

# Rotary news

India

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# Congratulations

**Rtn Prof. R. Raja Govindasamy**  
District Governor, RID - 3000 (24-25)  
You will be a great District Governor

A great deed of hosting the program 'Yadhumanaval'  
during the first three days of your Governorship.

Yadhumanaval Program - 1st, 2nd, 3rd July 2024



"Empowerment of women leads to development of a good family, good society and  
Ultimately, a good nation". - A.P.J Abdul Kalam.



## Yadhumanaval • She is Everything

*Transforming shy caterpillars into beautiful butterflies*

Rotary strongly encourages partnership with like-minded Institutions and Corporates which support Rotary's Programmes. Empowering girls has been a major focus of Rotary in the recent years. Therefore the coming together of Rotary District 3212 and IDHAYAM, to empower young adults through a confidence and energy building Programme specially designed by an illustrious life skills facilitator, **Dr. Jayanthasri Balakrishnan**, titled "Yadhumanaval", is a great blessing indeed.

**Dr. Jayanthasri Balakrishnan** has touched the lives of 100,000 girls in India and Srilanka.

### Yadhumanaval Dates

R.C.of Madurai West | The Madura College, Madurai | 1st July 2024 - **80.0**

R.C.of Kodaikanal | Mother Teresa Women's University, Kodaikanal | 2nd July 2024 - **81.0**

R.C.of Dindigul Quencity | M.V.Muthiah Govt Arts College for Women, Dindigul | 3rd July 2024 - **82.0**



*Jayanthasri Balakrishnan*  
" SHE PAVES A PATH FOR GIRL CHILDREN TO BECOME STRONGER  
VERSIONS OF THEMSELVES THROUGH HER MESMERIZING TALK. "

**IDHAYAM**  
PROMISE OF HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

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## Interesting profile of Prez Stephanie

Thanks for the in-depth coverage of the visit of RI President Stephanie Urchick to India, and her interesting profile, where, under *At a glance* all her passions and interests are beautifully narrated. Thankfully, the incoming president has a clear idea on the quality of Rotary members; while she admits that to grow, Rotary needs new members, she makes it clear that the clubs have to take the right people, who can understand the core values of Rotary and its commitment to service.

During her recent visit to Bengaluru, I chatted with her briefly and she said clubs should address the urgent needs of their communities. She expressed happiness at the confidence level of the Rotarians in India and their acumen in choosing the right service projects for the local communities.

*R Srinivasan, RC Bangalore  
JP Nagar — D 3191*



It was a delight to see the beautiful photo of our RI President Stephanie on the June cover. The Editor's note narrates well how power and wealth dominate India in the context of the Pune car accident due to reckless, drunken driving by a 17-year-old boy.

TRF chair Barry Rassin has urged us to dream big for the future, while RID Raju Subramanian has called for membership retention. The interview of President Stephanie by the editor and other related articles about her are very interesting.

Photos are colourful too. Other articles including *RC Roop Nagar conducts crucial training*, *The Rotary buzz in Kolkata*, *Happy schools, happier children*, *A journey to chaos...*, *Boosting local healthcare*, *Slow down on fast fashion* and *Consistency is the key* are all interesting. *A requiem to Boeing 747* is a fitting tribute to that jumbo plane. The June issue is superb.

*Philip Mulappone MT  
RC Trivandrum  
Suburban — D 3211*

Recollecting with pride all that has been achieved during his tenure, outgoing RI President Gordon McNally has given a clarion call to Rotarians to fulfil their promises to the children of the world by supporting the 'End Polio Now' campaign to reach zero cases. He rightly said that peacebuilding and Rotary Peace Centers are earning positive mileage in Rotary's quest for global

## A mockery of justice

The heart-wrenching incident of reckless driving by an inebriated 17-year-old boy killing two youngsters is condemnable. But the punishment meted out at first to the guilty made a mockery of our justice system. Allowing influential people to escape the long arm of law only emboldens the privileged to break the law more often. The guilty must be punished, and quickly too.

*Raj Kumar Kapoor  
RC Roop Nagar — D 3080*

The Editor's note *When the privileged wreak havoc* on the dominance

of influential people made a big impression on me. The immoral actions of those with position, money and influence are harmful to the common man. Using influence to escape punishment for wrongdoing is unacceptable.

*R Thayumanavan, RC Cuddalore  
Mid Town — D 2981*

Jaishree's article on understanding mental health challenges in the May issue is fantastic. Thank you for guiding the youth by publishing useful information that every parent should be aware of. Also, the article *Bike for the big burn*, details not only the

benefits of cycling, but the need to change our eating habits.

*GJ Kannan, RC Dindigul  
West — D 3000*

I found the article on mental health problems and challenges, especially among youngsters, very interesting. Dr Lakshmi Vijayakumar has suggested in detail ways to reduce stress that leads to mental illness, and has also talked about having healthy and open conversation in families to educate children on stress, depression, etc.

*TD Bhatia, RC Delhi  
Mayur Vihar — D 3012*

## LETTERS

peace. He urges all members to join the Rotary Action Group on mental health initiatives. Let us work together to realise his vision to *Create Hope in the World*.

*VRT Dorairaja  
RC Tiruchairapalli — D 3000*

I read the June edition from the beginning to end. It was interesting to read about RI President Stephanie and equally remarkable to know about Rotary's programmes, projects and camps, which made me feel happy as a Rotarian.

Also, it was enjoyable to read the editorial on the Porsche hit and run case and the article *A journey to chaos... and back*. While writing a book review is easy to produce an article, I feel that we should concentrate on any essential news, publications and improvements that Rotarians can utilise.

*Venkatesh MN, RC Bangalore  
South West — D 3191*

It was heartening to read the article *Creating hope in a Naxal-infested area*. I used to feel sad reading the reports of encounters in Naxal areas and the numerous killings. I salute the efforts of Rajeev Warbe; this is a path-breaking move which should be emulated by Rotarians in other areas too without delay.

*N Jayachandran, RC Madras  
Central — D 3232*

The letter from a non-Rotarian from Gujarat in the June issue, belittling Bharat Ratna and former President of India Dr APJ Abdul Kalam should not have been published. An excellent

person, he had risen beyond the barriers of religion, language and region and was loved by everyone in the country.

*Murali Krishna RV  
RC Moodabidri — D 3181*

The content of the letter on former President Kalam is highly derogatory, particularly for an organisation like Rotary, known for its secular values.

*M Shanmugam, RC Thanjavur  
Mid Town — D 2981*

### Make minimum attendance a must

I am an 89-year-old Rotarian, charter president of my club, and served Rotary for 34 years. I am pained at the worsening standards in Rotary due to induction of new members who have either no interest or have not understood the philosophy of the institution.

Earlier a minimum attendance at club meetings was compulsory but now most Rotarians have poor attendance. I find that most district officials have a poor attendance record in their parent clubs. I feel that minimum attendance must be strictly enforced. It is better to have a small number of committed Rotarians rather than a motley crowd whose interests do not match Rotary's ideals.

*Nanubhai Mehta, RC Thane  
Mid Town — D 3142*

#### On the cover:

RI President Stephanie Urchick

### Excellent editorials

Your Editor's notes and articles are a treat to the senses, transporting one to the subject/destinations you so prolifically write about, oft bringing a sense of loss for having missed the destinations/project/event you have written about.

As I read another such Editor's note, sipping my cuppa of green tea, I felt that what I have been putting off for years should be reaffirmed as life is unpredictable and one cannot take it for granted, as I linger beside my papa's hospital bed for the last 79 days.

My father, who is 96-plus, has taught me many a life lesson, one being to appreciate those persons who doggedly take up a task, giving their all. I am positive there are many Rotarians who echo my sentiments. Excellence, unquestionably, needs to be acknowledged and applauded. Thank you for the myriad splendid articles that you have put together for years, and warm wishes for another eloquent year ahead.

*Susann Koshy  
RC Kottayam — D 3211*

From July 1, 2024,  
our E-version subscription  
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Lucy Hewett

## Towards a greater vision

Rotary is at its best when we foster a sense of inclusion and belonging in our clubs. In fact, I would go so far as to say that belonging is *The Magic of Rotary* itself.

With a focus on inclusivity and belonging, it is easier to be united in a common purpose. When we are committed to one another and focused on our goals, we are most effective.

Rotary's Action Plan can help. The Action Plan comes with tools you can use to collect feedback, assess your club's strengths and weaknesses, and address challenges.

The world is changing, and our clubs can't afford to stand still. But the changes we make need to be consistent and strategic — building on one another toward a greater vision. The Action Plan can help you work towards that vision and create effective change within your club. Following the Action Plan

and addressing suggestions from the community will go a long way to fostering the sense of belonging we want all Rotary members to feel in their clubs.

That's why expanding our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is so important. Committing ourselves to each other's well-being is the first step to expanding our reach, allowing us to spread Positive Peace in these troubled times.

Peacebuilding is one of our top priorities, and one of the most effective ways we can build peace is with our Rotary Peace Fellowships, through which peace and development professionals learn how to prevent and end conflict.

We offer the fellowships through our Rotary Peace Centers at leading universities around the globe, where more than 1,800 Rotary Peace Fellows have graduated. And thanks to a \$15.5 million gift from the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation, we can continue supporting peacebuilders in more regions with the next peace centre at Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul.

Opening another peace centre is a monumental achievement, and it is my great honour to invite you to celebrate at next year's Rotary Presidential Peace Conference at the Istanbul centre. The three-day conference February 20–22 will highlight the many ways our family of Rotary advances peacebuilding. Registration for the conference is officially open. I hope to see you there.

The Rotary Presidential Peace Conference 2025 has great potential for our peacebuilding efforts — but only if we have your support.

The truth is, we're not going to bring peace to the world, end polio, or grow membership by waving a wand and saying some funny words. It's up to you. You create the magic with every project completed, every dollar donated and every new member inducted.

I love my Rotary family and I know you do too. That's why I know that together, we can make every club and district simply irresistible. This year, let us change the world by embracing *The Magic of Rotary*.

**Stephanie A Urchick**  
President, Rotary International



## Heatwaves, cool waters, green shoots...

The heatwave under which the world is reeling is a petrifying reminder of how the human species' extreme greed, selfishness and thoughtlessness are contributing to devastating climate change. In utter helplessness, this summer we've watched most regions of India reeling under a record heatwave. At least 37 cities recorded temperatures above 45 deg C, with some exceeding the dreaded 50 deg C mark, forcing schools to have an extended summer vacation. The extreme heatwave is caused by burning fossil fuels, cutting down forests and green covers, which are replaced by buildings, all this resulting in an explosion of greenhouse gases and global warming, which has now reached alarming levels.

Many European countries, considered a dream summer escape for well-heeled Indians, experienced heatwaves, resulting in several deaths. In Greece, five hikers died due to extreme heat. Urban India is hit much more than rural India; the garden city of Bengaluru experienced an unprecedented water crisis last year and as I write this edit, Delhi's Education Minister Atishi Singh and some other AAP leaders have begun a hunger strike at Rajghat, demanding release of water from Haryana to save the parched citizens of Delhi, which is now experiencing a water crisis.

Amidst all this gloom, the cheerful news is that with the environmental protection being added as Rotary's seventh area of focus, Rotarians across the world are engaged in meaningful projects to save Mother Earth. These include water conservation and augmentation, building of check dams and water bodies, greening the earth by planting trees and mangroves, creating eco parks to give the much-required lungs to cities gasping under the thick layers and levels of pollution. As pointed out by Meenakshi Venkataraman, director, Projects (2022-24), Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group, and TRF Cadre, Environment, in a recent issue of this magazine,

climate action not only prevents emissions but protects our health by reducing deadly particulate air pollution from fossil fuels. Examples include helping low-income taxi drivers to access e-auto rickshaws and increasing urban tree cover to reduce excessive heat. Clubs in India can do projects to give out clean cookstoves; such a project using induction stoves powered by hydro energy is being done through a global grant in Nepal, RID 3292. Funding an EV charging station by a club is another great way to promote the elimination of polluting petroleum products.

With the kind of destruction of our planet that we are seeing today, only passionate, collective and affirmative action on climate change will save our world. It came as a shot in the arm of Indian Rotarians working for sustainable livelihood of our *annadata*, the farmers, and greening our country while doing so, when this year's Programs of Scale grant worth \$2 million, given out every year by TRF, was awarded to the Rotary Club of Delhi Premier for sustainable farming. This issue carries a detailed article on how this club has been greening the desert areas of Rajasthan by building check dams and conserving water bodies, which has not only increased the income of farmers substantially but also arrested and even reversed migration to cities from villages.

But this is only the beginning; the enthused club members have already raised an additional \$2 million (over ₹16 crore) from CSR funds of Indian corporates for expanding their work on sustainable farming, and are confident that much more money will come in for this heartwarming cause as companies see verticals related to their area of business in this work.

Good luck and godspeed to this club!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rasheeda Bhagat'.

Rasheeda Bhagat

# All aboard to Calgary



Elbow River Camp, on the Calgary Stampede grounds, celebrates First Nations culture.

**I**t's time to start making plans to meet up with your Rotary besties in Canada at a convention with an epic backdrop: the Rocky Mountain foothills.

The Rotary International Convention returns for a second time to Calgary, site of the 1988 Winter Olympics and a city known for its bicycling culture and strong indigenous heritage. Clubs will use Rotary's signature event **June 21–25** to boost membership and interest in working with the organisation, while exchanging ideas with attendees on how to do the same in their hometowns — whether that's Toronto or Tokyo. You'll leave renewed with Action Plan inspiration to make your club the place to be.

Organisers will showcase inspiring community projects — you might be asked to help with one — to drive awareness of Rotary around the convention, last held in

the city in 1996. It will be one of the largest events in the recently expanded BMO Centre. You'll help spread the story of Rotary's good work simply by attending. And you'll find plenty of excitement in the city, known for its Calgary Stampede summer rodeo (search online for snapshots of cowgirl hat-wearing RI President Jennifer Jones (2022–23) in the parade).

This gateway to the Canadian Rockies will tempt you to extend your travels. Many people visit Calgary to start or end a Western Canada rail tour. Calgary is an ideal launching point to explore a piece of North America. A stopover on your way home in sunny Hawaii or Mexico, toting a souvenir bottle of cherished Canadian maple syrup in your luggage, would be oh-so-sweet.

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

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Magazine

## Director speak



## Time to experience the magic

and clubs, let us chart a clear path towards achieving ambitious multi-year goals and executing action plans that resonate with every club and members.

**A**s we embark on this new Rotary year, let us embrace it with a spirit of renewal and inspiration. This is a pivotal time for all members to reaffirm their commitment to Rotary's noble ideals. A thriving membership is not just a goal but the heartbeat of our vibrant community, essential for driving forward our impactful service and project initiatives.

Our seasoned members carry a vital responsibility: to warmly welcome and actively engage new members, ensuring they feel valued and integral from the start. Each member joins Rotary with a unique spark — be it a passion for service, a quest for fellowship, a desire to forge lasting friendships, or a journey of personal growth. It is our collective duty to nurture these motivations, understanding that they evolve over time, thus fortifying the ties that bind us together as a club.

Introducing innovative roles like 'Plan Lead Coordinators' and 'Action Plan Champions' highlights our commitment to strategic growth and collaborative achievement. By working closely across districts

As we embrace this new year, let us seize the fresh opportunities it brings, and confront the inevitable challenges with resilience and innovation. Embrace cutting-edge technologies and foster partnerships across diverse sectors — from youth initiatives and Rotary Community Corps (RCC) to corporate alliances, governmental collaborations and NGO partnerships — this will amplify our impact and elevate our standing in the community.

Amidst the multitude of projects we undertake, let us heed the stirring call of our global leader, Stephanie Urchick. Let us champion the transformative power of our action plan, finding balance between continuity and change, and work for positive peace. Let this year be marked by bold steps, taken with optimism and a steadfast resolve to surpass past achievements.

Now is our moment to ignite the magic of Rotary, to create ripples of positive change that resonate far and wide.

**Anirudha Roychowdhury**  
RI Director, 2023–25

## The engine that powers us



This month, we begin a new journey together to celebrate *The Magic of Rotary*. So buckle up for an exciting trip.

If Rotary is a beautiful car that you are proud to drive, The Rotary Foundation is the engine that propels it to your chosen destination. And it's the strengths of Rotary — especially you and

our other incredible 1.4 million members — that make TRF powerful.

I knew little about The Rotary Foundation when I joined Rotary. Everything changed in 1985 when, as incoming president of my club, I attended my first RI Convention with my wife, Gay, in Kansas City, Missouri. We will never forget the thunderous support for Dr Albert Sabin, creator of the oral polio vaccine, who called upon Rotary to vaccinate the world's children. It marked the dawn of PolioPlus, a pivotal moment in Rotary's commitment to children worldwide.

You, as a member of Rotary, are also a part of The Rotary Foundation. You are part of a worldwide movement that implements global grants to build sustainable systems for clean water and sanitation where there are none. You help train peacebuilders in a world plagued by unrest. And through supporting the Foundation, you help people rebuild their lives after natural disasters.

To accomplish more good in the world, the Foundation trustees have set an ambitious fundraising goal of \$500 million for 2024–25. Achieving this goal will require the support of everyone reading this message. It will also help us reach our goal of building the Endowment Fund to \$2.025 billion by 2025.

To keep financial support of TRF at the forefront, I have developed Mark's Magical Markers — a set of specific targets to help us achieve our goals. The first Magical Marker focuses on personal commitment, particularly to the Annual Fund, which supports the grants, scholarships, and vocational training teams that make the magic happen. Please contribute what you can to the Annual Fund no later than August 31.

Let's fuel the engine that enables us to do good in the world and unleash *The Magic of Rotary* through TRF. Let's make this year an unforgettable one — for us and for the people whose lives we will touch.

**Mark Daniel Maloney**  
TRF Trustee Chair

## The power of collective action

As we enter a new Rotary year, it is time to reflect and build on our past and step forward into the future. A future where Rotary is respected and more relevant than ever before thanks to The Rotary Foundation.



The Foundation operates as the charitable arm of RI. Its mission is to advance world understanding, goodwill and peace through improvement of health, support of education and alleviation of poverty. Over the years, the Foundation has made significant strides in addressing some of the world's most pressing issues.

Through its grants programme, TRF gives the vision to Rotary to make our dreams of a better world, better community and a better tomorrow, come true. Grants support initiatives that align with Rotary's areas of focus.

Whether it is giving commercial grinding machine... *chakkis* to single women in rural parts of RID 3132 enabling them to earn a livelihood, or conducting paediatric cardiac surgeries in the Philippines, building Homes for the Homeless in RID 3232, or taking medical missions to Africa, through the grants, the Foundation is touching lives and transforming communities.

Programs of Scale is a TRF grant of \$2 million given to an impactful, sustainable and replicable project. Only one grant is given worldwide every year on a competitive basis. I am happy to share that the 4<sup>th</sup> Programs of Scale award has been granted to RC Delhi Premier for their project, *Partners for Water Access and Better Harvests in India*. This is a proud moment for India. Well done RCDP.

As you are aware there are three funds whereby we contribute to TRF: Annual Fund — Our contributions to the Annual Fund today help us to do global grants tomorrow. And global grants have been the gamechangers for TRF; Polio Fund — It is our promise to the children of the world that we will make the world polio-free; Endowment Fund — Our support to the Endowment Fund ensures the future of TRF.

My request to all of you is to support all the three funds of TRF. The Foundation stands as a testament to the power of collective action and philanthropy. Through its wide-ranging programmes and initiatives, it continues to foster sustainable development and promote peace and goodwill across the world. That is the magic of The Rotary Foundation.

