



District 5360 Youth Exchange Information Sheet #11 – About Rotary



About Rotary

Rotary is a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders that provides humanitarian service, encourages high ethical standards in all vocations, and helps build goodwill and peace in the world. Approximately 1.2 million Rotarians belong to more than 32,000 clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas.

Rotary club membership represents a cross-section of the community's business and professional men and women. The world's Rotary clubs meet weekly and are nonpolitical, nonreligious, and open to all cultures, races, and creeds.

The main objective of Rotary is service — in the community, in the workplace, and throughout the world. Rotarians develop community service projects that address many of today's most critical issues, such as children at risk, poverty and hunger, the environment, illiteracy, and violence. They also support programs for youth, educational opportunities and international exchanges for students, teachers, and other professionals, and vocational and career development. The Rotary motto is *Service Above Self*.

Although Rotary clubs develop autonomous service programs, all Rotarians worldwide are united in a campaign for the global eradication of polio. In the 1980s, Rotarians raised US\$240 million to immunize the children of the world; by 2005, Rotary's centenary year and the target date for the certification of a polio-free world, the PolioPlus program will have contributed US\$500 million to this cause. In addition, Rotary has provided an army of volunteers to promote and assist at national immunization days in polio-endemic countries around the world.

The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International is a not-for-profit corporation that promotes world understanding through international humanitarian service programs and educational and cultural exchanges. It is supported solely by voluntary contributions from Rotarians and others who share its vision of a better world. Since 1947, the Foundation has awarded more than US\$1.1 billion in humanitarian and educational grants, which are initiated and administered by local Rotary clubs and districts.

A Brief History

Paul P. Harris, an attorney who wished to recapture in a professional club the same friendly spirit he had felt in the small towns of his youth, formed the world's first service club, the Rotary Club of Chicago, Illinois, USA, on 23 February 1905. The name "Rotary" derived from the early practice of rotating meetings among members' offices.

Rotary's popularity spread throughout the United States in the decade that followed; clubs were chartered from San Francisco to New York. By 1921, Rotary clubs had been formed on six continents, and the organization adopted the name Rotary International a year later.

Taken from www.rotary.org





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As Rotary grew, its mission expanded beyond serving the professional and social interests of club members. Rotarians began pooling their resources and contributing their talents to help serve communities in need. The organization's dedication to this ideal is best expressed in its principal motto: Service Above Self. Rotary also later embraced a code of ethics, called The 4-Way Test, that has been translated into hundreds of languages.

During and after World War II, Rotarians became increasingly involved in promoting international understanding. In 1945, 49 Rotary members served in 29 delegations to the United Nations Charter Conference. Rotary still actively participates in UN conferences by sending observers to major meetings and promoting the United Nations in Rotary publications. Rotary International's relationship with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) dates back to a 1943 London Rotary conference that promoted international cultural and educational exchanges. Attended by ministers of education and observers from around the world, and chaired by a past president of RI, the conference was an impetus to the establishment of UNESCO in 1946.

An endowment fund, set up by Rotarians in 1917 "for doing good in the world," became a not-for-profit corporation known as The Rotary Foundation in 1928. Upon the death of Paul Harris in 1947, an outpouring of Rotarian donations made in his honour, totalling US\$2 million, launched the Foundation's first program — graduate fellowships, now called Ambassadorial Scholarships. Today, contributions to The Rotary Foundation total more than US\$80 million annually and support a wide range of humanitarian grants and educational programs that enable Rotarians to bring hope and promote international understanding throughout the world.

In 1985, Rotary made a historic commitment to immunize all of the world's children against polio. Working in partnership with nongovernmental organizations and national governments through its PolioPlus program, Rotary is the largest private-sector contributor to the global polio eradication campaign. Rotarians have mobilized hundreds of thousands of PolioPlus volunteers and have immunized more than one billion children worldwide. By the 2005 target date for certification of a polio-free world, Rotary will have contributed half a billion dollars to the cause.

As it approached the dawn of the 21st century, Rotary worked to meet the changing needs of society, expanding its service effort to address such pressing issues as environmental degradation, illiteracy, world hunger, and children at risk. The organization admitted women for the first time (worldwide) in 1989 and claims more than 145,000 women in its ranks today. Following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Rotary clubs were formed or re-established throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Today, 1.2 million Rotarians belong to some 32,000 Rotary clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas.

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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.

Four Avenues of Service

Based on the Object of Rotary, the Four Avenues of Service are Rotary's philosophical cornerstone and the foundation on which club activity is based: *Club Service* focuses on strengthening fellowship and ensuring the effective functioning of the club. *Vocational Service* encourages Rotarians to serve others through their vocations and to practice high ethical standards. *Community Service* covers the projects and activities the club undertakes to improve life in its community. *International Service* encompasses actions taken to expand Rotary's humanitarian reach around the globe and to promote world understanding and peace.

The Four-Way Test

From the earliest days of the organization, Rotarians were concerned with promoting high ethical standards in their professional lives. One of the world's most widely printed and quoted statements of business ethics is 'The Four-Way Test, which was created in 1932 by Rotarian Herbert J. Taylor (who later served as RI president) when he was asked to take charge of a company that was facing bankruptcy. This 24-word test for employees to follow in their business and professional lives became the guide for sales, production, advertising, and all relations with dealers and customers, and the survival of the company is credited to this simple philosophy.

Adopted by Rotary in 1943, The Four-Way Test has been translated into more than a hundred languages and published in thousands of ways. It asks the following four questions:

Of the things we think, say or do:

Is it the TRUTH?
Is it FAIR to all concerned?
Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

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