

Philippine Rotary

SEPTEMBER 2025

MAGAZINE

Your Taipei convention guide **page 28**

SERVICE WITH A SMILE

Meet Francesco
Arezzo, your new
RI president

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ROTARY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

TAIPEI, TAIWAN | 13-17 JUNE 2026



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Peace through education

When I stepped into the role of Rotary International president, the moment came swiftly and unexpectedly. It got me thinking how the world can change in an instant, and how Rotary has the power to be a steady force for good in that change. This month, Rotary's Basic Education and Literacy Month, we have a clear call to action: to strengthen the foundation of learning in every community we serve.

Millions of people worldwide remain unable to read. Millions of children lack access to basic education. And yet, we know the solution: sustainable, inclusive, and equitable education, especially for girls and marginalized youths. Literacy is more than the ability to read and write. It is the key to human dignity, economic mobility, and peace. Every book opened, every classroom supported, and every teacher trained becomes a building block of peace.

This year, our message is *Unite for Good*. "Unite" speaks to the strength we find in each other. When we unite our talents and resources — not only among our clubs but across partners, organizations, and communities — we expand our reach. And when we do so consistently over time, we create lasting change. Rotary service cannot be measured only in annual goals. Our work in education must extend beyond a single year. Literacy projects take time to take root, grow, and bear fruit.

Now is the time to think boldly and creatively. New types of clubs can help us engage educators, students, and advocates in new ways. Let us use this month to welcome new members with a passion for education and empower existing ones to lead service projects that reflect local needs. Whether you're building libraries, distributing textbooks, or mentoring students, your actions matter.

Education is also peacebuilding. Every scholarship we provide, every early childhood program we support, every adult literacy class we fund is an act of peace. And Rotary has been building peace in this way for more than a century.

Let us not forget that the fight for literacy is not only about access, it's about equity. It is about ensuring every learner, regardless of background, has the opportunity to reach their potential. And it is about standing together — across borders, languages, and generations — to say that education is a right, not a privilege.

Let's *Unite for Good* by committing to literacy that lasts. Let's dream of a world where every child learns to read. And then, as people of action, let's work together to make that dream a reality.

Together, we can change lives, starting with the power of education. Together, we *Unite for Good*.

FRANCESCO AREZZO

President, Rotary International



▲ ON THE COVER:
The Rotary world has rallied quickly around Francesco Arezzo as RI's leader. Photograph by Monika Lozinska.



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Rotary reduces stress

The global pandemic brought on heightened awareness of mental health issues such as stress, depression and anxiety, which are often stigmatized.

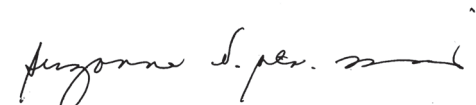
Rotary International leaders are actively working to break down this stigma and create a supportive environment for those affected.

Felix Kingsley Obialo from the Rotary Club of Ibadan Idi-Ishin in Nigeria believes that Rotary's involvement will reduce this stigma and encourage more people to seek help. Darren Hands, president of the Rotary Club of Plympton in England has launched the Don't Bottle It Up! campaign on social media to encourage those with mental health concerns to seek support.

Membership in Rotary, by itself, should be a natural stress reducer. Rotary's focus on service and friendship enhances its members' sense of belonging, reducing feelings of isolation and promoting well-being. Doing acts of kindness not only benefits communities but also reduce stress levels by stimulating the brain's reward centers, resulting in feelings of happiness and fulfillment.

Despite occasional political tensions brought about by elections at the district and higher levels, Rotary should at all times remain a welcoming space where members can find joy, support and a sense of belonging.

Rotary should provide a refuge from the pressures of work and business — a safe place to come home to.



SUE VILLA STA. MARIA
Chairman, PRMFI



“Doing acts of kindness not only benefits communities but also reduces stress levels by stimulating the brain’s reward centers, resulting in feelings of happiness and fulfillment.”

Philippine Rotary

THE MAGAZINE OF CHOICE

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Tapping into Rotary vibrancy

Participating in the handover and induction ceremony of a vibrant Rotary club is truly a heartwarming experience.

With scores of other Rotarians, I witnessed how the Rotary Club of Rizal West, established in 1980, infuses energy and enthusiasm as it propagates our mission of service to humanity. Providing the spark is their President, Cherry 'Ino' Russell, a dynamic Millennial entrepreneur in data management and an international marathon runner, supported by seasoned past presidents, and highly spirited members.

Among some 120 clubs in District 3830, Rizal West holds the distinction of being able to elect a fresh crop of club leaders — President, President-elect, and President-nominee, without having to rely on those who have previously served to step up anew. This is, of course, enabled by their vigorous recruitment efforts buttressed by a purposive Rotary education and immersion program.

Building on their own best practices, the club membership is segmented into four groups. This year, they adopted the term Regatta for each of these groups to simulate a contest among boats. Each Regatta team is assigned to host a club meeting or lead in executing a service project, thereby ensuring that the work is well-distributed and enabling each team to demonstrate and share unique and innovative ways of concretizing Rotary service.

Gender balance is another key element: 25 men, 23 women. Eight out of 16 presidents since 2010 are women, indicating that indeed, there is gender equality in club membership and leadership.

Past District Governors Jaime 'Jimmy' Cura and Alfredo 'Al' Montecillo have provided steady leadership in this exemplary club.

In my book, the Rotary Club of Rizal West is a model worth emulating by members of Rotary International that truly desire to render unalloyed community service. Mabuhay!

Sonny Coloma
SONNY COLOMA
Editor-in-chief



“With scores of other Rotarians, I witnessed how the Rotary Club of Rizal West infuses energy and enthusiasm as it propagates our mission of service to humanity... a model worth emulating by members of Rotary International that truly desire to render unalloyed community service.”

DISTRICT 3800

1st Service Project Expo makes waves

by Prisco S. Rivera, Jr.

On Aug. 24, 2025, District 3800 etched a new milestone in its history with its inaugural Service Project Expo at SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City. This event, championed by District Governor (DG) Gina T. Sanchez and District Service Projects Chair (DSPC) Noel Cuico, highlighted the district's commitment to Rotary's Seven Areas of Focus.

The Expo drew some an 1,350 registered Rotarians and guests. It showcased 127 creatively designed booths representing 85 participating clubs, each presenting innovative and impactful projects.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was led by DG Sanchez and The Rotary Foundation (TRF) Trustee Dennis Shore. Following the ceremony, guests were welcomed into a vibrant exhibition hall brimming with creative, interactive booths that brought to life Rotary's diverse service initiatives.

Following the call to order, District Governor Nominee (DGN) SherryLou Khosiking led a heartfelt invocation. District Secretary Carla Dejerer warmly acknowledged the distinguished guests, including TRF Trustee Shore, End Polio Now Coordinator Marilou Co, Regional Membership Coordinator Anna Louisa Bumagat, Regional Public Image Coordinator Mildred Vitangcol, Assistant RPICs Rhodora Gonzalez and Jerry Ang, District Governor Veronica Yu of District 3780 and Past District Governor Johnny Gaw Yu.

Past Governors Florian Enriquez and Milo Lucenario as well as District Governor-Elect Rhian Virrey and District Governor Nominee Lotlot Alvarez along with several past and future District Governors and their spouses, district officers, and local government officials.

DSPC Cuico officially welcomed all guests and attendees. He noted that each booth represents impactful projects that have touched lives and transformed communities, fostering a deeper understanding of what Rotary truly stands for.

In his message, TRF Trustee Shore expressed admiration for the dedication

shown by every participating which reflects strength, unity and innovation.

DG Sanchez emphasized: "When people with good hearts come together, amazing things happen. This Expo...(is) more than an exhibition of projects; it is a celebration of compassion, of collaboration, and of what it truly means to unite for good." Echoing this year's theme, Unite for Good, she concluded: "Rotary shows us that unity is powerful. When clubs work together, when we join hands with partners and communities, our reach extends far beyond what any of us could achieve alone."

In the showcase session, RC Pasig spotlighted its Emergency Hotline Response Program; RC Upper East Side Antipolo, Roots to Riches Grape Growing Workshop; and RC Rizal Premier, Water Filtration System Project.

Past President Ophel Bello and Senior Assistant Governor Roland Cardinoza served as program emcees.

Indeed, this Expo sent a clear and powerful message: when Rotarians unite, we do not just imagine a better world: we build it, together.

The author is Charter President of the Rotary Club of San Mateo Highlands. ■

1st SERVICE PROJECT EXPO WINNERS

The highlight of the Expo afternoon was the announcement of winners for the Best Booth Awards, recognizing creativity, impact, and presentation: The winners:

Single Booth Category

- RC Rizal Mideast
- RC Suburban East Rizal
- RC Passport One Marikina

Medium Booth Category

- RC San Juan Del Monte
- RC Antipolo East
- RC San Mateo

Large Booth Category

- 4th Place – RC Malabon
- 3rd Place – RC Upper Eastside Antipolo
- 2nd Place – RC Pasig South
- 1st Place – RC San Juan Supreme





Top row: DG Gina Sanchez is joined by TRF Trustee Dennis Shore and other dignitaries and organizers at the entrance of the Service Projects Expo at the Mega Trade Hall 2 of SM Mega Mall.

Second row: TRF Trustee Dennis Shore, DG Gina Sanchez, and Zone 10A regional leaders during the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the Expo; TRF Trustee Shore, DG Gina Sanchez, and RPIC Vitangcol check out the participating booths; A festive air during the opening program.

Third row: The first-place winning booth in the large category Best Booth was this back-to-back booth of RC San Juan Supreme featuring its 'Watch Your Bottle' and 'Supreme Store' service projects; The L.E.T.S. READ booth of RC Pasig South was the second placer in the large booth category; The Tindahan Square booth of RC Upper East Side Antipolo was the third-best in the large category.

Fourth row: The booth of RC Malabon showcased its 'Butterfly Haven', 'Rotary Peace Poles' and Global Grant projects, and won 4th place for best booth - large category; RC San Juan Del Monte's booth featuring its 'Bouyanihan' and 'Seagrass' environmental projects was among the best in the medium-size category; RC San Mateo's 'Kariton ni Pedro' service project booth was also a winner in the medium size category.

Bottom row: RC Rizal Mideast's 'Crochet of Hope' was recognized in the single booth category; Group photo of the h and ardwor-king District Service Projects Expo Team led by Chair PP Noel Cuico with DG Gina Sanchez.