**Bharat Pandya**  
TRF Trustee



### Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs	:	36,978
Rotaract clubs	:	10,634
Interact clubs	:	14,613
RCCs	:	13,460
Rotary members	:	1,181,186
Rotaract members	:	162,325
Interact members	:	336,191

*As on June 17, 2024*

### Membership Summary

As on June 1, 2024

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	140	6,033	6.03	73	504	32	254
2982	87	3,923	6.07	44	909	86	186
3000	145	6,121	11.89	106	1,815	214	217
3011	137	5,154	30.29	87	2,452	159	39
3012	167	4,207	24.67	78	1,139	101	61
3020	84	4,879	8.05	41	818	112	351
3030	101	5,770	16.66	56	1,000	480	386
3040	98	2,404	14.23	40	809	54	214
3053	74	2,992	16.71	27	414	39	131
3055	78	3,207	12.63	70	1,089	46	378
3056	87	3,840	24.58	34	450	98	201
3060	103	5,215	15.95	67	2,305	66	144
3070	119	3,282	15.51	49	570	55	63
3080	109	4,384	12.61	66	1,925	166	126
3090	128	2,707	5.87	21	374	258	166
3100	112	2,222	10.76	13	58	34	151
3110	141	3,825	11.84	18	127	55	109
3120	89	3,788	16.00	48	587	25	55
3131	144	5,808	33.40	131	3,181	258	151
3132	93	3,819	14.04	44	638	102	214
3141	116	6,419	27.87	141	6,046	170	241
3142	110	3,989	21.84	64	2,275	108	97
3150	110	4,352	13.69	101	2,012	113	130
3160	80	2,639	8.75	32	258	95	82
3170	149	6,717	15.24	126	2,020	172	180
3181	89	3,730	10.86	47	505	88	121
3182	86	3,717	10.71	48	249	86	103
3191	94	3,489	18.14	70	1,940	132	35
3192	86	3,612	21.59	89	2,431	145	40
3201	176	6,865	9.96	139	2,606	101	95
3203	96	5,049	7.31	50	933	115	39
3204	79	2,606	6.75	24	237	14	13
3211	161	5,274	8.72	9	97	22	135
3212	125	4,770	11.66	102	3,799	185	153
3231	96	3,487	7.11	42	569	39	417
3232	188	6,569	20.99	128	4,500	127	102
3240	104	3,553	17.17	47	709	44	234
3250	108	4,212	21.94	63	1,003	58	191
3261	100	3,422	23.50	26	275	26	45
3262	117	3,907	15.64	81	830	642	287
3291	145	3,912	26.41			78	751
<b>India Total</b>	<b>4,651</b>	<b>175,870</b>		<b>2,542</b>	<b>54,458</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>7,088</b>
3220	70	2,041	17.49	97	4,242	115	77
3271	112	1,548	21.51	196	2,061	275	28
0063 (3272)	129	1,499	17.88	97	1,233	22	49
0064 (3281)	332	7,081	17.65	249	1,701	117	214
0065 (3282)	180	3,512	9.94	179	1,305	24	47
3292	157	5,613	18.99	185	5,435	110	137
<b>S Asia Total</b>	<b>5,631</b>	<b>197,164</b>	<b>15.98</b>	<b>3,545</b>	<b>70,435</b>	<b>5,663</b>	<b>7,640</b>

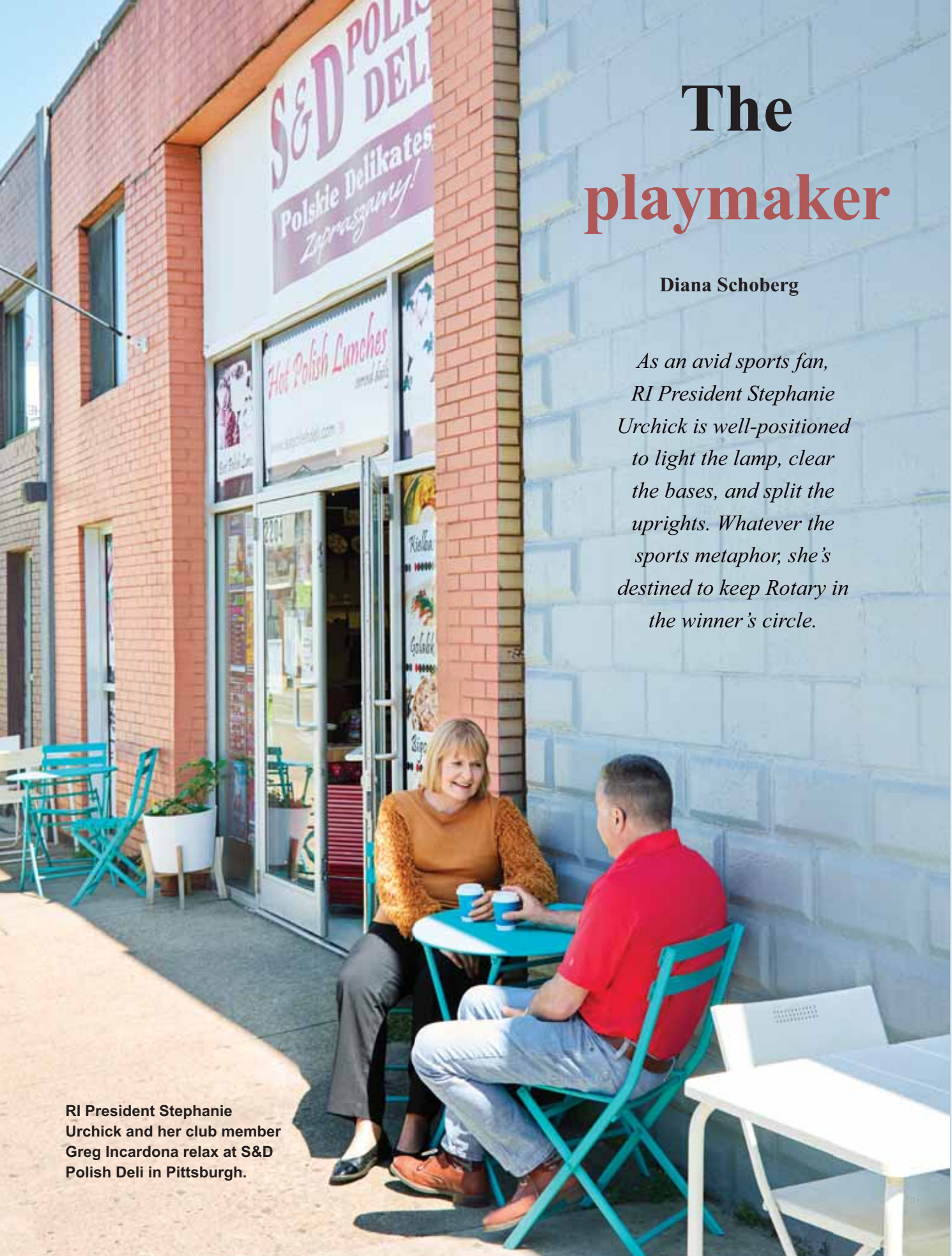
Source: RI South Asia Office

# The playmaker

Diana Schoberg

*As an avid sports fan, RI President Stephanie Urchick is well-positioned to light the lamp, clear the bases, and split the uprights. Whatever the sports metaphor, she's destined to keep Rotary in the winner's circle.*

RI President Stephanie Urchick and her club member Greg Incardona relax at S&D Polish Deli in Pittsburgh.



**I**t's a frigid January night, the second in a row to dip below zero degrees Fahrenheit in Chicago.

Schools are closed, events cancelled, flights grounded. Outside an arctic blast is howling, but inside Stephanie Urchick's condo, the party is sizzling.

Stephanie wears jeans and a Pittsburgh Steelers t-shirt with a "Magic of Rotary" pin affixed. Draped over one of her shoulders is a "Terrible Towel," an iconic yellow dish towel-size piece of fabric that stalwart fans of the American football team wave to rally their team. The occasional cheer or groan punctuates the party's chatter.

This playoff game between the Steelers and the Buffalo Bills has already been rescheduled once because of the dangerous winter weather sweeping across the United States. A group of Rotarians visiting Rotary headquarters was stuck in suburban Evanston because of a flight delay, and Stephanie invited them to watch the game with her. The 2024–25 Rotary International President Stephanie has just returned from a trip to the International Assembly in Orlando. She pulls out some pierogi, a type of Polish dumpling, from her freezer and sets out beverages of all kinds for her unexpected guests.

To call Stephanie a sports fan might be a Hall of Fame-worthy understatement. At her home in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, about 20 minutes outside Pittsburgh, Stephanie's basement "woman cave" is floor to ceiling Pittsburgh sports: 1990s-era cereal boxes featuring baseball great Roberto Clemente and the Stanley Cup-winning Pittsburgh Penguins hockey team; photos of her with Pittsburgh sports legends including Steelers running back Rocky Bleier, along with one of Bleier's framed jerseys; a Steelers piggy bank; Penguins hockey pucks; a signed football; a collection of tickets;

a Steelers quilt. Her most recent acquisition is a bobblehead of Pirates baseball player Richie Hebner, whose photo Stephanie plastered in her high school locker. In a nearby closet hang her two favourite uniforms: her Rotary t-shirts and her Pittsburgh fan gear.

The Bills score three touchdowns in a row to open the game, making the score 21–0 by the middle of the second quarter. Stephanie steps away from the group gathered in front of the television and perches behind the kitchen counter, checking her phone and the food she's heating up in the oven.

Her enjoyment of sports extends well beyond that of a typical fan. One summer, she assisted with character analyses for Canadian Football League scouts, attending NFL training camps to watch for players who might be cut and would be a good fit for that league. (She recalls Baltimore Ravens coach John Harbaugh approaching her about her role: "I've never worked with a lady before!" "Well," she replied, "I don't bite.") She also participated in a women's training camp put on by the Steelers and run by former players; her experience was cut short

**President Stephanie's hometown of Pittsburgh is known as the City of Bridges.**



after she snapped her Achilles tendon doing footwork drills through car tires. Didn't matter. "It was just a fun, fun summer," she says.

She met the vice-president of the Steelers, Art Rooney Jr, when he spoke to her Rotary club. Afterward, she brought him some chocolates from Sarris Candies, a well-known confectionery founded in Canonsburg. It's a tradition she's continued to uphold a few times a year, the two united by their love of the game.

That kind of connection is what's happening at the party tonight. Fellow Steelers fan René Laws, 2023–24 governor of District 7610 (Virginia), wears her #90 TJ Watt jersey for the occasion. The two met when they sat at the same table at a presidents-elect training seminar and their mutual love of the Steelers came up. "Ever since then, we would see each other at events and we would always have football and Rotary to talk about," Laws says. The Steelers score early in the fourth quarter and pull within a touchdown of tying the game. The two laugh as they both signal a Steelers first down along with the refs.

Life couldn't be better, unless the Steelers were actually winning, which unfortunately is not the case. Not tonight. The Bills score one more touchdown with 6.27 remaining in the game. Their fans celebrate by tossing snow in the air. The Steelers lose the game 31–17 and that's the end of their season. But for Stephanie it's just the beginning. This year, she will get her own chance to head up a winning team: Rotary.

A few weeks later, Stephanie gathers with family back in western Pennsylvania for the birthday of her eldest cousin, Michael Hatalowich. The two grew up like siblings, always at each other's houses, and they still tease each other as if brother and sister. The kitchen counter is spread with pizza and chicken wings, pasta salad, fruit, crackers and dips, as the news plays in the background on the television in the living room. But before they eat, the dozen or so gathered — cousins and their spouses, children,

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To call Stephanie a sports fan might be a Hall of Fame-worthy understatement.

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and grandchildren — sing "Happy Birthday," first in English, and then in Slavonic, harmonising to "Mnohaja Lita," a traditional Carpatho-Rusyn birthday song whose title means "many years." Stephanie joins in, her voice clear and strong.

Music has been a touchstone throughout Stephanie's life. Her dad played the accordion and led a polka band, the Harmonizers, for more than 35 years. "I learned to polka before I learned to walk," she says. Stephanie was a singer with her father's band and when she's in town, she sings with the Orthodox church choir directed by another of her cousins. "You know how some families get together and play cards?" she asks. "My father was a musician. My grandmother, my aunts, they were all singers. So when we got together, we sang."

Stephanie grew up here in western Pennsylvania, near the border of West Virginia, a countryside of forests and farms in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. Both her maternal and paternal grandparents moved here from Eastern Europe (Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine), settling down to take advantage of the jobs in the region's coal mines and steel mills. When she arrived in the US, her mother knew one sentence: "Give me some potatoes."

Stephanie's culture and her family remain important to her. Spend a bit of time with her and you're likely to hear family lore involving a misunderstanding around beets and the power



Club members Incardona (left) and William Kern join President Stephanie at Acrisure Stadium, home of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

of a patron saint and stories about her visits to meet distant relatives in Eastern Europe. She gathers regularly with Hatalowich and her other maternal cousins who live nearby, and she gets together with her more far-flung paternal cousins for an annual trip.

Western Pennsylvania is part of what was once known as the Steel Belt for its steel mills and coal mines, though it's now called the Rust Belt after the decline of those industries in the 1970s and '80s. The population of Stephanie's childhood hometown, Monessen, peaked at around 20,000 people in the 1930s but as of 2022 had declined to less than 7,000. Rows of stores along the main street stand vacant, and there's only one full-fledged grocery store left in town. Holy Name Cemetery, the Slovak cemetery where Stephanie's paternal grandparents are buried, is more than half empty, its pristine lawns an indication of the number of graves originally anticipated. "They'll never fill it up," Stephanie explains, "because so many people left town."

As a child, Stephanie devoured Nancy Drew mystery novels and dreamed of being a spy. "I was in this little place in Pennsylvania, and I really had never gone anywhere," she says. "I wanted to see the world." When she went to college, she channelled that desire into a major in international relations, with its focuses on history,

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**Spend a bit of time with her and you're likely to hear family lore involving a misunderstanding around beets and the power of a patron saint.**

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President Stephanie's club, the Rotary Club of McMurray, Pennsylvania, began meeting for breakfast to reach new members.

political science and languages. She studied Russian, Polish, Serbian and Italian, on top of the French she'd learned in high school. As she was finishing up college, she applied to work for the FBI, the CIA, and other US intelligence agencies. But there was one obstacle: All four of her grandparents were from Eastern Europe. "Most people's background checks take about three or four months," she recalls. "Well, mine apparently took a year and a half."

By the time the FBI called with a job offer, Stephanie had started down a new career path as an administrator in higher education. And she loved it. She declined what had been her dream job (although she jokes that her work with

Rotary is merely an elaborate cover for her cloak-and-dagger pursuits), and she went on to earn a master's degree in education and a doctorate in leadership studies. Her dreams of an international career were back-burnered — that is until Rotary came along.

Over dinner at the birthday party, Stephanie's nephew Jeremy Layne reflects on his aunt. Layne, now 38, didn't meet Stephanie until he was a teenager, and he recalls the impact that moment eventually had on the trajectory of his life. She encouraged him to push himself toward his goals and refuse to accept "no" as an option. "The day I met her at my Baba's (grandmother's) house, from that day forward she has meant everything to me," he

says. “Her vibe, her energy, her spark that she gives off is just intoxicating. She’s just an amazing woman. I’m so thankful for her to be in my life.”

“She really is very authentic and very genuine,” says Rebecca Bazzar, Hatalowich’s daughter. “She could fit in anywhere, in a room full of diplomats or a room full of local yokels. Everybody loves her and she’s going to have a good time everywhere she goes.” Bazzar leans over and in a conspiratorial whisper adds, “You won’t meet anyone more fun than her.”

The dozen people gathered toast “Na zdravja!” and then Stephanie begins the long process of hugging everybody goodbye. They discuss where she’s travelling next, her family members wishing that she stay safe. As they walk outside, she and her cousin Peter Merella, the choir director, say goodbye “their way,” in Polish. “Do widzenia.” They loosely translate: “Until we see each other again.”

**T**he next morning, as she walks into a side room at a diner in Canonsburg, Stephanie is welcomed by hoots and applause from the couple dozen Rotary members seated along a string of tables. But it isn’t just Stephanie who’s cheered as she enters the room. It’s the greeting that every member gets when arriving for a meeting of the Rotary Club of McMurray, Stephanie’s home club.

The tradition started a few years ago when someone arrived late to the meeting. Everybody cheered — and it caught on. Now no matter when they arrive at the meeting, all members are greeted as if they’re the president of an international organisation. “How could you not feel good?” Stephanie says.

She hugs William Kern, the club president, and the meeting starts. It’s

a breakfast meeting, and the smell of toast permeates the air. The table is a jumble of coffee mugs and carafes, empty cups of half-and-half, and water glasses. The food begins to arrive, classic diner fare including French toast, bagel sandwiches, hash browns and oatmeal. Stephanie isn’t much of a breakfast eater and sticks to decaf coffee.

For years, the club had been stuck at around 35 members, Stephanie says.

But it used Rotary’s Action Plan to take a look at itself with new eyes. Club leaders asked every member about the club’s performance — things such as the club meeting day, time and location, and club projects. With that information, they determined that meeting at a different time of day might work for more people and switched from a lunch club to breakfast. “Instantly, and I mean instantly, we had two new people come into the club,” Stephanie





says. “They said they were invited before but could never come.”

The club didn’t stop there. Members talked to other groups in the area and found people who wanted to serve but didn’t want to attend club meetings. Looking into options, club leaders started a satellite club for people to do just that. The concept brought 15 new members to the club. “They pay full dues,” Stephanie says. “We don’t discount anything. But we also know


they’re not coming to weekly meetings.” Instead, they hold “PBR” nights, referring not to the familiar monogram of the American beer Pabst Blue Ribbon, but to “pizza, beer, and Rotary.”

This morning’s meeting is vibrant, full of lively conversations and bursts of laughter. The cheering, the shared breakfast, the camaraderie is all part of the club’s intention to be, to borrow Stephanie’s catchphrase, “simply irresistible.” “It makes my job easier

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**Being irresistible means  
the experience is so  
compelling, so fun, so  
dynamic that people are  
drawn to it and don’t  
want to leave.**

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**President Stephanie works  
with McMurray Club president  
William Kern to scout a  
location for a peace pole in  
the community.**

talking about being a Rotarian in an active club,” she says. Being irresistible “means the experience is so compelling, so fun, so dynamic that people are drawn to it and don’t want to leave,” she adds. “At the bottom of that is the whole concept of belonging: Is this the kind of group I want to belong to?”

That was the question Stephanie asked herself in 1991, when an acquaintance walked into her office at the California University of Pennsylvania and asked if she’d like to go to a Rotary club meeting. Stephanie didn’t know much about Rotary, but she was recently divorced and looking for ways to meet new people. And when the woman mentioned Rotary’s internationality, something clicked.

When she went to her first meeting of the Rotary Club of California, a town south of Pittsburgh, she met Chuck Keller, a member of the club and RI’s 1987–88 president. “He introduced himself and we got to be friends quickly,” she says. “I had a built-in Rotary godfather. It was amazing.” Stephanie dove in, hosting Group Study Exchange team members and pitching in with the club’s Youth Exchange students. She organized an indoor picnic complete with a three-legged sack race. “Oh, my *gawd*,” she says in her Pittsburgh accent, “it was hilarious.”

Stephanie was drawn especially to the work of The Rotary Foundation, becoming first the Foundation chair for

her club and then for her district. Later, at the zone level, she served as a Regional Rotary Foundation Coordinator, focusing on fund development. She worked with Lou Piconi, another Pittsburgh-area Rotarian who had served Rotary on the international level as both a director and trustee, to train what they called “major donor possibility teams,” groups of five to seven people who focused on fundraising for The Rotary Foundation. “Lou and his wife, Barbara, and I would get in his big red Cadillac,” she says, and travel around the region. “We had a great time.”

