

# WHAT IS ROTARY?

## THE HISTORY OF ROTARY

Rotary was born on February 23, 1905 in Chicago, Illinois, the world's first and most international service club. The founder of Rotary was attorney Paul P. Harris (1868-1947), who gathered with three others to discuss his idea of a group of businessmen from different professions getting together periodically to become better acquainted. They decided to limit membership to one representative of each profession and to rotate the meeting site among each member's place of business, to acquaint each other with their various vocations and to promote business. The rotation of meeting places is the source of the name "Rotary".

Club membership grew rapidly. The second Rotary Club was founded in San Francisco in 1908. When clubs were formed in Canada and Great Britain, in 1912, Rotary became an international organization.

Since 1905, the ideas of Paul Harris and his friends have become ideals which have been accepted by people of practically all nationalities, and of many political and religious beliefs. Today there are Rotary Clubs in Austria and American Samoa, in Brazil and Brunei, in Italy and India, in Scotland and South Africa - in some 200 countries. The universal acceptance of Rotary principles has been so great that there are now more than 33,000 Rotary clubs, with a membership of over 1.2 million men and women.

## ROTARY MOTTO AND THEMES

Rotary International has adopted as its motto, "**Service Above Self**". A second theme of Rotary is "**He profits most who serves best**". Additionally, each year, the Rotary International President coins a theme for that Rotary year.

Rotarians throughout the world quote 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?

Each of the more than 33,000 Rotary clubs in the world is a member of Rotary International. Rotary is divided into 521 Districts, each of which is headed by a District Governor. We are District 7390 which consists of 48 Clubs in South Central Pennsylvania.

Our District includes the cities of Harrisburg, Lancaster, York, Lebanon, Shippensburg, Gettysburg, Carlisle, Mechanicsburg, Hanover and surrounding areas in South Central Pennsylvania.

The District Governor, and all officers of Rotary on the international, district or club level, serve for a Rotary fiscal year that runs from July 1 to June 30. A number of district-level committees are organized to provide sponsorship or support for Rotary functions and initiatives that involve Rotarians from across our District.

## THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

The mission of The Rotary Foundation is to enable Rotarians to advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through the improvement of health, the support of education, and the alleviation of poverty.

The Foundation is a not-for-profit corporation supported solely by voluntary contributions from Rotarians and friends of the Foundation who share its vision of a better world.

Within the past year, The Rotary Foundation was restructured into Future Vision with a new motto – Doing Good in the World. Today The Foundation’s Global Grants support large, international projects with sustainable, high-impact outcomes in one of six areas of focus which correspond to the Foundation’s mission:

1. Peace and conflict prevention/resolution
2. Disease prevention and treatment
3. Water and sanitation
4. Maternal and child health
5. Basic education and literacy
6. Economic and community development

One of the foundation’s major programs is Polio-Plus that was started twenty years ago with the goal of eliminating polio from the world. Today the Polio-Plus program is on the brink of eradicating this tenacious disease. The Rotary Foundation’s funds along with a \$355 million in challenge grants received from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will directly support immunization campaigns in developing countries, where polio continues to infect and paralyze children.

**Another program is the Group Study Exchange. This program involves paired districts in different countries sending teams of 4 or 5 business or professional men and women for a 4 week period of study and discussion with their counterparts in the other country.**

## **ROTARY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL – THE ROTARY CLUB**

The "personality" of each Rotary club is a reflection of the community it serves and the membership of that club. Even within our own District, club size ranges from less than two dozen members to well over two hundred members. Rotary clubs meet weekly throughout the year; some for a breakfast meeting, others during lunch. Some Rotary club meetings are quiet and “serious”, staying to a tight schedule so the members can return to work on time, while other club meetings are less formal and structured.

Exchange students often find that the Rotary club **hosting** them will be very different from the Rotary club **sponsoring** them, and both will be very different from other Rotary clubs they may have the opportunity to visit during their exchange year. But Rotarians around the world all share the common philosophy for Service to Others, and as an exchange student, they are there to help provide a successful exchange experience.

As with most organizations, Rotary clubs are led by officers who are elected by the membership for one year terms, beginning on July 1, the beginning of the Rotary Year. The officers include the Club President, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-President and/or President-Elect, and Directors. Rotary clubs participating in the Youth Exchange Program generally appoint a Youth Exchange Officer, or YEO, to oversee that program, and that Rotarian, or another member of the host Rotary club, will be designated as the exchange student’s Club Counselor. This Rotarian serves as the primary liaison between the Rotary club, the exchange student and the host families.