

Philippine Rotary

OCTOBER 2025 MAGAZINE

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What community-led development looks like

October is Rotary's Community Economic Development Month, a time to spotlight our efforts to help communities build thriving, sustainable futures. This month's observance aligns perfectly with the Rotary core value of leadership.

Leadership means empowering people to guide their own progress. That is precisely what Rotary's economic development projects aim to achieve.

Take, for example, a recent initiative in southern India in which Rotary members unlocked the power of women of the Adivasi tribal groups through sewing training to earn a living and regain social inclusion. Historically, widows and abandoned women in this region lose social standing and are shunned by society or blamed for their misfortunes. Opportunities to support themselves or obtain training are minimal.

This year, the Rotary Club of Windsor-Roseland, Ontario, partnered with clubs in Districts 3203 and 3234 in India — and with the Indian organization Sevalaya Trust — to provide sewing machines and training to 80 Adivasi women. They learned to stitch saree blouses, kurta tunics, and salwar suits, enabling them to support themselves and their families. Each woman received a certificate for completing the program, and the sewing-machine provider offered free long-term maintenance for the machines. The project offered vital income and dignity to women ostracized by society after widowhood.

This story is one example of Rotary leadership in action: local people guiding solutions that address

their community needs. Our role is not to deliver charity or to impose outside models, but to foster self-reliance by investing in leadership, skills, and sustainable enterprise.

This October, I invite Rotary members worldwide to reflect on economic leadership in their communities. Who is stepping forward to lead local economic initiatives? Where is there untapped talent that could be supported with training or mentorship? How can your club catalyze opportunity through partnerships with local businesses, vocational schools, or savings groups?

Leadership is not always about being visible. Sometimes it means listening, working collaboratively, and amplifying the voices of others. That approach lies at the heart of Rotary's philosophy and our lasting impact on economic development.

By building capacity — whether through microcredit groups, vocational training workshops, or entrepreneurship programs — we enable communities to lead their own transformation. When people take ownership of their progress, change becomes sustainable.

Let us lead with good intention and provide support with heart. By nurturing local leadership, we can create opportunities that ripple through communities, empowering individuals, families, and societies.

Together, we can support economies that work for everyone and enact community development projects that last.

FRANCESCO AREZZO

President, Rotary International



▲ ON THE COVER:
A mother cradles her newborn in Papua New Guinea, where midwives build confidence with Rotary clubs' support. Photograph by Mark Lehn.



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Finishing what we started

Rotary members around the world unite to mark *World Polio Day* on October 24 — a powerful reminder of Rotary's enduring commitment to end polio for good. For more than four decades, Rotary's steadfast efforts have driven an amazing 99.9 percent global reduction in polio cases, bringing us closer to a complete eradication of the disease.

We Filipinos can take pride in knowing that this global mission began right here. On September 29, 1979, in Guadalupe Nuevo, Makati, where the Rotary Club of Makati Clubhouse now stands, the first Rotary Health, Hunger and Humanity (3H) project was launched.

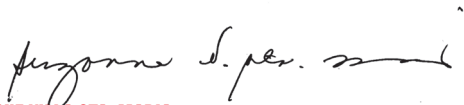
The historic signing between then Philippine Secretary of Health Enrique Garcia and Rotary International President James Bomar marked the start of organized polio immunization in the world. On that day, President Bomar personally administered the first oral polio vaccine to a Filipino child — an unforgettable moment made possible by then District Governor Rafael “Paing” G. Hechanova.

This pioneering effort, which vaccinated six million Filipino children, became the foundation for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) launched in 1988. Today, GPEI brings together Rotary, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the U.S. CDC, Gavi, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, alongside national governments, to ensure every child is protected.

The Philippines was declared wild polio-free in 2000, yet the 2019 vaccine-derived outbreak reminded us that vigilance must never wane. Sustained immunization remains vital to keeping the disease at bay.

Today, only Afghanistan and Pakistan remain endemic. The finish line is near — but the final steps are usually the hardest.

Rotary's long-term investment and global partnerships make finishing the job possible. One day, polio will exist only in history books.



SUE VILLA STA. MARIA
Chairman, PRMFI



“For more than four decades, Rotary's steadfast efforts have driven an amazing 99.9 percent global reduction in polio cases, bringing us closer to a complete eradication of the disease... We Filipinos can take pride in knowing that this global mission began right here.”

Philippine Rotary

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Tapping Rotary leaders

Whenever Rotarians engage in light banter, vignettes on how the most serious matters could be wrapped in humor emerge. Try asking a club president how he or she reached the peak, and you are likely to be told, "I stepped out of the meeting for a comfort break, and when I returned, they told me I'm the new president-elect."

Yet, the same narrators of such folk tales will quickly tell you that, indeed, they regard being elected to lead a club as a most auspicious attainment.

In Rotary, it's the club president that is pivotal in determining how well Rotarians will combine their talents and resources to bring about beneficial outcomes in terms of service to the community and beyond.

Through my more than four decades of being a Rotarian, I have been privileged to witness how new leaders have emerged, stepped up and risen to the occasion. By dint of their native talent, as well as their extraordinary devotion to duty, they invariably chalk up notable deeds that have continually raised the bar of service excellence.

Since the pandemic era when our toughness and resiliency as Rotarians were put to test severely, we have been blessed by a procession of young and emergent leaders. They deftly evaded being sidelined by the contagion and crafted imaginative ways of delivering services under the most stringent quarantine and lockdown conditions.

I salute our Rotaractors who never seemed to run out of simple yet effective ways of gathering resources such as face masks and shields, personal hygiene kits, and food stuff, that were conveyed to needy communities in a timely and orderly manner.

Kudos, too, to our present crop of club president and leaders whose vigor and enthusiasm in showing Rotary cares seem unbounded. They provide proof positive of Rotarians' seemingly unlimited capacity to unite for good.

Sonny Coloma
SONNY COLOMA
Editor-in-chief



"Through my more than four decades of being a Rotarian, I have been privileged to witness how new leaders have emerged, stepped up and risen to the occasion. By dint of their native talent, as well as their extraordinary devotion to duty, they invariably chalk up notable deeds that have continually raised the bar of service excellence."

“Rotary changes lives—not only in the communities we serve but also among Rotarians who find meaning and friendship through service.”

— D3800 Governor
Gina T. Sanchez



D3800 FOCUS

Goodness **1**nspires New **A**chievements

by Divina Grace “Dee” Antang

In Rotary, goodness is never passive—it inspires, it moves, and it creates.

For more than a century, Rotary has shown that from the spark of goodwill come achievements that shape communities and transform lives. What began as a simple gathering of professionals has grown into a global movement of more than 1.4 million people, bound together by a shared vision: to create hope, peace, and lasting change.

Today, Rotary is a *century strong*. We continue to innovate, to reimagine service, and to create firsts that make a meaningful difference. Each new generation of leaders builds upon this tradition, carrying forward the timeless call to place *Service Above Self*.

This year, District 3800 embraces a vision that is bold in its simplicity and transformative in its reach: *No Club Left Behind*.

VISION: NO CLUB LEFT BEHIND

Unite for Good is rooted in a powerful idea: nobody should feel left out.

In District 3800, this means ensuring every Rotary club—regardless of size, age, or location—feels supported, valued, and empowered to

make a difference. Whether a club has five or fifty members, decades of history or just a few years of experience, each carries its own culture, traditions, and strengths.

When clubs’ strengths are recognized, celebrated, and connected, the entire district becomes stronger. When clubs collaborate and share resources, their reach expands and their impact multiplies.

This vision is focused on people. It is about listening, building trust, and cultivating a culture where Rotarians feel they belong. Smaller clubs are honored with the same respect as larger ones. Ideas can emerge from anywhere. Leadership can blossom at every level.

No Club Left Behind is a call and an invitation to stand as one Rotary family, lifting each other up and proving that inclusion strengthens both members and communities.

This Rotary year, District 3800 focuses on building a true *culture of belonging*. Every club will be lifted, every bond strengthened, and the meaning of service enriched. Guided by District Governor Gina T. Sanchez, growth, collaboration, and impact are not only goals but also a shared roadmap.



GROWING WITH PURPOSE

Clubs are encouraged to grow by at least two new members—but the heart of this initiative goes beyond numbers. The deeper goal is connection. Every Rotarian should feel valued, seen, and at home. Growth will be measured not only in membership but also in friendship, participation, and fulfillment.

The district embraces Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) as guiding principles. Rotary's true strength lies in the diversity of its members—their professions, talents, and lived experiences. By celebrating these differences, District 3800 expands its capacity to serve and innovate.

HAND-IN-HAND WITH ROTARACTORS

Rotaractors are not the leaders of tomorrow—they are leaders of today. District 3800 recognizes this by placing Rotaractors in every district standing committee. Their fresh perspectives, energy, and creativity enrich planning and execution, ensuring Rotary remains relevant and responsive to evolving challenges.

By co-creating programs with Rotaractors, the district not only strengthens intergenerational collaboration but also invests in Rotary's future.

PROMOTING NEW CLUB MODELS

Rotary thrives when it adapts. Flexible and innovative club models—whether interest-based, cause-based, or alumni-led—offer new ways for people to align their passions with Rotary's mission. These models expand reach and relevance, creating space for professionals, young people, and alumni to reconnect with service in ways that fit their lives.

REFOCUSING SERVICE PROJECTS

Service remains Rotary's heartbeat. Clubs are

encouraged to focus on *one high-impact project* aligned with any of Rotary's seven Areas of Focus. By concentrating resources and energy, projects become deeper, more sustainable, and more measurable. The goal is quality over quantity—fewer projects, but with greater long-term impact.

STRENGTHENING THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

The Rotary Foundation fuels Rotary's mission. District 3800 is committed to strong support, setting ambitious but achievable targets:

- 85 percent of clubs to qualify as EREY (Every Rotarian, Every Year) and Foundation Giving Clubs.
- 20 percent of the District Designated Fund (~\$62,390) allocated to PolioPlus.
- \$1,500 per club fundraising goal for PolioPlus.
- \$10,000 DDF contribution to Rotary's Endowment Fund, building a legacy for future generations.

This roadmap is more than a plan—it is a shared commitment to serve inclusively, collaboratively, and purposefully.

Opposite top: Presidents-Elect of District 3800 celebrate their graduation at the final session of PELS, ready to take on their year of leadership

Top: District Officers of Rotary District 3800 participate in the Rotary Learning Institute.

Second row: DG Gina officially opens the Public Image Seminar; DG Gina leads the discussion during the Supplemental SAG and AG Learning Seminar 2025.

Above left: DG Gina with PDG Ador Tolentino, Ma. Theresa Sarraga, and Marie Jane Liban during the Membership Seminar Q&A, engage members in a discussion on club development.

Top row: A jam-packed Membership Seminar engage Rotarians in discussions and sharing of strategies to grow and strengthen their clubs; Guest speakers join DG Gina during the Public Image Seminar, sharing insights to help Rotary members strengthen their public presence and community impact.



Second row: Presidents-Elect from District 3800 collaborate during a breakout session at their Pre-PELS 1, sharing strategies and ideas to lead impactful Rotary clubs in the coming year; Presidents-Elect and District Officers in a fun activity before starting the learning sessions at Pre-PELS 2.



Third row: A grand group photo of DG Gina Sanchez and her presidents at the Induction and Handover ceremonies; Presidents-Elect at Pre-PELS 3 put their teamwork to the test, building towers using available materials.



Bottom row: A proud moment for District 3800 as the first Service Expo kicks off with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting at the Mega Trade Hall, SM Megamall; DG Gina inducts the District Officers of District 3800 at Solaire Resort North.



FIRST QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS

“We began this Rotary year with a simple promise: to work side by side, to support every club, and to let service lead the way. Three months hence, we’re already seeing that promise take shape,” says District Governor Gina T. Sanchez

The first quarter of the Rotary Year emphasized listening, equipping, and moving forward. Clubs received new tools, expanded service opportunities,

and stronger connections — all laying the groundwork for meaningful change.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR GROWTH

The district upgraded its website, making it more accessible, interactive, and welcoming. The Governor’s Monthly Letter (GML) evolved into a vibrant platform for storytelling, highlighting club projects and member experiences.

Governor’s Visits were reimagined into

authentic conversations, creating space for honest dialogue and mutual learning.

All clubs submitted three-year strategic plans aligned with district priorities. A new reporting system and active use of the Rotary Learning Center improved leadership development and accountability.

Before July 1, Presidents-Elect completed Training Needs Analysis surveys. A district-wide classification and advocacy survey mapped members’ profes-



Top row: DG Gina opens the District Learning Assembly, inspiring members and sharing strategies for a successful Rotary year ahead.



Second row: PDG Jun Farcon, Gina's governor during her club presidency, inducts her as District Governor; DG-Elect Gina Sanchez asks a question during the Governors-Elect Learning Seminar in Taipei, preparing for her term.



Third row: District 3800 gather at the District Learning Assembly, engaging in sessions designed to enhance skills, share knowledge, and prepare for service; Rotary District 3800 launches RY 2025–2026 with “Goodness for Kids,” a two-day initiative promoting DEI and supporting nearly 1,000 underprivileged and special-needs children across five locations.



Bottom row: The first breakfast meeting of the year brings Rotary District 3800 leaders together to align goals and strategies for a successful first quarter; DG Gina shares her insights during PELS Seminar 3, a candid moment of passion and leadership in action.

sions and passions — valuable data for networking and resource-sharing. Two new committees — Data Analytics and Strategic Planning — now ensure decisions are guided by insight, not instinct.

SERVICE THAT TOUCHES LIVES

Service projects during the first quarter embodied Rotary’s heart:

- Goodness for Kids Initiative delivered support to children and families.

- Unite for Good projects brought clubs together in collective service.
- Rotary Peace Poles were installed as symbols of peace and unity.
- Service Projects Expo (August) gathered 109 clubs and partner organizations to showcase, learn, and collaborate — an inspiring, professional-level exhibition of Rotary in action. District grant funds supported 90 clubs. Major Donors and Paul Harris Fel-

lows were recognized for their generosity. The Vibrant Roadshow brought training and updates directly to members, making Rotary knowledge accessible to all.

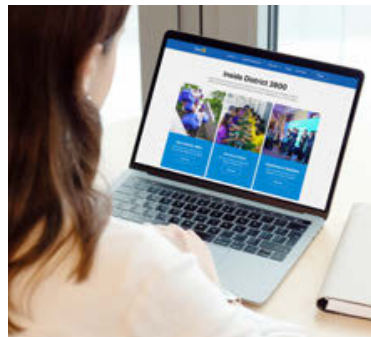
A DISTRICT MOVING AS ONE

The first quarter reflected a district shifting from planning to implementation. Modernized systems, visible leadership, and cross-club collaboration created a sense of unity and shared purpose.