Her work with the Foundation meant more people got to know her and led to a 5am phone call in 2012. Her name had been put forward to replace Anne Matthews as a Rotary Foundation trustee. (Anne left her post to join the Rotary Board of Directors.) Later, Stephanie became a director herself and led the organisation’s Strategic Planning Committee, a role that proved pivotal to shaping her thinking about how to move Rotary into a thriving future.

Given Stephanie’s background in international relations, her interest in peace as another of her priorities as president likely comes as no surprise. She encourages living The Four-Way Test, investing in a positive club culture and engaging with Rotary Peace Centers as ways members can help spread the message of Rotary’s

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**She really is very authentic and very genuine. She could fit in anywhere, in a room full of diplomats or a room full of local yokels.**

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President Stephanie mentors Kate Matz (centre) of the Rotary Club of Pittsburgh. Matz and her daughter, Mason, join President Stephanie at Sarris Candies, a confectionary.

commitment to peace. “We’re not going to get a Nobel Peace Prize for stopping a war,” Stephanie says, “but we can use what we have in Rotary to make the world a better place.”

One of the pillars of Stephanie’s peace push is, well, a pillar. That afternoon after the club meeting, she joins members of the Rotary Club of White Oak at a park in the community about 15 miles southeast of Pittsburgh. It’s a gorgeous sunny day that feels like spring although it’s only early February, with a slight breeze on the remaining leaves clinging to the oaks in the park.

Dan Dougherty, the 2024–25 governor of District 7305 and a member of the White Oak club, is holding a white 8-foot pole. The words “May Peace Prevail on Earth” are inscribed on it in eight languages — English, Irish, Italian, Polish, German, Croatian, Spanish and Vietnamese — spoken in the community. The phrase also appears in Braille, and there is a rainbow flag sticker and another decal for Veterans for Peace. Stephanie walks up and immediately pulls out her phone,

scanning the QR code on the peace pole’s side that links to a website with more information.

She encourages clubs to put up these poles as visible signals of their commitment to peace, whether at members’ homes, in their club, their community, or around the world. Dougherty’s wife, Autumn, who is also a member of the White Oak club, has made it her goal to get every club in their district to erect a peace pole in the coming year.

When the last White Oak club member arrives, everyone clusters around Stephanie like players huddled around their coach during a crucial timeout. “The peace pole project is a favourite of mine because it’s a visual representation,” she tells them. “It’s going to tell everybody in White Oak who comes to this park that your club is about peacebuilding. Rotary is about peacebuilding.”

To conclude the ceremony, Stephanie invites the members to reach out and touch the pole. They unite, all part of the same team — the Rotary team. Stephanie smiles. Game on.

Pictures by Christine Armbruster

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# Rotary's 4<sup>th</sup> Programs of Scale grant for Indian farming

Rasheeda Bhagat

One Indian club's passion for water conservation and improving the income of Indian farmers has ensured that The Rotary Foundation's next Programs of Scale grant worth \$2 million for this year has been awarded for Indian farming, as announced by TRF chair Barry Rassin at the RI Convention in Singapore. The application for this grant was made by the Rotary Club of Delhi Premier, RID 3011, which has been working over two decades in the area of water conservation, restoration of water bodies and building of check dams in some of the most parched regions of India.

Rassin said this grant will support the work Indian Rotarians do with the country's farmers, who have been



badly affected by climate change. The grant will be given through the programme *Partners for Water Access and Better Harvests in India*, which will aim to increase groundwater tables, extend cultivation areas, and raise the incomes of about 60,000 farmers by 25 per cent to 30 per cent.

Addressing one of the general sessions at the convention, Rassin said, “Farmers in India are responsible for producing much of the world’s wheat, rice, and other food staples. But the groundwater these farmers depend on is vanishing. Climate change is making rainfall more erratic which leads to drought.”

The result of this was that women and children in these distressed regions of India were spending increasing time walking long

distances to get water.... Time which could be used much better in education and earning a livelihood. Thanks to falling income from farming, men were forced to leave their villages to find work in urban areas to supplement their farm income. These trends were not sustainable either for these particular communities or the world.

Rotary’s fourth Programs of Scale aims to reverse these trends. Through this grant Rotary will work with Indian farmers on a five-year programme to plant the seeds for sustainable farming in India for generations to come, he said. *Partners for Water Access and Better Harvests in India* will build rainwater collection systems such as check dams and ponds to increase groundwater tables by 10 to 15 per cent each year in four

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Farmers in India are responsible for producing much of the world’s wheat, rice, etc. But the groundwater they depend on is vanishing thanks to climate change.

**Barry Rassin**  
TRF Chair

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states. It will also work to reduce soil erosion on about 4,100 hectares (more than 10,000 acres) of land by introducing drip irrigation and planting native species and fruit trees.

All these measures are expected to help offset the effects of climate change and facilitate sustainable farming practices.

Rotary members who are familiar with local dialects and traditions will work with national organisations to support farmers and promote techniques that will store additional water and grow more crops with less water while protecting the ecosystems on which they depend. The project’s success will be measured not only by increased groundwater storage and agricultural productivity, but by the overall improvement in quality of life for farmers and their families, as well, he added.

#### **A club devoted to water conservation**

Sudhanshu Pachisia, president of RC Delhi Premier, is ecstatic that TRF found merit in supporting the club’s work in water conservation and passion for improving the livelihood of Indian farmers. In a conversation with *Rotary News*, he said, “Our club has been doing water conservation and building check dams for a while, and we have seen the benefits of



**RC Delhi Premier president Sudhanshu Pachisia with villagers at a check dam built by the club at Alwar, Rajasthan.**



Villagers perform a puja before the construction of a check dam at Alwar.

those check dams in the Alwar area in Rajasthan and how those check dams improved the groundwater in the region, resulting in dry tube wells and hand pumps giving out water in just one year.”

This heartening result inspired one of their seniormost Rotarians **KS Mehta**, charter member of this club and past president of RC Delhi Midtown from where these Rotarians branched out to form their present club. “He has a lot of passion and in-depth knowledge on water conservation and building check dams, and this grant of scale is his brainchild and has materialised thanks to his vision. He said ‘why don’t we do something really big which can have an impact across India.’”

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Our club has been building check dams and we have seen the benefits in Alwar, Rajasthan, where the dry tube wells and hand pumps started giving out water in one year.

**Sudhanshu Pachisia**  
RC Delhi Premier president

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On how the project will pan out over the next few years, Pachisia says that to begin with they would start from three regions — Marathwada in Maharashtra, Bundelkhand in Madhya Pradesh, and some areas of Rajasthan. “We have chosen some of the very dry regions and have already tied with some very strong implementation partners, one of them being Mayank Gandhi of GVT from Marathwada.”

(Gandhi is a social activist and chief trustee and founder of the NGO Global Vikas Trust which aims to transform the drought-hit villages of Marathwada, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh by increasing the minimum income of India’s farmers

from the average of ₹10,000 to over ₹1 lakh per acre per year.)

They have also partnered with Srijan, the NGO from Bundelkhand working on water conservation, and the PHD Rural Development Foundation in Rajasthan. Adds Pachisia, “The basic idea is to first increase the groundwater level for the farmers, and then also introduce them to drip irrigation by giving them farming options that require less water and work best with drip irrigation. In the second stage comes the plantation of fruit trees. Our objective is to change the basic farming concept and get farmers into more profitable farming.

The fruits chosen will be regional and decided by agronomists and other experts in the field, after analysing the soil, climate and other factors.”

Elaborating, Mehta recalled how the Rotarians had started this work of augmenting the income of the marginal and small Indian farmers way back in 2005 when he was chair of the PHD Rural Development Foundation. “Rajendra Singh had already won the Magsaysay Award for his work in water conservation and the environment. So we called him over, understood from him the whole concept of saving and conserving water through check dams, signed a MoU with him and built two check dams in partnership with him.”

Next the RDF, a body devoted to undertaking welfare measures in rural India, decided it could do this work on its own. “And then, with help from late PRID Sushil Gupta, who helped us get funding from overseas, we carried out several water conservation projects and built check dams in Sikar, Alwar and villages near Dosa and Jaipur, also constructed some water tanks in Pataudi in Haryana.”

### **Pressing need of Indian farmers**

Asked if water is indeed the most pressing need of the Indian farmer, he

## Partners express happiness, support

**T**he Rotary Club of Delhi Premier’s partners, who are working with the Rotarians to improve the yield, value of farm produce and income of farmers, welcomed TRF’s announcement. Mayank Gandhi, GVT managing trustee, congratulated the club members “for getting this prestigious grant to help the farmers of India. We know that it is the poorest of the poor who bear the greatest brunt of the climate crisis, and we at GVT believe that the only way to transform their lives is by sustainable agriculture at scale. We have been planting trees and working on water conservation for several years now, and through this association with Rotary, we hope to help thousands of farmers in one of the worst-hit areas of India, which is drought-prone, poverty-ridden and reports some of the highest numbers of farmers’ suicides. We look forward to working together on this collaboration and hope that we can impact the lives of farmers significantly in the long term.”

Sharad Jaipuria, chairman, PHD Rural Development Foundation, said, “We, in partnership with Rotary, look forward to empowering farming communities in remote rainfed rural India. The partnership will focus on climate resilient agricultural practices to improve the socio-economic conditions of 30,000

farmers, with 45 per cent being women, by diversifying to high value crops like fruit plantations and multilayer vegetable farming, along with groundwater recharge by generating a water potential of more than 10.45 million cubic feet through sustainable management of natural resources. The project will be executed with an integrated approach for community participation in collaboration with the government; with the community being one of the key stakeholders.”

Prasanna Khemariya, CEO, Self-Reliant Initiatives through Joint Action (SRIJAN), said, “We are pleased to announce SRIJAN’s partnership with RC Delhi Premier to empower women farmers and foster sustainable livelihoods in Jhansi and Niwari districts. Through our combined efforts in water conservation, climate-smart agriculture and livelihood initiatives, we aim to benefit 1,500 women farmers and facilitate the plantation of 7,000 trees. This project will create potential for eight crore litres of groundwater, transforming 700 acres of agricultural land. Together, we are committed to driving positive change and creating a resilient, prosperous future for rural communities.”

*With inputs from Jyoti Rai, senior PR and communications strategist, RISAO*

says, "It's not just water, but we have to ensure that the farmer's total income goes up."

Mehta said that after building the check dams in Rajasthan, after which the groundwater levels went up in the region, when the farmers harvest their crops, "we found that their income had gone up by 100 per cent." But unfortunately, the fact remained that he was still drawing up water through the bored tube wells, depleting "at least 40 to 50 per cent of the water saved in the check dams. So we started thinking what more could we do to save that water."

After several rounds of discussions with water experts in the field on ways to lower the consumption of water in farming practices, "we discovered that there were certain types

of farming which can be done with drip irrigation; unfortunately crops such as wheat and mustard, widely cultivated in Rajasthan, cannot be done with drip irrigation. But fortunately, fruit trees can be grown with drip irrigation."

So the farmers have now started planting regionally suitable fruit trees such as amla or gooseberry, lime, sweet lime, apple bear (Indian *jujube* also called Chinese date) and papaya. "With these fruit trees, his income will go up three times. And while the fruit trees grow, he will be able to do crops on the land below these trees. The result is that while assuring his usual annual income, we are giving him additional income through fruits," said Mehta.

Also, along with the fruit trees, the Rotarians

File photo of a check dam built with Rotary support in Rajasthan in 2014.



Rasheeda Bhagat

Pachisia and club members with villagers at a check dam project.







Rasheeda Bhagat

have started giving these farmers an amount of ₹10,000, which they can use to put up the drip irrigation system. They are also entitled to get 50 per cent subsidy from the government for this but the only problem is the delay in getting the money sanctioned, he said. Add to this a bit of money as loan from the bank and some of his personal savings, the marginal farmer can put up his own drip irrigation system which will result in huge savings in groundwater in the coming years.



Above: Philippe Dangelser (second from R), past president of RC Brumath Truchtersheim Kochersberg, France, at the inauguration of a check dam in Kalakota village in Rajasthan in 2014.

Left: A check dam constructed by the club in Kaler village, Alwar.

Two horticulturists also have been appointed to go around the farms of small/marginal farmers and advise them on the right kind of fertilisers, pesticides and other inputs required. Vermicompost bags have also been given to the small farmers, so that they can generate their own compost, he added.



### Marketing challenge for farmers

On the marketing challenges before the Indian farmer, particularly the small and marginal farmer, who is a terrible loser in an ecosystem where the agents, brokers or middlemen make huge money while dictating the prices, Mehta said the entire situation will change when these small farmers, through value-added farming, hit a critical level of production. "Once they reach mass production,

then we will encourage them to go for farm companies or cooperatives... so that the middleman doesn't take away the major profit. Another benefit of mass production is that the moment the farmer achieves this, he doesn't have to run to the broker to sell his produce. On the other hand, the broker will come to him, and that makes a difference of 10 to 20 per cent in the pricing."

Once farmers' companies or cooperatives are formed, they would not only be able to sell their produce in a more organised way and profitably, but also the collective purchase of inputs will make them much cheaper, he added.

#### **Other verticals**

Pachisia added that apart from the direct impact on India's GDP when the small farmers' income goes up substantially, there are several other verticals which this grant is tackling, and these involve education, particularly of the girl child, health and hygiene of girls and women through adequate awareness on and support

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*These grants are given for sustainable projects that empower our communities and create measurable impact. I'm very proud this year's Programs of Scale grant has been awarded to RC Delhi Premier to address water scarcity and livelihood of our farmers.*

**Bharat Pandya**  
TRF Trustee

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to MHM, etc. "I can tell you that this grant programme will have a huge impact on women's welfare. We all know that women in our country have to walk for 2-3km to fetch water. Improving water tables will really help reduce this huge burden for them. Also migration to cities for casual labour will now stop."

Of course, he admitted, for all this to happen at the ground-level, it will

take three years; it takes an entire year just for the water levels to go up, and the results of planting fruit trees will be seen in three years.

"At the end of the day, we want to change the basic concept of farming, and the impact of the increased income of a marginal farmer will be huge, and will affect positively on other focus areas of Rotary such as health and hygiene, education, livelihood, greening of the earth and hence the environment."

Saving the best bit of news for the last, the club president said that apart from the \$2 million (over ₹16 crore) which will come from this programme, the club has already got commitments from Indian corporates for an additional \$2 million. "We feel this is just the beginning; once our donors and the community see the real impact of this project, the trickle-down effect will be there and we expect this project to grow to \$100 million in five years."

He added that there are so many Indian corporates who want to help development of rural India, and with





IPDG Jeetender Gupta (R) and DG Mahesh Trikha (second from L) with member of RC Delhi Premier.

Rasheeda Bhagat



this project having various components such as education, health, livelihood and environment, “somewhere or the other they will find an area which will align with their CSR objectives and commitments, and partner with us.”

Expressing his happiness at this year’s Programs of Scale being awarded to India, TRF trustee Bharat Pandya said that Rotarians were people of action who used their networks to create lasting solutions.

“Programs of Scale are an effort to implement sustainable projects that empower our communities and create measurable impact. I am very proud that this year’s Programs of Scale grant has been awarded to RC Delhi Premier to address the issue of water scarcity and its impact on agriculture and livelihoods of farmers. The grant will help the club in bringing a change, advancing environmental sustainability, and ensuring a brighter future for rural communities in India.”

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

# South Asia at Singapore



**Above:** PRIP Mark Maloney and his spouse Gay with (from L) PDGs Rajiv Sharma, Subhash Jain, RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury and South Asia Reception chair Priyesh Bhandari.

**Left:** PDG Bhandari and his spouse Ellora with TRF Trustee Larry Lunsford.

**Below:** From L: RI General Secretary John Hewko, his spouse Margaret, Catherine Gump and RIPE Stephanie Urchick.





**Clockwise from Top:** RID Roychowdhury and TRF Trustee Geeta Manek; From L: RID Roychowdhury, TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya and Madhavi; RID 3201 PDG Madhav Chandran and Sujata; RIDN KP Nagesh, his spouse Uma and Shipra Roychowdhury; DGND Ravishankar Dakoju and his spouse Paola with Rtn Rampur Viswanath (centre).





TRF Vice Chair Pandya and Madhavi.



PRIP Shekhar Mehta and Rashi.



PRIP K R Ravindran and TRF Vice Chair Pandya.



RIPE Stephanie with her aide PDG Tom Gump.



PDG Asha Venugopal and Anirudh Paldiwal.





**Clockwise from Above**

RIDNs M Muruganandam (L) and Nagesh; Vanathy and PRIP Ravindran with PRID C Basker and Mala, and PDG Bhandari; PRIP Maloney and Gay; (From L) PDGs V R Muthu, Suresh Hari and Deepak Shikarpur; TRF Vice Chair Pandya, Madhavi and RID Hans-Hermann Kasten. PDGs V R Muthu and Sampath Kumar are also seen.





RID Roychowdhury, PRIP Mehta, Rashi and PDG Bhandari.



From R: Shipra, RID Kasten and his spouse Nadja Picard;

**Right:** From L: Vanathy, PRIP Ravindran, PRIDs Basker and Mahesh Kotbagi, and RIDN Muruganandam. DGND Dakoju is also seen.



From L: RID Roychowdhury, RI General Secretary Hewko, Margaret, Ellora, PDG Bhandari, Shipra and PDG Jain. Right: PRID Kamal Sanghvi and Sonal.







RID Roychowdhury and Shipra with PDG Jain.



**Above:** PRID A S Venkatesh and Vinita; **Below:** PDG N Subramanian, his spouse Lalitha, Mohindru and DGE Amita, and PDG Jain.



Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat; Designed by N Krishnamurthy

# Make Rotary irresistible

Rasheeda Bhagat



Incoming RI President Stephanie Urchick

**H**ow will you make your club “irresistible” to your members, and foster a “sense of belonging” in them? This is my challenge to you,” said incoming RI President Stephanie Urchick, while addressing a general session at the RI Convention in Singapore.

While there would be so many different ways of doing so, she gave them one example of how the Rotary Club of Holyoke in Massachusetts, US, grew its membership by making some changes and adopting some innovations in the immediate aftermath of the Covid pandemic. “Turning this setback into a strength, the club started meeting in the community room at the local library, and now it gets lunch from a nearby deli. Lunch costs \$10 per person, but it’s optional. Folks can bring their own lunch if they want, and attending the meeting is free of charge for those who don’t buy lunch. What a great way to work towards being fair to all concerned.” Since then, RC Holyoke has gained 13 new members, she said, amidst applause.

Of course, one change did not mean any club could afford to stop focusing on the club experience. “But making lunch more flexible in meetings did something important for Holyoke — it fostered a sense of inclusivity by acknowledging and adapting to different considerations, the first step toward belonging.”

She urged club leaders to make changes to give members a greater sense of belonging, and the best practice was to ask both existing and prospective members what they expected from the club experience and Rotary membership. Once they get the feedback, “you might find that some members don’t feel like they fit in or that the club experience is not compelling to prospective members.” Here, Rotary’s Action Plan can help, as it has tools to collect feedback, assess the club’s

strong points, identify areas to improve, and address challenges, she added.

Stephanie said that in a constantly changing world Rotary clubs couldn’t afford to stand still. “But the changes we make need to be consistent and strategic and towards a greater vision, which will give you the continuity you need to create effective change within your club. Following the Action Plan and addressing suggestions from the community will go a long way to foster the sense of belonging we want all Rotary members to feel in their existing or new clubs.”

