Rotary
MAGAZINE
APRIL 2024

BIRTH RIGHT

A Rotary-backed initiative in Nigeria strives to improve maternal health

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Rotaractors host big headbanger bash in Bangladesh
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PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN SERNA

The change within

These are times that cry out for peace. The Middle East is in its most volatile condition in years. The war in Ukraine is the largest in Europe since World War II, and there are armed conflicts in Sudan and parts of Central Africa. Nearly every continent is experiencing a major armed conflict.

Rotary has a vital role to play in advancing the cause of peace — I often say Rotary needs to work toward peace as aggressively as those who wish to wage war. It's the spirit found in our vision statement: "Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change — across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves."
We must never lose track of that last call — that to bring about change in the world, we need to foster change within.

It is up to us to model peacebuilding behavior among each other. We can do better than questioning the motives of one another and jumping to the harshest possible explanation. After hearing words that might strain or offend us, we have an opportunity to ask, with compassion and curiosity, the intent of those offending words. And then we have another opportunity to repair the breach.

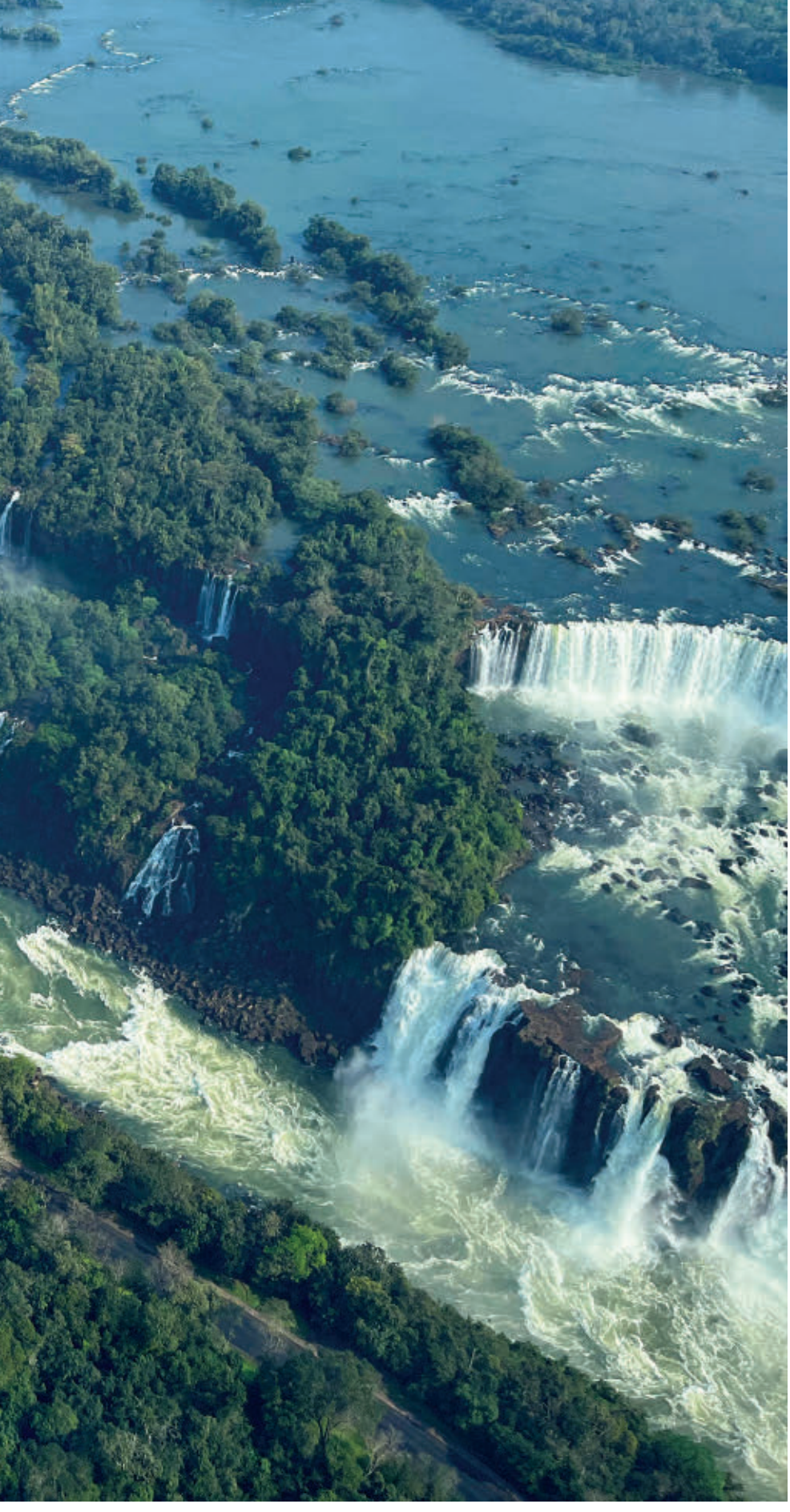
If we wish to be a beacon to the world, let us start by being so to one another. Let's help each other find greater understanding and productive alternatives to words that cause hurt and distrust. And let's stick to our principles, but never doubt the sincerity of each other to end conflicts, not inflame them.