Top row: RI Director Jennifer Scott joins District 3800 leaders in Navotas for the unveiling of a new Peace Pole — a symbol of Rotary's commitment to peace.



Second row: The July Special Edition of the District Governor's Monthly Letter is launched, now available online as part of the regular publication; District 3800 launches its new official website, a modern platform designed to make it easier to connect, collaborate, and stay informed; A preview of *Wheels in Motion*, a Rotary District 3800 news program and project of the Public Image Committee, highlighting projects, people, and community impact.



Third row: DG Gina leads the contribution of 20% of the District Designated Fund to PolioPlus, supporting ongoing global polio eradication efforts; During a breakout session at the International Assembly, DG Gina works with fellow governors in a group activity.



Bottom row: Rotary District 3800 welcomes the 2025–2026 Rotary Year with its Unite for Good Kickoff Projects — simultaneous service activities across all zones.



Listening to members, amplifying diverse voices, and investing in both seasoned and emerging leaders nurtured a district culture of belonging.

With these foundations, District 3800 is well-prepared for the challenges and opportunities ahead.

INNOVATING IN REAL TIME

District 3800 is proving that Rotary can be both timeless in values and forward-looking in methods. Innovation, creativity, and technology are transforming the way the district serves and communicates.

The district website (rotarydistrict3800.org) now serves as a *dynamic dashboard*—a hub for real-time updates, interactive tools, and accessible information.

The Public Image Committee went fully digital, producing broadcast-style

communications. *Wheels in Motion*, the official news platform, keeps members and partners informed through engaging, professional content.

The GML is now a digital magazine with stories, visuals, and features that celebrate clubs and members. Released every 10th of the month and mirrored on the website, it ensures a unified district experience.

Held at a professional exhibition cen-



Top row: DGE Gina attends the International Assembly with classmate-DGEs and their spouses.



Second row: Rotary District 3800 launches RY 2025–2026 with “Goodness for Kids,” a two-day initiative promoting DEI and supporting nearly 1,000 underprivileged and special-needs children across five locations; DG Gina radiantly smiles at the district-wide kick-off to launch service projects across the eight zones of D3800.



Third row: DG Gina Sanchez inducts the officers and pins their badges during the Marikina Zone 4 Joint Induction 2025, one of the many inductions this Rotary year; A milestone moment as Rotary District 3800 proudly launches its first corporate partnership with the Thank God I'm Filipino (TGIF).



Bottom row: Rotary District 3800 welcomes the 2025–2026 Rotary Year with its Unite for Good Kickoff Projects — simultaneous service activities across all zones.

ter, the Service Expo became a flagship event. Clubs presented their initiatives through interactive exhibits and live demonstrations, proving that service can be showcased as both inspiring and professional. Partner organizations joined in, reflecting Rotary’s collaborative spirit.

SPIRIT OF UNITE FOR GOOD

District 3800 is not only embracing change — it is leading it. By innovating in

real time, fostering inclusion, and prioritizing collaboration, the district sets a model for modern Rotary.

This year is not about doing things differently for its own sake — it is about doing things *better*. Each first is a doorway to more effective service, stronger clubs, and deeper connections.

“This Rotary year, District 3800 unites for good, turning creativity, courage, and compassion into firsts that em-

power Rotarians, strengthen clubs, and transform communities. With District Governor Gina T. Sanchez at the helm, every Rotarian engages fully, every club grows stronger, and every community experiences the lasting power of goodness in action.” ■

The author is a member of RC Mandaluyong Uptown and Editor-in-Chief of the Governor’s Monthly Letter of D3800.

D3800 FOCUS

A life of leading and serving

by Divina Grace “Dee” Antang

District Governor Gina T. Sanchez begins her term with strength, clarity, and vision. Leading Rotary International District 3800 for Rotary Year 2025–2026, she combines decades of professional success with a deep devotion to service, positioning her to guide the district toward a year of meaningful impact.

For Gina, Rotary is more than an organization—it is a community and a way of life. Guided by the principle of *Service Above Self*, her journey reflects leadership, humility, and purposeful action. From her early years in Bulacan to her role today as District Governor, she has lived by the belief that values are strongest when put into practice.

Growing up in Obando, Bulacan, as the youngest of eight children of the late Eusebio Thia and Conchita Banag, Gina learned early the values of hard work, perseverance, and gratitude. These lessons shaped her leadership style. Excelling in academics, she graduated Valedictorian of Catanghalan Elementary School and Salutatorian of St. Pascual Institute.



She went on to earn her BS in Business Administration, major in Accounting, from the Philippine School of Business Administration (PSBA) in Quezon City, graduating cum laude and Most Outstanding Graduate. Later, she completed her MBA in Finance and Management at PSBA Manila.

Her professional career is both diverse and accomplished. Currently, she serves as President and CEO of A27 Ventures Corporation. She has also served as Executive Vice President and NSTP Director at PSBA, consultant for the National Housing Authority and the Quezon City Government, Vice President for Finance at Firm Builders Realty Development Corporation, and Corporate Executive Officer II at the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS). Across these roles, Gina has consistently led with integrity and vision.

Her Rotary journey began in Rotary Year 1991–1992 as a Group Study Exchange Team Member to Arkansas, USA. She joined the Rotary Club of San Juan in 2006, serving as Club President in 2010–2011, Prime Minister of the League of Global Presidents in 2013–2014, and Chair of the TRF Awards Committee for Zone 10A, among others.

Her dedication has earned numerous honors: Most Outstanding President, Most Outstanding Assistant Governor, District Officer of the Year,



From top: (L-R) Immanuel Peralta, Karl Michael T. Sanchez, Matthew Peralta, Kristel T. Sanchez, and PP Rhodora Giorla, close friend of DG Gina; The young DG Gina Sanchez begins her Rotary journey in RY 1991–1992 as a Group Study Exchange Team Member to Arkansas, USA, an experience that sparked her passion for service and leadership; Speaking at a Rotary Club meeting at Arkansas as a Group Study Exchange Team member.

Rotarian of the Year, the Rotary Foundation Meritorious Service Award, and the Regional Service Award for a Polio-Free World. She is also a Major Donor Level 3 of The Rotary Foundation, a testament to her commitment to Rotary’s mission.

Beyond her public service, Gina treasures her family. She honors the memory of her late husband, Rodolfo C. Sanchez, and foster parents, Tatay Pepe and Nanay Thesia Peralta. She is a proud mother to Kevin Francis, Karl Michael, and Kristel, whose support and shared values continue to inspire her.

For District Governor Gina, Rotary embodies shared purpose, compassion, and hope. “I believe we can make a real difference together,” she affirms. “Rotary changes lives—not only in the communities we serve but also among Rotarians who find meaning and friendship through service.”

With Governor Gina T. Sanchez at the helm, District 3800 forges ahead in upholding Rotary’s legacy while fortifying new bonds of service and fellowship. ■

KUWENTO NG TAGUMPAY!

Ryan E. Miranda, Seaman at Palay Farmer | Victoria, Tarlac

Bilang isang seaman na nahilig sa pagsasaka ng palay, hindi ko akalaing matatagpuan ko ang isang produktong tunay na game-changer — ang **Biota Max™**. Isa ako sa mga unang gumamit nito nang in-offer ng **My Happy Farmer** sa tulong ni Sir Rolando Benosa, at hanggang ngayon, hindi na ako bumitiw.

Dahil sa Biota Max™, tumaas ang ani ko mula 5 tons hanggang 8 tons, kahit mabuhangin ang lupa! Hindi ko na rin kailangang gumamit pa ng fungicide o bactericide — preventive spray na lang ang gamit ko ngayon laban sa stemborer.

Nasubok din ang bisa ng **Biota Max™** nang mag-apply ako ng 8 dumptruck ng fresh chicken manure sa aking 1.4 hektaryang palayan. Sa halip na masira, lalo pang gumanda ang lupa ko, salamat sa tamang land preparation at tulong ng **Biota Max™**.

Noong tag-ulan, dalawang beses nabaha ang aking taniman. Nang humupa ang tubig at nagsimulang magkasakit ang palay, muling nakatulong ang **Biota Max™**, kasabay ng paggamit ng foliar (0-0-60). Unti-unting bumalik ang sigla ng palay at naiwasan namin ang pagkalugi.

Bilang financer ng aking mga kasamang magsasaka, mahalaga sa akin na siguradong may kita bawat cropping. Naniniwala akong magagawa ito sa pamamagitan ng tamang paghahanda, wastong pamamaraan, at siyempre, sa sikretong malupit — ang **Biota Max™**.

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- *Bacillus megaterium*
- *Bacillus pumilus*
- *Paenibacillus polymyxa*

Beneficial Fungi Contents

- *Trichoderma harzianum*
- *Trichoderma viride*
- *Trichoderma koningii*
- *Trichoderma polysporum*

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RC MANDALUYONG NORTH

Baking for a living

by Rosalyn Manlangit

On September 20, 2025, the Rotary Club of Mandaluyong North (RCMN), in collaboration with Don Bosco Technical College (DBTC) in Mandaluyong City and the Association of Salesian Cooperators (ACS) Mandaluyong Center, carried out their joint signature project, Tinapay ng Buhay Kay Bosco Iaalay.

Now on its third year, the one-day baking session was dedicated to the youth from the provinces that are housed in the Pinardi Migrant Center at DBTC. The program aims to equip 25 participants with basic baking skills and practical techniques that they can use for possible employment or livelihood.

The participants underwent theoretical, hands-on, and practical training: from identifying basic ingredients, measurement, approach, timing, preparation, mixing, kneading, fermentation, shaping, proofing, and baking.

They were able to bake the traditional pandesal, ube pandesal, ensaymada, cinnamon bread, bread roll, and pizza pie. The freshly-baked products were shared and tasted by the Rotarians, the Pinardi staff and members of the Don Bosco community.

The collective efforts of these organizations reflected their shared commitment to service, empowerment, and holistic youth development, and will help prepare the participants for their future.

Since its inception in 2022, participants have applied their training to earn a living through employment as bakers or bakery assistants, with some putting up their own bakery in their hometowns. Their achievements demonstrate stand the project's impact, proving that skill-building initiatives can open real pathways to self-reliance, economic sufficiency and enhanced sense of dignity.

Through this project, the Pinardi youth were not only introduced to the art of baking but were also given a recipe for hope in a brighter and more secure future. ■

The author is President of the RC Mandaluyong North, D3800.



This page: The participants of the signature project, Tinapay ng Buhay Kay Bosco Iaalay, underwent theoretical, hands-on, and practical training: from identifying basic ingredients, measurement, approach, timing, preparation, mixing, kneading, fermentation, shaping, proofing, and baking. The freshly-baked products were shared and tasted by the Rotarians, the Pinardi staff and members of the Don Bosco community.



RC RODRIGUEZ CENTRAL

Reaching out at Molave

by Almira Belmonte Buce

On August 30, 2025, RCRC held its very first outreach program for RY 2025-26 at Molave Youth Home in Payatas, Quezon City. Around 170 Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) and 15 personnel of Molave benefited from the project entitled “Lahat ng Kabataan, May Puwang sa Lipunan”.

The activity started with a holy mass celebrated by Fr. Eric Lacandula, SVD, followed by a Seminar entitled “Paano Malilikha ang Buhay na Nais Mo”. Mr. Meliton R. Darvin, Punong Gabay, Centree E-Therapy Hub, taught the children how to start living their dreams by thinking and acting like they’ve already achieved them. The lecture inspired the children and instilled in them the mindset that our attitude and reactions are influ-

enced by our thoughts, and that life is a product of our thoughts. Positive thoughts attract positive things. Definitely, the talk has enriched the mental and emotional well-being of the children, thus contributing to their readiness for reintegration in society. The outreach program ended with the handing over of washing and cleaning agents for the facility and a lunch with the children. The RCRC team was touched by the beautiful “thank you gifts” that were handcrafted by the children.

We extend our gratitude to Ms. Carolina O. Patalinghog (RSW, MP, City Gov’t Department Head 3, Quezon City), Ms. Irma of Molave Youth Home, and Doc. Rhapsody Barruga-Valderrama for making the event possible.

Together, let’s Unite for Good, foster collaboration, and build a better world. ■

Clockwise from top

left: RC Rodriguez Central members pose with Molave Staff; Club president Almira Buce delivering the welcome remarks; Guest speaker Meliton Darvin receives a token of appreciation from RCRC; Holy mass celebrated by Fr. Eric Lacandula, SVD.

Below: A thank you gift handcrafted by the children of Molave Youth Home



RI DISTRICT 3800

Rotary Peace Poles unveiled

by Noel Cuico

Signifying a collective commitment to fostering world peace, we hosted last Sept. 16 RI Director Jennifer Scott as she witnessed the unveiling of Rotary Peace Poles, in the company of District Governor Gina Sanchez, Past District Governors Jaime Dee and Edison Ang, Endowment Major Gifts Adviser (EMGA) Penny Policarpio and his spouse Past President Joan, along with District Peace and Conflict Resolution Chair Michael Raymundo.

First venue was Kapit Bahayan Elementary School, where the Rotary Club of Northbay East, led by President Aileen de Guzman and the dedicated members of the club, proudly unveiled their Rotary Peace Pole. The ceremony was graced by Navotas City Mayor John Rey Tiangco who delivered an inspiring message.

RID Jennifer Scott and DG Gina Sanchez also shared heartfelt words on peace and Rotary's mission. We were also joined by District 3800 Peace and Conflict Resolution Co-Chair Vince Bartolome, Deputy District Secretary Brill Chua, Senior Assistant Governor Angie Sioco, Charter President Jess Tan, and other members of RC Northbay East.

Our next stop was the Rotary Club of Navotas Clubhouse, where the club maintains a park and had installed another Rotary Peace Pole. President Cherry Pilos shared her message on the importance of peace, PDG Edison Ang recounted the proud history of the club. The event was a truly memorable and heartfelt gathering.

Next stop was the Rotary Club of Malabon clubhouse, where Director Jennifer inspected the ongoing production of Rotary Peace Poles. The welcoming party of RC Malabon members was led by President Samson Go and PDG Jaime Dee. A sumptuous meal followed at a Chinese restaurant in Banawe, Quezon City where we were joined by District Governor Nominee Sherryl Lou Khosiking, and Past President Michael Raymundo.

Though our time with RID Jennifer lasted only about six hours, and despite the rain, it was nevertheless filled with learning, inspiration, and heartfelt fellowship. She graciously shared her wisdom, experiences, and inspiring Rotary journey, leaving us all deeply motivated. ■

The author is District 3800 Service Projects Chair and Past President of RC Malabon.





Far left:
Unveiling of
RC Northbay
East's Rotary
Peace Pole with
Navotas City
Mayor Tiangco.