This was where, she added, the importance of “expanding our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is so important. Anyone who has the heart and hands for service belongs in Rotary, and I hope you’ll join me in opening your arms to future people of action even if — and in some cases, especially if — they don’t look or act like the typical member of your club.”

With a focus on inclusivity and belonging, it’s easier to be united for common goals, and members committing to each other’s well-being was the first step to expand Rotary’s reach and spread positive peace in these troubled times.

### **Peacebuilding a priority**

Building peace in the world remains a top priority for Rotary and one of the most effective ways Rotarians do this is through its Peace Fellowship, a project TRF announced in Singapore 25 years ago, which helps existing and aspiring peace and development professionals learn how to prevent or end conflict. “It’s fitting that we return to Singapore 25 years after our peace fellowship programme was first announced, and the progress we’ve made in that time is nothing short of magical. More than 1,800 peace fellows have graduated from Rotary Peace Centers and are working in more than 140 countries towards a better world.”

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Let’s welcome even those who don’t look or act like the typical members of our clubs. With a focus on inclusivity and belonging, it’s easier to be united for common goals.

**Stephanie Urchick**  
RI President Elect

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Now, thanks to a **\$15.5 million** gift from the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation, one more peace centre was coming up at the Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul, where the next year’s Rotary presidential peace conference would be held from Feb 20–22. Its very appropriate theme was ‘Healing in a Divided World,’ and it would focus on Rotary’s systematic peace efforts and provide opportunities to learn together. Rotary Peace Fellows, Positive Peace activists and Rotary’s key partners in peace would participate and registration for this conference will open in July, she said, seeking Rotarians’ support for this important initiative.

“The truth is, we’re not going to bring peace to the world, end polio, or grow membership by waving a wand and saying some funny words. It’s up to you. You create the magic with every project completed, every dollar donated, and every new member inducted.”

Signing off on a nostalgic note, Stephanie said: “I will always cherish my memories of the last international convention in Singapore 25 years ago. I was district governor then, and I am truly honoured to accept the position of Rotary International president now.” She urged the participants to return home and build on the connections they had made at the convention. ■



# RI Convention puts spotlight on peace, women's empowerment, mental health

Rasheeda Bhagat

Reflecting the troubled and conflict-ridden times we live in, the one strong message that came out of the Rotary International Convention in Singapore pertained to peace, women's empowerment and mental health. Addressing the opening session, RI President Gordon McNally struck a poignant and sombre note when he said, "All of us know, peace has been on the minds of the world

this past year — and remains on the forefront of Rotary's mission." Quoting the Scottish poet Robert Burns, he said this was the time people of the world, particularly Rotarians, came together to use "our common humanity and our shared desire to build a more peaceful and compassionate world, especially in the times of greatest peril. World peace is a perilous, difficult journey, and we are experiencing some trying moments

right now. The troubles of the world affect us deeply, because we have friends, and sometimes family and neighbours, experiencing the heartbreak of destruction and loss."

But through "our service projects, humanitarian efforts, and systematic approach to peacebuilding and conflict resolution, we can be catalysts for positive change in the world. We are an example of what a better world could be — one where people find



2023-24 RI President Gordon McNally addresses a session at the RI Convention in Singapore.

common ground across their divides — and common purpose in elevating humanity,” he said.

McInally said peacebuilding wasn't about stopping wars, even though “I'm sure all of us would love to have the power to march into the war zones of the world and say ‘Stop this war’! Sadly, we don't have that power. But I do believe that we have the power to stop wars and conflicts from starting, through building peace from the ground level up; by preventing and treating disease, by improving water, sanitation and hygiene, maternal and child health, and by basic education and literacy, community economic development, along with sustaining our environment.”

**R**otary, he said, was fortunate to have a strategic partnership with the highly respected Institute for Economics and Peace to help it in the mission to create a more peaceful world.”

The RI president also stressed the importance of bringing peace to those whose lives Rotarians were working so hard to improve through their community projects.

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World peace is a perilous journey; the troubles of the world affect us deeply, because we have friends, family and neighbours, experiencing the heartbreak of destruction and loss.

**Gordon McInally**  
RI President

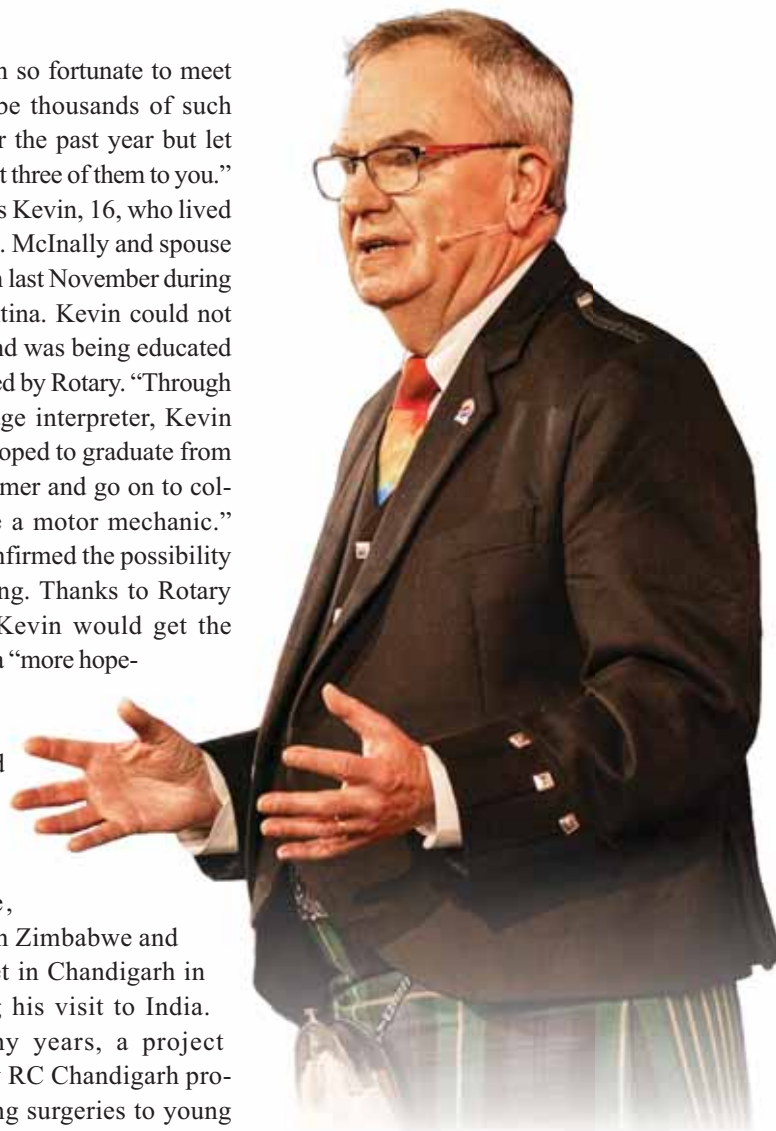
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“I have been so fortunate to meet hundreds, maybe thousands of such individuals over the past year but let me introduce just three of them to you.”

The first was Kevin, 16, who lived in Buenos Aires. McInally and spouse Heather met him last November during a visit to Argentina. Kevin could not hear or speak and was being educated at a school funded by Rotary. “Through his sign language interpreter, Kevin told us that he hoped to graduate from school this summer and go on to college to become a motor mechanic.” His teachers confirmed the possibility of this happening. Thanks to Rotary and its work, Kevin would get the opportunity for a “more hopeful and peaceful future.”

The second person whose life Rotarians had changed was Daphne, 16, who lived in Zimbabwe and who he had met in Chandigarh in January during his visit to India. Here, for many years, a project spearheaded by RC Chandigarh providing lifesaving surgeries to young people suffering from congenital heart defects, had helped Daphne undergo a heart surgery and return home to Zimbabwe “to live a normal, happy and achieving life. Daphne was the 777<sup>th</sup> patient to benefit from that programme.”

The third beneficiary whose life Rotary would protect against a crippling disease like polio was Precious from the African country Malawi. He himself had the privilege of giving her two precious drops of the polio vaccine, thanks to which the little child would be protected against polio. This was yet another “example of where Rotary gave individuals the chance of a more hopeful and peaceful future.”



**T**alking about mental health, one of his focus areas during his presidential year, McInally said “this issue is deeply personal for me. A little over 10 years ago, my brother Ian lost a long-term struggle with depression that he silently battled alone. His torment with this terrible disease consumed him — and ultimately took — his life. And for me and others who loved him, his loss left us asking why... what did we miss? What more could we have done?”

But, he added, he had shared this story “not to gain your sympathy, but to share my experience: that struggles



President McInally and his wife Heather (R) with their family.

with mental health can affect anyone, including a beloved younger brother, with a fine career and a loving, deeply caring family.” Over the last 18 months many Rotarians had shared with him similar moving stories about their own families.

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**Responsibility is the key word here. Many people here are in positions of influence and authority. Take that power and leverage it for the good and well-being of women.**

**Graça Machel**  
women’s empowerment activist

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Of course, Rotarians couldn’t “improve mental health and wellbeing by ending all human sorrow, pain or loneliness. Challenges are an inevitable part of life. But we can fight the stigma against reaching out for help. We can make a difference for the people we serve by investing in the tools, people, institutions, and systems that will ensure access to qualify, affordable care.”

So much more could be achieved, he added by “making our clubs warm, welcoming environments, where we care for and actively listen to one another and ensure that all members feel like they belong.” He was grateful to Rotarians across the world, who had been working over the last 12 months to erase the stigma associated with discussions of emotional well-being, raising awareness on mental health needs, and improving access to mental health services.

Even though significant progress had been made over the past year, much more needed to be done, and the second day’s sessions would highlight some of the “incredible projects underway in the Rotary world, showcasing the innovative ways in which we are addressing the mental health needs of communities and setting a standard for future projects across all of our areas of focus.”

It had to be remembered that this major problem required long-term focus and commitment, to treat not only the symptoms of poor mental well-being, but to also address the underlying systemic issues that perpetuate stigma and prevent people from accessing the care and support they need. “Mental health is a personal and family struggle for so many in this world — but it is also something more. It is a global challenge that affects everything we do.

It knows no boundaries of age, gender, race, or nationality. And yet, for far too long, even discussing it has led to stigma, shame, and silence,” he said.

But, added McInally emphatically, Rotarians would “not look the other way. You cannot show care and compassion with silence and excuses. We show it when we stand up, speak out, and take action.”

And this was just what Rotary had done. By recently helping the local community in a village in the Philippines to open a new health and wellness clinic for mothers, thus starting an informal network of peer-to-peer support group. Rotary clubs in Colorado were putting an endowment fund to ensure mental health professionals receive the right education to serve such issues faced by the youth and members of clubs across the world were showing care and compassion to one another.

The opening session had some soul-stirring songs sung by the British pop star Calum Scott, who has himself



British pop star Calum Scott performing at the convention.

struggled with depression, but who has been openly talking to his fans about his struggle and how important it is to seek the right kind of help when one has issues related to mental health.

The delegates also had an opportunity to listen to Graça (gras-ah) Machel, who has dedicated her public life to combatting inequality and championing women’s and children’s

rights. She was the education minister of Mozambique, has served as the chancellor of Cape Town University, works with the UN, and has received WHO’s highest honour for her work supporting the health and well-being of children, women and teenagers.

Addressing the audience about the importance of ushering peace into our world during these troubled times Graça said, “Don’t just feel it’s someone else’s problem to fix, everyone must take responsibility and we shouldn’t leave it up to governments.”

When asked about the many inequalities faced by girls and women in different regions and different situations, often having to face the brunt of displacement from climate change, violence and conflict, and what Rotarians could do to help in empowering women, she said responsibility was the key word here. “Take on responsibility; many people here are in positions of influence and authority. Take that power and leverage it for the good and well-being of women. Pay women the same salaries, be sensitive to their unique contributions. Education, education, education! Educate girls!” ■



Former education minister of Mozambique and international women’s and children’s rights activist Graça Machel (R).

# Adventure in Braille

Jaishree

The Rotary Club of Bangalore Lakeworld, along with eight Rotary clubs of RIDs 3191 and 3192, organised a car rally for the blind in May. The event had 30 cars, and was flagged off by DG Srinivas Murthy and PDG Fazal Mahmood at the Vega Mall in Bengaluru. The 40-km rally finished at the Gold Coins Club and Resort, Electronic City.

Each car had a blind person as navigator who received a list of directions in Braille during the flag-off.

They had to guide the sighted drivers through the route assigned, ensuring they followed a specified time, speed and distance to each checkpoint. Trust, communication and coordination were the key factors. “We vibed beautifully and exchanged meaningful conversation during our drive,” says Zubaieda Jamal, president of RC Bangalore Lakeworld. She was one of the drivers and was navigated by Lingaraj, an international Bharatanatyam dancer, who has performed in the US, Singapore and UAE.

Thanks to her navigator, Zubaieda won the second place in the women’s category. “The win was not that easy. But more than the accomplishment, I still cherish the camaraderie that we shared. We got lost multiple times and I couldn’t even read the route as it was all in Braille. I had to completely trust my partner throughout the drive and it was a memorable experience,” she says.

This is the 14<sup>th</sup> year of the event which was conceived and executed by club member Srikarunya

**Zubaieda Jamal (3<sup>rd</sup> from L), president, RC Bangalore Lakeworld, Srikarunya Subrahmanyam Rajan, president-elect of the club, RID 3192 DEI director Abha Saxena, RID 3191 DEI director Varalakshmi Balaji (R) and Rotarians of RIDs 3191 and 3192 at the flag-off point of the car rally.**







**RID 3192 IPDG Srinivas Murthy and DG NS Mahadeva Prasad presenting the DEI Catalyst Award to Deepa Narasimhan, a diversity & inclusion activist. District DEI director (2023–24) Abha Saxena (L) and PDG Jeetendra Aneja (R) are also seen.**

Subrahmanyam Rajan through his organisation People for People. “This is the first year we took the lead and intend continuing it,” says Zubaieda. The primary objective is to raise awareness and sensitivity for the visually-challenged, and help build a more inclusive society. For the 30 blind navigators who participated in the rally, “the feeling of ‘being included’ was the most predominant. They do not expect any special treatment; instead

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*We got lost multiple times and I couldn’t even read the route as it was all in Braille. I had to completely trust my partner throughout the drive and it was a memorable experience.*

**Zubaieda Jamal**  
president  
RC Bangalore Lakeworld

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they want to be recognised for their skills and be part of the mainstream.”

Throughout the rally, the teams encountered various tasks designed to test their navigation abilities, problem-solving skills and overall coordination. Marshalls on vintage bikes clocked the time at each checkpoint. “All the navigators were proactive despite their handicap. The event highlighted their incredible potential when given the right opportunity and support. We were inspired by people like Malini, a navigator from Mysuru, for whom this was the 16<sup>th</sup> rally. She teaches music online for international students,” says the club president.

The participants were students of Bengaluru-based NGOs Mitra Jyoti, IDL and Vividha, and they were charged ₹2,000 each as entry fee, a part of which will go to fund this Rotary clubs’ community projects. Dayanand, managing director of the Gold Coins Resort, presented cash prizes to the winners.

#### **DEI Awards**

In 2023–24, RID 3192, bifurcated from RID 3190, introduced the

Rotary DEI Awards “to celebrate organisations and individuals for their groundbreaking initiatives to promote diversity, equity and inclusion, and provide them a platform to share their best practices to inspire others,” says Abha Saxena, District DEI director (23–24). Submissions were invited from three types of organisations — public service organisations such as NGOs, education institutions and hospitals; corporates and Rotary clubs. “We looked for initiatives that had broken new ground, created social impact and encouraged participation of women, disabled persons and the LGBTQ+ community in the workplace and their local communities.”

The winners included corporates such as Wipro, Zomato and rProcess; public service institutions such as NIMHANS, Biocon Academy, All Inclusive Foundation and Sarthak Trust. Under the Rotary category, RCs Bangalore, Bangalore Northwest, Bangalore Bhuvaneshwari nagar, Chennai Bharathi and E-Club Chennai Shakthi won the inaugural DEI Awards. ■

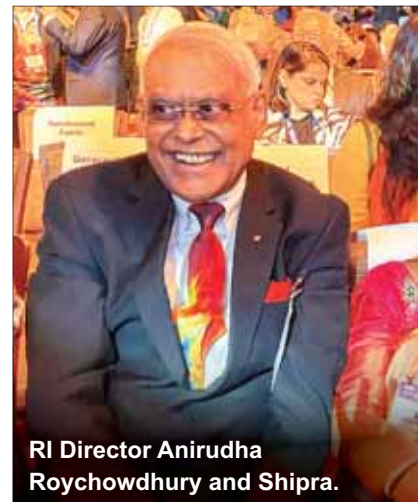


# Another magical RI Convention in Singapore

Rasheeda Bhagat



TRF Trustee Vice Chair Bharat Pandya and Madhavi.



RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury and Shipra.



PRIP KR Ravindran and Vanathy.



TRF Trustee Chair Barry Rassin and Esther.



RI 3250 PDG Sanjay Khemka with young participant.

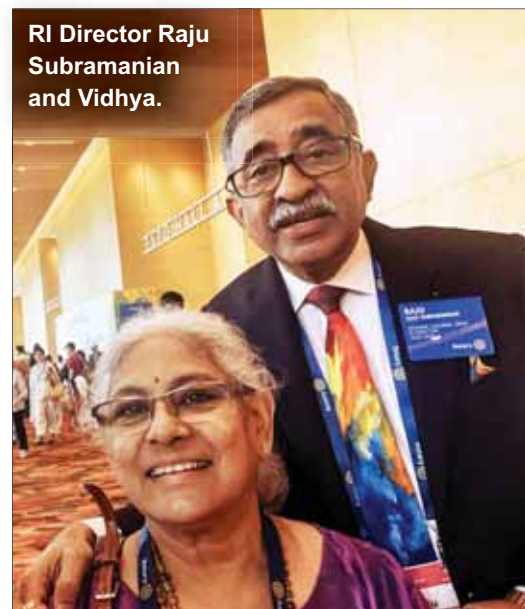


It felt like a mini-United Nations alright; with over 14,000 Rotarians from 151 countries converging on the city-state of Singapore in May 2024 for the International Convention, an annual gathering of Rotary held in different parts of the world each year.

Held in a different city each year, Rotary's conventions serve as a hub for members and participants to connect and learn from each other and a range of experts on how to take action to address issues in their communities.

The energy and the vibrations at this convention, as any other Rotary convention held in the past, were both magical and infectious. At the opening session, as there was a flag march with Rotaractors waving the flags of over 200 member countries, the colourfully dressed delegates erupted into lusty cheering, whistling and widespread applause.

The pre-opening session ABBA numbers proved magical yet again and as their songs filled the air,



RI Director Raju Subramanian and Vidhya.



**Seated**, from R: PRIP Kalyan Banerjee, Esther and PRIP Barry Rassin, RI General Secretary John Hewko, Heather and President Gordon McNally, PRIP Shekhar Mehta and Rashi. **Standing**, from R: Susanne and PRIP Holger Knaack, Margaret Hewko, Juliet and PRIP Ian Riseley, PRIP Mark Maloney and Gay, PRIP Ravindran and Vanathy, PRIP DK Lee and Young, PRIP Jennifer Jones and DGE Nick Krayacich.



RI President Gordon McNally and Heather.



A colourful rangoli at the House of Friendship.





PRIP Mehta and Rashi.



PRIP Mark Maloney with his daughter Suzanna Faith Greer.

a few hundred Rotarians spontaneously got up from their seats in the huge auditorium at the sprawling Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre and started jiving and dancing to the Swedish band’s mesmerising numbers.