RC METRO EAST TAYTAY

Adopt-a-school

On Aug. 26, 2025, the Rotary Club of Metro East Taytay (RCMET) officially turned over its Canopy for Learners and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Project to San Juan Elementary School Annex, Taytay, Rizal. This milestone project, held under Rotary’s Adopt-A-School Program, marked a celebration of partnership, service, and a shared commitment to improving education.

Turned over by Rotarians to their beneficiaries were: a Canopy for Learners that provides a safe, weatherproof communal area; and a refurbished WASH facility promoting health, sanitation and hygiene among students.

Additionally, they delivered three ceiling fans, lighting with bulbs, and electrical outlets, ensuring that the new space is cooler, well-ventilated, and

functional even after school hours.

The initiative was led by RCMET President Donato “Don” G. Santiago, supported by the dedicated members of the club. The Service Project Chair was PP Ariel Espino, with Rolando Panlaqui as Project Owner and Milagros Javier as Project Coordinator.

On the school’s side, Principal Dr. Melchor T. Tagudando, teachers, students, and the School Parent-Teacher Association (SPTA) actively participated. The event also showcased the strong collaboration between Rotary and the Department of Education (DepEd).

The project addressed pressing needs of the school community. Previously, students had to study under trees with only temporary shelter for cover, and their washing facility was old and unsafe. The lack of shelter and proper sanitation negatively affected learning, comfort,

and health. Hence, RCMET provided learners with a safer, more conducive environment.

The initiative also aligned with Rotary’s Seven Areas of Focus, particularly, Basic Education and Literacy, Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene, as well as Community Development.

More than infrastructure, the Rotary markers and signages installed at the site serve as a public reminder of accountability, transparency, and service. With over 1,437 students and 28 teachers benefiting daily, the project demonstrates a holistic, multi- impact approach that can be replicated in other schools across Taytay and beyond.

Truly, this initiative reflects Rotary’s mission to Unite for Good, showing that when communities and Rotary work hand in hand, lasting change is possible. ■

RC ANTIPOLLO EAST

Kulay at silong

On September 5, 2025, the Rotary Club of Antipolo East (RCAE) brought joy and protection to 230 young learners of Libis Elementary School in Sitio San Ysiro, Antipolo City, through its “Kulay at Silong” project. The initiative was held in celebration of Rotary’s Basic Education and Literacy Month.

The project was spearheaded by President Maria Cristina Rodriguez, together with dedicated club members and spouses, who worked hand in hand to ensure that every child experienced both happiness and care.

Kulay at Silong focused on two meaningful components.

- **Kulay (Colors)** RCAE distributed coloring books generously donated by District Governor Gina Sanchez, along with additional school supplies and coloring materials to inspire creativity and imagination among the students.

- **Silong (Shelter)** Rotarians provided customized umbrellas with the RCAE logo to students from Grades 1 to 6, symbolizing protection, safety, and comfort as they make their way to school, rain or shine. This also served as a meaningful public image initiative, spreading awareness of Rotary’s presence in the community.

The project was more than just a one-day activity; it was a reminder that education is not limited to books and classrooms but also about creating spaces of joy, providing comfort in small yet impactful ways, and ensuring that children feel cared for and supported in their everyday lives.

Antipolo East Rotarians look forward to continuing similar initiatives that blend creativity, compassion, and collaboration, proving that even the simplest gestures, when done with love, can transform lives, brighten communities, and unite people for the greater good. ■



PHILIPPINE COLLEGE OF ROTARY GOVERNORS

PCRG moves the needle

by Didet Santiago

The Philippine College of Rotary Governors (PCRG) held its handover and induction ceremonies for its new set of officers on Aug. 29, 2025 at the New Royce Hotel and Casino in Clark Freeport Zone, Pampanga.

The occasion was a celebration for the Philippine Governors of Rotary Zone 10A covering the entire Philippines as a testament to their shared interests, teamwork, diversity and sense of community.

In his message as outgoing PCRG chair, Past District Governor Odie Tarriela cited the resiliency of the institution “instilling upon its members the values of service with purpose, passion, integrity and enthusiasm.”

An incumbent member of the House of Representatives, he turned over the reins with pride of an accomplished vision for the institution and the Philippine Rotary as a whole.

Newly-inducted Chair Ann Lorenzana rallied fellow Rotarians “to help ensure (that) the Rotary we deeply value continues to grow and serve not just for this year but for the years to come.”

She noted that Rotarians being People of Action, it is well for them to celebrate “what we have achieved, what we can do next, and (that) we have what it takes to achieve more.”

“Let us also together honor our past and embrace the future,” she said, amid the backdrop of Rotary’s theme Unite for Good.

Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Undersecretary Josef Angelo Martires, also a Rotarian, inducted the new PCRG Board, led by Chair Ann of the Rotary Club of Downtown Olongapo, District 3790.

Serving with the PCRG Chair are Executive Vice Chair William Delloro Jr. (D3820); NCR Chair Pope Solis (D3800); Luzon Chair Noli Garcia (D3770); VisMin Chair Twinkle Gamboa (D3860); Secretary Cha-Cha Camacho (D3830); Assistant Secretary John Michael Ng (D3850); Treasurer Florian Enriquez (D3780); Auditor Joyce Ambray (D3810); and Public Relations Officer Hubert Quiblat (D3870).

In his keynote speech, Undersecretary Martires shared the correlation of service in Rotary and in government, where they are united in building stronger and self-reliant communities.

The evening’s changing of the guards was a delightful event and a time for fellowship attended by past, present and future District Governors, Rotarians and guests who were treated with sumptuous dishes and a modern interpretation of Filipino dances. ■

The author is Past President of RC Downtown Olongapo and Past Assistant Governor, D3790.





Top row:
PCRGR Board RY 2025-2026 with PRID Guiller and PDG Odie. Serving with the PCRGR Chair PDG Ann Lorenzana are Executive Vice Chair William Delloro Jr. (D3820); NCR Chair Pope Solis (D3800); Luzon Chair Noli Garcia (D3770); VisMin Chair Twinkle Gamboa (D3860); Secretary Cha-Cha Camacho (D3830); Assistant Secretary John Michael Ng (D3850); Treasurer Florian Enriquez (D3780); Auditor Joyce Ambray (D3810); and Public Relations Officer Hubert Quiblat (D3870).



Second row:
Outgoing Chair Odie and Incoming Chair Ann; PCRGR Board with DAR Usec Josef Angelo Martires; PCRGR Chair PDG Ann Lorenzana with Immediate Past Chair PDG Odie Tariela and Past PCRGR Chair PDG Anna Bumagat.



Bottom row:
PCRGR Chair Ann Lorenzana; PDG Mark Go; PDGs Odie, Jess, Ann, Cha-Cha, Dindo, Noli, Riz.



RC TAGUM NORTH

Lifesaving mammography

by Arnold M. Nicolas

In Tagum City, Philippines, a quiet revolution in women's health is underway.

Thanks to a \$89,000 Global Grant from The Rotary Foundation, three Rotary clubs in the Philippines, supported by four partner clubs in South Korea, have joined hands in this project aptly named Gift of Awareness: Mammography for Early Detection involves more than the donation of a machine. It is an investment in time, survival, and dignity for women who, until now, lacked access to critical breast cancer screening.

The initiative was spearheaded by the Rotary Club of Tagum North with co-host clubs RC Tagum and RC Tagum Golden LACES, and the international support of RC Pohang-Shin, RC Gyeongju East, RC Sangju-Central, and RC Jeomchon Joongang from District 3630 in Korea.

It was approved by The Rotary Foundation in record time and officially launched on August

Clockwise from top left: United Rtn. Jewan Park delivers a message on behalf of the International Partners from Rotary District 3630, highlighting the spirit of global collaboration and shared service; A radiology technician with a patient; Ribbon-cutting ceremony (L-R) IPP Kevin C. Rubinos, IPP Maria Martha B. Conde, PAG Arnold M. Nicolas, Dr. Arnel R. Florendo, Pres. Keziah M. Gentugaya, City Administrator Edgar de Guzman, District Grants Chair Fortunato F. Uy, IPP Eduardo C. Dinglasan, and PAG Jewan Park of District 3630.

14, 2025, during a turnover ceremony in Tagum attended by city officials, health workers, and Rotary leaders.

This initiative is more than just a machine it's about saving lives through early detection. The ultimate goal is to empower women through awareness and access."

Though Tagum is a rapidly growing city of nearly 300,000, it lacked a public mammography facility prior to the project. Women often had to travel long distances and pay out of pocket for screenings.

This barrier to early detection placed women at greater risk of late-stage cancer diagnosis, a reality well known to Engr. Melina Avila, a breast cancer survivor and founding president of the Pink Tagum Cancer Survivors Club.

"This isn't just about equipment," she said during the turnover. "It's about giving women the



Top row: Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the mammogram machine. From left to right: IPP Kevin Rubinos, PAG Arnold Nicolas, Dr. Arnel R. Florendo, Pres. Jun Coquilla, Jr., IPP Maria Martha Conde, Engr. Melina Avila, Mr. Edgar De Guzman, Pres. Keziah Gentugaya, IPP Eduardo Dinglasan, Jr., PAG Jewan Park, and District Grants Chair Chi Uy.



Second row: Engr. Melina Avila, Founding President of the Pink Tagum Cancer Survivors Club, shares her testimony during the turnover ceremony of the donated mammogram machine; District 3860 Grants Chair and Past District Secretary Fortunato F. Uy delivers a message on behalf of the District Rotary Foundation during the turnover ceremony; Dr. Arnel R. Florendo, Tagum City Health Officer, delivers his acceptance message, assuring that the mammogram machine will be well-maintained and maximized for the benefit of the community.



Third row: RC Tagum North together with PAG Jewan Park of D3630, Republic of Korea and D3860 Grants Chair Fortunato F. Uy, during the turnover ceremony of the mammogram machine; (L-R) PAG Arnold M. Nicolas, PAG Jewan Park, PDS Chi Uy, IPP Kevin C. Rubinos, IPP Maria Martha B. Baura, and IPP Eduardo C. Dinglasan; PAG Jewan Park, IPP Eduardo C. Dinglasan, Jr., Radtech Trainer Richelle Joy Maunes, Tagum City Health Radtech Ella Uy, PAG Arnold M. Nicolas, and PDG Chi Uy — united leaders and experts fueling the impact of the mammography initiative across D3860 and D3630.

chance to fight and the hope to survive. Every image captured could mean a life saved.”