Left: Unveiling
of RC Navotas
Rotary Peace
Pole.



Left: RID
Jennifer Scott
delivering her
inspiration
message.



Third row:
RC Navotas
officers and
members in
family
portrait; RID
Jennifer with
Past District
Governor
Edison Ang of
RC Navotas; RID
Jennifer with
Past District
Governor
Jaime Dee of
RC Malabon.



Bottom row:
RC North Bay
East members
and Interactors;
RID Jennifer
with some
RC Malabon
officers;
Inspection of
other peace
poles at the
RC Malabon
Clubhouse.

RC UPPER EAST SIDE ANTIPOLLO

Standing tall, serving well

by Vicky Solis

At District 3800's Service Projects Expo 2025, the Rotary Club of Upper East Side Antipolo (RCUESA) demonstrated the unified action of its members, and their solidarity with the partner Mangyan community from Naujan, Oriental Mindoro.

This is a capsule narrative that provides Rotarians with glimpses on how a club mobilizes its resources and harnesses the energies of its stakeholders—from conceptualization of design, gathering of materials, to the procurement of upcycled decors and props.

Our spouses took turns in supervising the preparations for the gourmet fish and liquid soaps, while coordination work was done to check on the harvests of the club's adopted community in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro so that their coffee beans would be ready for roasting and grinding.

The group of Mangyan women cooked the coco sugar, the perfect match for the coffee to be sold. It took a week for the products from the province to reach Manila via sea and land transport.

Rotarians attached product stickers and repacked the goods in resealable foil pouches. Our lanai was turned into a production-packaging assembly line, with boxes and crates reaching the ceiling.

Artistic details and designs

As designed by Past President Larry (last name) and GP Vcky Solis, RCUESA's booth consisted of three kiosks made out from wooden pallets sourced from the scrap yards in Rizal. Real bamboo poles were cut from the surroundings of Cascades Subdivision, while a couple of discarded old tires painted colorfully by guest artist Orville Tiamson, assisted by PP Ariel Julgan and spouse Tin.

The booth resembling a community plaza, named RCUESA Tindahan Square,

served as a vibrant open-air hub where neighbors gather, stories flow, and local goods find new homes. Here, every exchange is more than a trade. It is a celebration of community and connection rooted in tradition, propagating products grown by the people for neighbors and friends.

Rotarians and guests patronized the Expo for food tasting of the three variants of gourmet fish, namely, dilis, tuyo, and tinapa. Crochet lessons were offered so that others may experience the workshops that RCUESA provides to its RCCs. There was also free product tasting of tapuey, or rice wine, from Sagada.

Guests were requested to sign the bamboo poles which were part of the setup to be repurposed for use at the Panunuluyan ng mga Katutubo in Laiban.

Total experience

The first District Service Projects Expo under DG Gina Sanchez made everyone involved proud and happy. All 109 clubs showcased their legacy projects in Rotary's seven Areas of Focus. Project partners from the private sector and the government were also acknowledged.

This was an occasion for new discoveries, new ideas, meeting old friends while gaining new acquaintances, and finding new opportunities for future collaboration.

The Assumption Antipolo Mothers' Group RCC, whom we fondly call Sitio Nanays, made us realize how the exposure we opened for them have left deep impressions in their lives. They expressed their appreciation RCUESA family and readiness to pursue further collaboration.

This reflects the essence of our theme, Unite For Good, as we make sure that no one is left behind.

The author is President of the Rotary Club of Upper East Side Antipolo, District 3800. ■

This page, from top: Past District Governor Pope Solis & spouse President Vicky Solis pose in front of the RCUESA booth; A bigger shot of the RCUESA booth - the vision of Plaza where the club's RCCs meet and showcase their wares; Bonding over tapuey and gourmet fish.





Left: DG Regional Membership Coordinator Past District Governor Anna Bumagat checks out the RCUESA booth.

This page, second row: DG Gina Sanchez signing the bamboo poles; The view from inside the booth; Buena mano!; The turn of Ms. Gretchen Laurel to sign as well.

This page, third row: With the Sitio Nanays of the Assumption Antipolo Mother's Group RCC; RCUESA ladies; PP Rolly Maramo giving a talk on grape urban farming entitled "Roots to Riches"; First public appearance of Polly, the district's End Polio Now mascot.



RC MALABON CENTRAL

‘Bee happier’

by Muffet Manahan

In collaboration with Cavite State University Brite Center Director, Michele Bono and her team, RC Malabon Central adopted Barangay Harasan, Indang Cavite.

This community is known for its high value vegetables, fruits, and other crops sold at different ‘bagsakan’ areas. These are their source of livelihood for the community.

The club distributed one stingless beekeeping package to the beekeeping adopters of Barangay Harasan, Indang, Cavite. Each package contained: five stingless bee colonies, one hive tool, five hive boxes, and one bee veil.

RC Malabon Central served as the donor of this beekeeping package for the said barangay.

The BRITE Center will be extending stingless beekeeping technology to the new beekeeping adopters. This activity aims to promote stingless beekeeping for pollination of crops and important vegetables, for additional sources of income, for biodiversity conservation, and for responsible beekeeping.

This partnership is more than just about bees — it is about building self-sufficiency, promoting environmental awareness, and providing alternative sources of income to strengthen the barangay’s local economy.

This project also strengthens agro-urban communities through opportunities in beekeeping.

Bee Happier is not just a project — it’s a movement towards a sweeter, more sustainable future.

Bees be with you! ■

The author is President of the Rotary Club of Malabon Central, District 3800.



This page: The partnership between RC Malabon Central and The BRITE Center is more than just about bees — it is about building self-sufficiency, promoting environmental awareness, and providing alternative sources of income for the club’s adopted community in Barangay Harasan, Indang Cavite, famous for its high value vegetables, fruits, and other crops.





RC GREATER MANDALUYONG

Life-saving citronella

by Grace Sibayan

The citronella plant is widely known for its ability to repel mosquitoes, thanks to its strong citrus fragrance. Beyond this, it's a bee-, butterfly-, and bird-friendly plant that is easy to grow and offers a variety of personal, household, and community benefits.

In 2011, the Rotary Club of Greater Mandaluyong began planting citronella in the backyard of its Charter President Mila Puyat. What began as a small initiative blossomed into a livelihood project, empowering mothers to produce citronella-based soaps and lotions.

This initiative earned the club a Significant Achievement Award from RI in recognition of both the health benefits and the economic opportunities it brought.

Mosquitoes are not just pests. They can carry deadly diseases such as dengue and malaria — both of which are preventable and treatable when addressed early. Citronella offers a natural and effective line of defense, particularly when the crushed leaves are rubbed directly on the skin to release the essential oils. Indeed, citronella plants serve not only as a natural insect repellent in the form of lotion or oil, but also possess antibacterial and antifungal properties.

The club plants and replants citronella — in backyards, in partnership with LGUs, other Rotary Clubs, religious groups, and communities. It has expanded the project to include citronella oil extraction, producing soaps, oils, and soon, scented candles. These products are sold to support fundraising efforts and create sustainable livelihoods, especially for housewives.

Citronella is more than a mosquito repellent. It can also be used as a culinary herb in teas and desserts, dried and added to potpourri, incorporated into floral arrangements for fragrance and texture, and grown in pots or gardens for its aesthetic appeal and practical use.

Led by President Henry Rosario, the club undertook Project Greenshield by planting citronella in Barangay Manzante, Vigan, Ilocos Sur, and encouraged housewives there to grow citronella plants as a natural personal insect repellent, with the potential to extract the oil and sell it as a side business.

The club also supplied some seedlings for the housewives to propagate. Last Aug. 19, another citronella planting activity was undertaken in Solarena, La Union. ■

PHILIPPINE NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2027

‘Galing ng Pinoy’

by Sue Villa-Sta. Maria

Rich in experience. United in service. Willing to sacrifice. Innovative and flexible. Bound by friendship.

These five qualities top the long list of strengths identified by 22 members of the Philippine National Conference 2027 (Natcon 2027) team during their first strategic planning session on October 11, 2025, at the MCRFI Lounge, Rockwell, Makati.

Natcon 2027 is envisioned as a milestone event that will gather around 10,000 Rotarians from across the Philippines. Scheduled for March 19–20, 2027 at the SMX Convention Center, Manila, it will celebrate Philippine Rotary’s unity in service, fellowship, integrity, diversity, and leadership.

Guided by Rotary’s vision — “Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change” — the event will showcase district achievements, innovations, and the Seven Areas of Focus with Rotary’s Action Plan as the cornerstone.

Beyond learning sessions and project immersions, Natcon 2027 aims to elevate the presence of Philippine Rotary in local communities and among professionals and business leaders nationwide.

Embracing the servant leadership model, the organizing team empowers members to propose ideas and innovations aligned with the national plan. Past RI Director Jocelyn ‘Joc-joc’ Bolante serves as Lead Convenor, with Past RI Directors Guiller Tumangan and Raffy Garcia III as part of the core leadership.

Past District Governor Sam Pagdilao chairs Natcon 2027, assisted by Past District Governor Sid Garcia as Overall Vice Chair. Past District Governor Edna Sutter, supported by Past District Governor Josie Ang, leads Administration, while Past District Governor Chacha Camacho oversees Operations.

During the planning session, Past Directors Bolante and Garcia opened the discussions.

Past District Governor Chito Borromeo presented the event’s vision and success factors, and PP Bong Cruz, on organizational structure. Past District Governor Sue Sta. Maria facilitated the SWOT analysis, after which the Administrative and Operations teams defined goals and success metrics.

Past District Governor Mar Reyes presented risk and contingency plans, and Past District Governor Lewi Tolentino concluded with next steps.

A comprehensive Manual of Procedures diligently developed by PDG Sutter provides valuable guidance as preparations advance toward 2027. She notes that the manual is a work in progress and may evolve over time.

With the theme *Galing ng Pinoy*, the conference promises a uniquely Filipino touch — which includes the “Rotary Tam-bayan,” the event’s inimitable version of the RI Convention’s House of Friendship.

Indeed, Natcon 2027 will strengthen the collective impact of Rotary’s ten districts, deepen bonds of friendship, and propel Philippine Rotary toward a more vibrant future. ■

Photos courtesy of PDG Rey Castillo and PP Emmie Cabrales.





Left: The convenors , leaders and committee members of the Natcon 2027 gather for a strategic planning session more than two years ahead of Natcon 2027.

Second row: PDG Chito Borromeo presents the draft program plan; DT Lea Recomite, PDG Josie Ang, CP Maricris Lim, PDG Lewi Tolentino and PDG Sue Sta. Maria; Lead Convenor PRID Jocjoc Bolante makes a point.

Third row: PDG Chacha Camacho contributes to the list of strengths of the team; PDG Mike Lirio, PDG Tonipi Parungao, Lead Convenor PRID Jocjoc Bolante, PDG Chito Borromeo and Convenor PRID Raffy Garcia III; PDG Lewi Tolentino wraps up the day's discussions.



Fourth row: PDG Sue Sta. Maria facilitates the SWOT session as PDG Ador Tolentino and PDG Ernie Choa share their thoughts; PP Bong Cruz, PDG Connie Beltran, PDG Ador Tolentino and PDG Tonipi Parungao (at back); Natcon 2027 Chairman Sam Pagdilao sends a video message from the USA.



Opposite bottom: RID Nominee Edna Sutter delivers the closing remarks.



Tapestry of impact

by Sue Villa-Sta. Maria

In Rotary, unity transcends borders. Through Intercountry Committees (ICCs), nations come together in friendship and shared purpose—bridging cultures, rebuilding trust, and advancing peace through service.

An Intercountry Committee is a formal partnership between Rotary clubs in two or more countries. It initiates bilateral humanitarian and peace-building activities aligned with the Rotary International Strategic Plan, providing a framework for sustained collaboration and long-term relationships.

The first ICC was born on May 23, 1950, between Germany and France, in the aftermath of World War II. Its mission was to heal the wounds of conflict and rekindle friendship between Rotarians from formerly divided nations.

The success of this pioneering committee inspired similar alliances around the world, demonstrating how service and goodwill can transcend political and cultural divides. Today, ICCs continue to be Rotary's living expression of peace through understanding, cooperation, and fellowship.

ASEAN Connection

Asia strengthened this global movement through the creation of the Rotary Intercountry Committee ASEAN (RICCA), formally chartered in Singapore on May 13–15, 2022.

Under the leadership of Charter Chairman Past District Governor Rajamohan Munisamy, RICCA was established as a network linking Rotary clubs from ten ASEAN member-countries—Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Today, RICCA connects more than 1,600 Rotary clubs and over 42,000 members across the region. Its purpose is to strengthen intercultural understanding and build lasting partnerships through international service, economic development, and peace initiatives. It is a living example of Rotary's enduring belief that goodwill among nations is the foundation for lasting peace.

Celebration of leadership and unity

On Sept. 15, 2025, RICCA marked a new chapter in its journey at the Solaire Resort North in Quezon City, as the leadership baton passed from Past District Governor Jason Lim of District 3350 (Thai-

land), RICCA Chair in 2023–2025, to Past District Governor Virgilio “Jun” Farcon, Jr. of District 3800 (Philippines), who will serve as RICCA Chair for 2025–2027.

The momentous handover was honored by the presence of Rotary International Director (RID) Jennifer Scott from New South Wales, Australia.

The event gathered prominent Philippine Rotary leaders including Past RI Directors Guiller Tumangan and Rafael “Raffy” Garcia III, along with incumbent and past district governors from across the ASEAN region.

The international spirit of Rotary was vividly expressed as leaders from the ten member-nations proudly paraded their flags, led by Chairman Jun Farcon, who carried the RICCA banner high.

Voices of vision and service

In his valedictory address, outgoing Chairman Jason Lim expressed gratitude to his team for two years of meaningful collaboration and conveyed full confidence in Chairman Farcon's leadership.

In his acceptance speech, Chairman Farcon inspired the assembly with a challenge: “Let us make the next two years a time of bold initiatives, deeper friendship, and lasting peace. Together, we can. Together, we will.”

RICCA Adviser, Past RI Director Guiller Tumangan, added a profound insight: “Let us turn fellowship in service into business and development plans, and friendships and neighborliness into networks. This is wealth creation from the inside out—powered by Service Above Self and the Four-Way Test.”

He emphasized that ethical leadership must go beyond concept, becoming a daily practice rooted in integrity and compassion.

RID Jennifer Scott, affirming her commitment to support the committee's work, said: “I am here to assist as I can and where I can. Continue to work and take action to make a difference.”

Tokens of appreciation were presented to RID Scott by Chairman Jun Farcon and his spouse, Zenaida, as well as by District 3800 Governor Gina Sanchez.

The evening culminated in a joyful dance celebration, with RID Scott and PRID Tumangan joining Rotarians on the floor as a lively violinist filled the room with music—a fitting finale to an evening of unity, purpose, and joy.