I'm reminded of a speech that U.S. Senator Robert Kennedy made on 4 April 1968, that dreadful day when the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. Kennedy was in Indianapolis speaking to an audience in a predominantly African American neighborhood where people had yet to learn that Dr. King had been killed.

He shared the terrible news. He honored Dr. King for all he had done for the cause of justice and peace. And then he connected with the fuming, grieving crowd by saying: "For those of you who are Black and are tempted to be filled with hatred and distrust at the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I can only say that I feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed."
It was the first time he had spoken publicly about President John F. Kennedy's assassination. And while many American cities exploded in violence that night, Indianapolis did not.

It is in times of crisis and despair that we need empathy most of all. Empathy is the most powerful tool of peace, and it is vital if we are to take the first brave, humble steps to *Create Hope in the World.*

R. GORDON R. MCINALLY
President, Rotary International



WELCOME

YOU ARE HERE: Iguaçu Falls

GREETING: Olá (Portuguese); hola (Spanish)

DEVIL'S THROAT: Straddling the border of Brazil and Argentina, the Iguaçu (or Iguazú) Falls is a series of 275 cascades lining a winding gorge and surrounded by subtropical rainforest that's home to jaguars and howler monkeys. The tallest portion, at 269 feet, drops into a chasm known as the Garganta do Diabo. Marveling at the sheer size of the falls, former U.S. first lady Edith Roosevelt is said to have lamented, "My poor Niagara."

ROTARY INSTITUTE OF BRAZIL: Last August, about 1,300 Rotary members and leaders from over a dozen countries gathered nearby in the city of Foz do Iguaçu for the 46th Rotary institute of Brazil. RI Director Antônio Henrique Barbosa de Vasconcelos called it "the perfect location" because of its natural beauty and its position at the crossroads of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.

THE CLUBS: Foz do Iguaçu has eight Rotary and two Rotaract clubs. Their district (4640) has the most members of any district entirely within the Southern Hemisphere.

Photograph by Heather McInally

Rotary
MAGAZINE

April 2024

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FEATURES

On the cover: Nafisa Abubakar and her child during a home health visit in Nigeria, where a Programs of Scale initiative aims to improve maternal and neonatal survival rates.
Photo by Maryam Turaki

CONNECT

OUR WORLD

OUR CLUBS

ILLUSTRATION: MAYA FIDAWI; PHOTOGRAPH: (OPPOSITE) JORDAN VONDERHAAR

CONNECT

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STAFF CORNER

Kate Yonan

Director of Senior Leader Support

I went to the University of Toronto but was born at Evanston Hospital, just a couple of miles from One Rotary Center, and grew up in Chicago's northwest suburbs. My uncle lived in Canada and encouraged me to apply to colleges there. I visited Toronto for a campus tour and fell in love with the university. Back then, the public conversation about climate change was getting louder. I always loved science and public policy. So I double-majored in environmental studies and international development.

Four years in Toronto gave me a deep appreciation of the culture and traditions unique to Canada. I also temporarily picked up a slight Canadian accent. While there were many similarities to life in the States, my time in college was still a cross-cultural experience that remains so valuable to me even more than 20 years later.