Rotary service model

The project reflects Rotary’s Areas of Focus, particularly Disease Prevention and Treatment. It also exemplifies the best of Rotary service: needs-based planning, sustainable design, and international cooperation.

Key Rotary leaders who championed the project include Immediate Past District Governors Caroline L. Andrade (D3860) and Kyung Hee Kim (D3630); Stephen Chian, Rotary Foundation Chair, D3860; and Jong Youl Lee, Rotary Foundation Chair, D3630.

The mammography machine is now housed at La Filipina Primary Health Care Facility, Tagum City, managed by the Tagum City Health Office, and serves as a permanent public resource for free screenings, particularly for women aged 40 and older.

More than a machine

The Gift of Awareness is not only about diagnostics it also includes: community education on breast cancer; training for local health professionals; ongoing support for survivors and at-risk

women; and partnerships with local oncologists for treatment referrals

What began as a local vision is now a replicable model for other Rotary districts worldwide. It proves what’s possible when grassroots needs meet international solidarity when compassion is powered by Rotary’s global network and commitment to Service Above Self. ■

The author is the editor of the D3860 Governor’s Monthly Letter and Rotary Friendship Exchange Chair. He is a Past President of RC Tagum North.

Quick Facts:

Gift of Awareness Project

Global Grant No.: GG2574662

Total Budget: \$88,973.84 (approx. PHP 5 million)

Lead Club: Rotary Club of Tagum North (D3860)

International Partners: 4 Rotary Clubs from District 3630, South Korea

Beneficiary: La Filipina Primary Health Care Facility, Tagum City

Target: Women aged 40+, underserved populations

Key Outcomes: Free mammography services, education campaigns, survivor support

RC TAGUM NORTH

Improving reading skills

by Arnold Nicolas

In celebration of Rotary International's Basic Education and Literacy Month, the Rotary Club of Tagum North, in partnership with its sister club, the Rotary Club of Godeok, District 3620, Republic of Korea, proudly turned over Phase 2 of the Reading Hub Project to Mankilam Elementary School.

The turnover ceremony was held with the presence of distinguished guests, including: Dr. Maria Fe D. Sibuan, SDS Representative/OIC and Math Education Program Supervisor; Francisca R. Padlan, SGOD Chief Representative and Education Program Supervisor; Dr. Nila L. Digal, Public Schools District Supervisor (PSDS); and Dr. Josefina B. Palaca, SGOD Supervisor.

The Reading Hub was formally received by Mrs. Miraluz O. Panaligan, School Head of Mankilam Elementary School, with attendance from Rotarians of the Rotary Club of Tagum North and the school's dedicated teaching staff.

The Reading Hub Phase 1 was initially funded through a Rotary District Grant via The Rotary Foundation, with additional support from Past President Rommel B. Gomito. With the success of Phase 1, Phase 2 focuses on integrating digital learning tools to further enhance literacy and learning.

New features of the Reading Hub include: a 55-inch Google TV for streaming educational videos and online reading materials; a dedicated computer set complete with headphones and speakers for individualized learning;

a curated collection of storybooks with QR codes linking to audio narrations for mobile listening; upgraded tables and chairs to provide a comfortable reading space; two new stand fans, complementing existing wall-mounted fans for improved ventilation; and security frills to ensure the safety of equipment after school hours.

As part of its literacy campaign, the Rotary Club of Tagum North held a Storytelling Activity on September 3, 2025, engaging 29 Grade 1 learners in an inspiring session led by Dr. Nila Digal. The storytelling experience sparked imagination and excitement among the young readers, furthering the mission to instill a love for books at an early age. ■



From top: Rotarians of the Rotary Club of Tagum North led by Club President Jason James S. Ebdao and Project Chair PAG Arnold M. Nicolas, together with DepEd Tagum City Division OIC SDS Dr. Maria Fe D. Sibuan, School Head Mrs. Miraluz O. Panaligan, and the dedicated educators of Mankilam Elementary School during the ceremonial turnover of the newly established Reading Hub; Ceremonial turnover of reading materials successfully held officially received by DepEd Tagum City Division and Mankilam Elementary School to support young learners; United for a cause Tagum North Rotarians, DepEd Tagum City Division officials, and Mankilam Elementary School stand together in the name of literacy and learning; More than just books the new Reading Hub boasts modern e-learning equipment, Google TV, QR-coded stories, and colorful, kid-friendly furniture to foster a love for reading.





Top row: A moment of inspiration: PSDS Dr. Nila L. Digal engages young minds through storytelling before the official turnover of reading materials on September 3, 2025; Rotary in action Pres. Jason James S. Ebdao takes part in the storytelling session, making the Reading Hub turnover a day to remember.



Second row: Promoting reading comprehension through interactive storytime Past President Rommel B. Gomito and President Jason James S. Ebdao connect with Mankilam Elementary students during the reading session; Blending tradition with innovation Past Asst. Gov. Jose Alvic P. Suaybague reads Pinocchio using QR codes on his mobile, making stories more accessible.



Bottom row: Instilling a culture of reading GML Editor Arnold M. Nicolas supports learners as they build strong reading habits during the session; Empowering learners through technology PAG Charles Aldwin M. Carpio demonstrates proper computer use with interactive e-learning.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The most valuable currency

*Neighbors are helping neighbors
with a time-tested idea: the time bank*

In a quiet corner of Northern California, among the misty orchards and rolling vineyards that power the region's rich agricultural economy, a curious kind of wealth is quietly accumulating. It doesn't shine like gold or flow like cash. It's not tracked on Wall Street or stored in Swiss vaults. But for those who trade in it, it may be the most precious currency of all: time.

When Michael Fels and his partner, Jesada "Wee" Simla, wanted to learn how to make butter-laced croissants, they didn't turn to online videos or enroll in a pricey cooking class. Instead, they posted a request on their local time bank in the city of Sebastopol, 50 miles north of San Francisco. Soon, a retired professional chef invited them into his kitchen, where they spent an afternoon rolling dough and laughing together, an experience that yielded more than just pastries. "He really was a master chef," Fels recalls, smiling as he flips through photos from the day of flour-dusted smiles, crispy crescents, joy captured in crumb and crust.

This, Fels explains, is what a time bank is all about. "You give an hour of your time and earn an hour in return," he says. "And sometimes, what you get back is so much more."

Time banks operate on a premise that feels both old-fashioned and quietly revolutionary: that everyone has something to offer and that everyone's time and skills are valued equally. In this benevolent economy, an hour spent fixing a neighbor's

faucet is worth the same as an hour of tax prep or Thai cooking.

In brief, a time bank does with time what other banks do with money: It stores and trades it. People receive credits — typically measured in hours — when they provide a service to another time bank member. Those cashing in credits for a service have their account debited. Through an online platform, registered users can offer and request services and log their credits and debits.

Money isn't exchanged, though members might agree to cover expenses such as supplies or gas money. The system is flexible, allowing people to offer as much or as little time as they want and even the option to donate their credit hours to a friend or a community pot.

Thousands of time banks with several hundred thousand members have been established in at least 48 countries, stretching from the rural villages of Senegal to bustling cities in Japan, from China, New Zealand, Malaysia, Argentina, and Brazil to countries throughout Europe with millions of hours exchanged. In the United States alone, more than 500 local networks are helping more than 40,000 members reimagine what it means to belong, to be needed, and to give back. Some time banks specialize in clearly defined missions, such as a focus on support for parents of children with disabilities or to provide eldercare and hospice services to fill a need other organizations can't address. There are even time banks that aim to reduce recidivism for juvenile deten-

Interested
in joining or
starting a time
bank? Visit
timebanks.org.



Clockwise from top: Rotarian Michael Fels (right) and his partner, Jesada "Wee" Simla, learn to make croissants through their local time bank; time bank members volunteer at a repair café.

tion and help with social reentry for people leaving prison, on the belief that it may support their well-being and strengthen their relationships and social ties to their community.

In Sebastopol, a town of just over 7,000 people, the local time bank boasts 300 members. Fels, an author and playwright, offers his expertise in editing, and his partner, Simla, who hails from Thailand, volunteers rolling authentic Thai spring rolls. Others exchange rides to the airport, plumbing repairs, or a few hours of company on a lonely afternoon.

For Fels, the president of the Rotary Club of Sebastopol Sunrise, his engagement with Rotary and the time bank go hand in hand: "The idea of both is to bring the community closer together." His Rotary club

focuses on community service, and in a recent survey, more than half of its 40 members overwhelmingly noted community service as the most important aspect of their membership. "We might help a member with some house repairs they can't manage on their own," Fels says, offering an example of where the time bank and Rotary overlap.

He learned about the time bank through his friend David Gill, Sebastopol's time bank coordinator and unofficial time tycoon. Gill has 384 hours in his "savings" account, "but I haven't recorded any of my hours since 2022," he says. "I probably need to record another 750!" Gill likes to offer his expertise with computer programming, editing, and financial planning. In return, he

Time banks explained

What are time banks?

Time banking is a system of exchange or bartering of services, such as babysitting, basic home repairs, or rides to the store. Time, rather than money, is the unit of account.

How do they work?

Time bank members earn an hour of credit for every hour they spend helping someone. The person receiving the service has their account debited by an equal amount. All skills are valued equally. An hour spent fixing a neighbor's faucet is worth the same as an hour of tax prep or Thai cooking.

Is there a physical bank?

No. Registered members use an online platform to offer and request services and to log their credits and debits. No money is exchanged, though members will often cover expenses such as supplies or gas money. The system is flexible, allowing participants to offer as much or as little time as they want and even the option to donate their credit hours to a friend or a community pot.

Do they have other benefits?

Participants say the reciprocal giving has led to friendships and social connections along with a greater sense that everyone has meaningful experience and skills to offer.

asks for help when he needs a ride to the airport or to transport heavy furniture. “Steve who lives on the next block drove me and my partner to the Santa Rosa airport. Ken fixed the ice maker in our refrigerator, and Elaine did some electrical work,” he says, rattling off a few of the many examples.

If he had called professional repair and taxi services, the expenses would have been significant. However, the interest, so to speak, goes beyond the value of a mere transaction. The time banks are building social capital. “I’ve made wonderful friends I wouldn’t have met otherwise, and we now invite each other to our garden parties,” says Gill. “It’s about being a part of the community. You can’t put a price on that.”