Above: Attendees gather for a group photo.



Left: Incoming Chair Farcon acknowledges the cheering of the audience; After the formal program, RID Scott and PRID Tumangan share a joyful mood with PDG Andre Suharto and PDG Bing Garcia; At the "Meet & Greet", Rotary leaders stand at attention as the Philippine National Anthem is played. From left, PDG Mildred Vitangool, PDG Anna Louis Bumagat, PRID Guiller Tumangan, RID Jennifer Scott and PDG Marilou Co.



Bottom row: RI Director Jennifer Scott vows "to assist as I can and where I can" to the members of RICC; DG Gina Sanchez gifts RID Jennifer Scott with a unique Philippine-crafted handbag; Incoming Chair Farcon and spouse Zenaida present a gift to RID Jennifer Scott.

Right: Past District Governors proudly carry their national flags.



Second row: Incoming Chair Farcon carries the RICCA banner; Outgoing Chair Lim and Incoming Chair Farcon extend their hands to emphasize the continuity of RICCA.



Third row: Past RI Director Guillier Tumangan (extreme left) administers the oath to the incoming Board; Incoming Chair Farcon gifts Outgoing Chair Lim with a personalized replica of the RICCA bell and gavel.



Bottom row: PRID Guillier Tumangan and RID Jennifer Scoot show their dance moves; PDG Eva Kurniati of Indonesia (center) enjoys the evening with Filipino PDGs.





Left: Past District Governors proudly carry their national flags.



Second row: Masters of ceremonies were PDG Andre Suharto of Malaysia and PDG Prescy Yulo of the Philippines; Outgoing Chair PDG Jason Lim acknowledges the cheers from the audience as PDG Eva Kurniaty of Indonesia looks on.



Third row: The audience attentively listen to Chair Farcon's inaugural address; PRID Guillen is treated to a gift by Incoming Chair Farcon and spouse Zenaída.



Bottom row: Incoming Chair Farcon is supported by his spouse, Zenaída; The incoming board led by Chair Farcon express their confidence as RICCA leaders.

DISEASE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

A renewed fight against an old foe

In India, Rotary members dispel myths and promote treatment for leprosy

On the outskirts of India's capital of New Delhi, the satellite city of Gurugram is a bustling technology and financial hub that's home to some of the country's largest companies, upscale residential developments, and popular entertainment districts. In the shadow of that wealth, there also lies a community of people with leprosy — one of hundreds that persist in India even though the disease is not highly contagious and is easily curable today.

A Gurugram businessman and Rotarian, Tridibes Basu, first visited the settlement several years ago. He knew such places existed yet was unprepared for the scale of poverty and suffering he encountered. "People were living without access to health care, clean water, and basic sanitation," he says. "Most of them had to beg for a living, because the very mention of leprosy sparked fear. It was seen as a curse and no one wanted to hire someone suffering from it."

Global efforts to eliminate leprosy have made tremendous strides in recent decades, with a 95 percent reduction in symptomatic case prevalence and the disease's disappearance from much of the world. However, India remains one of the few strongholds of the disease, with around 100,000 new leprosy cases detected every year, roughly half of the 200,000 cases recorded globally.

Also known as Hansen's disease, leprosy is caused by a bacterial infection that often starts with

numb patches of discolored skin and can progress to destroy nerves and muscles. It's curable with a multidrug therapy donated by the pharmaceutical company Novartis and provided for free through the World Health Organization. But if not treated in time, even patients who are cured can be left with serious permanent disability and disfigurement, leading to social ostracism and stigma so intense that some people in India self-exile in the country's more than 700 leprosy "colonies."

"Leprosy is one of the world's oldest diseases, but in many parts of the world, the greater suffering comes not from the illness itself, but from the stigma and discrimination that follows. Though curable, those affected are too often isolated, misunderstood, and denied basic dignity," says Nayan Patel, a longtime Rotarian in England who is an ambassador for Lepara, a UK-based international charity that diagnoses, treats, and rehabilitates people with leprosy.

Because the leprosy bacteria cannot be cultured in the lab, it's a challenge to study and remains something of a mystery. Scientists believe it is spread by droplets from the nose and mouth. But it is not highly contagious and around 95 percent of the population is naturally immune and able to fight off infection. Still, stigma, misinformation, and fear remain.

Basu, a member of the Rotary Club of Delhi South, saw the outcomes of this firsthand on his vis-

Visit [rotary.org/our-causes](https://www.rotary.org/our-causes) to learn more about disease prevention and get involved.



Ganga Kalshetty smiles at a friend in a leprosy settlement in New Delhi. At the time this photo was taken, in 2015, she had been diagnosed with early signs of the disease.

its to the leprosy settlement in his home city. There he became friendly with a man in his 50s who stood out for his cheerful disposition and the fact that he was one of the few people there with a well-paying job, as a security guard at a nearby establishment. One day, Basu learned the man had lost his job and started needing a wheelchair. Six months later, he was bedridden. “His condition had grown progressively worse,” says Basu, who became his Rotary district’s chair for leprosy control and alleviation in 2024. “I learned that once he started working, he had stopped taking his medication, a common problem we see among patients who just aren’t aware enough of how to manage their condition.”

In 2019, Basu’s club and two others, Delhi South End and New Delhi, formed an alliance with Lepra, the charity, to raise awareness about how to identify early symptoms, to advocate, and to support those with

disability caused by the disease. Soon the Rotary Club of Delhi Registry Next joined as well.

Deepak Kapur, a member of the Delhi South club who, as chair of the India PolioPlus Committee, played a pivotal role in India achieving polio-free status a decade

“In many parts of the world, the greater suffering comes not from the illness itself, but from the stigma and discrimination that follows.”

ago, was surprised during a meeting with Lepra representatives in 2019 to learn that leprosy was still a problem. “I had always thought that leprosy was relegated to the pages in history books, and the last I’d heard about it was in the film *Ben-Hur*,” says Kapur. “I was shocked.”

Working with Lepra, Rotary members began to tackle relief efforts in India under what Kapur calls “the four pillars.” First was an effort to create awareness of leprosy among the public and dispel myths to let people know it is curable and is not spread through casual contact. “We spoke about the nature of the disease,” says Kapur. “For instance, not too many people know that the government of India gives the multidrug therapy for free to patients. And within 72 hours of its administration, the person who’s taking it stops being a spreader of the disease.”

They extended their awareness drives to health care workers, in-



Through a center in the city of Noida, east of New Delhi, Rotary clubs have worked with the Leprosy Mission Trust India to train people affected by leprosy and other disabilities to work as IT professionals and cosmetologists.

cluding some doctors. So far, they have trained 500 of India's community health workers, the front-line force of trusted community members who deliver basic care, to identify signs of leprosy.

Finding cases was the next priority. Through clinics and awareness drives, they did community outreach to identify individuals with signs of leprosy who may have been unaware or afraid to seek treatment, encouraging them to get care. The disease can be hard to diagnose and is often missed. It also has a very long incubation period with symptoms sometimes emerging up to 30 years after exposure.

In the fourth pillar of the plan, the Rotarians helped those left disabled. For instance, they arranged for ulcer management and mobility aids like specialized footwear and wheelchairs, as well as reconstructive surgery, Kapur says.

The Rotary partnership expanded to collaborate with the Leprosy Mis-

sion Trust India, which runs 15 hospitals across the country, as well as residential homes and vocational training centers that help around 1,200 people find jobs each year.

Through a center in the city of Noida, east of New Delhi, the Rotary clubs have worked with the nongovernmental organization to train around 120 people affected by leprosy and other disabilities to qualify to work as cosmetologists and IT professionals.

One of the first students to enroll was Disha Santhosh, 17. She grew up in a leprosy settlement in the Dilshad Garden area of Delhi, one of the largest of its kind in India and home to thousands of people affected by leprosy and their family members. Here most households face persistent financial hardship. Her father was affected by leprosy, but he had long been the sole breadwinner, working tirelessly as a plumber to provide for the family. To meet even basic needs, her father

had to take out a loan, deepening the family's financial crisis. But through the training center, Santhosh completed certification in cosmetology in March and is now employed, offering a vital lifeline to support herself and her parents.

Though leprosy stubbornly persists, there is hope for prevention. A possible vaccine called LepVax is in development and has shown promising results in preclinical tests against the *Mycobacterium leprae* bacteria that causes the disease. But until a vaccine materializes, much support is required.

"As Rotarians, committed to service and inclusion, we must come together to raise awareness, support early diagnosis and treatment, and challenge the harmful myths that still surround leprosy. Let us unite to end both the disease and the injustice," says Patel. "Together, we can restore hope, dignity, and opportunity."

— KAMALA THIAGARAJAN

BY THE NUMBERS

200K
Annual leprosy cases globally

95%
Reduction in cases since the 1980s

121
Countries that reported new leprosy cases in 2023

Short takes

In April, Nigerian businessman and Rotarian Sir Emeka Offor committed \$5 million to Rotary's Together for Healthy Families in Nigeria program.

To show support for ending polio, over 86,000 people took part in a challenge on the fitness app Strava, logging over 120 million minutes of movement in one month.





PROFILE

Peace of mind

A Serbian naval architect sees a shift toward reconciliation

Tijana Ristić
Rotary Club
of Belgrade
International,
Serbia

It's been 26 years since the war between Serbia and Kosovo, but Tijana Ristić can still recall the scent of bomb shelters. "That moldy smell will always remind me of that period of time," she says. Her father was a Serbian air force pilot, and for months, Ristić and her family had no idea if he was alive.

But today, she says, it's not conflict on her mind, but peace. "The Balkans is a region with a lot of conflict. And what I see happening in my generation is that we are kind of over it," says Ristić, a naval architect and marine engineer. "When you Google Serbia and Croatia, they are 'sworn enemies.' But I have a lot of friends in Croatia."

Soon after joining Rotaract in 2019, Ristić participated in online training in nonviolent communication conducted by Tom Carlisi, a Rotarian in Ohio. At the end of the program, Carlisi gifted Ristić a membership in the Rotary Action Group for Peace. She was the first Rotaractor on the group's board of directors and is serving this year as its chair.

She urges interested members to contact the action group or the peace chair in their district — and to think broadly about what might constitute a peace project. She argues that digging a well, for example, doesn't solely provide clean water — it ensures equitable distribution of resources, preventing conflict. "Every single Rotary project is a peacebuilding project," she says.

As for bringing more peace to your daily life, Ristić offers this advice: "You have power, and peace starts from within. Read everything you can, educate yourself, and reach out for help."

— JP SWENSON

In 2024-25, The Rotary Foundation approved 1,424 global grants, 468 district grants, 74 disaster response grants (initial figures), and a Programs of Scale grant.

This month marks 100 years of Rotary in Austria and the Czech Republic, where the first clubs were chartered in Vienna and Prague, respectively.

The 2025-26 People of Action Honors will recognize young leaders ages 13-30 as Champions of Tomorrow. Submit nominations by 31 October at rotary.org/rotary-people-of-action.





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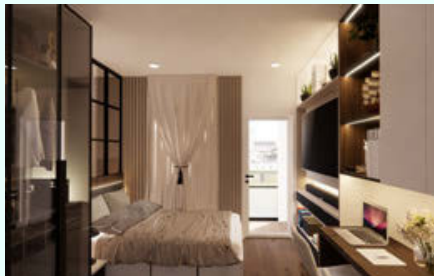


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Buddy up

With peer support, midwives in Papua New Guinea aim to lower maternal death rates

By Hannah Shaw

**Photography
by Mark Lehn**



Mary Sitaing (left), president of the Papua New Guinea Midwifery Society, has called for more midwives.





Gwyneth Weuta is the only midwife serving a population of 12,000 in a rural part of Papua New Guinea. The area is a remote place where lush palms drink in the moisture that hangs in the air and forests are sonorous with the calls of shorebirds and tree frogs.

The isolation, as beautiful as it may be, is one of many challenges for the 37-year-old midwife: The clinic where she used to work, a single-story building tucked on a narrow island in the South Pacific nation, had no running water until she procured a grant a couple of years ago. A new health center where she's now stationed is more developed, but there's no reliable transportation to get there. Then there are the misconceptions and cultural barriers that lead many to resist birthing in a health care facility.

She recalls a teacher from a nearby village who had been under her care for nine months, a rarity, given that in rural Papua New Guinea many pregnant women don't visit a health care provider until they're in labor, if they visit at all.

The baby was overdue, raising the risk of complications, so Weuta urged the woman to deliver at the district hospital. But she soon returned home, either sent back by the doctors or by her own choice, Weuta isn't sure. More than three weeks past her due date and without transportation, the mother waited and went into labor. The next day, hours passed before a vehicle could be found to bring her to the more fully equipped provincial hospital five hours away. It was too late. By the time she arrived, the baby's heart had stopped.

The baby's anguished father was livid and blamed the midwife. "All the bad words you could imagine, he just threw at me," Weuta explains with a slow, melodic certainty.

Delays in seeking and accessing care threaten women's lives in Papua New Guinea, which has one of the world's highest maternal and neonatal mortality rates. Compared with women in nearby Australia, a woman in Papua New Guinea is 95 times more likely to die giving birth, and babies are 10 times more likely to die during or shortly after birth.



Universal access to midwifery care could avert more than 60 percent of all maternal and newborn deaths.



Only half of all births in Papua New Guinea occur in the presence of a skilled attendant.



Most of these deaths are preventable, and midwives are key. Worldwide, universal access to midwifery care could avert more than 60 percent of all maternal and newborn deaths and stillbirths — 4.3 million lives saved annually by 2035, according to the World Health Organization. And the lifesaving work of rural midwives goes beyond birthing: Like Weuta, they are often the only skilled health care workers for miles, supported by community assistants and occasional guidance from doctors over the phone.

In Papua New Guinea, more than 80 percent of people live in rural areas and only half of all births occur in the presence of a skilled attendant. With only 1,600 midwives in the country, the Papua New Guinea Midwifery Society estimates that five times as many are needed to serve the growing population. Mary Sitaing is outspoken about the challenges of giving birth in the country. When she became president of the society in 2022, Sitaing made a public call for more midwives, better support of midwives, and greater awareness of reproductive health care in her country.

Still, the solution isn't just more midwives. The country needs more well-educated, supported, and empowered midwives. "If they've got a voice, they can ask for the equipment, they can ask for the training," explains Judith Brown, a retired midwife and a member of the Rotary Club of Morialta in Australia. "They can ask for the womanpower that they're going to need to provide safe and evidence-based care for their women."

And that's where Rotary comes in.