I traveled to New Zealand on an exchange program in college and spent about six months at the University of Otago in Dunedin, a city with Scottish roots on the beautiful South Island. I studied gender roles and development across the Pacific islands with a focus on Indigenous communities.

I spent a year in AmeriCorps after college. I was placed with an adult literacy program in Chicago's northwest suburbs. Some of the adults I tutored had lived their whole lives in the area but lacked basic literacy. About 130 million adults in the U.S. have low literacy skills. In the summer, I ran a program for the children of seasonal workers employed at the Arlington Park horse track. It was an exhausting but fulfilling experience through which I developed a deep respect for schoolteachers. During this period, a Rotarian I worked with invited me to talk to her club about my AmeriCorps experience. That was one of my first exposures to Rotary.

Yonan and her children, Colin and Layla.

I landed a job at Rotary in 2007, first supporting Rotary Youth Leadership Awards and then Rotary Youth Exchange. As a parent now, I'm more aware of how important it is for young people to have these cross-cultural experiences and build leadership skills and resiliency.

I moved to the Senior Leader Support team about eight years ago, providing administrative and logistic help for the president, president-elect, president-nominee, The Rotary Foundation trustee chair and chair-elect, as well as members of the Board and the Foundation Trustees. Knowing how strenuous these roles can be, we work to ensure they have the support they need to be successful. In the process, we often get to know the leaders and their families quite well and learn their cultural traditions, a special part of working for Rotary.

I met my husband at Rotary. He was with our Global People and Talent team at that time. We now live in Evanston and have two young kids. Having worked here for nearly 17 years, I kind of owe much of my life to Rotary.

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF KATE YONAN

Letters to the editor

PREVENTION IS KEY

I read with interest Elizabeth Hewitt's feature article in January ["First response"] about how Rotary members are helping fight the opioid crisis. While I applaud all first responders who are saving overdose victims, I am concerned that, as a country, we may have profoundly failed to educate our youth about the prevention and consequences of substance abuse — abuse that has necessitated the wide distribution and use of overdose kits. The potency, accessibility, and legalization of some gateway drugs have hindered both prevention and treatment/recovery efforts.

Substance abuse has national security consequences as it impacts effective military recruiting. The shortage of able recruits is a worldwide problem requiring an all-hands-on-deck effort. Let me offer a Bravo Zulu [in honor of] the Rotary Action Group for Addiction Prevention and to those Rotary clubs that support drug-free clubs for students.

R.A. Erbetta, Marblehead, Massachusetts

NEVER FORGET

Your January story "A survivor's legacy," about [Holocaust survivor] Sam Harris, is not news. It is nonetheless a story that needs retelling and that connects history to current events.

Much like the way the stories of Passover, Easter, and other religious traditions are retold annually, retelling stories like this reinforces our foundation of knowledge, so that we never forget. Antisemitism, like Islamophobia and anti-everything else, has no place in a world that Rotarians envision.

We need to find ways for disagreements to be solved the Rotary way. So I'm thankful your editors found a way to retell and update a crucial story.

Hal Schlenger, Marietta, Georgia

GOING IN CIRCLES

I was fascinated to see the article about the roundabouts of Carmel, Indiana, in *Rotary* [Welcome, January]. My wife, Jennifer, and I had the opportunity to traverse the city's roundabouts this past summer. We found them to be both convenient and frustrating! They are great when you know where you are going. When you don't know, as was the case with us, they are most annoying. We would get off where we thought we were going, only to find that we had misjudged our exit. Having said that, we love the roundabouts where we live.

David V. Daugherty,
Evansville, Indiana

BEE INFORMED

I read with interest the article about Getachew Yitelelu, the beekeeping microbiologist ["Harvest season," December]. Beekeeping is becoming a popular hobby here in the United States, but some caveats need to be considered.

Foreign species of bees are easy to acquire and keep. However, they don't pollinate many native plants. More importantly, by increasing the competition for nectar, they crowd out native bee species and help put them on the road to extinction. So, if you are interested in acquiring hives, make sure that you only choose those of native bees in your area.

