dollinger says. "He immediately will be able to see something in the operated eye again. A completely different life will begin for him." ■

## GERMAN ROTARY VOLUNTEER DOCTORS BY THE NUMBERS

**Members**  
942

**Total missions**  
Nearly 2,500  
over 25 years

**Average missions per year**  
100

**Where they work**  
Ghana, India,  
and Nepal

**Hospitals supported**  
23 (14 in Ghana,  
one in India, and  
eight in Nepal)

**Foreign specialists trained in Germany**  
About 100

**Largest single sum for a project**  
625,000 euros for the emergency ward of Holy Family Hospital in Techiman, Ghana, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

HANDBOOK

# Responsible voluntourism

How to make sure you're making a positive impact and other tips from veteran volunteer Susan Gibson

By 1990, Susan E. Gibson had worked at a bank and in the nonprofit sector and had found fulfillment volunteering in her community. But she loved to travel and wanted to combine that with her love of service. She flew to Haiti to volunteer shortly after her 30th birthday but found the nonprofit she'd connected with didn't align with her values. "My objective of helping wasn't turning out the way I had envisioned," she writes in the foreword to her book *How to Be an Amazing Volunteer Overseas: Rules of the Road, Stories from the Field*. "I thought I could arrive, roll up my sleeves, do whatever needed to be done, and everyone would be happy. It turned out to be a lot more complicated."

The experience inspired Gibson to go back to school to get her master's and learn about best practices in overseas service and development. She persuaded Grameen Bank, the microcredit institution founded by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, to give her an internship, and she set about learning about microfinance. "The notable difference in going to Bangladesh versus my first trip to Haiti was that my purpose was to learn, rather than simply to volunteer," she writes. "Naturally, I wanted to be helpful. But overall my purpose in being there was to watch and learn."

Gibson went on to a career in international development and microfinance, working and volunteering in 70 countries. These are some lessons she learned in the field, adapted from her book.



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## 1 START LOCAL

Before you go off to another country, take a look at what you can do at home. Although not perceived as being as glamorous and exhilarating as going abroad, volunteering close to home could have more impact than a weeklong trip to another country, without the costs or, crucially, the carbon emissions associated with flying. And it's good to build upon experience that volunteering locally can provide.

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## 2 BE PREPARED

Do your research. Being well-informed will position you to have a worthwhile experience. It takes time to think about what you actually want to get out of an experience and how you can match your skills to really be of help. The more you can learn at the beginning of the process, the better.

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## 3 SPEND TIME IN THE FIELD

Don't just talk about it — do it. You've gone to all that trouble to get on a plane and put yourself out there, so now make the most of it. Interacting with local people will help clarify what their needs are. Given that you made the effort to travel

a great distance, you will find that most people are appreciative of your visit and are usually willing to provide advice. It takes energy and initiative to make appointments, but take advantage of the many interesting and inspiring people you wouldn't otherwise have had the chance to meet.

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## 4 RESPECT PEOPLE

You are a guest in a country, so behave with grace and modesty. Be on time. Read up on the culture and what religions are practiced — adhere to cultural etiquette.

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## 5 LISTEN

Work on really listening to what people are communicating to you, not what you assume they will say. Resist any temptation to say, "All you need to do is ..." Your hosts probably have lived in their environment for a long time. It is important to listen to the history and understand what has been done to address issues — the situation is never as straightforward as you think.

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## 6 LEARN BY DOING

You don't know all the answers, especially if it's a first visit for you. Test and reconsider your

assumptions and don't jump to conclusions. The best teacher is firsthand knowledge on the ground. Information is everything, but only when it is shared and applied.

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## 7 WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

Collaboration is the most effective way to achieve lasting results. Doing *with* others as opposed to doing *for* others is the guiding principle. The most impactful nongovernmental organizations are the ones created by individuals at the grassroots of their community, working with partners to scale up their efforts. Invest time in establishing relationships with residents. Be a catalyst, a cheerleader, a facilitator, and a connector.

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## 8 CONNECT WITH THE LOCAL NGO STAFF

Make an effort to interact with everyone at your host NGO — find out about your colleagues' lives. Cultivating and nurturing relationships is essential to achieving successful results. In addition, those staff members are the key to having an enjoyable time.