Building the confidence to lead

It's April, the rainy season in Papua New Guinea, and midwives from across the country are gathered for a five-day leadership workshop in the capital of Port Moresby. They're paired with midwives from Australia, kicking off a yearlong program supported by Rotary members in the two countries. "Not only their voices come together, but their energy and their passion come together," says Brown, leader of the Papua New Guinea Midwifery Leadership Buddy Program. "They assist each other and support each other in a way that's not possible if they're in another land, never having met."

Brown, who has spent her career improving maternal standards from Thailand to Morocco to Afghanistan, crafted the workshop to build connection among the midwives. Each morning, the workshop begins with a song, led by a group of midwives from a different region of Papua New Guinea. When the buddy groups are announced at the end of the first day, the room erupts in cheers as the paired midwives excitedly embrace.

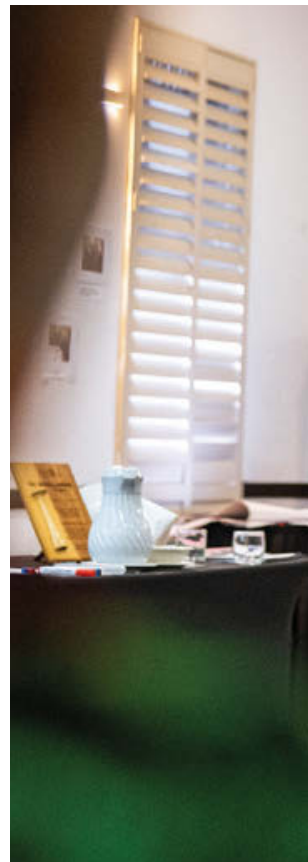
Attending the workshop in the city costs the midwives nothing but a week of their time. Airfare, food, and lodging are covered by Rotary, supported by district grants and two global grants from The Rotary Foundation. For participants like Weuta, who is never truly off the job — even here she fields calls from community health workers for updates on the expecting mothers in her care — the days full of learning and connection provide a much-needed respite. "I felt a weight lift off my shoulders," she says.

The initiative grew out of a twinning program between the Australian College of Midwives and the Papua New Guinea Mid-



Judith Brown

With only 1,600 midwives in the country, the Papua New Guinea Midwifery Society estimates that five times as many are needed.





1. Simon James Kopalua (left) is one of five male midwives in this year's buddy program. **2.** Helen Hall, midwife and program facilitator, joined the Rotary Club of Rosebud-Rye in Australia after working with Rotarians on this initiative. "The people I've met are the people I want to spend time with," she says. "They look locally, they look nationally, and they look globally at what they can do, and how they can bring their skills into it." **3.** As a buddy group in the program, (from left) Noah Noah, Xaviera McGuffin, and Gwyneth Weuta support each other. **4.** Afzal Mahmood, a member of the Rotary Club of Morialta, is a public health expert and workshop organizer.



wifery Society that started in 2011. In 2019, Rotary members from both countries joined the partnership in developing the buddy program to better support individual midwives. Rotarians in Port Moresby help with logistics and funding, giving the Papua New Guinea midwives a stipend to pay for nonessential trip expenses, while those from Morialta manage the overall project and its evaluation, and organize travel.

Organizers had planned initially for only three cohorts. But Brown says the program was so successful that at the end of the third workshop, the midwives pleaded for them to keep going. This workshop in April is the fifth of the program, with hopes to continue.

While parts of the program are information-dense, the primary focus is on building bonds and encouraging a perspective shift. “We’re not trying to go in there and teach clinical skills,” explains Helen Hall, of the Australian College of Midwives, the project facilitator. “Other groups have done that, and it’s important. What the buddy program does is build confidence to lead.”

During the workshop, the Papua New Guinea midwives establish a project that they will complete with the help of their buddies over the coming year. “You can see that they start to recognize their capacity,” explains Hall, who, impressed by her Rotary partners, decided to join a club in her semiretirement. “And then they’ve got a champion on their side that says, ‘We believe in you and let’s do a small little project together.’”

For instance, one graduate of the program developed a poster with a checklist for each prenatal and postnatal stage. It serves as a guide for community health care workers with less training than a midwife or a nurse. “That simple checklist, I have no doubt, will save some lives,” Hall says.

For each project, the Rotary Club of Morialta sets aside 500 Australian dollars (about US\$325) to help the midwives complete their work, but the midwife who generated the posters found another organization to cover the printing costs. So instead, the midwife used the Rotary funds to purchase life jackets. In remote regions of the country, midwives often transport women in labor via canoe. With the life jackets, they can do so more safely.

“As a midwife, you can create change.”

Weuta and her Australian buddy, Xaviera McGuffin, sit in the back of a bus, giggling and bobbing their heads to twangy banjo music playing from a cellphone. “We’re heading to the country!” Weuta laughs, as the bustling streets of Port Moresby turn into pastoral rolling foothills out the window.

The workshop group is on its way to Pacific Adventist University, where many participants, including Weuta, received their midwifery training. After a day of touring medical facilities, the buddy cohort will meet midwifery students and deliver donated learning materials toiled in the Australian midwives’ luggage.

Geography and lack of resources are not the only challenges that midwives here face. Culturally, giving birth is a “family thing,” explains Sitaing of the midwifery society, so many women in labor stay at home without a trained attendant. To try to shift these practices, midwives work with the whole family and the whole community. They encourage women to come into the clinic early in their pregnancy to ensure healthier outcomes and welcome the father’s involvement throughout the pregnancy and the birth.

Increasing male partner involvement may also lower Papua New Guinea’s intimate partner violence rate, one of the highest in the world. According to a national survey, nearly two-thirds of women in the country who have been married have experienced spousal physical, sexual, or emotional violence. Anecdotally, midwives have seen that getting partners involved in pregnancy and birth helps prevent violence, enabling fathers to feel more connected to their children and see their partner’s strength in the delivery room.

Papua New Guinea has a greater share of male midwives than Australia, says Helen Hall. And male midwives often work in the more perilous regions. This year’s buddy cohort had five male midwives, including Simon James Kopalua.

Kopalua, who sports a button-up shirt and tie on this day, speaks with the measured



Mothers recover from
births at Port Moresby
General Hospital.



Over the first five cohorts, the buddy program has included 52 midwives from Papua New Guinea and 32 from Australia.



that it will reduce their strength, make them weak, or infect them with diseases. It's so challenging, but I break this barrier because I want to make a change and help people change their way of thinking."

cadence of a university professor despite being 29 years old. He is a midwife in the remote Highlands region of Papua New Guinea. Kopalua transitioned from being a nurse to a midwife after witnessing several maternal and neonatal deaths on the job. His own mother and sister almost died in childbirth.

His cellphone contains images of ambulances outfitted with off-road tires stuck in rutted rainforest mountain roads. Grinning with pride, he speaks of his work, from advising on family planning to building goodwill with the community to performing lifesaving procedures with only a cellphone flashlight. "As midwives, we must remember that we have multiple skills," says Kopalua. "Most of the time, we focus on governments and people to create change. But as a midwife, you can create change too."

Kopalua discusses common misconceptions about going to health care facilities: "Women believe that it's not safe to deliver in the health facility because the baby might die, the woman might die, sorcery will attack them in the night. Staff attitude and behavior can also become barriers." He continues, "In my culture and in most other cultures in Papua New Guinea, men are not supposed to touch the blood of a woman because people think

Weaving a network of supports

The final day of the workshop is a whirlwind of activity. The buddy groups spend time together discussing their projects. They walk on paths shaded by palm trees and huddle over their computers crafting presentations. There are impromptu roundtable discussions about their hopes for the future, and at dinner they discuss challenges they've faced working in their clinics.

For midwives working on their own, like Weuta, the buddy program has provided more than just a buddy. It's woven a network of supporters. Over the first five cohorts, the buddy program has included 52 midwives from Papua New Guinea and 32 from Australia. Program participants represent all 22 provinces of Papua New Guinea. Some midwives had never left their province before, but now they've had the opportunity to visit medical clinics, hospitals, and universities. They've met other graduates of the buddy program who hold leadership roles in maternity wards and educational programs.

Weuta plans to focus on preventing teenage pregnancy in the region where she works. Each month, she says, she sees at least one teen mother-to-be. Her project will focus on pamphlets and a program to train educators to teach family planning.

Papua New Guinea's maternal health crisis cannot be solved by midwives alone. But in between paddling laboring women in canoes and challenging generations of cultural norms, they are championing improvements to maternal and child health. With the help of Rotary, midwives are gaining tools, a voice, and a community. They are striving for a future where no woman labors alone or dies from preventable causes. Says Mary Kililo Samor, a technical adviser for the Ministry of Health who visited to champion the midwives' work: "We have not done it yet. But we are doing it." ■





Program facilitator Julie Kep (left) has worked as a midwife in Papua New Guinea for more than 40 years. Here, she speaks with Sania Ronnie and her child.



Weuta (second from left) and fellow Papua New Guinea midwives lead the group in a song.

People of action around the globe

By Brad Webber

Register your club's participation at endpolio.org/register-your-event

Rotary members and their partners in service come together each World Polio Day on 24 October to recognize progress in the fight to end the disease. Here is a sample of the ways members are taking action to make history and eradicate polio.



Canada

The annual Pub N Paint event by the Rotary Club of Edmonton Whyte Avenue raises money each November to fight polio. The Alberta club's regular meeting venue, the Rooster Kitchen, hosts the event. "I do a little spiel about the state of polio and Rotary's role in eradication," says Stan Bissell, a past president of the club who inaugurated the project. It's not unusual for visitors to remark how little they know about polio, he says. "We talk about it so much in Rotary, but people don't know and think it's a disease of the past." After his presentation, an art teacher distributes blank canvases and brushes, guiding Rotarians and guests in replicating landscapes such as Edmonton's cityscape and a mountain range. "There are some very talented people" among the club's members, reports Bissell. "But it's variable — mine is in the garage."



Club of Edmonton Whyte Avenue

CA\$1 billion+

Total contributed by the Canadian government toward polio eradication

United States

In support of polio eradication, Ralph Zuke has raised more than \$57 million by pedaling his rickshaw bicycle from his Missouri home to recent Rotary International Conventions in North America: Toronto in 2018, Houston in 2022, and Calgary this year, a journey in which he braved hail, sleet, and snow, and even skirted a tornado. His next opportunity will be at the 2028 convention in Minneapolis. "If it's needed," Zuke adds, optimistically. "I hope we'll be done with polio by then." As governor of District 6060, Zuke rolls out the rickshaw for parades and on his rounds to clubs. "It allows me to tell my passengers about polio, Rotary, and what Rotary has done for polio. It's a captive audience for a couple minutes. That's all they need," says Zuke. "If they donate, that's great. If they don't, that's fine too, but at least they know the story of what Rotary's done with polio."



District 6060

10,000+

Miles logged by Ralph Zuke for End Polio Now



Italy

There may be no better way to spotlight (literally!) polio awareness than through the can't-miss illuminations of global landmarks. Those monuments have included the Sydney Opera House, London's Houses of Parliament, Rome's Colosseum, the Egyptian pyramids, Scottish castles, and more. For World Polio Day 2024, the Rotary and Rotaract clubs in the Pisa area teamed up with community leaders to turn the floodlights on the Leaning Tower of Pisa. "This is a commitment that we wanted to share together precisely to reach a wider audience," the club presidents noted in a statement. They've showcased historic buildings for about 25 years and the city's signature tower over the past five. The clubs also had a video about polio eradication shown on monitors at the Pisa Airport.



2002

World Health Organization declares Europe polio-free



238,171

Participants in the world's largest charity walk, held in 2018 in the Philippines



Ghana

In the port city of Tema, more than 300 Rotarians, Rotaractors, and partners stepped out in October 2024 for a twilight World Polio Day walk. A campaign surrounding the action included a "polio tower" lighted for the occasion, signage, and a sea of End Polio Now T-shirts donned by participants. The Rotary Club of Tema-Community 25 led the effort, which was supported by the Rotary clubs of Tema and Tema Meridian, as well as the Ghana PolioPlus Committee. The involvement of 25 Rotaract and Interact clubs contributed to the sizable turnout, says club member Elizabeth Ahiagba. "Participants distributed educational materials, engaged commuters and residents, and advocated for vigilance, particularly among families with young children," Ahiagba says.



India

For World Polio Day 2024, more than 1,200 young people hoisted placards as they lined up in formation to spell out "Polio Free Bharat" (India) when viewed from above. Students performed traditional dances and skits during a program at the community sports complex of Dwarka, a neighborhood of New Delhi. The day concluded with a spirited rally. "There was a huge response from the public and youths, including members of Rotaract and Interact clubs," says Mahesh Trikha, then governor of District 3011. The district has sponsored similar gatherings for about a decade.