David Gerrol, West Hartford, Connecticut

UNWANTED MESSAGE

I am a charter member and a past president of my Rotary club, serving for more than 40 years. But in recent years, I have seriously considered canceling my Rotary membership because of its ultraliberal bias, the magazine being a prime example. In the recent Food Issue [December], there were numerous references to "climate change," including in the president's message and in two other articles espousing what should be done. I am an educated adult, and I don't appreciate the political bias in every issue. You have helped change a once-great organization into an organization [whose meetings] I feel hypocritical in attending.

Verlin Janssen, Gothenburg, Nebraska

OVERHEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In January, we highlighted how Rotary members are addressing the opioid crisis in the United States, including through a multifaceted initiative called Project Smart.

It's heartening to see initiatives like Project Smart making a positive difference from prevention to treatment. 💙 #OpioidPrevention #RotaryImpact

Callie Maderos
▶ via LinkedIn

Such an important Rotary collaborative program! Saving lives!!

Therese Maggioncalda
▶ via LinkedIn

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THE SPECIALIST

Climate smarts

A fourth-generation farmer nourishes the land too

My family have always been farmers. My great-grandfather unknowingly bought land with contaminated soil. That led him to try hydroponics, the cultivation of plants in nutrient-rich water instead of soil. Three generations later, from my base in Florida, I practice regenerative agriculture, a method that restores nutrients to the soil and prioritizes feeding our growing population in the least resource-intensive way possible.

I combine growing on land with aquaponics, a technique of raising plants alongside fish, whose waste serves as fertilizer for crops on land or in soilless systems. With aquaponics, we can grow nutrient-dense crops from seed to harvest in as little as 30 days in controlled environments such as warehouses and greenhouses, with a fraction of the land use of traditional farms. It is a closed-loop system: Fish waste provides nutrients to the plants, and the plants filter water that's returned clean to the fish tanks.

Angela TenBroeck
Rotary E-Club of WASH, District 9999
Regenerative agriculture leader

Early in my career, I noticed some health problems could be solved with good food and clean water. It troubled me that many people had access to neither. So I've developed methods for putting farms in places thought to be too small and using nutrient-rich water from fish farms to build better soil. Other solutions I've initiated include fresh produce vending machines and farm-to-door produce delivery for older adults and people with cancer and other chronic diseases.

Together with people all over the world, I help develop farms that produce diverse, nonextractive, and nutritious food. Our latest project is in South Sudan in partnership with a local health care organization. This is the mission of the nonprofit I started, the Center for Sustainable Agricultural Excellence and Conservation.

We put farms everywhere. You don't need acres and acres of farmland to feed a community. I use 1 percent of the water of a traditional farm growing the same amount of food. I produce over 40 acres worth of lettuce for every acre I have covered.

I was honored to represent Rotary at the COP28 climate summit. I connected with fellow Rotarians who work in energy, banking, and finance and are just as invested as I am in saving water, people, and the planet. And I got to tell them farming can do all of this.

— AS TOLD TO HANNAH SHAW

Photograph by Agnes Lopez

OUR WORLD

FOOD SECURITY

Food of the future

Can the curiously named breadfruit feed a warming world?

In the quest for food sources that can withstand a rapidly changing climate, there's one conspicuously curious crop: the breadfruit, a spiky green orb native to the Malay Archipelago that's surprisingly versatile and packed with nutrition.

The starchy fruit, long a staple in the tropics, is attracting new interest globally as farmers and scientists search for crops that are hardier while still nutrient dense. The need is critical. Nearly half of the world's food calories come from just three crops: rice, wheat, and corn. But all three staples are vulnerable to the extreme heat, changing rainfall, and other impacts of climate change. Researchers estimate yields of wheat and corn could decline as early as 2030.

In the search for the food of the future, agriculturists are rediscovering ancient crops such as amaranth and cowpeas and developing hybrids such as avocados and melons that use less water. And then there's the breadfruit. The tree that produces the fruit can withstand drought and heat and thrives in rainy conditions. A single tree can yield 300 fruits per year for up to a century, with one of the fruits, which have a potato-like interior, providing enough carbohydrates to feed a family of four. The fruit is also high in fiber, minerals, and vitamins.