Gill came to the time bank like most neighbors: through a whisper, a flyer, a friend. The semiretired health care administrator immediately thought it was a great idea and started helping out with coordination, and before long, he became the heartbeat of the operation. Now, he banks his hours with the quiet confidence of someone who knows their value — not in dollars, but in something deeper: “I think this might be the richest I’ve ever felt.”

Many time banks are volunteer community projects, but the one in Sebastopol is funded by the city and operates under the nonprofit status of the Community Cultural Center. Some cities find that support for time banks more than pays for itself in the services their members provide for populations like older adults. Time bank members in St. Gallen, Switzerland, for example, regularly help older residents run errands, shop for groceries, get to the doctor, or simply find company — all of which can ease demand on government-funded services.



BY THE NUMBERS

48

Countries that have time banks

500,000+

Time bank members around the world

\$29

Average value of a volunteer hour in the U.S. in 2022

Time bankers beautify the library grounds for the California city of Sebastopol. The idea of time as a bankable currency goes back several centuries.

After all, time is money. “Every volunteer hour [in the U.S.] is valued around \$29,” explains Krista Wyatt, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit TimeBanks.Org, which helps volunteers establish time banks all around the world. “Now think about the thousands of dollars a city saves when hundreds of citizens serve their community for free.”

The idea of time as a bankable currency goes back several centuries to the labor theories of early economists. In the U.S., civil rights lawyer Edgar Cahn rediscovered the idea of time banks while looking for ways to fight poverty in the

early 1980s after money for social programs dried up.

Today, time banks are like the 2.0 version of what used to happen organically in small communities: Neighbors helped raise barns and children alike. But in an increasingly atomized world, those natural support systems have frayed. Michael Fels sees the time bank as a way to repair them.

And maybe that’s the deepest truth of time banking: It fosters human connection and the quiet transformation of time into care, beauty, and belonging. Given freely, time — like kindness — comes back tenfold. — MICHAELA HAAS

Short takes

The 2027 Rotary Convention will no longer be held in Honolulu because its main convention venue is being renovated.

The deadline to submit breakout session proposals for the 2026 Rotary Convention is 17 October. Learn more at on.rotary.org/breakout-sessions.

A new Rotary Fellowship focused on rum was recognized in June.



PROFILE

When disaster strikes

A Rotaractor in Switzerland spreads the mission of ShelterBox

Vincent Menne
Rotaract
Club of Bern,
Switzerland

One day at a Christmas market in Germany, a few men standing in a gigantic barrel selling mulled wine caught the curious eye of Vincent Menne. A sign with a Rotary logo was attached to the barrel. “Rotary? Is that a wine brand?” Menne asked. The men laughed and explained that they were raising money for polio eradication. One year later, Menne was standing in that same barrel selling wine to raise money for ShelterBox, Rotary’s project partner in disaster relief.

“ShelterBox has been around for 25 years. We’ve helped over 3 million people in over 100 countries,” says Menne, a law student who represents Rotaract on the board for ShelterBox Switzerland, connecting other Rotaractors with the nonprofit. “ShelterBox itself is a great organization, but what really enables our work is the partnership with Rotary.”

Menne says Rotary members throughout the world are often the first point of contact for ShelterBox after a disaster, helping to quickly analyze the damage and use their connections to local governments. “It all comes down to having good communication inside of a great team,” he says. “To see that people are motivated helps you get engaged again.”

ShelterBox Switzerland’s role is primarily raising funds to aid other countries faced with disaster. Menne believes Rotary can help ShelterBox reach even more people to increase and distribute this aid.

“Anyone can be struck by disaster, and the people that can give that urgent aid are people that were not hit by disaster, which is just luck,” he says. “Using this fortune to support others is a no-brainer to me.” — JP SWENSON



The Rotary Learning Center has an improved mobile app. Download RotaryLearn, which replaces GoLearn, from your device’s app store.

Nominations for the Alumni Association of the Year Award, which honors chartered associations of former Rotary program participants, are due 15 September. Learn more at rotary.org/awards.

People of action around the globe

By Brad Webber



Peru

In the western Amazon, the Rotary Club of Iquitos Amazonas organized a seminar in January to educate members of other Rotary clubs about the state of the area's schools. Two District 4465 leaders, Doris Alván and Fernando Del Aguila, enlisted a well-known educator in the area, Josefa Ríos Gil, to share with Rotarians what they can do to assist educators. In May, the Iquitos Amazonas club finished one related initiative, a district grant-supported teen empowerment project that taught young people to make earrings sold at eco-lodges near Lake Zungarococha. The club also provided school supplies to primary schools in the area.



39%

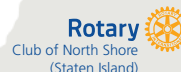
Share of Peruvian entrepreneurs who are women

United States

Prom is an expensive rite of passage, with purchases of gowns, tuxedos, flowers, meals, and transportation. In New York City, the Rotary Club of North Shore (Staten Island) is helping students through its "Cinderella/Cinderella" project. The entire 25-member club solicits new and gently used formal attire, some of which is purchased new by Rotarians. In April, students from across the borough are invited to choose from about 200 free dresses and suits, as well as shoes and accessories, so they're ready for prom season. The project was started in 2024 by then-President Suzanne Demetrio and is led by members Stephanie Accardo and Regina Boukhvalova. "We believe no student should miss out due to financial hardship," says Demetrio. "We are giving young people the chance to feel special and confident on one of the biggest nights of their lives."

\$919

Average spent per student on proms in 2015



Croatia

The Rotary Club of Zagreb International organizes regular treks for members and friends. The club, says immediate Past President Petra Pungercar, had “noticed our members were not as connected and focused as they once were.” So the group conceived of the hikes as a way to reconnect and motivate members while also raising money for the club’s signature project, a mentoring initiative. Their inaugural hike took members of the country’s only English-speaking club through the Slapnica Valley near Zagreb in October. They walked in Budapest during a trip to Hungary, and in June they strolled beside the Kamačnik River in Croatia’s mountainous Gorski Kotar region. “Relaxed, happy, and laughing, it was an incredible experience,” the club posted on Facebook.



10%

Land designated for national and nature parks in Croatia

Rotary
Club of Zagreb International

17 million

People affected by the 2025 earthquake in Myanmar

Myanmar

After an earthquake of magnitude 7.7 struck Myanmar in March, killing more than 3,700 people and injuring many more, the Rotary Club of Yangon coordinated a relief effort both at home and at the epicenter near Mandalay, about 400 miles away. The club gathered supplies donated by its members, Mandalay Rotarians, and other Rotary clubs in neighboring countries, notably the Rotary Club of Bangkok South in Thailand. In May, a District 3350 delegation to Myanmar brought water purification systems, temporary shelters, and thousands of hot meals. The district committed to providing long-term recovery assistance, including a tube well in Sein Pan, a hard-hit ward in Mandalay. “The project reminded us that Rotary’s strength lies not only in delivering aid but in showing up together across borders with compassion and commitment,” says Thordur Adalsteinsson, a member of the Bangkok club that helped. “The partnership between our club, Rotary Myanmar, and District 3350 brought tangible relief to those in urgent need, but even more importantly, it brought hope and human connection in a time of crisis.”



India

During the early stages of a global grant project to support mothers and their children, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the Rotary Club of Hiranandani Estate in Maharashtra state to reimagine the enterprise. Rotarians pivoted to organize vaccination camps, distribute emergency food, and establish basic health care. The three-year effort reached more than 6,000 people across four communities in the city of Navi Mumbai. The club partnered with the Rotary Club of Metropolitan Lubbock, Texas, on the nearly \$50,000 global grant, which also provided 12 industrial sewing machines and offered training in their use. Namrataa Srivastav, project director, lauds the program as a “milestone, opening doors for future collaborations between Rotary and prestigious social service institutions.”

26,076

Home visits by community health workers in the Navi Mumbai project

Rotary
Club of Hiranandani Estate



Rotary
Club of Yangon





out of the gate

With just two weeks' notice, Francesco Arezzo confidently takes the reins of Rotary

By Etelka Lehoczky

Photograph by Monika Lozinska

In the short walk between Francesco Arezzo's makeshift office in the BMO Centre at the Rotary International Convention in Calgary and a patio outside it, enthusiastic Rotarians stop him no fewer than a dozen times.

With a warm smile, Italy's Arezzo thanks two sergeants-at-arms from India, hugs and jokes with a past RI director, and poses for a selfie with a group of Rotarians from Korea.

It's the day before the start of the convention, and while all Rotary presidents draw well-wishers, there's another reason why everybody is clamoring to meet Arezzo and his wife, Anna Maria Arezzo-Criscione: He'd been selected to be the 2025-26 Rotary president less than a week earlier.

On the night of 14 June, Arezzo, a member of the Rotary Club of Ragusa in Sicily, was sitting with his Rotary friends at his district conference when he learned of his new role. Rotary's Board of Directors had reached the decision at a special session after the unexpected resignation of Mário César Martins de Camargo due to personal reasons and business obligations at home in Brazil.

Since the news hadn't been officially announced, Arezzo couldn't tell anyone. But soon, he noticed phones coming out all over the room. "When the news arrived on social media at about 11 p.m., we were in the middle of the gala dinner," he says. "You can imagine more than 400 Rotarians all finding out on their phones. It was quite an unforgettable moment. All of a sudden, they all lined up to kiss me and offer their congratulations."

Two days later, he was on a plane to Canada to accept his role in front of the convention's 16,000 attendees from some 140 countries. "I didn't even have time to have a haircut," he says, pointing to his robust head of gray hair.

But, he says, he was ready for this moment. Having been part of Rotary for more than three decades, Arezzo has served as RI director and chair of the 2023 Melbourne Convention Committee, among other leadership roles. He had applied for the RI president's role in 2023 and was short-listed.



The Rotary world rallied around him. His touching personal stories, his humble nature, and the unadorned but powerful messages in his acceptance speech won him ebullient applause and a standing ovation.

While Arezzo was in great demand at the convention, we caught up with him in the hallway during breaks, inside a minibus en route to a Rotary event, and at his makeshift office to find out more about the new president. Read on for the key takeaways.