The choice of music clips at most Rotary International events is excellent and RI President Gordon McNally’s Convention was no exception. The opening session was wrapped up by the soulful melodies of British popstar Calum Scott, whose presence and speech reiterated that the most talented and brightest of people can suffer from depression and mental disorders, but with proper care, counselling and treatment, these can be overcome.

Through four days, and pre-convention sessions, events, special

lunches and dinners, over 100 humanitarian service projects done by Rotarians all over the world were shared. Many of these were displayed through short and snappy videos on the giant screen, House of Friendship, and the speeches of world class speakers, who talked about all the focus areas of Rotary and how the organisation’s work was constantly endeavouring to make the world a better place.

“Rotary conventions are about bringing people together to create meaningful connections and to inspire each other to help create a more healthy, hopeful, and peaceful world,” said McNally. He expressed his excitement in “reconnecting with so many friends from across the globe in Singapore to celebrate in the joy we bring through our work, and to learn how we can continue to help

people and communities thrive in the future.”

RI President Nominee Mario de Camargo acknowledged how a Rotary Youth Exchange programme he had participated in 1974–75 in the freezing winter of Minnesota, US, had changed his vision of life, and paved “the way for me to become the first RI president coming from the ranks of the Youth Exchange programme.”

Incoming RI President Stephanie Urchick said she couldn’t over-emphasise the importance “of belonging. In fact, I would go so far as to say that belonging is *The Magic of Rotary*. My challenge to you is to consider making changes to the experience that your club offers its members to help more people feel like they truly belong.”

TRF Trustee Chair Barry Rassin warmed the hearts of every Indian Rotarian present in Singapore and beyond, when he announced that this year's Programs of Scale grant for \$2 million has been awarded to promote sustainable farming in India by conserving water and shoring up different water sources in rural India.

Over the next few days Singapore, the global economic powerhouse and the hub of innovation, continued to pulsate to the presence of 14,000-odd participants for this conference, with many of its hotel rooms fully booked, and as usual, the demand for rooms sending the prices galloping up.

The House of Friendship was constantly buzzing with visitors going around the various stalls, making new connections and friendships, and promises to do more for making the world a better place, even as the dark shadows of the violence and conflict in Palestine and Ukraine loomed large, leading most of the speakers to touch upon how working for peace was more important now than ever.

While big projects were discussed and big dreams were dreamt, what

also touched the heart were small details that had gone into the planning of this mega event. For instance, take this announcement in the main auditorium: 'Attention, lights during this general session may potentially trigger seizures for people with photo sensitive epilepsy. Viewer discretion is advised.'

But at the end of the day, the one constant and crucial message that came out of this mega event was the need for innovation, immediate, imaginative and even revolutionary steps, to increase Rotary's stagnating membership, which was actually decreasing in some parts of the world. All the senior leaders agreed that there was no magic wand to fix this problem, and each club would have to think out-of-the-box to address this critical issue.

Addressing one of the general sessions, RI General Secretary John Hewko quoted Albert Einstein on the need to have vision to solve any major problem, "We must revolutionise our thinking, actions, and have the courage to revolutionise relations among nations of the world."



Singapore's traditional Lion Dance.



RIDN K P Nagesh and Uma, and PDG Madhav Chandran and Sujatha with Rotaractors.





PRIP Knaack and Susanne.



TRF Trustee Aziz Memon and Samina.



RIPN Mario de Camargo and Denise with PRIP Jennifer Jones (centre).



A Rotaractor proudly holds the Indian flag on the stage.



RI Director Muhammed Faiz Kidwai and Uzma.



PRIP Ravindran (centre) with PRID AS Venkatesh and Vinita.



RIPN De Camargo and Denise.



PRIP Banerjee with Juliet and PRIP Riseley.



Vanathy Ravindran, Vinita Venkatesh and Phyllis, wife of RI Director GB Chew.



Margaret Hewko vibing to an ABBA number.





President McNally and Trustee Chair Rassin present the 'Rotary People of Action Award' to RID 3300 PDG Bindi Rajasegaran. RI General Secretary Hewko is on the left.



Rotarians of Nepal at the House of Friendship.



From L: RID 3291 DGE Krishnendu Gupta, RID 3192 DGND Ravishankar Dakoju, Vanathy, PRIP Ravindran, Simran Gupta and Paola Ravishankar.

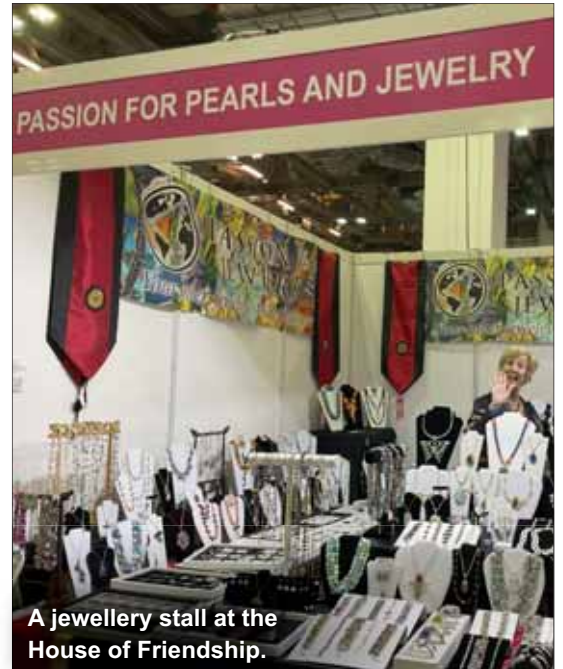
Left: An LGBT+ Rotary Fellowship stall at the House of Friendship.

To do this, Einstein had added, "It is impossible to apply methods and measures which at an earlier age might have been sufficient." So new thinking and new tools were going to be needed at various levels to keep the organisation robust and vibrant.

While welcoming the audience, Hewko said as it was a truly global audience, he wished he could speak many more languages than he did. But wait... he might just be able to do that, he said, as his image was beamed on the screen, saying in Hindi: *Singapore me aap ke saath hona ek anand hei* (I am happy to be with you here in Singapore). The image went on to say the same in French, Korean and Chinese. Predictably enough, an AI tool had been used for this!■



A Rotarian with his toddler.



A jewellery stall at the House of Friendship.



# How global grants impact the world

Rasheeda Bhagat

**T**he Rotary Foundation chair Barry Rassin announced at the Singapore Convention that TRF had awarded 1,098 global grants during the 2022–23 Rotary year. “Just think about the scale of that work and the magnitude of our impact. Our work goes beyond global grants and supports every area of focus.”

Announcing the fourth Programs of Scale grant of \$2 million for sustainable farming in India (See pg 20), Rassin said protecting the environment and supporting sustainable livelihoods remained Rotary’s priority. Restoration of mangroves in various regions of the world was being done with TRF grants. In the Philippines, Rotary clubs

From L: PRID A S Venkatesh, TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya and TRF Chair (2023–24) Barry Rassin.

Rasheeda Bhagat



have participated in largescale plantings to protect and restore mangroves along shorelines as part of its *Project Green* environmental initiative. “Projects like this are underway across the globe, from the Bahamas to Kenya. And we will continue planting mangroves that protect sacred shores from erosion, build local economies, and capture immense amounts of carbon to help stave off the effects of climate change.”

That’s why it was important to meet TRF’s “ambitious fundraising goals. These are stretch goals, to be sure. But the more we do, the more we can help alleviate the impact of disease, poverty, and war. Big problems require big solutions. There’s no greater example of this than polio. Health workers in Pakistan and Afghanistan are putting their lives on the line every day, and they need our continued support.”

Rotarians could help these workers in many ways; by joining or initiating a PolioPlus Society in their clubs or districts and engage other members in this task at a historic moment when “we are so close to ending polio forever. And don’t forget that the Gates Foundation continues to amplify Rotary’s donations to polio eradication with a 2-to-1 match for every dollar,” he reiterated.

Ending polio remained Rotary’s primary aim; and towards this goal it was working to raise \$2.025 billion by 2025 for TRF.

This year, TRF had set an ambitious fundraising goal of \$500 million, and the “only way we will get there is with your support. I’m especially counting on Rotary and Rotaract members who have not yet contributed to make your first gift, as it will make a difference.”

## Including Rotaractors

Bassin also urged Rotarians and Rotaractors to seek out global grant projects where they could make a difference. “Consider planning your biggest million-dollar dinner fundraiser or End Polio Now event. There are all sorts of ways to support our Foundation, but I encourage you to start small and dream big.” He also made a case for including Rotaract activities and projects in district grants, adding that now Rotaractors were also eligible for global grants.

One exciting global grant was presently funding a Rotaractor’s graduate study researching ways to use artificial intelligence to design and develop new, innovative drugs at a leading research centre in Germany. “Projects like this research grant have so much potential, if we dream big. And TRF has a history of supporting big dreams.”

The TRF chair recalled that it was at the Singapore Convention 25 years ago that Rotary had announced plans for its first peace centre. Now, 25 years later, thanks to a very generous donation of \$15.5 million from the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation, Rotary was setting up its new peace centre at the Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul, Turkey. That opening was being celebrated with a presidential peace conference in Istanbul next year.

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Health workers in Pakistan and Afghanistan are putting their lives on the line every day, and they need our continued support.

**Barry Rassin**  
TRF Trustee Chair

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Striking a sombre note, Rassin said that Rotary’s systematic approach to peacebuilding is needed today more than ever. “We see proof of that all around the world today. For me, the conflict in Haiti has been particularly heartbreaking. Half of Haiti’s people are deprived of the fundamental right to clean drinking water. But amid the violence and chaos, Rotary members are working to improve the lives of Haitians.”

This they were doing through a programme called *Hanwash*, which has already brought drinking water to thousands of people. Rotarians were also partnering with local officials to improve the delivery of public services so Haitian communities could themselves sustain their clean water sources.

## UN partnership in environment

Rassin disclosed that Rotary had now struck a strategic partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme. “This will give us a greater ability to protect, restore, and sustain freshwater ecosystems in our

communities.” It was called the Community Action for Fresh Water Initiative, and he urged Rotarians to get involved in it and use it to plan projects, leverage Rotary grants and advocate for fresh water in their communities.

Giving a report card on the Programs of Scale grant for a Malaria-Free Zambia, the TRF chair said there was enough evidence to prove its benefits. The Zambia programme had not only increased Rotary’s visibility in that country, sparking the creation of three new clubs, it had also inspired a similar programme to address malaria in Uganda.

Another crucial area TRF was focusing was “nimble addressing short-term priorities in communities during times of natural disasters. Over the past five years, TRF has awarded 274 disaster response grants amounting to \$8 million, enabling our members to meet the urgent, time-sensitive needs of communities impacted by natural disasters.” But this grant too required Rotarians’ generous support, he added.

The money raised by Rotarians for TRF not only supported efforts to eradicate polio, but also resulted in global grants that impacted people around the world. “A few months ago, I witnessed a great example of this when I visited a hospital in India where doctors have performed over 4,200 paediatric heart surgeries thanks to a number of Rotary global grants.

And I will never forget the fire department and hospital in Taiwan where ambulances, critical care equipment, and paramedic training funded by Rotary have doubled the survival rate for heart patients.”

Rassin added that it was hard to describe what “it’s like to shake the hands of these doctors — to look into the eyes of children whose lives we have helped make whole again.” At the end of the day, such work was changing lives and creating hope across the world, he said. ■



# De Camargo to focus on continuity and membership increase

**Rasheeda Bhagat**

**I**t was a Rotary Youth Exchange programme way back in 1974–75 “that changed my vision of life, after spending a year in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, with a freezing winter and warmhearted people. That experience paved the way for me to become the first RI president coming from the ranks of the YEP. By the way, I survived the winter,” said RI President Nominee

Mario de Camargo, in a passionate acceptance speech made at the closing session of the Singapore Convention.

Amidst applause, as his spouse Denise stood by his side, he promised to focus on the core values and objectives of Rotary and particularly follow the mantra of continuity. At the outset he made it clear that as Rotary is in the business of “we, not ‘I’”, as isolation

induces a feeling of superiority, the reason for many difficulties,” he was accepting the presidency for not only himself but also his spouse Denise and son Andre. He also recognised his parents who had introduced him to Rotary at an early age, and acknowledged the hard work put in by earlier RI presidents from Latin America — Paulo Costa from Brazil in 1990–91, Luis Giay from Argentina in 1996–97

**RIPN Mario de Camargo**



and Frank Devlyn from Mexico in 2000–01; and the first RI president to mention continuity, Carlo Ravizza from Italy (1999–2000), when he was the DG.

De Camargo said he would keep in mind the “successful lessons from Polio to help change our partnership mindset. Rotary can do wonders working alone but we need partners to change the world. There is an African proverb that states: If you want to go quickly, walk alone. If you want to go far, walk together.”

### **Innovation for membership boost**

Reiterating the need for innovation, new club formats and new forms of associations, he said, “We must change to continue to be the same — to be in sync with modern times in an ever dynamic world and stay relevant. We accept the need for continuity, realising the president must lead by example and emphasise we are in a relay race, not a solitary sprint. The long-term goal is what matters most, not our individual egos. We will continue what Gordon (McInally) and Stephanie

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We accept the need for continuity, realising the president must lead by example and emphasise we are in a relay race, not a solitary sprint.

**Mario De Camargo**  
RI President Nominee

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**With his wife Denise.**

(Urchick) started and we will move forward with continuity.”

For membership and revenue growth it was important to connect with professional and business associations — doctors, traders, industrialists, lawyers, salespeople (He is a salesperson and a lawyer). Rotary also needs to “rejuvenate our image and procedures; appeal to the younger generation to guarantee our succession plan for Rotary — that means including them in our decision process, not using them as cheap labour to move furniture.”

He stressed that membership increase would remain “our biggest priority, asset and challenge — after more than 25 years of stagnant growth.”

He was confident that with a great history as an NGO, “we will

win the battle for more members. We know we will prevail because we are a force for good that will defeat polio around the planet after 40 years of battle.”

He said his Rotary journey has always included Denise. “She was a little jealous when I joined Rotary six months before getting married to her. She joked that she was second, and behind Rotary.” Denise, who was beside him on the dais, added that his club asked her if she wanted to join. “But I wanted to do Rotary my way, so I helped form a satellite club!”

In conclusion, De Camargo said, “Leading Rotary will be the most rewarding mission somebody can perform. So we accept (the presidency) to work with this extraordinary pool of talent and do good in the world.” ■

# Fun, frolic and more at RYLA

V Muthukumaran

**T**eenagers Akshita from Bhavan Vidyalaya, Bhavraj from St Johns High School, and Ragini Yadav from Rotary Vidya Sadan, a school at Bapu Dham slum colony in Chandigarh, are reliving their happy moments at the three-day residential RYLA by narrating their “joyful experience” to their families and classmates.

Hosted by RC Chandigarh, RID 3080, at The Plenum School, an elite residential institute at Bagthan village,

located in the scenic backdrop of Himalayas at the Nahan district of Himachal Pradesh, the leadership workshop gave 82 students from nine schools across the Tricity (Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali) a glimpse of life’s challenges and the ways and means to cope with adversity. “Above all, we trained them to hone their leadership qualities and actively network with their peers at the interactive sessions that would help them to build a successful career,” said Anil Chadda, club president.



Trekking on a hill.





Second row, seated (from left) Arun Aggarwal, president-elect Jatinder Kapoor, DGN Ravi Prakash (4<sup>th</sup> from left), RYLA convener Sartaj Lamba, Neelam Kapoor and teachers, along with students.

For Akshita, it was “my first Rotary experience at RYLA, and I learnt many new things that will shape my life and career,” while Ragini, studying in a Rotary school says, “the RYLA stay helped me connect with new friends and discuss a whole lot of social issues to plan ahead.” Bhavraj was elated that Rotary has opened a wide avenue for career growth. The club sponsored 12 students from Vidya Sadan, a Rotary school for the underprivileged, to take part in RYLA, and “all the students from Class 8–12, including those from our vocational centre, were put through talk sessions, outdoor activities and team-building events during their stay at the boarding school,” he said.

On the first day, Captain (retd) Anil Kumar Singru, a navigator turned amateur astronomer, engaged the students on the wonders of the cosmos, and mysteries of the universe the “mankind is still trying to unravel.” It was followed by a team-building session in which eight teams were formed and they were asked to solve problems that require ingenuity and quick thinking to foster bonding among them.



Astronomy session in progress.

The next day, they were on nature’s trail early in the morning, and through the adventurous trip “they helped each other to achieve their final goals.” Addressing the students, district RYLA chair and DGND Rita Kalra urged them to “make full use of this opportunity, ask questions, reflect on the experience you gain here, and think about how to apply what you have learnt here in your communities.”

RYLA is not just a youth seminar, “but a launch pad for your leadership roles in whatever fields you have chosen.”

DGN Ravi Prakash called upon the students to develop a strong bond with their communities, and noted the participation of students from diverse backgrounds would kindle camaraderie. PDG Madhukar Malhotra gave a motivational talk on positivity and self-worth. Fun-filled



Sartaj Lamba (centre), to her right Rosy Katyal, along with Aggarwal (right), to his right Jatinder Kapoor, Harish Valecha (left) and students, at a bonfire dance event.

games and events followed, and the teams competed with energy, striking friendship in the process.

In the evening, an ‘Antakshari’ programme of music and dance, was followed by a music session. The screening of the movie *Rabb Di Awaaz* directed by national award-winning filmmaker Ojaswwee Sharma, followed by an interactive session with him, was the major highlight of RYLA.

He gave insight into intricacies of the film industry like editing, direction, screenplay and music that form part of the 24 crafts associated with the filmmaking.

RYLA convener Sartaj Lamba, also club director, Vocational Services, thanked her team members — Arun Aggarwal, Harish Valecha, Rosy Katyal and president-elect Jatinder Kapoor — for a successful event. “We

achieved our goal of creating a robust and inclusive programme for young students which was relatable, interactive, and focused on team-building skills,” she smiled. Ever since, the club was chartered in 1958, “we have done hundreds of RYLAs till now, benefiting over 1,000s of Interactors, Rotaractors, school and college students. We are serving the communities over the last 65 years,” added Chadda. ■

## Rotary makes dialysis accessible

### Team Rotary News

**R**otary Club of Hassan Hoysala, RID 3182, through a global grant, set up a haemodialysis centre with three machines at the Sanjeevani Cooperative Hospital in Hassan, near Bengaluru.

A safe water supply system and a UPS were also provided at the centre

through the project. The hospital’s founder, Dr Gururaj Hebbar was the charter president of the club. RC Hollis Brookline, RID 7870, USA, was the international partner for the project.