The optimist

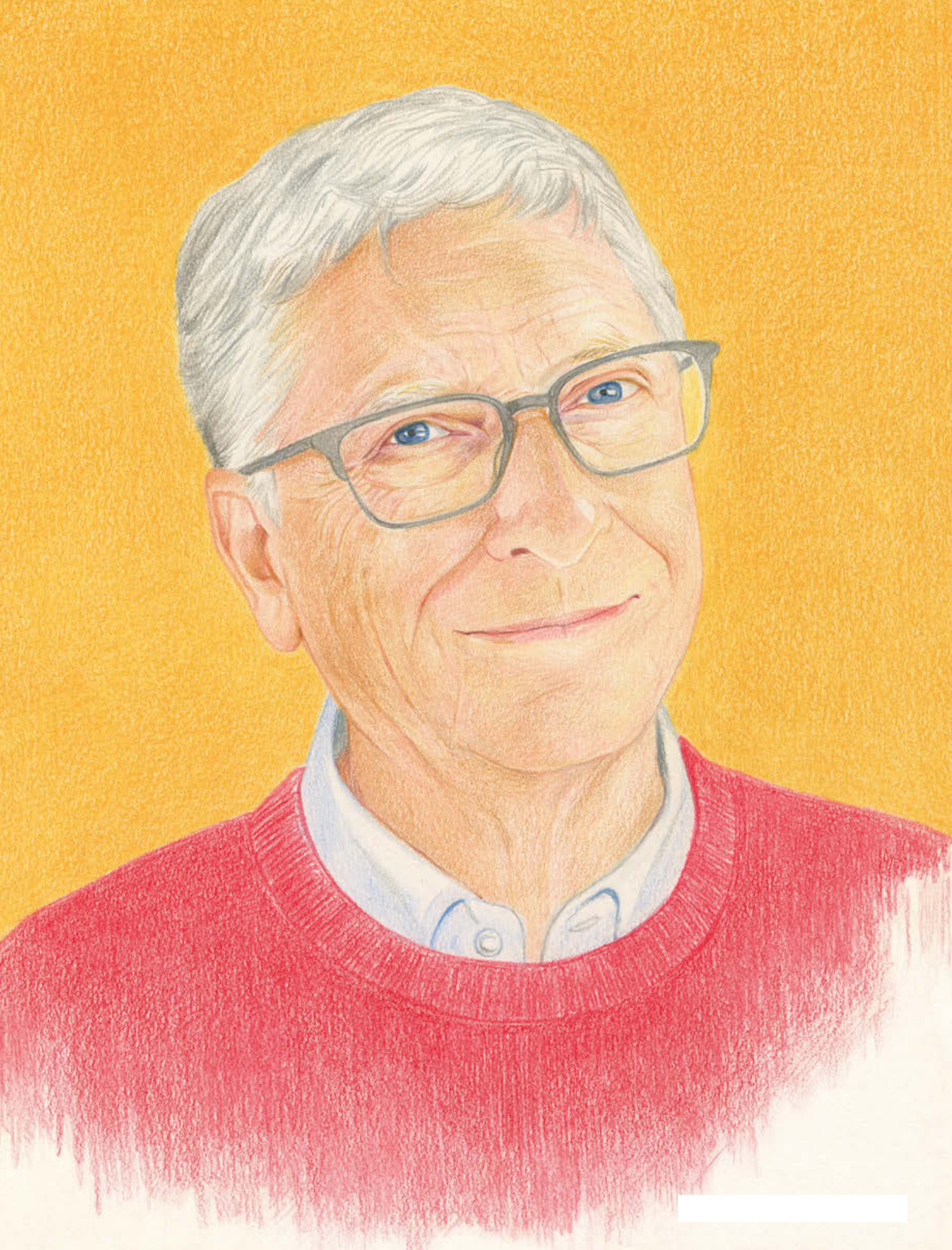


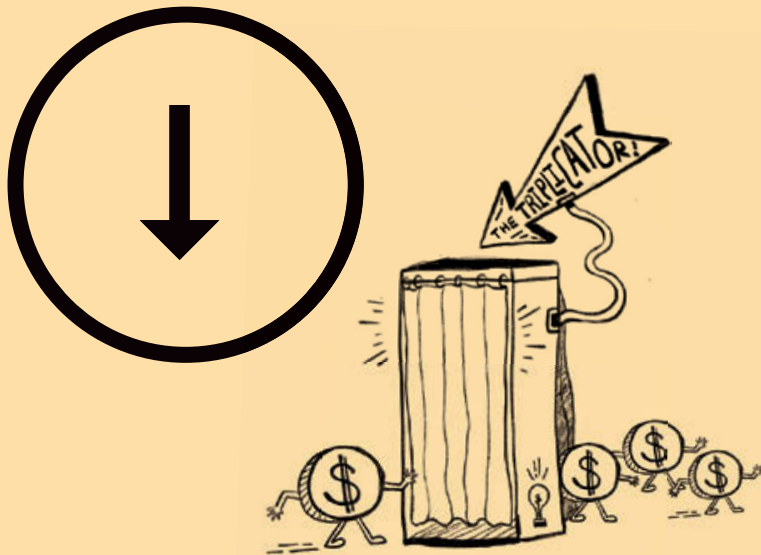
*As he begins to wind
down his foundation,
Bill Gates makes his
biggest plans yet*



Illustration by
Uli Knörzer

Interview by
Diana Schoberg





IN MAY, BILL GATES GAVE HIMSELF A BOLD NEW CHALLENGE AND A TOUGH DEADLINE: to give away virtually all his wealth in the next 20 years and close up his long-running philanthropic enterprise. The Gates Foundation, one of Rotary's partners in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, has already given away more than \$100 billion in its first 25 years. But for the foundation to wind down fully it first needs to ramp up — in order to spend more than twice that amount before it closes its doors on 31 December 2045.

Polio remains a priority. At the 2025 Rotary International Convention in Calgary, Alberta, Rotary and the Gates Foundation announced a joint commitment to direct up to \$450 million over the next three years to support polio eradication, a renewal of their long-standing partnership. Rotary will continue to raise \$50 million per year, with every dollar matched with two additional dollars from the Gates Foundation.

To learn more about his decision, how he views the foundation's legacy, and what lies ahead, the magazine posed some questions to Gates, who turns 70 this month. These are the responses he sent in their entirety.

As the Gates Foundation celebrates its 25th anniversary, what are you most proud of?

Over the past 25 years, we've witnessed and contributed to more progress than we ever thought possible.

I'm proud of the partnerships that have contributed to saving lives — not only the Global Polio Eradication Initiative but also the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

Thanks to these programs, the price of lifesaving health care innovations — vaccines, treatments, bed nets, and diagnostics — has dropped dramatically.

The impact is mind-blowing:

Thus far, these collaborations have reached 1.1 billion children with lifesaving vaccines, helped cut global child mortality in half, and saved more than 80 million lives. Hundreds of millions of people have risen out of poverty and into better lives.

As you wind down your foundation over the next 20 years, where do you think your money will make the biggest impact? What headwinds do you anticipate?

In spite of all of the progress I've just described, we are seeing the toughest headwinds in the history of our foundation. Countries are slashing tens of billions of dollars in global development funding, and the consequences will be deadly. In fact, this will be the first year in the new millennium when the number of kids dying around the world goes up instead of down — an unthinkable tragedy.

We need people who are committed to progress — like Rotarians — to stand against these deadly cuts and help us get back on a path to progress.

For our part, we will be accelerating our work over the next 20 years to solve urgent problems and save and improve more lives. We remain steadfastly focused on where we can have the most



Help Rotary and its partners reach every child with the polio vaccine. Thanks to the Gates Foundation, your contribution will be tripled. Make your donation at my.rotary.org/polioplus-fund.

▶ In June, Bill Gates dedicated an award he received from the Nigerian president to Chief Ayuba Gufwan. Paralyzed by polio at age 5, Gufwan serves as the executive secretary of Nigeria's National Commission for Persons with Disabilities and CEO of Wheelchairs for Nigeria.

impact: 1) reducing child mortality, 2) eradicating or eliminating infectious diseases, and 3) lifting millions more people out of poverty and onto a path to prosperity.

We're placing our bet on human ingenuity — on the scientists, health workers, educators, and farmers whose tireless work has already delivered some of the most dramatic gains in human history. They haven't given up, and neither will we.

How do you ensure sustainability?

Our goal at the Gates Foundation has always been to solve problems, not manage them in perpetuity. That means helping communities build capacity to take on the challenges they face. That will be our priority for the next 20 years, and we hope it will be the priority for the next generation of catalytic philanthropists who will take up the challenges of their time.

New innovations will continue to give these communities better tools than ever before to invest in their own health and prosperity. So, despite the challenges we face, I'm optimistic. The past 25 years was one of the greatest periods of human progress in history, and I believe that we can make the next 20 years even more transformative.

Wild poliovirus case counts rose in 2024. What makes you optimistic polio eradication is still possible?

I am as confident as ever that the global polio program will end polio for good.

What keeps me optimistic, despite some challenges, are the innovation, frontline workers, and global commitment driving this effort forward. The next-generation polio vaccine, nOPV2, is helping to stop outbreaks, protecting children in under-immunized communities from paralysis. More than 1.6 billion doses have been administered as of July 2025 — that is an incredible number of children protected from this devastating disease. And we now have enough supply of this



new vaccine to protect children wherever it emerges.

In the countries where wild polio remains endemic, Afghanistan and Pakistan, the program is working closely with local authorities to tackle obstacles, improving cross-border coordination and strengthening community trust to reach all children with vaccines.

Despite the recent uptick in cases, we shouldn't lose sight of the broader progress, which really is remarkable: the Global Polio Eradication Initiative has eliminated wild poliovirus in almost every country in the world, reducing the number of polio cases by over 99 percent. With continued commitment and collaboration, including from Rotarians around the globe, I am confident we can finish the job.

How is the polio program pivoting given the current political and economic volatility? Is there any change to how your foundation is doing its work toward ending polio?

The polio program has a long history of adapting to stop polio in some of the world's most complex settings — working closely with governments and communities to protect routine immuniza-

tion progress and stay focused on eradication.

Take Pakistan as an example. Security forces sometimes provide support in conflict areas so that vaccinators can do their jobs safely. But in areas of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where conflict has been on the rise, the presence of those security forces was actually keeping families from feeling safe enough to go get vaccinated. So local influencers stepped in to keep vaccinators safe without having to involve security forces at all. The approach has been working well, with a reported 80 percent of children being reached. It will be critical that the program independently monitor these areas so we can be confident in the results.

Today, amid competing health priorities and growing political and financial pressures, we know tough challenges lie ahead. Some major donors are reducing support for global health, but new donors are also coming in with contributions, which is so critical at this time. And we are continuing to adapt as we do best, staying laser-focused on what works and using financial and human resources where they will have the greatest impact to end polio for good.



What's the biggest lesson you've learned in your time working on polio eradication?

Progress depends on relentless collaboration. Success is only possible when polio workers, government officials, partners, and donors — including Rotary — all work together to reach children with life-saving vaccines, even in the world's hardest-to-access areas.

We observed the power of this kind of collaboration recently in Madagascar during an outbreak of variant poliovirus. The government came in with strong political leadership to halt the spread; community partners worked quickly to strengthen vaccination campaigns; and international partners like UNICEF and the World Health Organization surged support to bolster those efforts. Everyone worked to protect children with vaccines in some of the most distant and isolated regions of the country, and they succeeded in stopping the outbreak.

Ending polio for good will require more collaboration like this whenever and wherever the disease continues to emerge. Rotary members' roles as global advocates and civic leaders are critical to ensure polio eradication remains a top global priority.

The Gates Foundation has funded technical innovations in polio vaccines for two decades, including the development and rollout of nOPV2. What most excites you about what's in the research and development pipeline now?

Sustained investment in innovation is as critical as ever. As I mentioned, nOPV2 is already helping close outbreaks, and we continue to invest in more genetically stable vaccines to keep future generations safe from variant polioviruses. These advances are helping us stop transmission faster and protect more children with greater precision.

We're also excited about the hexavalent vaccine, which combines protection for children into a single shot against six diseases: diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, Haemophilus influenzae type B, and hepatitis B, along with polio. This simplifies immunization schedules and strengthens early protection for children, especially in regions that have limited health care resources. In fact, in July, Senegal and Mauritania became the first countries to introduce this vaccine with support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

These innovative vaccines are giving frontline health care workers better tools to reach every child and

stop transmission of all forms of polio for good.

Why did you choose to have the Gates Foundation partner with Rotary? What does Rotary bring to the table?

Rotary was the first organization to envision a world without polio, and members' leadership has been essential in driving this global effort for over four decades.

As a founding partner of the GPEI, Rotary has helped vaccinate nearly 3 billion children across hundreds of countries since 1985. Rotary members have contributed numerous volunteer hours and significant funding, and their advocacy has helped secure billions more from governments to support eradication efforts. Their global network allows them to deliver vaccines and engage communities in the toughest settings, from India to the Philippines to Ukraine.

Because of Rotary's leadership, we are closer than ever to our shared goal of ensuring that families will never have to fear this disease again.

Why are you extending the Gates Foundation's 2-to-1 funding match with Rotary?

Together, we hope to mobilize up to \$450 million in new funding over the next three years. These funds will be used to support vaccine delivery, outbreak response, community engagement, and implementation and maintenance of polio eradication programs in affected regions.

This extension comes at a critical time. Over the past year, we have seen wild polio case numbers rise in the last endemic countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan. And the detection of polio in places that were previously polio-free is a stark reminder that polio anywhere is a threat to people everywhere. While transmission overall remains low, our hard-won progress is at risk. Reductions in global aid, vaccine misinformation, and rising conflict and politi-

This September 2000 photo captures Gates giving the polio vaccine to a child in India, an illustration of his long-standing commitment to ending the disease.

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

cal instability are all contributing to polio's continued spread.

Continuing our partnership with Rotary will allow us to address these challenges and reach children around the world with lifesaving vaccines.

It is critical that we finish the job on polio. Eradication is the only way to make sure that continuing challenges don't mean an ongoing risk for children today and for generations to come.

In 2009, your father, Bill Gates Sr., suggested to Seattle Rotarians that they work on malaria eradication. Over the years, their work has grown into the Rotary Healthy Communities Challenge, which the Gates Foundation supports through a \$13 million donation and technical assistance and guidance. How does this project fit into your overall strategy for malaria eradication and preventing childhood deaths?

Our long-standing partnership with Rotarians has been critical to the progress we've seen against malaria in recent decades — and it's more important today than ever, in the face of shifting agendas and uncertain financing that are putting this progress at risk.

Over the past 25 years, 2.2 billion cases of malaria and 12.7 million deaths have been averted — thanks to innovation, generous aid, and political commitment. For the first time, eradication is within our view, and the pipeline of next-generation tools to bring that vision to reality has never been stronger.

Rotary's work is essential to building the networks of community health workers who will bring these tools to the people who need them. Through the Healthy Communities Challenge, Rotary is helping to train thousands of community health workers across the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Zambia who are treating malaria, pneumonia, and diarrhea in their own communities. These community health workers

know their communities in ways no one else could. They're the ones who will get us across the finish line in beating malaria in the toughest places — and in the process, they'll build the foundation for healthier, more resilient communities that can face multiple health challenges.

How will AI impact development? Paint us a picture of what health care, agriculture, education, etc. might look like in 20 years.

Artificial intelligence has the potential to help solve some of the world's toughest challenges. One of the key ways AI is helping to shape the future is by providing critical support to frontline workers — including community health workers, farmers, and teachers — who are using AI to reach people more efficiently and effectively.

In global health, AI-powered tools could significantly reduce pressure on overburdened health care systems by supporting frontline workers in diagnosing health problems and delivering better, more effective care. Imagine a nurse in a rural clinic using an AI tool to analyze a patient's symptoms, flag high-risk cases, and provide accurate diagnoses and treatment suggestions. This kind of real-time clinical support could improve both accuracy and access, bridging long-standing gaps in care and bringing lifesaving capabilities to those who need them most.

And this is just the beginning. In agriculture, AI is delivering tailored advice to smallholder farmers to increase agricultural production. In classrooms, AI-powered tools are helping teachers personalize lessons for students and improve learning outcomes.

If the world continues to prioritize equity and access at the forefront, AI can be a powerful force multiplier for development — expanding opportunity, reducing inequality, and improving millions of lives.

Rotary has been increasingly emphasizing measurable impact in

its projects. As someone who has long been focused on data collection, can you give our members any advice?

Quality, timely data is critical for everything from development of AI-backed tools to vaccine delivery to advocacy. Through advances in how researchers collect and analyze global health data, we now know much more about what kills children, where these deaths occur, and why some kids are more vulnerable than others. By putting those insights to work, we've been able to make incredible progress over the last 25 years, reducing child mortality and saving lives. Over time, better data has revolutionized how we understand health challenges, target resources, and measure impact — and remains one of the most powerful tools we have to drive future progress.