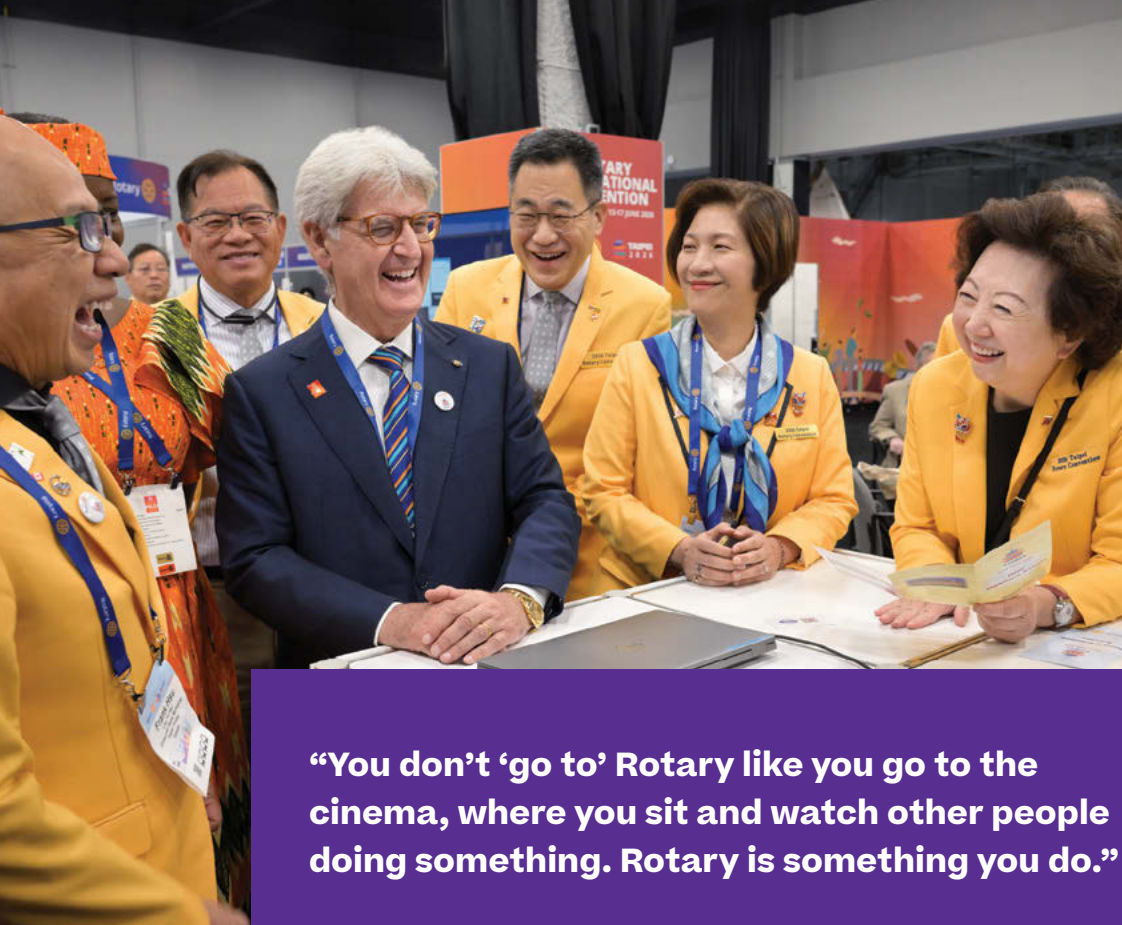


“Rotary faced an emergency and I’m ready to step up. I’m very lucky to have the opportunity.”



Clockwise from left: RI President Francesco Arezzo and his wife, Anna Maria Arezzo-Criscione, at the 2025 Rotary International Convention in Calgary, Canada, in June; a holiday photo with grandchildren Francesco and Anna Maria and (standing, from left) daughter Elena, son-in-law Magnus, and daughter Raffaella; aide to the president John de Giorgio (right, with partner Monique Chambers) has worked closely with Arezzo through Rotary since 2009. “Francesco is the right president because he is a force for unity and stability, representing strong Rotary values while also being open to the innovation that Rotary must apply,” he says.





Left: At the convention in Calgary, Arezzo mingles with Rotary members from Taipei, where the 2026 convention will be held. **Below:** Arezzo spoke about the presidential message, *Unite for Good*. “It is an extraordinary message in its simplicity, brevity, and impact,” he said. He outlined two ways to unite: across space — involving both members and partners in service — and across time. “A project that lasts one year will rarely be transformational,” he said.

“You don’t ‘go to’ Rotary like you go to the cinema, where you sit and watch other people doing something. Rotary is something you do.”

He has two daughters — and two grandchildren with familiar names.

The elder one, who’s 3 years old, has my name: Francesco. The younger one is a year old, and she has my wife’s name. I love playing with them in my living room. They are so happy with me that they won’t let go of me when I leave.

While I feel sad about not being able to stay with them, I have to make a choice. I either have to refuse to be president or I must part with them temporarily. It is only for one year. I’m willing to make a small sacrifice. Rotary faced an emergency and I’m ready to step up. I’m very lucky to have the opportunity.

Orthodontics is about more than teeth.

I’ve been a practicing orthodontist for 46 years now. I work mainly with young people, and it’s very important to try to understand them before beginning treatment. If you don’t understand them, it’s impossible to treat them — you have to win their cooperation. Forging those relationships is one of the best aspects of my job. Sometimes I know things about them that their parents don’t. A relationship so deep is the beginning of a good treatment.

His family has produced olive oil for more than a century.

I am the last of a long line of olive producers, I fear, because my daughters are not interested in this field. A good olive oil has to be spicy, and it has to be bitter. It has to have great chemical qualities — the acidity must be very low, lower than 1 percent. To do this, you have to collect the olives very early. That means you have a small quantity but high quality. The olives in the oils you find at the supermarket are collected very late, which results in a huge quantity but a very low quality. To produce good olive oil, it is a question of passion.

He wasn’t keen on becoming his club’s president.

When my club first proposed that I become president, I didn’t want to accept. I had a stutter, so I was terrified of speaking to my club. But it wasn’t so bad. Then they invited me to be a district governor, and again, I didn’t want to accept. But once more, they convinced me.

Rotary has changed me. If the young professional who was afraid to speak to

PHOTOGRAPHS: (WITH MEMBERS) ED ZIRKLE; (STAGE) CHRISTOPHE VISEUX

his club because of the risk of making a fool of himself can now get up on a stage and speak, in a language which is not his own, to an audience of thousands, well, I owe it all to the Rotarians I have met in my life and who have always supported me and surrounded me with their affection.

But he thinks club presidents are key.

We have to improve our communication with club presidents, because they're on the front lines of dealing with members. While we do a wonderful job of instructing district governors in the importance of membership, district governors in many cases speak

with a club president only two or three times a year. So, there are too many club presidents who don't have any idea why our membership goals are so important.

One of his top priorities is peacebuilding.

When I was a district governor, I organized a Rotary Youth Leadership Awards event for districts bordering the Mediterranean Sea: Italy, France, Spain, North Africa, Greece, Turkey. The challenge was bringing together Turkish and Italian young people, because they looked at one another as very different. The first day was tense; it was clear that they didn't feel

comfortable with each other. But after a few days, they began to discover that they had the same interests and the same dreams.

When the last day came, they sang John Lennon's "Imagine" together and performed a skit they'd written about the cultural differences between their countries. It was one of the most beautiful things I can remember.

If you think about how many young people we send around the world through Rotary Youth Exchange, through scholarships, and through Rotary Peace Centers, it's like a peace machine. We need a peace machine at this moment, when the world seems to be moving away from peace.

He's been listening to opera since he was young.

It was normal to hear opera in my family's home. But Ragusa is a small town, and there was no lyric theater there. When I went to university in Padua, there was the theater nearby in Venice and I began to go. It was really very beautiful. A composer I like a lot is Vincenzo Bellini. He was born in Sicily; he's from Catania. He died very, very young. He only did a few operas, but they are all very high quality. *Norma*, for example, is wonderful. So is *The Capulets and the Montagues*. And of course, there are many other great composers — Puccini, Verdi, Mozart. It's hard to pick one.

He has plans for overcoming his late start.

Usually, the president has a year to study problems, a second year to create a plan, and a third year, while serving as president, to act. I'm very conscious that I'm beginning late. I hope to work very closely with President-elect SangKoo Yun. I think we can create a two-year plan that will be really effective. Rotary isn't a scooter that can change direction quickly. It's like a big cruise ship: If you want to make a turn, you have to begin many kilometers in advance.

He thinks Rotary is an action verb.

When I speak to Rotarians, I always tell them to change the verbs they use. You don't "go to" Rotary like you go to the cinema, where you sit and watch other people doing something. Rotary is something you do. You have to participate. And then you begin to grow. ■





2026 CONVENTION

THE QUERY QUEST

By Diana Schoberg



Why go to Taipei
for the 2026
Rotary International
Convention?
Question asked;
question happily
answered

Photograph by An Rong Xu

THE BEST PART

about the red-eye flight to Taipei is that the most magnificent host will welcome you when you arrive: the sun. On the drive from the airport to my hotel, the city's illustrious landmarks become monumental inkblots when backlit by that blazing orb. As I cruise past rice paddies and riverfront paths, the palatial Grand Hotel, once a haven for foreign dignitaries, salutes me as if I too were visiting royalty, while in the distance, what appears to be an impossibly lofty pagoda — Taipei 101, formerly the world's tallest building — grandly ascends toward tangerine skies.

I've come to Taipei to discover for myself why Rotary members should travel to Taiwan's capital for the 2026 Rotary International Convention. After reviving myself with a visit to the myriad pools in the steam room and sauna at the Regent Taipei hotel, my quarters in the trendy Zhongshan neighborhood for the next few days, I set out to answer that question.

I begin by punching "coffee" into the map app on my phone. Half a dozen cafés within blocks of my hotel pop up. Taiwan is known for its oolong teas so I wasn't sure how easy it would be to find a good cup of coffee, but it turns out Taipei has a thriving coffee culture; even the ubiquitous 7-Elevens serve good coffee, as several of my new Rotary friends tell me later. I choose the Libo café and walk over. The friendly barista helps me choose a drink and giggles right along with me as I tentatively test out a thank you: *xiè xiè* (pronounced *shyeh shyeh*).

In Zhongshan, among all the cafés, boutiques, and thrift stores, you will find a bounty of luxury shopping. I should have known: My hotel is on a plaza called Fashion Square. "Many years ago, Zhongshan North Road was supposed to be the Champs-Élysées of Taipei," Pauline Leung, secretary general of

the convention's Host Organization Committee, tells me a short while later over a lunch of beef noodle soup. "It was the major street where all the prestigious shops were." The city has since expanded eastward, as has the city center, but the neighborhood has retained its chic reputation.