The host club augmented the centre’s capacity to deliver dialysis treatment by providing



DG B C Geetha (standing, centre) with project coordinator Preeti Mohan (on her right), club president M D Kumar (4<sup>th</sup> from R). Seated, from R: DRFC P Narayan, PDG Venu Rao and DRFC Suresh Ambli.

three more machines with the help of the Bangalore Kidney Foundation. DG B C Geetha, project

coordinator Preeti Mohan and DRFC P Narayan were present at the inaugural of the centre. ■



# From RI South Asia

Rotary Year 2024–25 Rotary Foundation zonal teams for Zones 4, 5, 6 & 7

Zone	Designation	Name	E-Mail address
4 & 7	RI Director	T N Subramanian	rtn.subramanian@gmail.com
5 & 6	RI Director	Anirudha Roychowdhury	anirudh.roychowdhury@gmail.com
4, 5, 6 & 7	TRF Trustee	Dr Bharat Pandya	drbspandya@gmail.com
4	E/MGA	Ashish Ramesh Ajmera	ashishajmera27@hotmail.com
	EPNC	Dr Ashes Ganguly	ashesganguly@yahoo.com
	RRFC	Dr N Subramanian	drnsubra@yahoo.co.in
5	E/MGA	R Madhav Chandran	madhav.chandran@ymail.com
	EPNC	Dr Chinnadurai Abdullah	chinnaduraiabdullah@yahoo.com
	RRFC	Gowri Rajan	rotary.gowri@gmail.com
6	E/MGA	Rajiv Sharma	rtn.rajiv.3030@gmail.com
	EPNC	Uttam Ganguli	uttamganguli57@gmail.com
	RRFC	Debashish Das	debashishdg32401920@gmail.com
7	E/MGA	Sam Rao Movva	sammovva@yahoo.com
	EPNC	Dr Girish Govind Gune	drgirish3131@gmail.com
	RRFC	Manjunath Shetty	manjunathshetty@gmail.com

TRF-Area of Focus: Major Gift Initiative Committee members from South Asia

Name	Area of Focus
PDG Deepak Gupta	Supporting Environment
PDG Suresh Hari	Economic and Community Development

## RI Board Decisions

The RI Board of Directors met on April 8–10, 2024, at the Rotary headquarters in Evanston, Illinois, USA. The following Board decisions are relevant to the functioning of Rotary clubs:

- ❖ The Board strongly encourages clubs to set three-year rolling goals; and zones to develop three-year rolling regional plans to help the clubs reach their goals; and further encourages districts and zones to support these three-year regional plans.
- ❖ The Board approved two new strategic initiatives in 2024–25: **The Club Experience** that aims to enhance club activities and increase member satisfaction through consistent, cross-functional efforts that will bring enhanced products and tools to best meet member needs

and **Evidence-based Decision-making** that aims to improve decision quality, enhance innovation, optimise resource allocation, mitigate risk and enhance accountability by transitioning towards an evidence-based approach to decision-making processes.

- ❖ A Presidential Peace Conference is to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, on Feb 20–22, 2025, to celebrate Rotary’s contribution to peacebuilding and to coincide with the first cohort of Rotary Peace Fellows studying at Rotary’s newest Peace Center in Bahçeşehir University. Planned plenary topics include: Peace in a polarised world; Making peace last; Technology, media, and peacebuilding; and Environmental issues in peacebuilding.

*Rotary.org*



DG Manjoo Phadke (3<sup>rd</sup> from L, second row), RC Pune Pride president Sudhir Bapat (3<sup>rd</sup> from R) and Avinash Joag (R) with women entrepreneurs at the launch of *Project NAWNI 2.0* in Sept 2023.



## Grooming women entrepreneurs

Jaishree



Bhaktee Deodar, a participant, at a session.

**B**haktee Deodar, a budding entrepreneur, broke new ground when her creative crafts done in resin and wax started selling like hotcakes after she implemented some key management and marketing strategies that she learnt through *Project NAWNI*, a mentorship programme of RC Pune Pride, RID 3131. She has now joined this club as a member.

*Project NAWNI* (Nurturing Atmanirbhar Women with Novel Initiatives) was launched in 2021 to mentor nine women with entrepreneurial instinct to be successful in their line of business. “We chose highly enthusiastic and committed women entrepreneurs with businesses across engineering, cosmetics, corporate gifting, ready-to-eat and fresh food segments, fashion and interior designing, and matched them with appropriate mentors whose role was to facilitate business growth and success for each woman,” says Anuja Kolhatkar from the project team led by Avinash Joag. The mentors were either club members, Anns or other successful industry professionals with vast knowledge and experience.

After a year’s pause, the project was revived last year (2023–24) under the leadership of club president Sudhir Bapat.

This time 32 women signed up for the programme. “We covered topics such as social media and digital marketing, legal aspects, government schemes, collaboration, marketing and pricing through a physical session every month,” says project chair Joag.

The programme has helped all of these women to scale up their business, make it more lucrative and productive. Bhaktee says, “Although I had the creative skills and people around me appreciated my products, I did not know how to take it to the next level.” Her mentor Sampada, spouse of club member Ujwal Kunte, taught her how to get and process bulk orders, understand the market, position her products for corporate gifting and apply for bank loans. Even as she was undergoing the training, Bhaktee was happy to get her first corporate order, and she is all set to expand her business. This includes manufacturing

wardrobe fragrances, scented candles and décor products “handcrafted with passion,” she says with a smile. The trophies that she had designed for the district conference “received good reviews and I got more business with other Rotarians.” Ultimately *NAWNI* made her become a Rotarian!

Another mentee, Girija Rao who is into overhead tank cleaning, “considered a male-dominated business” is happy to have found her feet, thanks to the programme. Ratnawali Ingale, who runs a chain of cafes, says, “The business model which I thought was tried and tested was turned on its head, and now the results are amazing. *NAWNI* mentorship has shown me a new way to look at the business and it is working out well.”

The selection process was elaborate starting with scrutiny of applications, followed by interviews and psychometric assessment.

“We received 75 applications from which 32 were shortlisted. Women running unique and ethical businesses, either solo or with employees, and with a passion and commitment for growth, were given priority.”

Sharda Rao from the 2021 batch is planning to sign up for the programme’s third edition this year. She produces cold-pressed oil. The club intends to begin the third edition in August with more business modules and ideas based on the four pillars of business — finance, marketing, operations and legal. “The youngest applicant this year is a 25-year-old doctor who wants to establish a market for her patented lab testing product in addition to her medical practice. We have a couple of women interested in toddler/babycare and eldercare. It is interesting to note the diverse variety of businesses one can pursue if one has the acumen and passion to succeed,” smiles Anuja. ■

## Rotarians honoured in Meerut

Team Rotary News

**K**erala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan presented the Vocational Excellence Awards to five individuals for their selfless contributions to society at the two-day district conference of RID 3100 in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. In his speech, he called upon the citizens to “take individual responsibility for the progress of the nation and society.”

During the inaugural session, Justice Pankaj Mittal, judge of Supreme Court, praised Rotary’s work across the world and listed some of the



From L: RIPR Prem Agarwal and his wife Renuka being honoured at the district conference. Also seen (from L): Suneel Aggarwal, Kapil Aggarwal, PDG Rajiv Singhal, DG Ashok Gupta, Sanjeev Garg and Vivek Garg.

initiatives that Rotary clubs have taken up to root out social evils in the country. Businessman Aditya Gupta, who has scaled Mount Everest, shared interesting anecdotes from his expedition. PDG Ashish Desai spoke on Rotary’s multidimensional work and explained its various initiatives.

DG Ashok Gupta honoured all the PDGs from RID 3100, and praised the contributions of Pallav Aggarwal (Major Donor, Level-3) and Suneel Aggarwal (MD, Level-1). In his speech, RIPR Prem Agrawal from RID 3090 highlighted Rotary’s work and noted the diverse initiatives of clubs at RID 3100. ■



## Wordsworld

# Hiss, Don't Bite



Sandhya Rao

Stories about snakes, crocodiles and other misunderstood reptiles told with affection.

**W**e are all familiar with shows that follow seemingly fearless individuals dig unceremoniously into the private lives, so to speak, of animals deemed to be dangerous: a resting python, a nesting crocodile, and the like. They make me wonder how those creatures, most often minding their own business, might feel. The title of this month's column is borrowed from a folktale about a snake that wishes only to be regarded with love and consequently ends up being bullied and brutalised by humans. It is saved by wise counsel from a wandering monk who give it the mantra contained in the title.

*Scaling Up*, by Zai Whitaker, recounts many instances of the

interaction between humans and reptiles in the course of telling the amazing story of Romulus Whitaker, the *paambukaaran* (snakeman). The book, which is a revised and expanded version of *Snakeman* (published in 1989), was recently launched in Chennai in the presence of a large and enthralled audience. The new title was inspired by a conversation. In Zai's words: 'The title of the book comes from a conversation with Salim Mamoo, who visited me in Madras soon after I got married and asked how I was getting on. I gave him a pompous reply about how satisfying it was to work for this neglected group of animals. "Birds and mammals get all the attention," said I, "but reptiles are equally important..." He looked a bit taken aback, did his famous head-bobbing, and said, "Oh, so you're SCALING them up, are you?"'

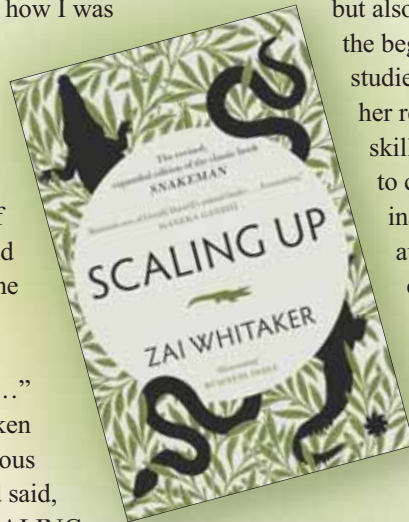
Yes, Salim Mamoo is *that* Salim, Salim Ali, the birdman of India! Zai's mother Laeq's uncle. Her father Zafar's grandfather was the well-known freedom fighter Badruddin Tyabji. Laeq was a writer with a keen interest in plants and gardening; she was the literary editor of *Quest* magazine for many years. Zafar was a naturalist and conservationist, with a keen interest in birds, and for 45 years, edited the *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* which consistently nourished the appetites of birders and birdwatchers all over India; he started the India chapter of the WWF.

Reading what Zai quotes from Laeq's book, *Gardening*, — 'Perhaps it was an advantage that we had

a house before we had an income, for the need to organise the land without any money was good training' — you understand that gentle humour runs in Zai's DNA. *Scaling Up* is written with wit and affection, so much so that reading about reptiles was probably never so much fun, even for those who get goosebumps at the mention of snakes! Given her family tree and being married to Rom for several years put Zai in the ideal position to not only have wonderful, new experiences in the world of nature, but also to observe closely the beginnings of reptile studies in India. And with her remarkable writing skills, Zai has been able to communicate imaginatively to a massive audience, comprising children and adults.

Quite apart from the fact that their work brought Rom and Zai close to the Irulars, a snake-catching

community in Tamil Nadu, their emotional attachment to these people is palpable through their association via several platforms. One of them is the Irular Snake Catchers' Industrial Cooperative Society (ISCICS) which supplies snakes for the production of antivenom. Zai is also deeply invested in the Irular Women's Society that has been working for women's economic and social empowerment. Zai unself-consciously weaves in the personal into this narrative about the phenomenal work done by Rom



with snakes and crocodiles, which led to the setting up, first of the Snake Park in Chennai (then Madras) and later, the Crocodile Bank just outside Chennai. We follow Zai's journey through the ghats and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Papua New Guinea, the Snake Park, the Croc Bank, the Kodai International School and other places she taught at... to the present time when she is managing trustee of the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust and Centre for Herpetology.



Zai Whitaker

While *Scaling Up* focuses on the seminal work of Romulus Whitaker, it acknowledges many others engaged in conservation and wildlife work, both nationally and internationally. It also recognises the work done by several individuals who started off volunteering at the Croc Bank and who have now become central to wildlife conservation.

It's not all rosy, and Zai says as much. In the end, though, it's an inspiring story set against great odds. Take the case of snakebite alone.

'India tops the list,' she writes, 'with 50,000 or more deaths a year and at least triple that number of morbidities like the loss of a limb, kidney failure or PTSD following snakebite. The majority of victims are poor farmers or farm labourers, often the sole earning members of the family.' Which makes the work of the Irular all the more valuable: 'We loved the idea

that the Irular, one of the poorest of our Adivasi groups, should produce one of the most pricey products in the country. At that time, a gram of krait venom cost three thousand rupees, ten times the price of gold. About fifty kraits are needed to make one gram.'

I was a teenager when we went on a family outing to Selaiyur, Tambaram, in the early 1970s, where a snake park had just opened. A blonde, long-

haired man was sitting inside a large pit nursing a baby crocodile in one hand. He said the baby croc had bitten him and he was trying to make friends with it. When my aunt headed towards the snakes, I followed. 'Would you like to hold it?' a young man asked, holding out a huge python. 'It's just eaten, so it's sleepy.' As it wrapped itself around my hand, I was surprised by how smooth and dry its underside felt. There were many young people working there, I remember. Maybe Zai was one of them?

The book highlights many aspects of human-animal conflict that should make us reflect on what we are doing to Earth. Zai recalls that she and her sister Shama were drawn to birds, particularly the raggiana, 'one among the forty or so species of birds of paradise'. She goes on to write: 'When flamboyant bird feathers became fashionable adornments on ladies' hats in nineteenth-century Europe, and milliners began importing birds of paradise from parts of Indonesia, New Guinea and Australia, the bird skins were exported after chopping



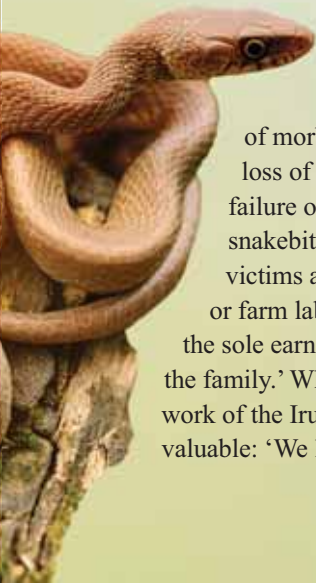
off the legs. The glitterati, fashionable but ignorant, believed that these were legless birds that had descended from heaven/paradise.'

But it's not all doom and gloom. The work of the Croc Bank is a case in point, as also the amazing insight emanating from the study of reptiles. American turtle expert Mike Ewert explains that the reason why 'Indian flapshell turtle eggs develop almost full-term embryos, then sit and wait for six months before hatching' is because they need ponds and streams to live in. Therefore, they hatch when they are stimulated by the sound of rain. 'If they hatched in the hostile hot season, they probably wouldn't survive for more than two days,' writes Zai.

This is an important book, both for the world of wildlife and the world of literature. The writing is deft, light, detailed, and always laced with gentle humour. For instance, at the end of the formal conversation during the launch, Zai was asked which creatures frightened her. She responded that if she had to name them, it would be the human kind.

*The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist*

Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S



RC Chidambaram  
Mid Town – RID 2981

An air conditioner and furniture were donated to the Stroke Physiotherapy Clinic at the Government Hospital, Cuddalore, at a project cost of ₹50,000.



RC Delhi Mayur  
Vihar – RID 3012

Furniture, new clothes, beds, mattresses and a cupboard were donated to the Arya Kanya Sadan, a special home for orphaned girls in Faridabad.



RC Chopda – RID 3030

Rotary Bhavan hosted a week-long chiropractic camp in which 750 patients were treated and got relief from chronic pain.



RC Gandhidham – RID 3055

Electronic hands were fitted for 125 amputees at an artificial limb camp at the Rotary Bhavan with the support of Inali Foundation and RC Poona Downtown, RID 3131.



RC Shri Madhopur  
Sunrise — RID 3056

Around 130 people were screened at a six-day eye camp, and 49 were shortlisted for cataract surgery at a Jaipur hospital. So far, 1,395 surgeries have been done since 2018.



RC Jalandhar  
South — RID 3070

Sewing machines were donated to 10 trainees at Chuheki village in a joint project with RC Semiahmoo, Canada.



RC Sri Ganganagar  
Grace — RID 3090

DG Ghanshyam Kansal inaugurated a Miyawaki forest with 250 Peru saplings at the BSF campus, thanks to the initiative of club president Sonia Chauhan.



RC Muzaffarnagar  
Mid Town — RID 3100

DG Ashok Gupta inaugurated a computer lab (15 machines) and library at the Mayadevi Charitable Hospital, Sarurpur Kalan, in Baghpat under a GG project.



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# Transforming the lives of marginal farmers

Kiran Zehra

In a village near Chikhli, situated 28km from Valsad, Gujarat, Kantilal, a marginal farmer with three acres of land was struggling to make ends meet. Limited financial resources meant he could only plough his field to a minimal extent, resulting in low agricultural productivity and yield. Thanks to *Project Kisaan*, an initiative by RC Chikhli River Front, RID 3060, Kantilal's fortune is beginning to change.

*Project Kisaan*, a permanent service initiative of the club, was launched in Nov 2021 with the purchase of a tractor costing ₹7 lakh, raised through member contributions. "This high-end tractor can perform

the toughest farming operations with ease," explains club president Mehul Patel. A committee of five members, headed by club secretary Nikunj Patel, oversees the operation of lending out this tractor to struggling farmers. "Farmers with less than three acres of land have to fill out a simple form to schedule the tractor service. The tractor belongs to the club, but the farmers can use it for a day," he adds.

Currently the project is benefiting around 200 farmers like Kantilal, offering them free tractor service. The service includes ploughing, rotoring etc, specifically targeting the small and marginal farmers. The average daily cost of this service comes to ₹4,200

which is covered by a rotating sponsorship system involving 20 donors, including club members, their family members and friends. This model ensures a sustainable and manageable contribution process, enabling continuous support for the farmers, says Patel.

Before *Project Kisaan*, "I could only afford limited ploughing, which affected my crop yield. Now, with this free service, my yield has improved, as the soil is well-aerated and ready for planting, thanks to the tractor," says Kantilal, who has planted groundnut, green peas and beans on his recently ploughed land. "The tractor service helps break down the soil, mix organic

Club members with DG Nihar Dave at the inauguration of the tractor service.





material, and create a suitable seed-bed, thus improving soil structure and fertility. As a result, fields are better prepared for sowing, leading to higher seed germination rates and improved plant growth,” adds Patel.

The financial relief provided by this initiative, says Patel, is substantial. Because renting a tractor and other necessary equipment is not affordable for these marginal farmers. The money saved by them is used for seeds, fertilisers, and to meet other family expenses. The project’s donor system covers fuel expenses, ensuring they do not have to worry about the operational costs.

Kantilal, is happy he can plant and harvest his crops in a more planned, orderly and sustainable manner. ■



A farmer and his family with the tractor.

## A Delhi Rotarian at the Rotary Day at UNESCO

### Team Rotary News

Ritika Anand, joint secretary of RC Delhi City, RID 3012, and principal of St Mark’s Senior Secondary School, Meera Bagh, Delhi, made a presentation on ‘Contribution of Technology in Education’ at the *Rotary Day at UNESCO* event held at the UNESCO House in Paris. This year’s event (2023–24) that focused on education and peace was presided over by RI President Gordon McNally.

Ritika, a cadre member of TRF’s technical advisors for Basic Education and Literacy, said that she highlighted teachers’ valuable contributions in building value and ethics in children and how the GoI’s *Prashant App* helps evaluate 21 disabilities in students. “We had insightful exchanges on the opportunities and challenges of technology in education and why it is important for teachers to continuously update themselves on the various developments.” Ritika is



**From L:** TRF Cadre vice-chair Carolyn Johnson; Anna Cristina d’Addio, head, thematic division, UNESCO’s Global Education; Ritika Anand, joint secretary of RC Delhi City and TRF Cadre member at a session.

a recipient of the National Teacher Award presented by President of India Droupadi Murmu on Teachers’ Day (Sept 5).