Rotary clubs have taken notice of breadfruit's potential for addressing food insecurity in the face of climate change. After Hurricane Dorian devastated the Bahamas in 2019, destroying homes, farms, and livelihoods, residents received nearly 5,000 breadfruit trees with support from the Rotary clubs of St. Catharines South, Ontario; Niagara Falls Sunrise, Ontario; and Abaco, Bahamas.

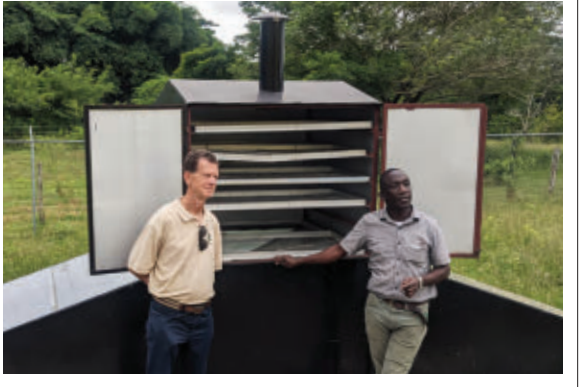
Through Rotary clubs' partnership with the Trees That Feed Foundation, an Illinois-based nonprofit that has a goal of planting 1 million fruit trees in places dealing with food insecurity and poverty, they also have been involved in efforts to plant breadfruit trees in Jamaica, Haiti, and Pakistan.

"With global climate change affecting millions and the starvation of many due to a lack of sustainable food, this program is one of the most important projects supported by Rotary," says Cathy Henry, a member of the St. Catharines South club.

While the breadfruit's climate-resilient powers are only now being recognized, people in the South Pacific have been eating it for thousands of years. In one of the most famous maritime tales in history about the mutiny on the HMS Bounty, the ship had been transporting breadfruit plants from Tahiti, destined for British colonies in the Caribbean to grow cheap food for enslaved people. (One story has it that Lieutenant William Bligh was hoarding the supply of drinking water for the breadfruit rather than the crew.) The breadfruit plants did not survive the mutiny, but Bligh did, and on a later trip he succeeded in delivering 678 of them to Jamaica and St. Vincent in 1793.

While the fruit has a dark history entwined with slavery, it became a staple in the Caribbean's culinary culture and today forms

To learn more and get involved, visit **treesthatfeed.org**.



PHOTOGRAPHS: (LEFT) GETTY IMAGES; (RIGHT) COURTESY OF TREES THAT FEED FOUNDATION

Clockwise from left: The spiky green breadfruit is gaining attention for its climate resiliency; a farmer plants a breadfruit tree in Haiti; Trees That Feed Foundation co-founder Mike McLaughlin (left) and Robin Rhoden of the Sydney Pagon STEM Academy in Jamaica with a solar-powered dehydrator designed to preserve breadfruit.

the basis of several beloved island dishes. A close cousin of jackfruit, it can be steamed, roasted, fried, or fermented, as well as dried and ground into flour. And because the trees can live for decades, people in some cultures plant them when children are born to ensure they will have food for life.

As the Earth gets warmer, breadfruit trees are expected to continue to produce fruit at a consistent rate, according to research from Northwestern University in Illinois. In addition, the increased warming could allow the trees to be planted at latitudes farther from the equator. "Twenty years ago, there was almost no breadfruit north of the [Florida] Keys," or if there were, they didn't survive long, says Mary McLaughlin, who founded Trees That Feed with her husband, Mike. "Now, we're seeing breadfruit flourish as far north as Fort Lauderdale."

Trees themselves have climate benefits, capturing carbon dioxide through photosynthesis and returning oxygen to the air. When breadfruit is grown alongside other crops in a strategy known as agroforestry, it creates something of a "living pantry" that not only benefits the farmers but also tends to capture more carbon, McLaughlin says.

The involvement of Rotary members with Trees That Feed began in Jamaica in 2009 after Henry, the Ontario Rotarian, met McLaughlin through a mutual acquaintance. That first project funded trees for school grounds and small, diversified farms already growing a variety of other crops. Over the years, around 30 Rotary clubs have forged a solid partnership with the organization, which considers the clubs a key financial and on-the-ground partner.