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## 9 PARK YOUR EGO

As a volunteer, everything is your job (within

reason)! In any assignment, there are mundane aspects that still need to get done. Do the most good and be the most useful you can. Don't set out to take credit for the things you accomplish. Leave the back-patting to family and friends. It's not all about you!

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## 10 BE ADAPTABLE

Put yourself in other people's shoes and be empathetic. When things don't go your way, take a deep breath to help you stay calm and grounded. Arm yourself with compassion and understanding. Most often you will be working with a team, and accepting that people have different working styles is key. Try not to be judgmental.

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## 11 FOLLOW UP

When you make promises and commitments, keep them. Promptly thank everyone who has helped you. And if one of their suggestions helps you in some way, send them a quick update. It is always heartening to receive good news from people to whom you have given advice. Very few people keep in contact with interesting developments — an email providing a positive update with no request for anything in return is a novelty.



TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

## More than a basic necessity

**Rotary's focus turns to two themes this month.** March is Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Month, and we celebrate World Rotaract Week 11-17 March. Both WASH and Rotaract are near and dear to me.

Clean water, basic sanitation, and proper hygiene are fundamental human rights, yet a staggering 2.2 billion people still lack access to safe drinking water.

We're taking action. Over the past decade, your Rotary Foundation has invested more than \$180 million in over 2,500 water and sanitation projects worldwide. Rotary is on the ground making a difference through global grant-supported projects funded by your contributions to the Foundation.

But Rotary can't do it alone. We have partnered with organizations like USAID to deliver large-scale solutions. The Rotary-USAID Partnership has helped thousands access water and sanitation services in the Dominican Republic, Ghana, the Philippines, and Uganda.

Our Foundation is the connector for other water partnerships, too. This was the case when I worked with leaders from Rotary District 7020 to set up the Haiti National Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Initiative, known as HANWASH. Foundation grants continue to play a critical role in our strategy of working with nongovernmental organizations, municipalities, and government agencies in communities throughout Haiti.

Rotary efforts to connect people with clean water go beyond providing a basic necessity. We are paving the way for healthier communities and brighter futures, and doing so in a sustainable manner. With access to water, communities enhance education levels, improve health, and further development.

When we talk about partnerships, we can't forget our closest ally, right here in the family of Rotary: Rotaract. The engagement, energy, and ideas of Rotaract complement the experience of Rotary clubs and increase our collective impact.

Yet many Rotary members still do not know that, as of 2022, Rotaract club activities can be included in district grants, and they are eligible for global grants, expanding avenues for collaboration.

I encourage all Rotary and Rotaract clubs to foster closer collaboration and engagement in our Foundation, whether it's rolling up their sleeves on a project or giving.

We all know that in Rotary, great opportunities are always around the corner. When you combine water and sanitation projects, Rotaract, and the Foundation, all will become a big part of your life, as they have in mine — and not just this month, but forever.

**BARRY RASSIN**

*Foundation trustee chair*

## SERVICE ABOVE SELF

### THE OBJECT OF ROTARY

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

**First** The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;

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

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

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

### THE FOUR-WAY TEST

Of the things we think, say or do:

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

### ROTARIAN CODE OF CONDUCT

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

As a Rotarian, I will

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

## CALENDAR

# March events

### IRISH EYES ARE SMILING

**Event:** St. Patrick's Day Celebration

**Host:** Rotary Club of Homewood, Alabama

**What it benefits:** Local scholarships

**Date:** 2 March

First held in 2017, this annual event commemorates St. Patrick's Day with an evening of Irish food and Celtic music. There are also live and silent auctions of items contributed by individuals and community businesses, including a trip to the Emerald Isle. Last year's celebration attracted more than 100 attendees, who helped raise \$42,000. Proceeds go toward the club's education foundation, which awards scholarships to students at Homewood High School.

### READY TO ROCK?

**Event:** Classic Gala

**Host:** Rotary Club of Schaumburg-Hoffman Estates, Illinois

**What it benefits:** Local projects and nonprofits

**Date:** 2 March

For its 45th annual gala dinner, the club has chosen a classic rock theme that promises to take guests on a lively journey down memory lane. Musicians will perform favorite hits of yesteryear in "a celebration of unity, compassion, and rock 'n' roll." The evening also includes a silent auction and a grand prize drawing, both of which can be entered online for those unable to attend in person.