Quentin Wodon, director of UNESCO’s International Institute

of Capacity Building in Africa, and Anna Cristina d’Addio, head of the thematic section, Global Education, were part of the session which was moderated by TRF Cadre vice-chair Carolyn Johnson. ■

## District Wise TRF Contribution as on May 2024

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution	
<b>India</b>						
2981	57,976	1,573	1,000	250	60,799	
2982	48,666	1,482	24,085	58,552	132,786	
3000	105,317	29,390	37,598	475,510	647,815	
3011	223,399	28,216	52,080	1,346,052	1,649,747	
3012	28,783	150	0	444,544	473,478	
3020	133,262	102,633	75,246	60,163	371,304	
3030	98,710	27,901	13,609	234,537	374,756	
3040	9,297	688	0	44,505	54,489	
3053	46,096	1,300	10,000	66,313	123,709	
3055	117,661	3,883	30	9,728	131,303	
3056	40,479	553	25,000	8,400	74,433	
3060	172,767	10,140	18,205	468,204	669,316	
3070	16,645	573	0	24	17,242	
3080	103,519	24,966	10,004	75,127	213,616	
3090	67,976	2,528	25,602	130,050	226,156	
3100	118,194	4,912	25,301	60,825	209,233	
3110	18,809	30	0	109,179	128,018	
3120	44,909	631	0	10,221	55,761	
3131	560,172	17,961	175,688	1,562,951	2,316,772	
3132	117,203	5,071	10,000	91,016	223,290	
3141	530,670	63,095	106,085	2,269,233	2,969,082	
3142	351,998	117,763	14,741	134,258	618,760	
3150	71,339	32,505	160,423	155,871	420,138	
3160	27,047	1,372	0	3,432	31,851	
3170	157,706	36,271	16,902	140,890	351,769	
3181	162,021	3,517	1,000	1,581	168,120	
3182	78,212	5,235	25,624	0	109,070	
3191	92,645	14,277	60,976	621,153	789,050	
3192	147,483	18,382	0	209,796	375,661	
3201	247,734	66,732	46,784	1,403,083	1,764,334	
3203	33,998	28,207	11,220	15,576	89,000	
3204	33,587	3,104	0	27,424	64,116	
3211	119,967	4,261	27,325	132,393	283,947	
3212	100,007	42,778	2,000	128,900	273,685	
3231	5,625	6,269	314	10,285	22,493	
3232	85,057	26,727	39,973	1,815,510	1,967,267	
3240	135,459	15,706	34,000	105,711	290,876	
3250	64,002	5,698	26	41,467	111,192	
3261	46,560	4,952	15,181	66,079	132,772	
3262	65,732	6,284	1,000	15,440	88,456	
3291	218,962	5,434	147,311	6,939	378,646	
3220	Sri Lanka	93,738	13,926	0	7,513	115,177
3271	Pakistan	15,750	87,578	0	93,141	196,469
*3272	Pakistan	4,342	385	0	25	4,752
*3281	Bangladesh	80,569	2,105	3,000	264,728	350,403
*3282	Bangladesh	90,726	4,982	1,000	9,116	105,824
3292	Nepal	169,219	25,488	19,999	404,750	619,455
63	(former 3272)	11,899	425	0	0	12,324
64	(former 3281)	28,615	1,559	1,000	0	31,174
65	(former 3282)	4,346	221	0	9,000	13,567

\* Undistricted

Annual Fund (AF) includes SHARE, AoF and World Fund.

PolioPlus excludes Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. **Source:** RISAO



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# Project Vignettes

## Team Rotary News

### Rotary landmark in Navi Mumbai

From L: DGE Harsh Makol, DG Dinesh Mehta, IPDG Milind Kulkarni, TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya and PDG Mohan Chandavarkar in front of the Rotary monument.



TRF vice-chair Bharat Pandya unveiled a Rotary monument installed by RID 3142 at Moraj Circle in Navi Mumbai. The structure features seven lines representing Rotary's seven Areas of Focus, with the Rotary Wheel and the words 'People of Action'. Twenty Rotary clubs of Mumbai participated in the project.

### Computer training centre inaugurated



Rashi Singh receiving the cheque from club members.

RC Delhi Safdarjung, RID 3011, has set up a computer training centre for underprivileged children. The centre will operate five days a week with morning and evening batches. The club presented ₹30,000 to Rashi Singh, a Class 7 student, as educational support for a year.

### Anganwadi adoption



Rotarians with children at the anganwadi.

RC Bangalore Bhuvaneshwarinagar, RID 3192, has adopted two anganwadis in Bengaluru. At Amruthnagara, the club provided uniforms to 65 children, installed a clean water counter, and added safe play area partitions. At Kempapura, they gave uniforms to 35 children and a kitchen storage stand to the anganwadi.

### E-waste initiative



Club members with the collected e-waste.

RC Siliguri, RID 3240, collected and disposed of 1,750kg of e-waste from North Bengal with the help of JS Pigments, a manufacturing company in Kolkata. The disposal adhered to all government regulations, earning the club a green environment certificate. ■



# Protect your furry friends from pollution

Preeti Mehra

Environment-friendly ways to keep your pets healthy and happy.



Those environmentally conscious among us are concerned about surface and air pollution, climate change, global warming and several other related issues. But there are also people in this world with a deep love for nature, and have a special place in their hearts for all creatures great and small.

This column is for the animal lovers among us, the ones who are not only worried about the impact of pollution on humans but also on all animals, specifically the pets in their homes, who have become veritable members of their families.

Pollution must be a source of concern for them because pets living in our homes are as vulnerable to its adverse impact as humans. With the Air Quality Index (AQI) touching hazardous levels in most cities, particularly during some months of the year, our pets need special care and attention. Keeping this in mind, I explored the best way to protect our

pets from pollution. I also believe that pet owners must take on this responsibility since poor air quality is a result of human action, and no fault of the animals.

In cities, cars and heavy vehicles using petrol and diesel contribute in a big way to polluting the atmosphere. Why any household must have more than one vehicle remains a mystery to me. And why we loathe advocating public transport for those who are young and able is another question that is intriguing.

Besides vehicular pollution, the urban air is also fouled beyond permissible limits by burning of coal, industrial emissions, crop burning, construction and igniting garbage, not to speak of the methane fumes that rise from landfills on the outskirts of every town. Add to this indoor pollution from sources such as cigarette smoke, cooking on cookstoves that are not environment-friendly, using abrasive chemical cleaners, or using coal for fireplaces in winter, and AQI levels go up a few notches higher.

The impact of pollution is telling. According to a blog on the website of PetsWorld (an online store for pet products), dogs that live in heavily polluted cities have brains that show increased inflammation and neural changes that are responsible for Alzheimer's disease in human beings. It also points out that indoor pollution is harsh on pets and "special care must be taken in case of brachycephalic dog breeds like Pug, Pekingese, Boxer and Shih-tzu." The website cites a 2011 study which found that airborne toxins have an extremely negative impact on animals too, especially stray dogs living on the streets. Further, cats, dogs and other pets develop asthma, diseases of the nose and throat, and bronchitis when exposed to year-round air pollution. The study also found that

cats exposed to cigarette smoke have reduced lung capacity.

The latest solution in urban areas to pollution is the use of air purifiers in homes. It helps reduce toxins, dust allergens, bacteria and odours, making the air better and healthier to breathe. But there are other solutions provided by indoor plants. Anthuriums free the air of ammonia, and 'Song of India' absorbs toxins like xylene, besides Parlor Palm and Phalaenopsis orchids are also effective in cleaning the air.

The Petsworld website also gives some solutions that can be incorporated in one's daily life. The most important is ventilation — the better ventilated the home, the less the problem for our furry friends. It also suggests growing other indoor plants known to be useful in purifying the air. Philodendrons and Massangeana cane sucks formaldehyde from the air and Pothos clears the air of carbon monoxide and formaldehyde.

To keep animals safe from toxins, the website suggests using natural cleaning agents such as white vinegar and baking soda instead of chemical solvents. For wall paint it recommends those that have a low volatile organic compound density and calls for eco-friendly furnishing including organic cat loungers and dog beds. Pet accessories like collars, leashes and sweatshirts should also be of natural material.

When we walk dogs, we must keep them away from places that have maximum traffic, or where construction activity is taking place. Not only does it spoil the walk for our canine friends, but high traffic zones expose them to noxious fumes that are terrible for their lungs and health in the long run. Construction in the vicinity makes dust fly around and creates a stressful situation for animals and humans alike.

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According to a PetsWorld blog, dogs that live in heavily polluted cities have brains that show increased inflammation and neural changes that are responsible for Alzheimer's disease in human beings.

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Emily Folk in an online edition of the *Ecologist* has some other tips that go even further on the green pendulum. She asks pet lovers to try out more sustainable pet food options instead of a regular non-vegetarian diet. She also suggests carrying biodegradable poop bags instead of single use plastic bags for collecting waste when walking the dog. "Our pets are like our children, and we always want to do what's best for them. But we also need to take care of our planet in order to create a world that can sustain both people and pets for many years to come," she notes in the article. And rightly so.

Pets have a special place in the minds and hearts of pet parents. Many are heartbroken when one of their animal friends passes away. They cherish memories of their pets through photographs and videos. But there are other eco-friendly ways to keep memories alive. Perhaps, planting a tree to celebrate your animal friend's life will be as rewarding a memorial as any. The tree will nourish the air in future and help in its small way to add to the greenery in the neighbourhood.

*The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues*

### RI District 3110

Study-cum-hygiene kits were distributed to girl students (Class 8–12) at government schools, and their mothers recognised under *Project Beti Shikshit Mata Vandit*.



### RC Pune Sports City — RID 3131

Solar lights were installed at 15 dwellings at Fanasrai Wadi, a remote village, along with five solar streetlights, thanks to CSR funds from PubMatic India.



### RC Ahmednagar Priyadarshini — RID 3132

A public address system and UPS unit (both cost ₹1.38 lakh) were donated to Sitaram Sarada Vidyalaya, part funded by the club and Shrigopal Ramnath Dhoot Foundation.



### RC Hindupur — RID 3160

An RO water plant (₹1.8 lakh) was set up at the APSRTC bus depot, Hindupur, in partnership with RC Plainsboro, North and South Brunswick, US.



RC Bardez  
Coastal – RID 3170

A campus placement interview was arranged at the Vidya Prabhodhini College, Porvorim, which had benefitted 32 final year students.



RC Sullia City – RID 3181

A toilet block was built for children at the Government Higher Primary School, Aletty village in Sullia taluk.



RC Edappal – RID 3204

DG Sethu Shiv Sankar handed over the keys of a new 800sqft house to a cancer patient in Edappal, Kerala.



RC Belur – RID 3291

Achievers' Award was presented to senior nurse Gita Dey at Woodlands Hospital, Kolkata, for her dedication in serving the society for the last 17 years.



Compiled by V Muthukumaran

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# Strength training saves the muscles

**Bharat & Shalan Savur**

**T**he World Health Organization (WHO) defines a healthy body as one that is in a ‘state of complete physical and mental well-being... By health we mean the powerful force to live a full, adult living, breathing life in proximity with people and things that you love. For you to realise all that you are capable of being and doing.’

Strength training acts as a buffer to prevent and/or postpone muscular decline. Probably because our legs, which bear our weight almost all the time, are normally the first to register the decline. Perhaps that is the originator of the terms ‘no leg to stand on’ and ‘on his last legs’. Be that as it may, the legs are the best visible indicators of our fitness.

But the alert body has an even earlier indicator: soreness — a surer pointer to the weakness within. Fascia, sheets of tissue that lie below the skin, are often the first in this challenge that the body faces. Jan Wilke, a professor of sports science in Austria, points out the role of fascia. And recommends ‘a dynamic warm-up that will make the tissue more resilient to the work-out ahead.’

Strength training is not just body-building — the hard rock muscular equivalent of the body’s stretch-and-strain resistance routine — it’s rock ‘n’ roll. Living at the optimum level and counter-balancing age-related loss are the reasons to go in for strength training. You don’t play a game to get fit, but, rather, get fit to play a sport. This is true of life itself. It is a high stakes game with your body itself on the line.

If you don’t use it, you lose it is one sure way of shedding muscle mass

and strength. Inactivity breeds sarcopenia which is a common condition of a host of health issues: lack of balance, cardiovascular diseases and metabolic illnesses. But then, again, arthritis is also often caused by overused or abused muscle over a period of time — the other end of the sarcopenia scale. Life is truly a balancing act and art.

Therefore, it is wiser to include strength-training exercises as soon as possible. Because the decline in muscle strength occurs much quicker than the fall in the size of the muscle. The decline normally shows up around age 60 but it can also set in earlier — around 40. Women are particularly vulnerable to these vagaries during the





premature/regular/post-menopause stage. An appropriate strength training routine will further define and sculpt your physique and not make you appear ‘masculine’ either. All the same, first check the strength training routine with your doctor.

### **Flex your muscle**

You are spoilt for choice in selecting the right exercise routine to strengthen yourself. Free hand, free weights, workstations, yoga, pilate, swimming, etc. Add to the list, the tonomatic which we will dwell on later. Check

and choose your exercise routine if you can with a doctor who specialises in sports medicine. Or an ortho from the sports field. Unfortunately, most gyms/health clubs are today part of the ever-growing sports industry and can push you to employ expensive exercise equipment to cover their costs. Then, there are some so-called trainers. They too may direct you to the same equipment for the above stated reason. Or because of their prior body-building exercise routine. They know no better and so guide you to weight-loaded workstations. When what you really require is a regular cardiovascular routine and selective weight-training.

Please note, bodybuilding is not the same as enhancing your cardiovascular condition and strength training, and your holistic life. Hence, please go in for exercises that enhance these requirements. In short, handle with care and ensure that you enrol into a programme that meets your objectives and suits your conditioning.

The National Strength and Conditioning Association, USA, recommends exercises that engage and address multiple muscle joints in each and every major muscle group. Older adults (over 60) are advised to perform these exercises two to three times a week with a 28 to 48 hours gap between sessions — for rest and recovery. Each exercise should be conducted at a weight-lifting capacity of 50 to 85 per cent of your ability to perform the first one (one repetition maximum). Six to 12 reps are required in each set. You could take a break of two to five minutes per set if it is too taxing. If the calculations required drive you crazy, or appear confusing or complicated, go in for exercises that use your own bodyweight like push-ups.

Our *Fitness for Life* programme has just the right exercise equipment for this task. It uses your bodyweight. The tonomatic exerciser (available at

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Bodybuilding is not the same as enhancing your cardiovascular condition and strength training.

So go in for exercises that enhance these requirements.

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Amazon for around ₹800) was first recommended by my physiotherapist to strengthen the ‘tail bone’. It did that and a whole lot more. This is an all body exerciser that lives up to its name. It stretches and employs the entire body in a series of horizontal exercises. We use it when we are short of exercise time. And the tonomatic is about the first thing we pack when we travel.

### **When in pain, don’t strain**

Soreness is caused by tissue damage. Remedies range from medicine to massage. It is imperative to distinguish between relieving and repairing damaged tissue. A painkiller brings relief in moments. But don’t push your luck. Never exercise immediately after taking a painkiller. You may not feel it right away. But it can cause further complications and injury. Best to lay off. Take it easy. Return to your routine at least 24 hours after you’ve stopped your painkiller, and feel no pain. Along with the painkiller, also work further from within. Consume extra calories and protein. And get sufficient sleep.

*The writers are authors of Fitness for Life and Simply Spiritual – You Are Naturally Divine and teachers of the Fitness for Life programme*



# Parkinson's therapy centre in Surat

Kiran Zehra

To support those battling Parkinson's disease, RC Surat East, RID 3060, in partnership with B K Parekh Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders Society, inaugurated a therapy centre at the Unity Hospital, Surat, last year. The Parkinson's Disease Therapy Centre is changing lives. One of the beneficiaries, Mahendra Shah, a 57-year-old former textiles salesman, was diagnosed with this nervous system disorder that affects body movement.

Once known for his "keen eye for colours, fabric and the ability to connect with customers," Shah noticed subtle changes in his body a few years

ago. "A slight tremor in my right hand and a stiffness in movements began to interfere with my work. Initially, I thought these changes were due to fatigue, but I consulted a doctor when the symptoms persisted," he recalls. The diagnosis was devastating. "I was worried about my future. Selling clothes was all I knew. How would I support my family?" Despite the initial shock, he resolved not to let Parkinson's dictate his life. While conventional treatments helped manage his symptoms, they had side effects like headache and vomiting, besides the high costs.

Fortunately he saw an advertisement in a local newspaper about the

Parkinson's Disease Therapy Centre, which offers free treatment for the underprivileged. "I signed up for the treatment. The support and therapies have significantly improved the quality of my life," he says. Jagdish Vaghasiya, past president of RC Surat East, said the centre was set up at a cost of ₹50,000, fully funded by the club. "We didn't have to look for space as the centre is housed inside the Unity Hospital."

The club contributes ₹12,000 monthly for maintenance, and the B K Parekh Society pays the staff salaries. Since inception, the therapy centre is treating over 100 patients through monthly consultations with



Dr Pooja Bansal taking a group physiotherapy session at the Parkinson's Disease Therapy Centre.

neurosurgeons, various therapies including physiotherapy, speech, music, cognitive and occupational therapies, and psychological counselling. They also conduct social activities like picnics, Diwali, Holi celebrations and a World Parkinson's Day event on April 11. Dr Hetashri Patel and Dr Pooja Lohia, physiotherapists, manage the administration and health services.

### Partnership with Rotaract

The club and its RAC Surat East organised a marathon, *Rotary Sanjivani*, to promote women's empowerment and cervical cancer awareness. With over 2,100 participants the marathon featured 10km, 5km and 2km runs. DG Nihir Dave flagged off the runs. Simultaneously, the clubs hosted *Cyclofun*, a cycle rally to promote environmental



Participants at the marathon flag off.

conservation. The event saw over 400 participants cycling across 5, 10 and 15km.

*Project Rotary Sanjivani* was also a fundraiser for other initiatives

including stress relief centres in Surat, de-addiction programmes for college and school students, free medical services for the handicapped, and the Parkinson's therapy centre. ■

## India's period song

### Team Rotary News



From L: Sunidhi Chauhan; a poster on the menstrual cycle in Hindi; Shreya Ghoshal.

The song *Period Ka Matlab Healthy Hai Aap* (Periods mean you are healthy), sung by Shreya Ghoshal and Sunidhi Chauhan and launched by feminine care brand Whisper from Procter & Gamble, aims to break the

stigma around menstruation. The song was unveiled on World Menstrual Hygiene Day (May 28) and features schoolchildren joining in, singing and dancing to its tune.

Sunidhi expressed her excitement, hoping the song “reaches every citizen of India to empower young girls to live confidently without fear.” She highlighted the critical need to educate girls, as some start menstruating as early as age 8, which can lead to school dropouts due to social taboos.

Shreya emphasised the importance of “educating young children on menstruation to prepare them and eliminate fear.” She has also sung the chorus of the song in eight languages. Music director Aman Pant has composed and directed the song.

Watch Sunidhi Chauhan's version on <https://youtu.be/nASJy3iX7uI> and Shreya Ghoshal's version on <https://youtu.be/1en0mKIiC8A>. ■

# RI Board of Directors 2024–25

The RI Board of Directors manages Rotary International affairs and funds in accordance with the RI Constitution and Bylaws. Directors are nominated by their zones and elected for two-year terms. Eight new directors and the president-elect join the Board on July 1.



**Stephanie Urchick, President**  
**RC McMurray, Pennsylvania**

Stephanie Urchick has been an RI director and TRF trustee and has served Rotary in numerous capacities, including as training leader, Regional Rotary Foundation Coordinator (RRFC) and RI president's representative (RIPR). In addition, she was a representative and member-at-large at three sessions of the Council on Legislation (CoL). She has also served as chair of the Strategic Planning Committee and TRF's Centennial Celebration Committee, as well as a member of various Rotary committees, including the Election Review Committee and the Operational Review Committee.

A Rotary member since 1991, Stephanie has participated in various international service projects, including National Immunisation Days (NIDs) in India and Nigeria. In Vietnam, she worked with clubs to help build a primary school, and travelled to the Dominican Republic to install water filters.



**Mário César Martins de Camargo**  
**President-elect**  
**RC Santo André, Brazil**

Mário César Martins de Camargo is a business consultant to the printing industry and former director of Gráfica Bandeirantes, a printing company founded by his father.