In the search for the food of the future, agriculturists are rediscovering ancient crops.

But this effort isn't just about shipping and planting trees. Today, Trees That Feed is helping communities set up operations to dehydrate breadfruit for longer storage and mill it into gluten-free flour, which can be used for countless applications, from biscuits and breads to desserts. Once picked, breadfruit has a short shelf life, so

Mike McLaughlin created a solar-powered dehydrator, with help from Northwestern University students, to process extra fruit. The machine blueprint is downloadable for free on the group's website.

The organization is also assisting women to become vendors of breadfruit products, creating small businesses. "We have spoken to women who have said the money from the fruit from the trees we planted is now helping to pay their child's school tuition. They're buying shoes, clothes for their kids," says Mary McLaughlin. One Jamaican farmer is using his trees as a living pension fund, allowing customers to pick the fruit and pay for what they harvest, she says.

Perhaps one of the biggest success stories for Trees That Feed and Rotary clubs has been in Haiti. The Rotary Club of Rochelle, Illinois, helped spearhead the effort there about a dozen years ago, when it paid for breadfruit trees to plant in the island country. The Rotary Club of Calgary at Stampede Park, Alberta, also has been a large source of funding for trees there.

In January, the United Nations World Food Programme confirmed a 15-ton order of breadfruit flour from a business in Haiti for its school food program in the country, McLaughlin says. The recent success is a testament to the project's emphasis on ensuring it is sustainable for communities to eventually take over.

"This is a 'teach them how to fish instead of giving them fish' kind of thing," says Brenda McKinley, of the Calgary at Stampede Park club. "[Trees That Feed] not only gives them the tree — they give them education on how to plant it, how to take care of it, what to do with the fruit."

The Calgary club buys 300 breadfruit per month from Pierre Moise Louis, a Haitian entrepreneur mentored by Trees That Feed. Louis grows the trees in a nursery and advises farmers on their care. He bakes konparèts, a snack bread, from the breadfruit flour he makes in his bakery, and the breads are then donated to schools.

"The whole project is from a simple idea from somebody who said, 'Let's plant trees that feed people,'" Henry says. "Rotary is respected around the globe and has contacts in so many countries. It is easy for us to help where needed to donate a tree, plant a tree, teach youngsters about the importance of the environment, and feed families."

— AMY HOAK

From top: Mike and Mary McLaughlin, founders of the Trees That Feed Foundation, examine one of the first breadfruit trees they planted in Jamaica over a decade ago; Ed Rice, a longtime member of the Rotary Club of Rochelle, Illinois, demonstrates how to make breadfruit flour in Haiti.

BY THE NUMBERS

80-100 years
Lifespan of a breadfruit tree

1,000 pounds
Amount of fruit some varieties produce per tree

18th century
Breadfruit introduced to the Caribbean

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF TREES THAT FEED FOUNDATION

Short takes

In December, the World Health Organization issued a prequalification approval for the novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2), which will expand access.

The Rotary Foundation's global grant scholarship program was named one of the "10 trendiest fellowships of 2023" by profellow.com.

PROFILE

Ripple effect

A climate activist's small plan yields big results

Advika Agarwal
Rotaract Club of MoCo, Maryland

Six years ago, when she was in seventh grade, Advika Agarwal was looking for a topic for a science competition. She and her friend Angelina Xu were aware of the cafeteria food waste at Xu's old elementary school and devised a plan to have it composted, diverting it from landfills where food adds to greenhouse gases. From there, despite the pandemic shutdown, the modest plan took off.

With help from a $48,000 grant from the World Wildlife Fund, the Coalition to Re-Imagine School Waste today coordinates the redistribution of food waste in 78 schools in Montgomery County, Maryland. The program is expanding to other states, and after a successful lobbying effort led in part by Agarwal, the Maryland Legislature enacted a bill to provide $1.25 million over five years to support similar programs.