### DRESS UP AND DANCE

**Event:** Dancin' Through the Decades

**Host:** Rotary Club of Sylvania, Ohio

**What it benefits:** Local and international nonprofits

**Date:** 9 March

Three live bands, including one that specializes in covers of 1960s, '70s, and



### GREEN SCENE

**Event:** St. Patrick's Day Party

**Host:** Rotary Club of Charlevoix, Michigan

**What it benefits:** Local projects and nonprofits

**Date:** 16 March

The club invites fellow Rotary members and friends to come clad in green to its 13th annual St. Patrick's Day party, at the century-old Castle Farms estate. The Irish-themed event features a dinner buffet, live music, and a silent auction. A portion of the proceeds goes toward the construction of a playground at a community recreation area.

'80s songs, will set the tempo for a night of dancing, emceed by a local celebrity. Attendees are encouraged to dress in the style of their favorite musical era. Local businesses will provide appetizers, dinner, wine, and craft beer, and a silent auction will be held.

### SIPS TO SAVOR

**Event:** The Big Taste

**Host:** Rotary Club of University Sunrise of Seattle

**What it benefits:** Local nonprofits

**Date:** 23 March

Attendees at this event can sample over 100 wines, beers, ciders, spirits, and nonalcoholic beverages from producers in the Pacific Northwest. Bites from an Indonesian food truck will be available for purchase. The tasting takes place inside a former aircraft hangar, part of a decommissioned military installation that in 1924 was the start and end of the

first flight around the world. Last year's event drew more than 600 people and raised \$45,000.

### STRUT YOUR STUFF

**Event:** Dancing for Our Heroes

**Host:** Rotary Club of Greater Anderson, South Carolina

**What it benefits:** Local nonprofits and projects, and End Polio Now

**Date:** 28 March

At this fundraiser modeled after the popular TV show *Dancing with the Stars*, dance partners representing local charities compete on stage to earn donations from audience members. Trophies are awarded to the couple who raise the most money and the couple with the best dance moves. Since it began in 2007, Dancing for Our Heroes has generated \$1.5 million. Each year has a different theme; this year's is the music of Motown.

**Tell us about your event.** Write to [magazine@rotary.org](mailto:magazine@rotary.org) and put "calendar" in the subject line. Submissions must be received at least five months before the event to be considered for inclusion.



Rotary's COP28 delegation included a group of Rotaractors.

IN BRIEF

## Rotary steps up at UN climate conference

**Rotary experts hosted** more than two dozen sessions at the United Nations climate talks, or COP28, addressing how a changing climate intersects with health, poverty, and other factors. Rotary International President Gordon McNally discussed the mental health effects of climate-linked disasters.

The conference, in its 28th year, brought together more than 70,000 delegates over two weeks in late 2023 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, with nearly 200 countries and thousands of nongovernmental organizations and other groups represented. It was the third time Rotary took part in the annual climate summit to foster dialogue, drive partnerships, and highlight community-led solutions. The meeting is the world's highest decision-making process addressing climate issues.

"The record global temperatures this year [2023] have underscored the immediate need to take action on climate change," McNally said. "They have also demonstrated the massive destructive toll that climate is taking on global mental health." McNally noted studies connecting extreme heat to mental distress and greater rates of violence. He also addressed the anxiety that many young people feel because of climate change.

Rotary's 28 sessions included presentations by RI representatives to the UN and

other international organizations, as well as by experts from UN agencies, nongovernmental organizations, universities, and corporate entities. Meenakshi Venkataraman, a member of the Rotary Club of Nilgiris West, India, discussed how invasive species cause biodiversity loss. Salvador Rico, of the Rotary Club of South Ukiah, California, offered an introduction to community-led watershed protection.

In addition, Elif Selin Calik, of the Rotary Club of London, talked about how artificial intelligence can revolutionize areas like energy, agriculture, and disaster resilience. And Yaseen Mohamed Jaffer Mohsen, president of the Association of Rotary Clubs in the United Arab Emirates, explored how corporate partnerships can finance environmental projects.