After lunch, I head out with Leung and other Rotary members for an afternoon of sightseeing. Our first stop is Liberty Square, a popular spot for concerts, festivals, and, in the morning, tai chi. Step outside the National Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, named after Taiwan's late leader, and take in the sweeping view of the massive plaza below. Symmetrical garden beds line either side, with red flowers planted in a curved design. Cypress trees with bottlebrush branches stand like sentinels along the border. From this vantage point, the National Theater is to your left, the National Concert Hall to your right. Both venues, which, with their yellow glazed-tile roofs and red columns, are masterful examples of Chinese palace architecture, will be home to host committee events for the Rotary Convention 13-17 June. "This is a must that all visitors should come see," insists Leung.

As we walk across the plaza, Leung extols Taipei's charms but expresses regret that it's a place not many people from the West have seen. "It's so different from places that you usually would go," she says. "It's just a jewel" — and the Rotary Convention will provide the perfect opportunity for newcomers to admire that precious gem.

Frank Ching-Huei Horng, a Rotary Foundation trustee, has joined me and Leung, and he explains that what keeps him returning to the convention year after year is the opportunity to meet with Rotary members from all over the world. "Maybe we can find some projects to

work together," he says. "I love that." Horng has made friends with Rotarians from Japan and Korea, and at every convention they search each other out to take photos and have dinner. Their face-to-face meetings may have only an annual cadence, but friendships made at the convention are friendships that last.

Later, Past RI President Gary C.K. Huang reminisces about the 40-plus Rotary Conventions he's attended in his nearly 50 years as a member of Rotary. He too cherishes the many opportunities to meet so many people of varied cultures and customs. "People will love Rotary more because of this type of cultural exchange," he says. "That is the special character of Rotary."

Taipei lies in a basin surrounded by mountains whose hazy outlines make you feel like you've landed in a painting. The city grew along the Tamsui River and its tributaries, which encircle much of the city center. The rivers brought Chinese settlers and European explorers. The island became a colony of Japan in 1895, which it remained through the end of World War II.

You can experience this historical tapestry as you stroll along Dihua Street. Situated in the Dadaocheng neighborhood, it is the oldest of Taipei's vibrant "old streets." Chinese settlers arrived here in the mid-1800s and built the earliest trading shops on the street, which runs north-south near the Tamsui River. These older, red brick buildings intermingle with structures from the Japanese colonial era.

The street is closed to vehicles on the weekends, so on the day I visit, Dihua is full of families and tourists milling around, eating, and shopping at stores that sell everything from traditional Chinese medicines to fabrics to soaps,



Jiufen
Old
Street

TAIPEI TRAVEL TIPS

If you can find the time, hike Taipei's Elephant Mountain (Xiangshan), where the payoff is a panoramic view of the city as seen on the previous pages.



Left: Pauline Leung (left), secretary general of the convention's Host Organization Committee, and Frank Ching-Huei Horng, a Rotary Foundation trustee, walk along Dihua Street. **Right:** Yi Lo (left), of the Rotary Club of Taipei Huapeng, and Chi-Min Cheng, of the Rotary Club of Wu Jie, sample food in Jiufen.

bags, and countless other goods. The sound of a woman singing floats above the crowd, but it's soon drowned out by the thump of a drumbeat and a crash of cymbals as a parade for a nearby temple snakes through the throng.

We make stops to visit the Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum, which displays traditional and modern Taiwanese hand puppets and marionettes, and the Dadaocheng Visitor Center, where, by appointment, you can don the traditional clothing and hats lining the room for photo shoots. Even without the costumes, rooms seemingly made for selfies beckon, including one filled with multicolored lanterns where I couldn't resist the urge to pull out my camera.

Dinner is at Du Hsiao Yueh, a Dihua restaurant known for its danzai noodles in a prawn broth with a rich minced pork topping. Ping Lee, another of my new Rotary friends, says that one of the best parts about attending a Rotary Convention is exactly what we're experiencing at this very moment: getting to know a culture from the perspective of a fellow Rotary member. "You get to meet the locals and see how they live," says Lee, the host committee treasurer. "Each city has something different to offer, which makes it very attractive." Taipei, she adds, is known for its friendly people — something visiting Rotary members are sure to experience for themselves.

Savor another of Taiwan's old streets by taking a day trip to Jiufen, a mountain town with stunning views of hills and sea. Turn down an alleyway and you enter a different dimension. Shops line both sides of the narrow brick path, and their overlapping awnings make it feel as if you're walking through a tunnel, albeit one lit by the warm glow of red lanterns. This former gold mining community is home to more than two dozen

teahouses — the Amei Tea House resembles the bathhouse in the Oscar-winning anime movie *Spirited Away* — and we head down a set of stairs to get a closer look at one of the shops.

Local artist Hung Chi-Sheng has converted the town's oldest building into Jiufen Teahouse, a gallery featuring pottery, painting, and, of course, tea. Charcoal embers nestle safely beneath a hefty wooden table, atop which bubbling teapots billow clouds of steam. One of the staff demonstrates the intricacies of brewing tea and then leaves us to steep on our own. More than

an hour passes as we sip tea, chat, and contemplate the shadowy hills receding into the sea. Once again the sun becomes the star attraction, casting a sublime pink light before it finally disappears with a sigh.

At the National Palace Museum, you'll find more than 600,000 pieces of Chinese art and artifacts that span more than 8,000 years, including some 300 items designated as national treasures. You can see scholarly scrolls, elaborately inscribed bronze



Register by 15 December for a discounted rate. Scan the QR code or visit **convention.rotary.org**.



TAIPEI TRAVEL TIPS

Chun Shui Tang, the teahouse chain that claims to have invented bubble tea, has a branch inside the National Concert Hall that's usually less crowded than others, so pick up a drink while you're there.

cookware, and exhibits that trace the development of porcelain techniques. But the piece of art that everyone covets is a drool-inducing rock resembling a chunk of cooked pork that looks ready to eat. An unnamed craftsman carved *Meat-Shaped Stone* — yes, that's its name — out of a piece of banded jasper, stained the rock various shades of brown that mimic layers of meat and fat, and created dimples on top to resemble pork skin. The result looks like Dongpo pork, a braised pork belly dish.

While the amazingly realis-

tic stone and its tasty, adjacent bok choy companion, *Jadeite Cabbage*, may attract the most attention, Beatrice Hui-Shen Liang made sure to show me her favorite work: *Lofty Mount Lu*, a 6-foot-tall scroll painted in 1467 by Shen Zhou. "I like to show people our Chinese paintings because they're very, very special," says Liang, whose spouse, Kevin Wen-Ta Liao, is a past district governor and the charter president of the Rotary Club of Taipei Min-Kuan. Liang became a volunteer guide at the museum when she returned to her native Taiwan after spending



Jadeite Cabbage (top) and Meat-Shaped Stone are two of the most popular art pieces at the National Palace Museum.

time living in Canada. "I wanted to learn more about our culture," says Liang, who likes to explain the artwork as seen through the artist's eyes. "The museum is a treasure," she concludes, imparting her most important lesson. "It's not a Chinese treasure; it's a world treasure. A heritage."

After I sate my hunger for artifacts, I make my way to the Silks Palace restaurant on the museum grounds to sate my craving for actual food. There, you can order items inspired by pieces in the museum's collection, including, you guessed it, cabbage and Dongpo pork.

It seems my primary occupation — make that, indulgence — while I'm in Taipei is eating. (A story dedicated to Taiwan's epic eats will appear in a future issue of the magazine.) And now, as the day winds down, I'm back at it again, this time at the Ningxia Night Market, where food stalls line a narrow path jammed with people sampling traditional Taiwanese foods, such as stinky tofu and oyster omelets.

It's one of nearly 40 night markets in the city, says Sweetme Shui-Mei Chou, who heads up the Taipei Business District and Industrial Confederation. "Night markets are a very important part of life for locals here in Taiwan and a very popular place to hang out at night," says Chou, a member of the Rotary Club of Taipei Hwa Yueh. Different markets around the city are known for different things, some famous for spicy foods, others for sweets, she explains.

While at the market, I chat with Jackson San-Lien Hsieh, the convention host committee chair and a past RI director and trustee. The hosts, he says, have had a lot of time to prepare for the thousands of Rotary members expected to descend on the city: Taipei's convention team first made its bid in 2014 and was supposed to host the event



Taipei Metro



in 2021, but the convention went virtual because of the COVID-19 pandemic. For June, the committee has planned extracurricular events that include a run, cycling, symphonic music, and opera. “We have 37,000 Rotary members in Taiwan,” Hsieh says. “We’re excited to welcome Rotarians from all over the world.”

As the night winds down, Hsieh and Chou take me to finish off the long day of sightseeing with a foot massage, a reflexology treatment steeped in Chinese tradition. As I settle comfortably into my chair, my feet and calves are stroked, kneaded, punched, and ... I’d tell you more, but the session was so relaxing, I fell asleep.

Public transit in Taipei is remarkably clean, I’m pleased to notice during my travels the next day. Absolutely no food or beverages are allowed on the Taipei Metro, so take note: Finish that bubble tea before you get on! In addition, people here are expected to take their trash home with them, which is why you will see very few garbage cans on the streets.

Stops on the MRT, as it’s known, are listed in English and Chinese. While that would make it easy for an English speaker like me to navigate the Metro alone, today I have Eric Chiu showing me around the city.

Chiu, 44, runs a lifestyle media company and looks the fashionable part. When the Rotary Club of Taipei Generation Next was founded in 2011 as an alternative for younger people in the city, the club members were on average in their 30s, and Chiu, as the son of a Rotarian, was charter president. “They kind of tricked me into it,” he jokes, “and then 10 years pass by.”

We make a quick stop at Xingtian Temple, one of the most visited temples in Taiwan. Folk beliefs that combine Confucian-

ism, Buddhism, and Taoism are most common in Taiwan, and this temple is devoted to Guan Gong, a deified real-life military general. Chiu joins the masses of people bowing and praying inside the temple, and then we grab lunch and a mango shaved ice for dessert, which turns out to be my own little piece of heaven. Scraped in thin layers as it’s served into a bowl, it looks like a mango orange flower.

Refreshed, we head back to the MRT and make our way to the Taipei Dome, an indoor baseball stadium and concert venue that opened in 2023. It will be home to the opening and closing sessions for the Rotary Convention; other sessions and the House of Friendship will convene at the Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center, a short ride from the dome on the MRT (transit passes are included with your convention registration).