Investing in data is a smart, cost-effective way to create impact. Continuing to improve data-gathering and to invest in the collection of quality data will give us a fuller picture of where our investments and programs will have the greatest impact and help us build solutions to some of the world's toughest health challenges. Measuring impact and starting with quality data to design programs will make Rotary initiatives even more effective.

What message do you have for Rotary members?

Most importantly, thank you for your unwavering support to eradicating polio. Rotary's leadership, advocacy, and sustained commitment have brought the world to the brink of eradication — something once thought to be impossible.

To Rotarians everywhere: Thank you for decades of dedication and partnership. Because of your efforts, we will one day live in a world where all children are safe from this disease. We look forward to leaving polio behind long before our foundation closes its doors in 2045. ■





A legacy in **miniature**

To honor the decades-long commitment to ending polio, Rotary invited artists to create tiny scenes of big moments in the global effort

● **DELIVERING HOPE**

DERRICK LIN

Physically delivering the vaccine requires challenging travel to remote parts of the world. The artist created this scene using everyday objects and dramatic lighting.



THE JOURNEY OF VACCINATION

RAPHAEL TRUFFI
BORTHOLUZZI

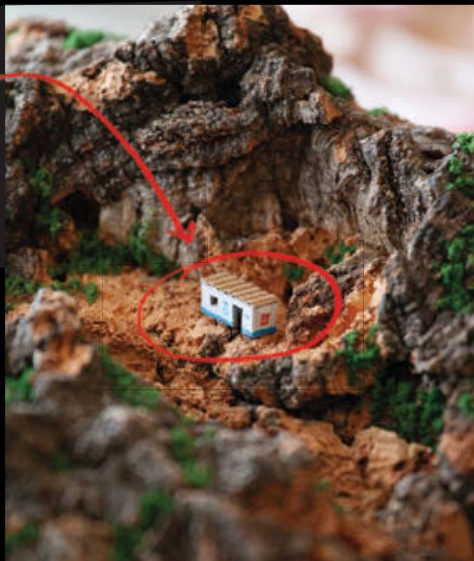
This re-creation of a rural vaccination site in Brazil illustrates the work of Brazilian Rotary members and health workers during a national vaccination campaign.



END POLIO NOW TEDDY BEAR

SALAVAT FIDAI

The teddy bear in an End Polio Now shirt is a recognizable unofficial mascot for polio eradication, and it is a reminder that at the heart of our work are the world's children.



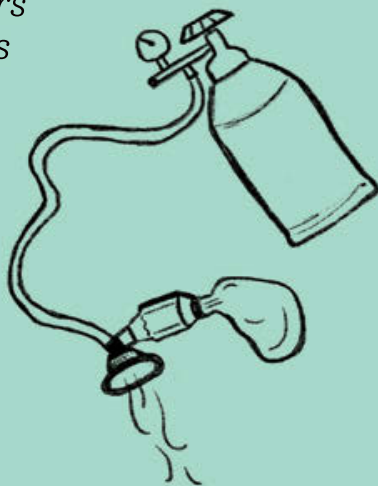
UNTITLED

ROSA DE JONG

This piece shows how old shipping containers are used as vaccination clinics at major transit points such as border crossings and railway stations.

A polio parable

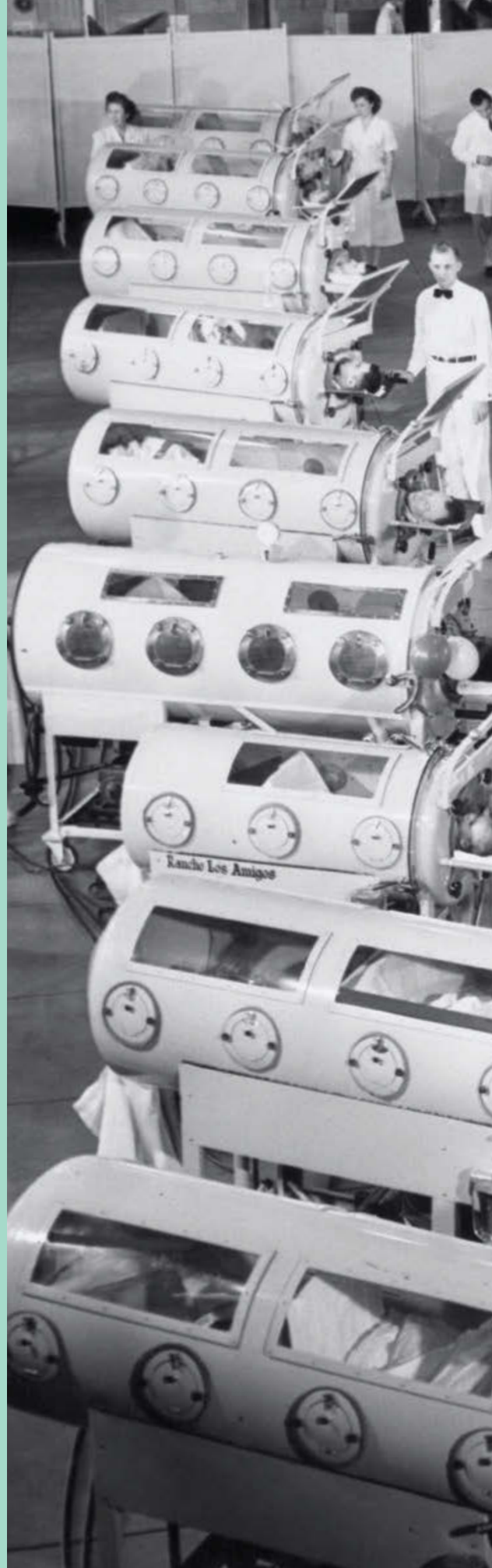
The story of a medical breakthrough 73 years ago offers important lessons for our time



①

By
Geoffrey Johnson

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES







THE POLIO EPIDEMIC that afflicted Copenhagen in 1952 was centuries in the making. Ancient Egyptian paintings and carvings, including an engraved stone slab at the Glyptoteket museum in Copenhagen, depict people with shrunken limbs, an indication that they may have been stricken with poliomyelitis. Fast forward to 1773 when Sir Walter Scott, while still an infant, was stricken with a fever, during which he (as the Scottish writer put it) “lost the power of my right leg.” Though he recovered to some extent, Scott would walk with a limp for the rest of his life.

Despite this evidence that polio had existed for thousands of years, it largely went undiagnosed for almost as long. The Greek physician and philosopher Hippocrates may be known as the Father of Medicine, but he failed to include polio in his list of infectious diseases. It would be more than 2,000 years before scientists first began to identify polio and catalog its impact on people’s health. “The disease is thought to have been ‘endemic,’ meaning that it was widely present,” writes Hannah Wunsch. “But because it seemed to cause little paralysis, it generally went unnoticed. ... There were no epi-

demics, but polio was lying in wait, biding its time.”

If polio was antediluvian, its remedy is of more recent vintage. A significant breakthrough occurred a mere 97 years ago, shortly after Philip Drinker visited a Boston hospital ward occupied by children dying from polio. A professor of industrial hygiene at the Harvard School for Public Health, Drinker had been investigating ways to resuscitate workers who had suffered occupational injuries, such as electric shock or gas poisoning.

The visit to the children’s polio ward, and the indelible images of “the small blue faces, the terrible gasping for air,” changed Drinker’s focus. He and his partner, Louis Agassiz Shaw Jr., made modifications to their respirator, and on 13 October 1928, Bertha Richard, diagnosed with polio and struggling to breathe, was placed in the machine. The 8-year-old girl was soon able to, as she said, “breathe bigger,” but after six days she succumbed to pneumonia.

One of the next polio patients to benefit from this new invention was a Harvard undergrad named Barrett Hoyt. In September 1929, after only a brief time in Drinker and Shaw’s machine, Hoyt, who moments earlier had been blue-faced and gasping for air, spoke two words: “I breathe.” Not only did Hoyt breathe, but, after four weeks in the machine, he recovered and lived another 44 years. “Suddenly, respiratory failure was not a death sentence,” writes Wunsch. “The monster metal device” — soon dubbed the “iron lung” — “was about to become synonymous with the treatment of polio. The relationship between human and machine had been irrevocably changed.”

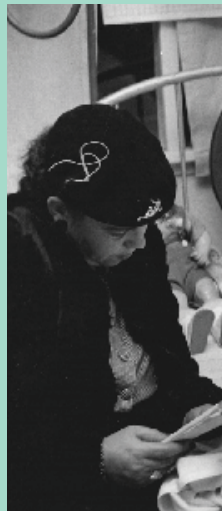
● **AS SHE WAS WORKING ON** what would become *The Autumn Ghost* — the book where all these polio stories appear — Hannah Wunsch had one perplexing concern. “I’m going to have to find a way to help readers figure out

why this matters: why mechanical ventilators are important, why intensive care matters,” she says, thinking back to the days when she was still “doing research and sort of scratching around” on her book. “This whole world is obviously important, always there day to day, taking care of millions of people worldwide. But there wasn’t that sense of ‘Isn’t this incredible?’ I was writing this book that was in the dark crevices of medical history. That interested me, but how was I going to convince others that it was interesting too?”

And then, in 2020, the pandemic hit. “Suddenly,” says Wunsch, “this book felt so relevant because of the fact that everybody was focused on these resources and the people who delivered this care. The parallels were remarkable: the horror of living it and the fear of running out of ventilators. It felt extraordinary how close we actually teetered to the edge of essentially returning to pre-1952 care, where people were just put in the corner and given a bit of oxygen and that was all you could do for them.”

That 1952 touchstone is crucial for Wunsch. Though it ranges across several decades and artfully weaves together numerous “tendrils of events” (Wunsch’s phrase), *The Autumn Ghost* is primarily about the polio epidemic that descended upon Copenhagen in 1952. (The book takes its title from the fact that, in Denmark and other Scandinavian countries, the polio season began as summer concluded and the autumnal equinox approached.) But as suggested by its subtitle — *How the Battle Against a Polio Epidemic Revolutionized Modern Medical Care* — the book is also about the breakthroughs in patient care that followed and that today can seem so unremarkable. Chief among them is that essential place where “patients might seek a reprieve from death: the ICU.”

“Whenever I was in [the intensive care unit], I never took it for granted,” says Wunsch, an anes-





Previous pages: Patients in iron lungs fill the Rancho Los Amigos Medical Center in California in the early 1950s. **These pages, counterclockwise from top left:** At

Copenhagen's Blegdam Hospital, a medical student hand-ventilates Vivi Ebert as her mother sits beside her; Dr. Bjørn Ibsen ponders a medical problem; Dr. Jonas Salk

administers the polio vaccine; a cat in a hat diverts a young polio patient as the child is hand-ventilated; a poster from 1952 provides precautions that children should take to avoid polio.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (VIVI EBERT) COURTESY OF THE EBERT FAMILY, (DR. BJØRN IBSEN) COURTESY OF THE IBSEN FAMILY, (DR. JONAS SALK) COURTESY OF MARCH OF DIMES ARCHIVES, (POLIO PATIENT, POSTER) COURTESY OF MEDICAL MUSEION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

THE EPIDEMIC OF '52

thesiologist and professor at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City. "I would hook up this machine and walk away and this person would continue to breathe. It would seem just extraordinary."

● **BESIDES HER MEDICAL** expertise and her capacity for wonder, Wunsch brings another crucial skill to *The Autumn Ghost*: She is a superb storyteller with a background in theater. (Based on the memoir of a World War II cryptographer, her play *Silk or Cyanide* got a staged reading in London this past year.) Those abilities serve her well as she unfolds a story packed with drama and inhabited by a vast cast of characters.

The primary setting for that story is Copenhagen's Blegdam Hospital, where the principal characters are two doctors: Henry Cai Alexander Lassen, the hospital's imperious chief, and Bjørn Ibsen, an insightful anesthesiologist capable of envisioning remedial possibilities that lie beyond the confines of his specialty.

When the hospital is overwhelmed by polio patients, many of them seemingly doomed to die, Ibsen, with Lassen's begrudging blessing, contrives a medical intervention that allows patients to continue breathing as they strive to overcome polio's initial onslaught (See "Vivi Ebert is going to die," page 36).

Aided by a squadron of medical students, who hand ventilate patients around the clock, the doctors at the Blegdam emerge from their polio ordeal better equipped to handle the next medical emergency, whatever it might be. Their innovations in care, tested on the frontlines, "spread across Europe and then into the rest of the world, changing the concept of who could be rescued," writes Wunsch. "The possibilities were suddenly endless."

While the Blegdam and its doctors and patients may occupy center stage, there are numerous other related stories in *The Autumn Ghost*. (It's one of the book's charms.)

“Vivi Ebert was going to die ...”



In Copenhagen, near the end of August 1952, Vivi Ebert came home from school saying she had a headache and went to bed. The next day she complained that she couldn't move her arms and legs well. On 26 August, she had a fever, headache, stiff neck, and some paralysis: the telltale signs of polio.

Vivi's mother called an ambulance, which took her daughter to the Blegdam Hospital. Vivi already had weakness in one arm, but much more concerning, she also had difficulty breathing. Since early July, the hospital had admitted many patients just like Vivi, and almost all of them had died. As her symptoms worsened, the doctors and nurses knew she likely had only a few more hours, or days at most, to live.

The following morning, a doctor examined Vivi, and he noted in her chart that her condition had worsened. A young girl with dark hair and a sweet smile, Vivi had extremely high blood pressure and, as an X-ray revealed, part of her left lung had collapsed. She was struggling more and more to breathe as polio took hold. Vivi was about to become another entry in the Blegdam's ledger of polio deaths.

With so little to lose, Dr. H.C.A. Lassen, the hospital's chief, decided that Vivi would be the test case for a new form of care proposed by Dr. Bjørn Ibsen. A skilled anesthesiologist, Ibsen had observed patients who had died of polio. He felt confident, based on his observations, that the majority of deaths from polio were not due to overwhelming infection of the brain (as doctors assumed) but rather the difficulties with breathing, what was termed “respiratory insufficiency.”

Ibsen's instinct was to do what he did in the operating room to keep people alive while they could not breathe for themselves during surgery. His plan was to bring the care he gave to surgery patients to the bedside of polio patients. First, Vivi would receive a tracheos-

tomy to “protect the airway.” This would avoid the aspiration — the sucking of secretions — into the lungs that was so common in polio patients. The second part to the plan was to give positive pressure ventilation: push air into the lungs, as he did for patients in the operating room.