The Climate Crisis and Health Consequences panel, held in partnership with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, addressed the escalating health threats posed by climate change. Moderated by Rose Cardarelli, Rotary's representative to UNICEF in New York City, the panel featured professionals from the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and Gavi. Speakers at other Rotary-hosted sessions focused on food systems, Indigenous land rights, and related topics.

Rotary's COP28 delegation included Foundation Trustee Chair Barry Rassin and General Secretary John Hewko, as

well as Judith Diment, dean of the Rotary Representative Network; Mohamed Delawar Aly, Rotary's representative to the Arab League; Yaşar Atacık, chair of the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group; and K. Neil Van Dine, past chair of the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Rotary Action Group. Rotary also sponsored 12 Rotaractors to attend the conference, recognizing the central role of young people in shaping a sustainable future.

Rotary International has long worked to protect the environment by collaborating with communities to provide clean water sources and sanitation, alleviate poverty, and promote sustainable energy technologies. The environment became an area of focus for The Rotary Foundation in 2020. But even before that, the Foundation had awarded more than \$18 million toward environmental projects led by Rotary members between 2013 and 2020. Since 2021, it has committed an additional \$6.4 million toward projects in the new area of focus.

The United Arab Emirates, where COP28 took place, is one of many countries where Rotary members are motivating progress and inspiring action on the environment. Members in the UAE recently participated in a national campaign to plant 50,000 mangrove trees to help protect coastlines and marine life.

— ETELKA LEHOCZKY

IN MEMORIAM

# Trustee Hsiu-Ming Lin dies



**Hsiu-Ming “Frederick” Lin**, a 2020-24 trustee of The Rotary Foundation, died 11 January at age 73. He was a member of the Rotary Club of Taipei Tungteh, Taiwan, and a Rotarian since 1988.

Lin was managing director of Continental Worldwide Enterprises Co. Ltd., a company that designs and integrates satellite communications systems. He served Rotary as director and treasurer on the RI Board, regional Rotary Foundation coordinator, Rotary coordinator, RI president’s representative, and committee member and chair. He was the 2005-06 governor of District 3520.

He was a member of the Arch Klumph Society, along with his wife, Jane Chen-Yi, who survives him. Lin was also a Benefactor of The Rotary Foundation and a Paul Harris Fellow.

With deep regret, we report the deaths of **Ray Klinginsmith**, Kirksville, Missouri, who served RI as president in 2010-11, director in 1985-87, and district governor in 1975-76; **Yoshiro Ito**, Sapporo, Japan, who served RI as Rotary Foundation trustee in 1989-92, director in 1986-88, and district governor in 1977-78; and **Theodore D. Griley II**, Newark, Ohio, who served RI as Rotary Foundation trustee in 2001-05, director in 1990-92, and district governor in 1976-77.

An obituary of Klinginsmith will run in next month’s issue.

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

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>James D. Walko</b><br>Murrysville-<br>Export,<br>Pennsylvania,<br>1979-80 | <b>Corliss Klaassen</b><br>West Des Moines,<br>Iowa, 2005-06 | <b>Sang-Myun Ju</b><br>Jungweon,<br>Korea, 2010-11          |
| <b>Charlie Cole</b><br>Springfield-Twin<br>Rivers, Oregon,<br>1993-94        | <b>Jiro Takahashi</b><br>Nagoya-West,<br>Japan, 2005-06      | <b>Joe Clancy</b><br>Weymouth,<br>Massachusetts,<br>2012-13 |
| <b>Hiroyuki Aoshima</b><br>Shizuoka, Japan,<br>1996-97                       | <b>Charles W. Pratt</b><br>Oviedo, Florida,<br>2006-07       | <b>Tom Narak</b><br>West Des Moines,<br>Iowa, 2018-19       |
| <b>Donald Adkins</b><br>Norman,<br>Oklahoma,<br>2001-02                      | <b>Hiroaki Tamanoi</b><br>Beppu North,<br>Japan, 2006-07     | <b>Chuck Pretto</b><br>San Diego,<br>2022-23                |
|  | <b>Haruo Yahashi</b><br>Sapporo West,<br>Japan, 2008-09      |   |

PHOTOGRAPH: MONIKA LOZINSKA

## wheels of hope

Wheels of Hope raises funds to build hand cranked tricycle wheelchairs to transform the lives of polio survivors in Nigeria.