The Taipei Dome’s glistening titanium facade provides an interesting juxtaposition to the neighboring historical Songshan Cultural and Creative Park, a refurbished cigarette-rolling factory that houses the Taiwan Design Museum and a hip collection of galleries and shops. Chiu owns one of them, Everyday Object, which sells coffee, books, household items, games, and more. Within the park you will find a hidden courtyard and fountain, behind which rises the dome and the Taipei skyline. “I think every single individual can find something they would really love about this city,” Chiu says. “That’s the most special thing about Taipei.”

I’ve written a lot about Rotary’s work on water and sanitation, and I live with a tween — or maybe it’s just that, on the inside, I’m still 12 years old. That said, I couldn’t pass up a chance to drop into a restaurant called Modern Toilet once Chiu and I say our goodbyes.



Tucked into the Ximending shopping district, the restaurant uses toilets as stools and serving dishes. My bubble tea was in a miniature urinal, and for dessert I had a big pile of chocolate ice cream in a squat toilet. The novelty of the place, and the yummy photo ops, left me flush (sorry) with joy.

This is it, the moment I’ve been dreading my whole trip. It’s my last day in Taipei, and it’s time to make my way up Taipei 101.

I’m not typically one for elevators and heights — but I’m also not typically one to turn down an adventure. So after some gentle encouragement, promises that

Opposite: Transit passes for the easy-to-navigate Taipei Metro, known as the MRT, will be included with your convention registration; Eric Chiu shows visitors around. **From top:** Mango shaved ice; convention host committee Chair Jackson San-Lien Hsieh enjoys a snack.



someone will hold my hand if I freak out, and a gut-busting serving of xiao long bao (soup dumplings) at Din Tai Fung on the skyscraper's ground floor, I step into the elevator.

As the elevator climbs from the fifth to the 89th floor, a digital sign tells you how fast you're going as well as other statistics. Or so I'm told: I couldn't bear to look. But I barely have time to get nervous before we complete our trip and the doors open; the ride takes only 37 seconds, reaching a top speed of 38 miles, or about 60 kilometers, per hour. This was without question the smoothest elevator ride I've ever taken. I exhale in relief and step out.

I'm glad I conquered my fear. From this height I can see the outlines of Taipei's basin, the mountains rising in the distance. The roofs of the buildings in Liberty Square, the gleaming silver Taipei Dome. It's like a fast-motion review of all the marvelous places I explored, all the wonderful people that I met — which, now that I think about it, are the answer to my question about why Rotary members should travel to Taipei for the 2026 convention.

I also see things I didn't have time to visit. I wish I had more time so I could hike at Yangmingshan National Park, take a gondola to see the tea plantations in Maokong, stay at the Grand Hotel, and shop at more of the night markets. This might be the sunset of my time in Taipei, but the sun will come back, and undoubtedly, so will I. ■

Taipei Rotarians (from left) Chang Sheng Ma, Henry Hsieh, and Past RI President Gary C.K. Huang at Din Tai Fung restaurant.

TAIPEI TRAVEL TIPS

Arrive early if you want to try the soup dumplings at Din Tai Fung inside Taipei 101. We bumped into a Rotarian from Australia who had a lengthy wait for a table the day before.



Ningxia Night Market



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

You can go home again

Oregon's Rotary Club of Beaverton helped Janet Chvatal realize her dreams. Now she's back to repay the favor.



Her Ambassadorial Scholarship helped prepare Janet Chvatal for her musical career. "I don't know how I would have done it without Rotary," says Chvatal, an honorary member of the Rotary Club of Beaverton.

For her eighth birthday, Janet Chvatal had a date with the devil. "My mother took me to my first opera when I was 8 years old," a grown-up Chvatal explains. "It was Goethe's *Faust*, the French version by Charles Gounod. It was so intense, with Marguerite taken down to hell and the devils dancing around — and then she sings to the heavens and is released because she's a pure soul. It was a visual and aural extravaganza, the likes of which I had never seen. All I wanted to do from then on was be involved somehow in the arts."

Born in Florida, Chvatal grew up in Beaverton, Oregon, and though she fulfilled her hope of a life in the arts, things didn't go exactly as planned. "I dreamed of being a concert pianist," she says. "And then I got into high school and discovered that classical pianists have to practice 10 to 12 hours a day. Singers, however, can only practice four to five hours. So I decided, I think I'll be a singer instead."

A straight-A student and a self-described "*Streber*" — a German word that Chvatal defines as someone who strives to excel — she strode

resolutely toward her goal. After winning several competitions in high school, she was invited to attend an exclusive vocalization workshop in California along with other top teenagers from around the country. "I was sure that I was going to be a little fish in a big pond," confesses Chvatal. Instead she turned out to be one of the workshop's most promising students.

With her sights set on attending a college with a top program for vocal study, Chvatal knew one thing for sure. "I wanted to get out of town as soon as possible," she says. "I hadn't yet fully appreciated what

Beaverton had given to me.” That realization would come with time.

In 1986, Chvatal concluded four years of studies at one of those top schools — Boston University College of Fine Arts — which she attended on scholarship and graduated *summa cum laude*. (“My *Streber* instinct was still there.”) While at Boston, she took workshops with the Belgian bass baritone José van Dam and the composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein. Chvatal says they both imparted the same message: “Girl, you must get to Europe!”

What they didn’t say was how she might accomplish that financially. “Between my junior and senior year in college, I began applying for scholarships,” says Chvatal. “I thought about the Fulbright — and then I discovered the Rotary Club of Beaverton.” With help from club member and future district governor Larry Huot (who died in 1998), Chvatal secured a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship. With that, she was able to continue her studies at her school of choice: Die Hochschule fuer Musik und Darstellende Kunst (University of Music and Performing Arts) in Vienna.

“It was a quantum leap into a new world,” Chvatal says. “I was able to continue my dream of honing my talent there. It provided the final stage of learning that I needed to master my craft. I don’t know how I would have done it without Rotary. I’ve been a fan and deep appreciator ever since.”

As a professional singer, Chvatal continued to excel. In 1990, she made her debut in Vienna as Christine Daaé in Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *The Phantom of the Opera*, and she followed that with more leading roles in operas and musical theater, as well as a masterful string of recordings. She also raised two children, Cypress Joseph and Naia Leone, who are both Rotary Youth Leadership Awards grads. (“It changed their lives,” says their mother.)

Today Chvatal lives in Füssen, a German city in the Bavarian Alps watched over by Neuschwanstein Castle, the fairy-tale structure that

inspired *Sleeping Beauty*’s castle in Disneyland. “It’s an extraordinary place to live,” she says, “and I am so blessed to now make my permanent home there.”

But Chvatal hadn’t forgotten Beaverton. “From the moment I learned the term Service Above Self,” she says, “it has remained one of the beautiful, haunting voices inside my mind.” Now she began to wonder how she could “put tools into the hands of children so they could live their dreams and reach their goals.”

In Germany, Chvatal wrote and produced *Der Schwanenprinz*; from that musical sprang a book called, in its English edition, *The Wish Prince*. The enchanting fairy tale encourages children to live their dreams; a 15-page addendum, which highlights “5 Crown Steps,” demonstrates how, with the help of a parent or a trusted friend, children can make those dreams come true. To date, Chvatal has given away about 20,000 copies of her book, including 5,000 that she is presenting to children under the auspices of the Wish Prince Project, an endeavor she launched in 2019 with her old friends, the Rotary Club of Beaverton.

Today, on her return visits to Beaverton, Chvatal visits grade-school classrooms with Rotary members. Clad in a traditional Bavarian dirndl, she goes through the book with the young students; she even sings them her song about the Wish Prince. Finally, she turns to the last pages of her book and relates a lesson from her life. “I tell the students that I wanted to tell a story, but that you never do anything alone,” says Chvatal. “You always need help, and these are the people who helped me reach my dream of writing this book for you.”

First names on the book’s list: three Beaverton Rotarians — Ralph Shoffner, Doug Taylor, and Maureen Wheeler — as well as a shoutout to the whole club, which, by sponsoring Chvatal’s Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship, launched the *Streber*-striving soprano’s career and helped make her dreams come true. — GEOFFREY JOHNSON

Janet Chvatal

- **Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship**, University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, 1987
- ***The Phantom of the Opera***, Vienna debut, 1990
- **The Wish Prince Project**, 2019-present (learn more at letsliveourdreams.com)



From top: Janet Chvatal stars as Christine Daaé in *The Phantom of the Opera*; Chvatal’s book, *The Wish Prince*, helps children fulfill their dreams; joined by Chvatal, happy students pose with their personal copies of *The Wish Prince*.



TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Literacy as a human right

Education is the most powerful tool

we have for changing the world, and during Basic Education and Literacy Month, I want to remind everyone why our work matters.

Education breaks the cycle of poverty, opens doors to opportunity, and empowers individuals to transform their communities. But education doesn't exist in a vacuum. We must also address peace, health, clean water, economic opportunity, maternal and child health, and the environment.

This is why Rotary has these areas of focus. Lasting change requires a comprehensive approach. When we collaborate across these areas through The Rotary Foundation, we raise up communities sustainably and with dignity.

Today, I have asked **Lynne Paradis** from the Rotary Club of Red Deer, Alberta, to share her passion for literacy:

"I believe that literacy is a human right. When I joined forces with the Rotary Club of San Ignacio, Belize, over a decade ago, we set out to improve reading instruction, but we had no idea how far this journey would take us.

Literacy Alive! has been supported by eight Rotary Foundation global grants since 2011. Using a straightforward approach based on phonics and science, we updated how teachers teach and focused on how

students really learn. We collected data on reading skills improvement over six months.

After demonstrating that teachers had integrated new practices into daily instruction, the project snowballed. The Belize Ministry of Education took notice.

Today, over 1,300 teachers have been trained and more than 20,000 students have benefited. We've achieved over 90 percent success rates, with many students making more than a year's worth of improvement in just five months.

The program is now compulsory in Belize primary schools. What moves me most is hearing teachers say how confident they are that they can change students' lives.

Our greatest success is working ourselves out of a job. When local educators take the lead, we know lasting change is underway."

Lynne's story exemplifies the power of Foundation grants. Through partnerships spanning six Rotary clubs and three countries, Literacy Alive! reminds us how good Rotary is at creating systemic change.