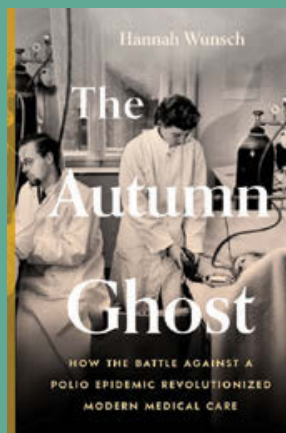
Crucially, Ibsen wasn't proposing the use of iron lungs, which use negative pressure to suck the lungs open. He felt those giant machines were not necessary. He knew from the operating room that he could provide someone with large and steady breaths using only positive pressure. The equipment to do this already existed: a rubber bag, hooked up to a supply of oxygen in a tank, and then connected to a tracheostomy tube in a patient. The anesthesiologist squeezed the bag, pushing oxygen into the lungs, and then on release, the patient exhaled.

Lassen had been skeptical, but he had nothing else to try. He told Ibsen that he could attempt his approach on a patient that he, Lassen, would select. That patient would be Vivi Ebert.

“A failure of a demonstration,” Ibsen wrote later, “would probably confirm the [infectious disease doctors'] belief that the situation was hopeless.” He had one chance to discredit just about everything the doctors and nurses of the Blegdam thought they knew about bulbar polio and the care of such patients.

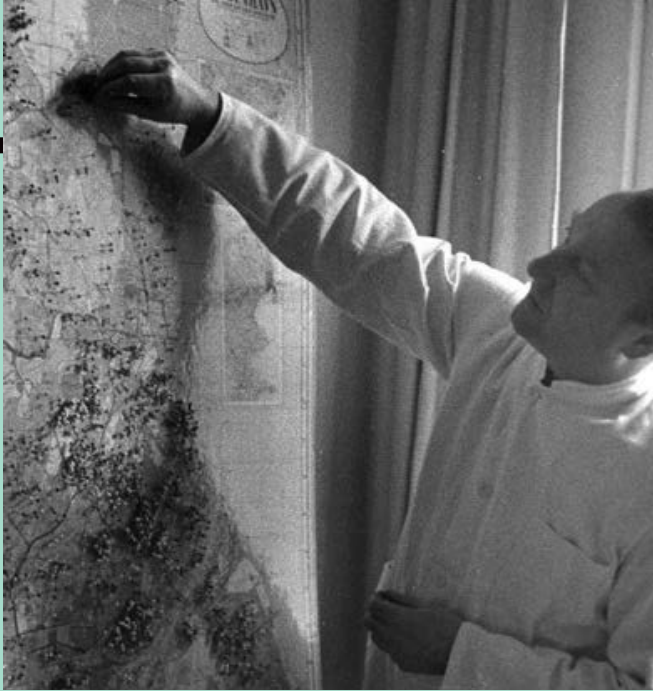
From the time Vivi was wheeled into the room for the tracheostomy at 11:15 a.m. on 27 August, Ibsen cared for her for 18 hours straight, keeping watch and, at every crisis, bringing to bear all his expertise so carefully amassed over the preceding years of medical training and practice. What he was doing was outside of all textbooks. Seated at Vivi's bedside, Ibsen was running an experiment. He was determined to save the girl and convince the clinicians of the Blegdam, and in particular Lassen, that he could save many others.

At 6:40 the next morning, the medical record stated, “The patient's condition is satisfactory.” Ibsen had done it. A child thought to be dying had been stabilized with the use of a tracheostomy and positive pressure ventilation — and without an iron lung. “That I could save the patient's life with such a simple method was one of the most incredible moments of my life,” Ibsen said later. “We had our first polio patient under control.”



Adapted from The Autumn Ghost: How the Battle Against a Polio Epidemic Revolutionized Modern Medical Care, by Hannah Wunsch. Published by Greystone Books Ltd.

During Copenhagen's polio epidemic in 1952, Dr. Henry Cai Alexander Lassen, the chief of the Blegdam Hospital, used colored pushpins and a large map of the Danish city to mark each new occurrence of the dread disease.



Chief among these may be what Wunsch calls the “parallel story”: the pursuit of a polio vaccine. “All [the doctors at the Blegdam] wanted was something that would prevent this entire scenario,” she says, referring to a hospital besieged by polio patients. “We get this development of ventilators and intensive care and all of that only because the doctors don’t have what they actually want, which is

a vaccine.” Readers of *The Autumn Ghost* can expect to follow the race to develop that vaccine, though because, as Wunsch admits, it’s a story that’s been told before, it’s not the focus of her narrative.

● **DESPITE THAT, WUNSCH IS** quick to extol the polio vaccines developed by Jonas Salk and Albert Sabin as among the greatest of medical achievements. “Everybody

I spoke to who lived through that era would say, ‘Thank God for the vaccine,’” recalls Wunsch. “Even the people I interviewed who had polio in 1952, every one of them would say, ‘It didn’t benefit me, but thank God for that vaccine. My children and grandchildren don’t have to worry about polio anymore.’ The gratitude for that shift and that ability to eradicate a disease like polio was always there.”

Which is why Wunsch worries about the pervasive “nonchalance” about polio among some people today, particularly in countries where the disease no longer exists. “The idea that we’re not all interconnected is crazy,” she insists. “Everybody should care about the polio eradication efforts in Pakistan. Because all it takes is one person from that region getting on a plane and ending up in New York at the wrong moment and it all falls apart. It gives me nightmares, the idea that my hospital could see a case of polio. It’s just devastating — so you can’t let up on that vigilance.”

From Wunsch’s perspective, another newly arisen specter looms that also frightens her. “The questioning of basic facts that are scientific, the manipulation of data and studies to say something other than what they say: All of that is very, very scary,” she says. “It feels like we are getting into a sort of factless world where some of these basics are not being accepted.”

It’s not just the mistrust or misuse of science that scares Wunsch, but the potential repercussions of such attitudes and actions. “The world will turn into a very different place if organizations like Rotary, the Gates Foundation, and others that are working to eradicate polio can’t do their job because of too much pushback,” Wunsch says. “I really hope we can figure out a way to reach people and help them understand that vaccines are one of the most extraordinary achievements of the 20th century.”

Time spent reading *The Autumn Ghost* may help accomplish just that. ■

POP QUIZ

How much do you know about Rotary's campaign to end polio?
Test yourself — or stump a clubmate.

START
HERE

1

In how many countries does wild polio remain endemic?

- (A) 1 (B) 2 (C) 3 (D) 4



Which vaccine is primarily used in countries where polio is endemic?

- (A) Inactivated polio vaccine
(B) Injected polio vaccine
(C) Oral polio vaccine
(D) Osmosis polio vaccine

How many children did polio paralyze each year before 1988?

- (A) 100,000 (B) 175,000
(C) 250,000 (D) 350,000

2

How many ways does the polio program do surveillance?

- (A) 1 (B) 2
(C) 3 (D) 4



4

When did Rotary launch the PolioPlus program?

- (A) 1979 (B) 1985
(C) 1988 (D) 1990

5

6

Which WHO region was the most recent to be certified free of wild poliovirus?

- (A) African (AFRO)
(B) Americas (PAHO)
(C) Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO)
(D) South-East Asia (SEARO)



7

What is the name of the newest vaccine approved for fighting variant poliovirus?

- (A) IPV
- (B) nOPV1
- (C) nOPV2
- (D) OPV



11

How many core partners make up the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI)? Bonus point available if you can name them all!

- (A) 4
- (B) 6
- (C) 7
- (D) 8



Who developed the inactivated polio vaccine?

- (A) Marie Curie
- (B) Albert Sabin
- (C) Jonas Salk
- (D) Peter Salk

9

How much does Rotary have to raise each year in End Polio Now donations to get the full 2-to-1 match from the Gates Foundation?

- (A) US \$50 million
- (B) US \$70 million
- (C) US \$100 million
- (D) US \$150 million



Which types of wild polio-virus have been eradicated?

- (A) Types 1 and 2
- (B) Types 1 and 3
- (C) Types 2 and 3
- (D) Types 2 and 4

12

In what country did Rotary first do a polio vaccination campaign?

- (A) Brazil
- (B) Indonesia
- (C) Nigeria
- (D) Philippines

10

13

What is Rotary's primary role in the GPEI?

- (A) advocacy, research, and social media
- (B) fundraising, advocacy, and raising awareness
- (C) media relations, vaccinations, and documentation
- (D) vaccinations, fundraising, and research

ANSWERS

- 1. B (Afghanistan and Pakistan)
- 2. D
- 3. C
- 4. B
- 5. B (environmental surveillance and acute flaccid paralysis surveillance)
- 6. A
- 7. C
- 8. C
- 9. A
- 10. D
- 11. B (Rotary, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Gates Foundation, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance)
- 12. C
- 13. B



TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Born of friendship

Friendship in Rotary often bears fruit that can change the world. When I was Rotary president-elect, I served on the Board of Directors alongside then-Vice President Olayinka “Yinka” Hakeem Babalola from Nigeria. My wife, Susanne, spent time with Yinka’s wife, Preba “Precy” Babalola. Yinka and Precy support The Rotary Foundation, not only as Arch Klumph Society members, Benefactors, and Major Donors but also as Rotary members who are deeply involved in Foundation projects.

Susanne and Precy’s friendship led to their clubs joining forces. For October, as Rotary marks Community Economic Development Month, I thought **Precy Babalola** could best capture the impact of their collaboration in her own words:

“Obuama, Nigeria, was hit hard by COVID-19. Many families, especially women and young adults, were left without stable income or opportunity. The community urgently needed practical support and long-term solutions.

My club, the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt Passport, decided to respond. We partnered with the Rotary E-Club of Hamburg-Connect and our districts to launch a global grant project focused on empowering people with skills that restore hope and dignity.

Over 250 women and young adults were trained in farming fish, poultry, and snails

as well as bead making. Local facilitators led hands-on workshops, equipping participants with skills to start enterprises.

Families are now generating income and mothers can send their children to school. Youths are earning, teaching others, and contributing to the local economy.

Women, once stuck, are now leading their own businesses, training others, and finding a new sense of purpose. The project continues to ripple, creating not just jobs but confident community leaders.”

This is what change looks like when dedicated Rotarians work together with the support of The Rotary Foundation.

Community economic development is an area of powerful projects for many reasons. We have experts in our clubs who know how businesses can strengthen their local economy. Such projects can be adapted nearly anywhere and often show early signs of success.

Our Foundation, too, provides the expertise of an engaged professional staff and the Cadre of Technical Advisers.

What began as dinner conversation led to a lifechanging global grant. Isn’t it remarkable that in Rotary, the friendships we make can create opportunities that transform lives for generations?

HOLGER KNAACK

Foundation trustee chair

SERVICE ABOVE SELF

THE OBJECT OF ROTARY

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

First The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;

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

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

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

THE FOUR-WAY TEST

Of the things we think, say or do:

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

ROTARIAN CODE OF CONDUCT

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

As a Rotarian, I will

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

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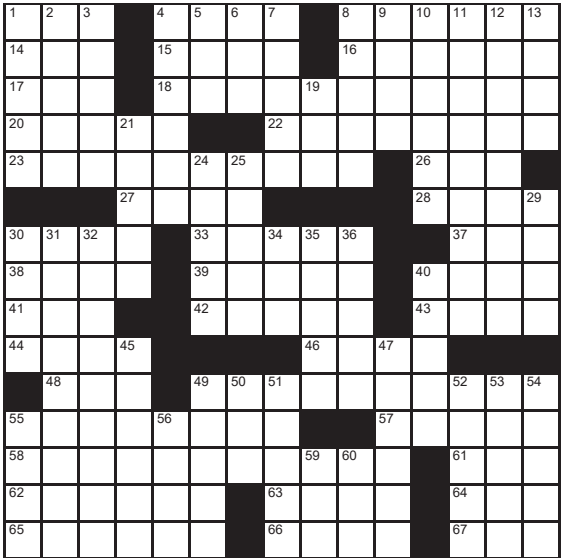
Rotaractors and young Rotarians are leaders at Rotary International Conventions. The newest generation of members, including the ones pictured in Calgary, present onstage, share expertise, and shepherd service projects. They'll set the tone again in Taipei 13-17 June.

CROSSWORD

End it now

By Victor Fleming
Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas

- ACROSS**
- 1 Dict. entries
 - 4 Animal house?
 - 8 Writes, but not in cursive
 - 14 Fury
 - 15 "If all ___ fails ..."
 - 16 Old car's reception aid
 - 17 Caustic soda
 - 18 With 58-Across, a Rotary goal
 - 20 Silences on Zoom
 - 22 Band for toting bullets
 - 23 Start of what Rotarians believe
 - 26 Hosp. areas
 - 27 11,000-foot Italian peak
 - 28 Bread in a bar jar
 - 30 Ally Financial's former name
 - 33 Figure of speech
 - 37 By way of
 - 38 Like drumheads
 - 39 Part 2 of what Rotarians believe
 - 40 Col.'s superior
 - 41 Like 1, 3, and 5
 - 42 How actors should enter
 - 43 Ural River city
 - 44 Juan's half-dozen
 - 46 Letter-shaped bolt holder
 - 48 Be a suitor of
 - 49 End of what Rotarians believe
 - 55 Georgia capital, slangily
 - 57 Digital app that makes a task easier
 - 58 See 18-Across
 - 61 Sabin's dose, initially
 - 62 "Ad astra per ___" (Kansas motto)
 - 63 Jackson ___, Wyoming
 - 64 "Fore!" site
 - 65 John ___ (certain tractors)
 - 66 Bird-food ingredient
 - 67 Abbr. on a golf scorecard
 - 11 Cairo waterway
 - 12 Sudden declines
 - 13 Coin opening
 - 19 Parisian's soul
 - 21 Campaign button word
 - 24 When a football may be snapped
 - 25 "Hello Walls" singer Young
 - 29 Vaccine developer Jonas
 - 30 Sporty '70s cars
 - 31 Degraded
 - 32 Old sound recording
 - 34 *The Lord of the Rings* monster
 - 35 Disney dog
 - 36 Blissful spots
 - 40 "I have the answer!"
 - 45 Metal-fusing alloy
 - 47 Online message service since 1979
 - 49 Machu Picchu builders
 - 50 Amtrak stop (abbr.)
 - 51 Forest walkways
 - 52 Pirate's prize
 - 53 Ran at an easy pace
 - 54 Keebler cookie makers
 - 55 ___ over heels
 - 56 Suffix with million
 - 59 Debt note
 - 60 ___ Miss
- DOWN**
- 1 Sprinter Rudolph who contracted this puzzle's theme as a child
 - 2 Become free of moisture
 - 3 Take care of
 - 4 Runs, informally
 - 5 "I'm ___ ears"
 - 6 Metric start?
 - 7 Steel rod for reinforcement
 - 8 ___ d'Or (Cannes award)
 - 9 ___ *Man*
 - 10 1950 sci-fi book



Solution on opposite page

J. Alfonso L. Katigbak
Chairman of the Board



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