### MOBILITY CHANGES EVERYTHING!

#### Better Health and Greater Opportunities

Wheelchairs enable polio survivors to go to school, learn a trade, get a good job and raise a family.

#### Greater Emotional and Social Well Being

Wheelchairs enable polio survivors to live a life of dignity, independence, respect, and inclusion.

You can join us in this international project to transform lives.

[wheelsofhope.net](http://wheelsofhope.net)



Wheels of Hope is a project of The Traverse City Rotary Club

2024 CONVENTION

# Customize your convention



Malay neighborhood

**The Rotary International Convention in Singapore** will offer so many special events and exclusive experiences that you'll want to make a plan to make the most of your time.

Come early or stay after the 25-29 May convention to take a tour curated for Rotary members or meet with potential business partners in this economic powerhouse home to so many big corporations. And be sure to register for an extra event to mingle with fellow members.

The Host Organization Committee has tours for you in Singapore and the region. Book at [rotarysingapore2024.org](http://rotarysingapore2024.org). One convenient three-day tour in neighboring Malaysia includes a Kuala Lumpur heritage walk and a batik fabric dyeing workshop.

A private tour to learn about the city's immigrants and hawker center culture in-

cludes tastings at the food markets in Chinese, Indian, and Malay neighborhoods.

Rotarians from the area invite you to Host Hospitality Night, with cultural and food events at exquisite venues in the heart of the city. At the Rotary Foundation Donor Summit, a general session-style event, members will hear stories about the impact of their support. Major Donors and members of the Arch Klumph, Legacy, Paul Harris, and Bequest societies can register on the convention site.

Rotary Youth Exchange alumni can connect and share ideas at the Youth Exchange Officers Preconvention 24-25 May.

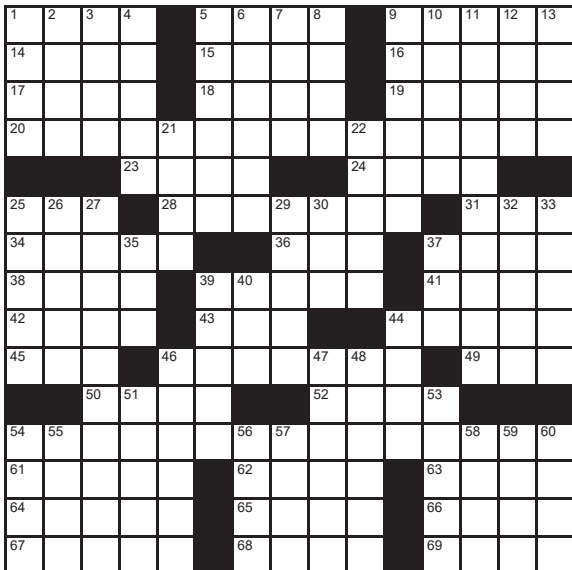
And stick around after the convention for the Asia Pacific Regional Rotaract Conference 1-4 June. Whichever Rotary-only experiences you choose for your trip, you'll be *Sharing Hope With the World*. ■

Learn more and register at [convention.rotary.org](http://convention.rotary.org).

CROSSWORD

## Season's greeting

By Victor Fleming  
Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas



Solution on page 10

**ACROSS**

- 1 Egyptian snakes
- 5 Bank acct. insurer
- 9 Denier's contraction
- 14 Defeat decisively
- 15 Change the decor of
- 16 "\_\_\_ World" (Sesame Street segment)
- 17 Corn syrup brand
- 18 \_\_\_-friendly
- 19 "Cool beans!"
- 20 Start of a quotation attributed to Robin Williams
- 23 Anthracite, e.g.
- 24 1990s Senate leader Trent
- 25 Feeling down
- 28 One who eats too much
- 31 After-school org.
- 34 Coastline crawlers
- 36 Aussie animal, for short
- 37 Bangkok denizen
- 38 Actors Alejandro and Fernando
- 39 Part 2 of the quotation
- 41 Ages upon ages
- 42 Italian pronoun
- 43 Hosp. workers
- 44 Cartoon drawing
- 45 It's pitched when courting