When our members' passion meets Foundation support, we don't just improve individual lives, we change entire communities. By supporting the Foundation, you can put your passion to work this month and every month.

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.

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.

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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*
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- *Paenibacillus polymyxa*

Beneficial Fungi Contents

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

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GOODWILL

How to resist an infodemic

We need to build resilience against the viral spread of misinformation. Here's how.

By Jessica Malaty Rivera

In the last five years, the world has had a crash course in public health. A flurry of scientific jargon-filled headlines has caused a fair amount of confusion, panic, and fear. This dynamic is not new, and, in fact, it has a name in epidemiology: infodemic.

Epidemiology asks us where, when, why, and to whom a disease is spreading, and how it affects population health. Infodemiology asks those same questions but about the information that is spreading, and how it affects population decision making.

Think of it this way: Infodemics are to infodemiology as epidemics are to epidemiology.

Infodemics don't necessarily mean an outbreak of all bad information. Sometimes, it's just too much information, making it difficult for people to find the facts from trusted sources. This is acutely true in the world of vaccines.

Vaccine misinformation — which has shattered trust, stalled vaccination campaigns, resulted in the reemergence of previously eliminated diseases, and threatened global health security — is moving faster and farther because of our digital information ecosystems. As we look to the future, building infodemic resilience must be a top priority for public health systems, policymakers, and communities alike.

What is infodemic resilience?

Infodemic resilience refers to a society's capacity to withstand, identify, and respond to false or misleading health information, especially during public health emergencies. It's not just about fact-checking or debunking false claims — it's about building critical thinking, trust, and communication infrastructures that can filter out noise and amplify credible voices. In the context of vaccines, this means protecting people from dangerous misinformation that leads to vaccine hesitancy, refusal, and, ultimately, preventable illness and death.

The high cost of vaccine misinformation

The consequences of unchecked vaccine misinformation are both immediate and long term. We've seen measles and pertussis outbreaks in communities with low vaccine uptake, resistance to COVID-19 vaccines despite overwhelming scientific evidence, and a resurgence of vaccine-preventable diseases in areas where misinformation thrives.

These outcomes don't just affect individuals — they weaken herd immunity (vaccination rates to reduce transmission), overwhelm health care systems, and lead to avoidable loss of life. Moreover, they disproportionately affect marginalized communities and those who are immunocompromised or medically fragile. Misinformation, when left unchallenged, becomes a form of health inequity.

Why we need to act now

The digital ecosystem is evolving quickly. Social media platforms have made it easy for misleading content to go viral within seconds. Algorithms often favor emotionally charged content — fear, outrage, or conspiracy — over nuanced, evidence-based information. While tech companies bear responsibility, we can't rely solely on content moderation. We need proactive, not just reactive, science communication. Resilience isn't built in a crisis — it's built before the next one hits. With future pandemics likely and ongoing public health campaigns for routine immunizations, our ability to respond effectively depends on how well we can communicate and foster trust. Here are some strategies to help build infodemic resilience:

1. Invest in health and data literacy

Public health messaging needs to go beyond the "what." It must also explain the "why." People are more likely to trust information when they can understand it and how it affects them.

2. Partner with trusted messengers

Local leaders, health care workers, faith leaders, and even influencers can be powerful allies in promoting accurate vaccine information. People trust people far more than institutions. Training and equipping these voices can dramatically expand the reach of public health messaging.

3. Prioritize transparent and compassionate communication

Ridiculing those who believe misinformation rarely changes minds. We need empathetic communication that validates concerns, addresses fears, and provides clear, consistent facts without judgment.

4. Policy support and global collaboration

Rotary, Shot at Life, UNICEF, WHO, and other global bodies have laid the groundwork to address current challenges and protect against future infodemics through public engagement, raising awareness, and encouraging governments to adopt policies that promote transparency and encourage collaboration between public health institutions and tech platforms.

Infodemic resilience isn't just the responsibility of public health professionals — it's a societal challenge. Parents, educators, journalists, scientists, tech workers, and community leaders all play a role in shaping the information environment. Vaccines save lives, but only if people trust them. That trust depends on the stories people hear, the information they access, and the communities they live in. By building infodemic resilience, we create a stronger, healthier, and more informed society — one that can face the next health crisis not with confusion, but with confidence. ■

Jessica Malaty Rivera is an infectious disease epidemiologist and award-winning science communicator. Find her on Instagram @jessicamalatyrivera and Substack @makingsciencemakesense.

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2026 CONVENTION

The hype is real!



Entertainers of all kinds bring energy and excitement to the convention stage.

If you've never been to a **Rotary International Convention**, you might wonder if the global gathering lives up to the hype that it's more fun than any conference you've attended. Your fellow members are here to assure you that the convention 13-17 June in Taipei will prove the hype is real: You'll find best-in-class opportunities to learn, travel, grow, and feel connected. Here are five ways the Rotary Convention breaks the mold:

- **The main stage rocks.** This is especially true when famous bands perform. Daily big-group sessions are packed with performers, members with inspiring stories, and speakers with serious star power.
- **Learning workshops are FUN.** Forget boring lectures — breakout sessions are led by your Rotary pals and experts committed to RI's mission. They recharge your batteries and inspire your service.

- **New members feel the benefits.** Newbies, not just club officers or long-time members, say the programming is valuable and new friendships are guaranteed. We hear it all the time: You truly grasp Rotary's international power when you experience a convention.
- **Families love the convention.** Relatives and travel companions are welcome under Rotary's global tent. Everyone enjoys the big-stage extravaganzas and House of Friendship activities.
- **You can unwind and stay on budget.** It's easy to sneak in vacation excursions after convention hours with so many options close by in Taiwan. Register soon for limited-time savings.

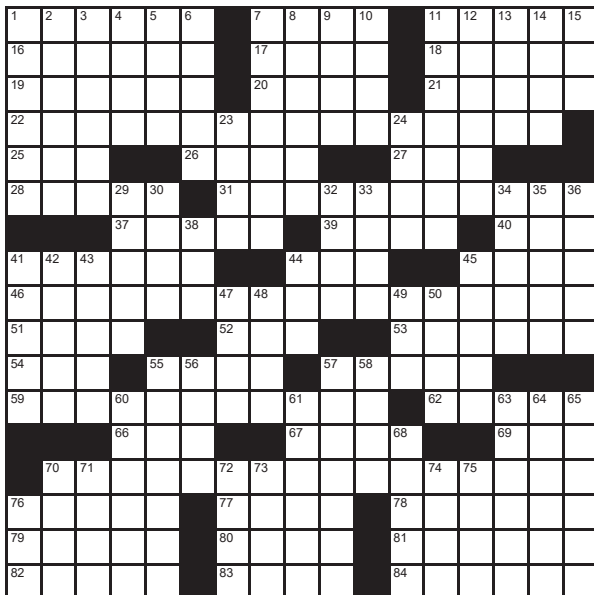
After their first convention, many members are hooked. Like a Rotarian attending her fifth one, in Calgary, Canada, said: Each is more enjoyable than the last. ■

Learn more and register at convention.rotary.org.

CROSSWORD

Visitors' riddle

By Victor Fleming
Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas



Solution on opposite page

ACROSS

- 1 Shortening brand
- 7 Gorillas and chimps
- 11 Model of perfection
- 16 Gymnast Mary Lou
- 17 Fall leader?
- 18 ___ to (helped cause)
- 19 Black key by B
- 20 Like Santa's cheeks
- 21 Animal dens
- 22 First part of a riddle
- 25 D.M.V. issuance
- 26 Spinning toys
- 27 Long, long ___
- 28 Muscle contraction
- 31 Part 2 of the riddle
- 37 Some eateries
- 39 "Atta ___!"
- 40 Acorn source
- 41 The same in number
- 44 Former nuclear agcy.
- 45 "Que ___ ..."
- 46 Answer to the riddle
- 51 Take the bus
- 52 Balk caller
- 53 Entertains
- 54 ___ and outs
- 55 Present starter?
- 57 Philbin of TV
- 59 Part 3 of the riddle
- 62 Be generous
- 66 ___ Miz

- 67 Some deadly snakes

- 69 O.T. book
- 70 End of the riddle
- 76 Bygone gas brand
- 77 ___ cloud (cosmic debris)
- 78 Become a participant
- 79 Beginning to think so?
- 80 ___ Cong
- 81 Redundant bullring shout
- 82 Type of tea
- 83 Ray of old movies
- 84 Wage ___

DOWN

- 1 Moves on all fours
- 2 Send again
- 3 Cornell campus site
- 4 "Now!" in the OR
- 5 Strong string
- 6 Stoned
- 7 ___ of (relevant to)
- 8 Novelist Marcel
- 9 Relaxation
- 10 Charon's river
- 11 Contrary to law
- 12 Church officer
- 13 Change copy
- 14 Subtle quality
- 15 33⅓ rpm records
- 23 Time long past
- 24 Twosome
- 29 Land or sea suffix
- 30 Horse hair
- 32 A long time

- 33 Puerto ___
- 34 "___ me!"
- 35 Western writer Bret
- 36 Approves
- 38 "Heads up" abbr.
- 41 Open building spaces
- 42 Eva Marie of acting
- 43 Center
- 44 Dada artist
- 45 Winter annoyance
- 47 Bits of wordplay
- 48 Throw off
- 49 Annoy persistently
- 50 Writer Kingsley
- 55 Close election margin
- 56 Dept. store goods
- 57 Osso buco go-with
- 58 X Games airer
- 60 Bad-weather cause, at times
- 61 Wire-___ terrier
- 63 Family 12-step group
- 64 Speak poorly of
- 65 More level
- 68 Missouri city, informally
- 70 The "C" in UPC
- 71 "All right, I get it now"
- 72 ___ Scotia
- 73 Labor arduously
- 74 Return of the Jedi dancer
- 75 Yesterday, in Lyon
- 76 Drink slowly

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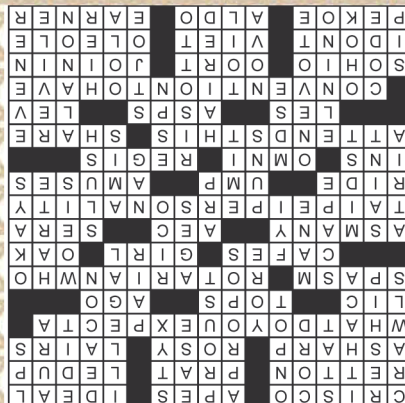


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