De Camargo joined Rotary in 1980 at age 23. A past director and trustee, he will be the fourth RI president from Brazil. He has volunteered for numerous roles including RI learning facilitator, zone coordinator for the Avoidable Blindness Task Force, Latin American coordinator for the Health Concerns Task Force, RIPR and CoL representative. He has served on committees including the RI Membership Growth Committee, TRF Programs Finance Committee and the International PolioPlus Committee.

De Camargo has received TRF's Distinguished Service Award. He and his wife, Denise, are Major Donors and Benefactors of TRF.



**Hans-Hermann Kasten**  
**Vice President**  
**RC Aachen-Frankenburg, Germany**

Hans-Hermann Kasten is a lawyer and businessman. He joined Rotary in 2003 and has focused on youth projects throughout his membership. Supporting Rotaract is very important for him.

In 2023, Kasten joined the RI Board of Directors. He has also served RI as learning facilitator and twice as CoL representative, coordinating the training and proposals of German-speaking districts in Germany, Switzerland and Austria. He authored the 2022 proposal to allow Rotaractors to attend Rotary club meetings which was adopted. "Rotary and Rotaract should learn much more about each other," he says.

Kasten and his partner, Nadja Picard, are multiple Paul Harris Fellows and Major Donors. He has received the Avenues of Service Award.



**Rhonda "Beth" Stubbs**  
**Treasurer**  
**RC Maryville, Tennessee**

Beth Stubbs is a certified public accountant who earned her degree at Plymouth State College.

Beth, who started frequenting Rotary club meetings at age 8 with her father, joined RC Maryville in 1991. She has attended 22 RI conventions, travelled to New York City for Rotary Day at the United Nations, helped with an NID in India, gone to Mexico for club partnership projects, and attended various zone meetings around the country. She has served on the Administration, CoL Advisory and the Joint Audit committees. She and her husband, Tony, are AKS members.



**Ghim Bok Chew**  
**Director 2023–25**  
**RC Bugis Junction, Singapore**

Chew maintains real estate and real estate management companies in Singapore, in addition to his fund management holding company.

He joined Rotary in 1996. Immediately after serving as DG in 2013–14, he took on several zone and international roles, including ARFC, ARPIC, RC and chair of the zone institute committee. He was the Host Organisation Committee chair for the RI Convention in Singapore in 2024.

Chew, who decided to join the Bugis Junction Club after reading about the global polio eradication effort in a newspaper, advocates for the power of partnering to accomplish great things. He is a recipient of the Service Above Self Award. He and his wife, Phyllis, are AKS members.



**Eve Conway-Ghazi, Director 2023–25**  
**RC Redbridgse, England**

Eve Conway-Ghazi is a multimedia journalist. In 2012, she became the first female DG in London.

She served as president of Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland in 2016–17. She has taken part in NIDs in India numerous times and has worked with leading journalists from the *BBC* and *The Independent* covering the topic. She produced a documentary for the *BBC* on fighting breast cancer in Pakistan, as well as more than 30 videos that Rotary in Great Britain and Ireland used for a membership and marketing campaign.

One of her proudest accomplishments was starting the Rotary Young Citizen Awards in association with *BBC News* in 2007, focusing on helping to promote positive stories about young people.

She met her husband, Robert Hossein Ghazi, who passed away in December 2023, through Rotary. She supports TRF as a Major Donor and member of the Bequest Society.



**Patrick Eakes**  
**Director 2024–26**  
**RC Crescent (Greensboro)**  
**North Carolina**

Patrick Eakes, a professional engineer, is the owner of CP Eakes Co, a custom metal fabricator he formed in 1996 that supplies metalwork in construction and manufacturing.

Eakes joined Rotary in 1998 on Rotary's birthday, February 23. He has served Rotary as International Assembly learning facilitator, RC, ARFC, leadership seminar chair, innovative club advocate and vice-chair of the Carolinas' presidents-elect training seminar. Eakes is proud of his club's strong Rotary Foundation support. With his leadership, at one time, each of its 125 members was a Benefactor, Sustaining Member and Paul Harris

Fellow. He has received RI's Service Above Self Award and belongs to the Membership Society. He has also earned TRF's Distinguished Service Award and Citation for Meritorious Service. He and his wife Kristen are Major Donors and members of the Bequest Society and Paul Harris Society.



**Christine Etienne**  
**Director 2024–26**  
**RC Petoskey, Michigan**

Chris Etienne is an associate broker with Harbor Sotheby's International Realty and director of leasing for the Village at Bay Harbor. Along with her husband, Dennis Lindeman, she also owns a retail business, Linde Furniture.

She joined Rotary in 1990. Etienne has volunteered during NIDs in India and Nigeria. She has served Rotary as a training leader, RIPR, RC, RRFC and Convention Promotion Committee member. She serves on the steering committee of the Haiti National Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Initiative, through which her district has a partnership with RC Memorial des Gonaives in Haiti.

She has received TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service and the Distinguished Service Award. She and her husband are Major Donors.



**Daniel Himelspach**  
**Director 2023–25**  
**RC Denver Mile High, Colorado**

Raised on a sheep and cattle ranch in southeastern Montana, Dan Himelspach earned his chemistry degree from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. He worked briefly at DuPont as a chemical engineer before joining the Army as an officer with the Army Corps of Engineers.

Himelspach joined Rotary in 1993. He has served in multiple district and zone leadership positions, including End Polio Now coordinator and RRFC. He was instrumental in proposing club flexibility provisions that became Enactment 16–21, adopted at the 2016 CoL. He also served as a CoL representative from 2017 to 2020. He has been involved in many local and international service projects, including a long-standing partnership with Rotary clubs in Kathmandu to provide water to a mountain community in Nepal.

He and his wife, Leslie, are members of the Paul Harris Society and the Bequest Society and are Major Donors. Himelspach has received several awards for his

Rotary service including TRF Citation for Meritorious Service.



**Naomi Luan-Fong Lin**  
**Director 2024–26**

**RC Taipei Lily, Taiwan**

Naomi Luan-Fong Lin is general manager of Lite-Puter Enterprise Co Ltd, a leading brand of energy-saving lighting control systems she established in 1978.

She joined Rotary in 2004 as charter president of RC Taipei Lily. She has served in senior leadership roles in the Taiwan Rotary Clubs Association and the Taiwan Rotary Council of Past Governors. She has also been active in Rotary internationally in numerous roles, including as RIPR, ARRFC, ARC Peace Major Gifts Initiative Committee member, endowment/major gifts adviser, and Rotary institute vice-chair and convener.

Lin has received the Service Above Self Award. She and her husband, PDG Louis Hsu Kun-Pai, are AKS members and Major Donors.



**Isao Mick Mizuno**  
**Director 2024–26**

**RC Tokyo Tobihino, Japan**

Isao Mick Mizuno is president of Chiyoda Unyu, which supplies parts to the automobile and trucking industries with branches throughout Japan. He

assumed leadership of the company in 1986. His father founded it in 1953.

Mizuno joined Rotary in 1989 as a charter member of his club, which was sponsored by his father's club. He has served as ARC, RC, training leader, regional membership plan project leader and RIPR. He is a Major Donor and Paul Harris Society member.



**Salvador Rizzo Tavares**  
**Director 2024–26**

**RC Monterrey Carlos Canseco, Mexico**

Salvador Rizzo Tavares is CEO of Grupo Rizzo, which he established in 1987 as an office equipment wholesaler.

He joined Rotary in 1989 at 27. Early on, he was an assistant to his mentor, PRIP Carlos Canseco, who taught him about Rotary during their travels throughout Mexico and the region. Rizzo Tavares has led GG projects to address eating disorders, resolve environmental problems and provide equipment to detect prostate cancer.

He and his partner, Esmeralda Chimal Navarrete, a member of RC Reynosa Empresarial, are Rotary Foundation Major Donors, Benefactors, Paul Harris Fellows and Bequest Society members.



**Anirudha Roychowdhury**  
**Director 2023–25**

**RC Calcutta Mega City, India**

Anirudha Roychowdhury is an electrical engineer and first-generation entrepreneur.

He joined Rotary as a charter member of his club in 1995. During his tenure as DG, he added 450 members and 11 new clubs and helped raise district contributions to TRF to \$613,000. He has since served RI as RPIC, ARC, ARFC and RIPR for eight times, and as a member of TRF's Cadre of Technical Advisers.

Roychowdhury is a recipient of the Service Above Self Award, TRF Citation for Meritorious Service and the Distinguished Service Award. He and his spouse, Shipra, are Level-3 Major Donors and members of the Bequest Society.



**Suzan Stenberg, Director 2024–26**  
**RC Östersund Åre, Sweden**

Suzan Stenberg owns a consulting business dedicated to business development and management training for university students. She also runs summer school programmes for teenagers and teaches

them entrepreneurship, innovation, economics and business law.

She is a former Rotary Youth Exchange student in Manhattan, Kansas. A Rotarian since 2009, Suzan has served Rotary as a CoL representative, district trainer, RRFC and RC.

She and her husband, Göran Stenberg, support TRF as Major Donors and are members of the Paul Harris Society, District 2230's PolioPlus Society and the Bequest Society.



**TN Raju Subramanian**  
**Director 2023–25**

**RC Deonar, India**

Raju Subramanian is a senior counsel, working in India's High Court and Supreme Court. He earned degrees in economics and law from Mumbai

University. He joined Rotary in 1987 as a charter member of his club. He has volunteered in club projects ranging from administering the polio vaccine during NIDs to

supporting his club's GG project that provides free paediatric heart surgery in low-income communities.

He has served on the Election Review, the Constitution and Bylaws and the CoL Organising committees. Subramanian also held the positions of Rotary institute chair, training leader and support training leader, RRFC and director of the Rotary Fellowship for PDGs. His two most challenging Rotary roles have been serving as training leader and as vice-chair of the 2022 CoL when he had to lead the meeting after the chair fell ill with Covid.

Subramanian and his wife, Vidhya, support TRF as Paul Harris Society and AKS members, and Benefactors. Subramanian is a recipient of the Service Above Self Award and TRF Citation for Meritorious Service.



**Daniel Tanase**

**Director 2024–26**

**RC Suceava Bucovina, Romania**

Daniel Tanase is managing partner of Assist Software SRL, a software research and development company that he co-founded in 1992 and now has

360 employees.

Tanase joined Rotary in 2002 as a charter member of his club. He has served as ARC, RC, Rotary institute chair and six times as an RIPR. He is a member of Rotary's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council and Participant Experience Committee.

Tanase has received the Service Above Self Award. He and his spouse, Marlena, are Major Donors.



**Alain Van de Poel**

**Director 2024–26**

**RC Wezembeek-Kraainem, Belgium**

Alain Van de Poel is the owner of Cocoonpoel SRL, a distributor of bathroom supplies and fixtures. In 1992, he chartered the club where he is still

a member.

He has chaired district membership and Rotary Foundation committees and has been active in regional Rotary groups, serving as director of the Coordination Center for French-speaking Governors and as honorary chair of Rotary BeLux Services, the publisher of *Rotary Contact*, the Rotary regional magazine in Belgium and Luxembourg. He also served as a CoL representative and co-chair of the Rotary Leadership Institute in Europe.

A recipient of the Regional Service Award for a Polio-Free World and TRF Citation for Meritorious Service, he supports the Foundation as a Paul Harris Fellow.



**Henrique Vasconcelos**

**Director 2023–25**

**RC Fortaleza-Alagadiço, Brazil**

Henrique Vasconcelos holds a civil engineering degree from the University of Fortaleza. Born in 1969, the year his Rotary club was chartered, Vasconcelos grew up surrounded by Rotary, inspired by his father, who served twice as DG. Vasconcelos joined Rotary in 1996, seeking an opportunity to give back and to see his father more regularly. At 38, he served as DG of RID 4490. Since then, he has taken on many roles for RI, including training leader, RC, RRFC, CoL representative, Rotary zone institute chair, RIPR and member of the 2020 RI Convention Promotion Committee. He has supported TRF as RC and endowment/major gifts adviser. In Brazil, he has served as a board member of the Brazilian Association of The Rotary Foundation since 2009 and was a columnist for *Rotary Brasil* magazine for six years.

A Paul Harris Fellow, he supports the Foundation with his wife, Renata Macedo, as Benefactor, Bequest Society member and Major Donor. Vasconcelos received the Service Above Self Award.



**Yeong Ho Yun, Director 2023–25**

**RC Masan South, Korea**

Yeong Ho Yun is chair of the Korea Tourism Association, the country's premier organisation representing the tourism industry.

Yun joined Rotary in 1983. During his three-year term as endowment/major gifts adviser, he helped find 51 new AKS members in his zone. He served RI as ARPIC and twice as training leader. Yun is a recipient of the Service Above Self Award and TRF Distinguished Service Award. He and his wife, Hae Suk Lee, are Trustees Circle members of the AKS.



**John Hewko, General Secretary**

**RC Kyiv, Ukraine**

John Hewko is the general secretary and chief executive officer of Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation.

Hewko holds a law degree from Harvard University; a master's in modern history from Oxford University, where he studied as a Marshall Scholar; and a bachelor's in government and Soviet studies from Hamilton College in New York. Hewko leads a diverse staff of 800 at RI's World Headquarters in Evanston, Illinois, and six international offices. He and his partner, Marga, are Major Donors.

*TRF Trustees in the next issue*



# Apply yourself

**A**s part of the family of Rotary, members are people of purpose, people of influence and people of action. Each year, committees that support Rotary and The Rotary Foundation focus on putting Rotary's strategic priorities into action, challenging clubs to increase their impact, expand their reach, enhance participant engagement, and increase Rotary's ability to adapt.

## Would you like to contribute to Rotary's success?

RI and the Foundation are searching for qualified Rotarians and

Rotaractors to apply their leadership skills and serve on a committee in the 2025–26 Rotary year. These positions offer an opportunity for you to share your vocational expertise and skill set and help ensure diverse perspectives within each committee. Rotarians and Rotaractors with areas of expertise as detailed on the opposite page are encouraged to apply. The number of openings is limited. If you are not selected this year, you are welcome to apply again next year.

All committees correspond through email and on virtual platforms, typically with one mandatory

in-person meeting per year. Rotaractors are encouraged to apply to any area of expertise based on their background and the skills and experience detailed for each area. Dual members of Rotary and Rotaract are especially encouraged to apply.

To be considered for committee membership or to recommend someone for an appointment, visit [on.rotary.org/application2024](https://on.rotary.org/application2024). Applicants must be registered on My Rotary at [my.rotary.org](https://my.rotary.org) and should make sure their My Rotary profile includes current contact information. Applications are due **August 15**.



Area of Expertise	Function	Prerequisites	Openings
<b>Audit</b>	Advises leadership on audited financial reports, internal and external audits and internal control systems	Independence, appropriate business experience, and demonstrated financial literacy in accounting, auditing, banking, insurance, investment, risk management, executive management, or audit governance	One position with a four-year term
<b>Communications</b>	Advises leadership on Rotary's overall public image, branding, communications, content strategy and approach	Professional background and experience in internal and external communications, marketing, public image, brand and content strategy	Three positions with three-year terms
<b>Diversity, equity and inclusion</b>	Advises leadership and assists in the regional implementation of a diversity, equity and inclusion action plan	Professional or educational experience related to diversity, equity and inclusion	Three positions with three-year terms
<b>Finance</b>	Advises the RI Board on Rotary's finances, including budgets and sustainability measures	Professional background in a finance-related field with nonprofit experience preferred. Candidates should have experience in financial matters at the club and district levels.	Two positions with three-year terms
<b>Fund development</b>	Provides guidance and advice to The Rotary Foundation Trustees on all aspects of fundraising	Significant professional experience in fund development or fundraising. Committee members actively fundraise and support the Foundation.	Two positions with three-year terms
<b>Investment</b>	Oversees the management of Rotary's investments and the implementation of investment policies	Experience in investment and/or foundations or endowments with a preference for institutional investment experience	One position with a four-year term
<b>Learning</b>	Advises leadership on the creation of effective learning opportunities for Rotary leaders and members	Adult learning expertise within or outside Rotary. Experience in the professional learning field including e-learning and/or experience with planning and implementing learning events at the member, club, district, zone and international levels.	Three positions with three-year terms
<b>Operations review</b>	Advises leadership on the effectiveness of operations, administrative procedures, and standards of conduct. Serves as the advisory compensation committee to the Executive Committee of the RI Board.	Experience in management, leadership development or financial management, and thorough knowledge of Rotary's operations. Appointments are limited to past RI directors and past Foundation trustees.	One position with a six-year term
<b>Strategic planning</b>	Advises leadership on matters relating to the strategic plan	Significant experience in long-term planning, financial management, and RI and Foundation programme activities	Two positions with four-year terms
<b>Technology</b>	Advises leadership on enhancing technology practices, products, and strategy to improve the member and participant experience at Rotary	Expertise in technology development, product management, user/participant experience, and security and data privacy. Non-Rotarian technology experts may be appointed.	Two positions with three-year terms



**TCA Srinivasa  
Raghavan**

## The all-knowing driver!



Recently I gave a lift to a classmate in my car. After he got off, my driver told me that this person had held a very important post in the government. I was astonished that he knew my classmate because he had never met him. When I quizzed him as to how he knew my friend, but he, always a man of very few words, said “Driver”. I was stunned. It has never occurred to me that despite all the fuss about privacy laws, the danger was sitting on the front seat and, moreover, behind the wheel.

But jokes apart, drivers have always played a crucial role in human affairs since the time of the Mahabharat war. Remember who Arjun’s charioteer was? Krishna, no less. He guided Arjun at a crucial time when Arjun was having doubts over the war with his cousins. That guidance became the *Bhagwad Gita* with which we are all familiar.

Perhaps that was the only time that a driver played a positive role. Closer in time, some of the older readers of this journal may recall the case of a Congress party member who was also a minister for a long time. But guess how he had started his career? As the driver of the then Congress president. This was when the party was in the throes of internal trouble as two factions fought each other. The Congress president’s driver would overhear conversations on the back seat and report

them to the leader of the rival faction. He thus played an important part in its victory.

A relative of mine used to have a driver who has been with them for over two decades. Over the years, as he grew older, his family started entrusting nearly everything to the driver because he was utterly honest and loyal. Whenever I went somewhere with them, I would be amazed at how much latitude they allowed him. Once they were discussing their three bank accounts and wondering which ones to close. Naturally the amount of money in each account came up. Eventually, fed up with their disagreements, the driver turned around and told them not only how much money there was in the different accounts but also which two to close. I fully expected them to explode in anger but they meekly agreed. That’s

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We tend to fully trust our drivers who, we always forget, have full access to our conversations in the car. But we have no control over what they do with what they hear and see.

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how important he was. But fortunately he was a very discreet man.

One of my friends has kept her driver for 30 years because she can’t trust anyone else when her daughter is in the car. She rarely goes anywhere now but the driver comes every day, cleans the car and watches films on his phone all day. He, too, is completely honest and loyal.

But these examples are few and far between. The norm is dishonesty and betrayal. One driver told me in all seriousness that it was okay to steal petrol because it was a top up of the salary. I know of a few who would fill their two-wheelers with petrol syphoned from the owner’s car.

The worst example of driver’s behaviour was the well-documented case of the fellow who videotaped the amorous encounters of his VIP boss. He had not been paid his salary for many months. So one day he blackmailed the boss with the video. It was a sordid episode which ended badly for everyone who was involved.

I am sure this sort of thing has happened many times in different contexts because we tend to fully trust our drivers who, we always forget, have full access to our conversations in the car. But we have no control over what they do with what they hear and see. So, at least as far as amorous affairs are concerned it is probably better to take a taxi. ■



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