- 46 Artistic composite of juxtaposed elements
- 49 Bull's-\_\_\_
- 50 Caramel-topped custard
- 52 Golf course vehicle
- 54 End of the quotation
- 61 Antler point
- 62 "Bearded" flower
- 63 \_\_\_-Rooter
- 64 Be in accord
- 65 3/4 of a dozen
- 66 Aikman or Donahue
- 67 "\_\_\_ is human ..."
- 68 Beer bash fixtures
- 69 "Bake" for "bale," e.g.

- 13 General \_\_\_ chicken
- 21 Winter holiday quaffs
- 22 Emotionally detached
- 25 Alternative to a nail
- 26 Playground retort
- 27 What some remember fondly
- 29 Secret rendezvous
- 30 Overly
- 32 Chief Justice Roger \_\_\_ (1836-64)
- 33 Airline seat choice
- 35 "Be prepared" grp.
- 37 Service spot?
- 39 All wet
- 40 Rule who wrote *Green River, Running Red*
- 44 Crime doer, briefly
- 46 Biblical crib substitute
- 47 Role playing
- 48 Helium and hydrogen
- 51 Large ocean vessel
- 53 Donna who wrote *The Goldfinch*
- 54 Brief quarrel
- 55 Golden Fleece craft
- 56 Chain component
- 57 New York canal
- 58 McIlroy of golf
- 59 'Vette roof option
- 60 Toy with a string

**DOWN**

- 1 Holy chests
- 2 Bath bar
- 3 Contented cat sound
- 4 Impassive
- 5 Careful about spending
- 6 Star Trek studio
- 7 "Beware the \_\_\_ of March"
- 8 Chowder ingredient
- 9 Continued
- 10 Aboriginal Alaskan
- 11 Mobile with a browser
- 12 Brief letter



# GREAT CLUBS DON'T HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT

Be intentional about providing your members with a great club experience.

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Get to know new and prospective members with the **member interest survey**.



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Meet members where they're at in their membership journey using the **retention assessment and analysis**.



Learn what your members want and keep your club relevant with the **member satisfaction survey**.



Understand why members are leaving your club with the **exit survey**.



[rotary.org/membership](https://rotary.org/membership)





## Where soup is a national dish

In Hungary, gulyás is central to identity. Just don't call it a stew.

**Wondering what to make for dinner?** If you're a hungry Hungarian browsing your cupboards, your answer may well be gulyás (goulash) — a hearty soup made with household staples like beef, carrots, and potatoes. While in other countries what people call goulash has the consistency of a stew, “in Hungary, it's always a soup,” explains Beatrix Turner. (Hungarians have another name for the stew.)

The dish dates back more than 1,000 years to Hungarian shepherds. The Hungarian word gulya means herd of cows, and gulyás is a person who herds the animals. Later, the soup was eaten as peasant food. But in the early 1800s, a time of rising nationalism and resistance to Habsburg Austrian rule, Hungarians everywhere embraced gulyás as part of their national identity. “It's the taste of Hungary,” Turner says.

**'TIS THE SEASONING:** The soup gets its signature red color from Hungarian sweet paprika, made from ground red peppers. “Onion, paprika, salt, black pepper — these are the main seasonings in Hungary,” she says. The caraway in the dish eases digestion, Turner explains; the seed is often served in cabbage dishes for the same reason.

**ON THE GROUND:** While gulyás is a typical meal for a home cook, it can also be made in an outdoor cauldron for a crowd. When Turner and members of her club arrived at the Hungary-Ukraine border to help refugees, they were offered bowls of the soup. “You can eat gulyás soup day after day,” Turner says. “You can make it in a big pot, and it's really better the next day as the taste grows.”

— DIANA SCHOBERG

**Beatrix Turner**  
Rotary Club  
of Budapest-  
Margitsziget,  
Hungary

What food is your region famous for? Tell us at [magazine@rotary.org](mailto:magazine@rotary.org) and you may see it in an upcoming issue.



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**SINGAPORE | 25-29 MAY 2024**



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