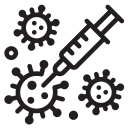
Those accomplishments did not go unnoticed: Last summer, Agarwal, Xu, and their classmate and collaborator Shrusti Amula were among 34 students who received the President's Environmental Youth Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

After serving as president of the Interact club at her high school, the 18-year-old senior joined the Rotaract Club of MoCo in September. Two months later she was in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, as one of 12 Rotaract representatives at the COP28 climate summit. She made connections with other environmental activists and presented on combating food waste and hunger.

"Seeing the ripple effect of smaller actions that can be replicated around the country and around the world is what gives me hope," Agarwal says. "It motivates me to not fall prey to climate pessimism. We can't just sit back. We have to do something about it." — GEOFFREY JOHNSON

Actor Liam Neeson recently accepted an honorary membership in the Rotary Club of Ballymena, Northern Ireland, where he grew up.

Rotary will join WHO in celebrating World Immunization Week, 24-30 April, to promote vaccines and disease prevention.



The RI Board selected Minneapolis-St. Paul as the site of the 2029 Rotary International Convention.

ILLUSTRATIONS: GETTY IMAGES

Photograph by Jonna McKone

People of action around the globe

By Brad Webber

United States
OysterFest has been a calendar highlight of the Pacific Northwest's fishing industry for more than four decades. The two-day festival is hosted by the Rotary Club of Shelton Skookum, Washington. Last year's event, held in October, attracted 13,000 seafood enthusiasts and raised $170,000 for community organizations. Seasoned seafarers and landlubbers alike got in some serious shelling, as the victor in a speed-shucking competition opened 24 oysters in 73 seconds. The champion in the half-shell — a separate challenge that also accounts for presentation, with penalties for errant cuts — clocked in at an adjusted time of 2 minutes and 10 seconds. "It is quite an event with the crowd cheering on their favorite to win," says Laurie Brown, the club's president-nominee. "Anyone can sign up, but most of the shuckers come from the various shellfish farms or restaurants."

Rotary Club of Shelton Skookum

$56 million
Annual value of Washington's farmed oysters

Suriname
Passing rates on secondary school entrance exams that have dipped as low as 50 percent have vexed officials in Suriname. The Rotary Club of Paramaribo Residence, whose members include several teachers or retired educators, is aiming to improve those results and reduce dropout rates. In October, the club instituted a mathematics training project for around two dozen teachers at schools serving older children. The program includes courses on topics such as set theory, equations, functions, plane geometry, and trigonometry. "You have to use mathematics at every level of your life, and statistics show that in Suriname kids have low grades" in the subject, says club member Yvonne Mohabir. A retired school dean and Rotarian, Ewald Levens, leads the sessions, which are funded with the support of the Dutch Association of Mathematics Teachers.

Rotary Club of Paramaribo Residence

75%
Share of Surinamese children ages 7-14 who lack foundational numeracy skills

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF ROTARY CLUBS

1.98 billion

Number of people who lack basic hygiene services

Macao

The Rotary Club of Macau's meeting place — one of the world's most profitable casinos — has turned out to be an ace in the hole for the club. Sands China, the operator of The Venetian Macao, sponsors the club's signature project, a Christmas party for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It supports the gala that is the club's primary fundraiser. And in December, Sands employees were among about 200 volunteers involved in a club effort to assemble 27,000 hygiene kits destined for the Philippines. The packages were provided to an organization that collects bath items from hospitality companies to be recycled and redistributed. Club President João Francisco Pinto says the club's projects align with Sands' philanthropic endeavors.

Rotary Club of Macau

Nigeria

Nigeria has one of the world's highest breast cancer mortality rates, a statistic that has not gone unnoticed by the Rotary Club of Ikoyi. "With an incredibly scary rise of the incidence of breast cancer in Nigeria, the club became saddled with the huge responsibility of combating this scourge with every resource available," says club member Winifred Ebiye Imbasi. The club partnered with the Sarah Ayoka Oduwaiye Foundation to conduct free breast cancer screenings for more than 500 women at Lagos Island General Hospital in July 2023 and for 400 women in the neighborhood of Obalende in December. In January, the club held a Jazz Nite concert and awards ceremony at the Alliance Française theater to raise awareness.

Rotary Club of Ikoyi

36%

Three-year survival rate for Nigerian women with breast cancer

2nd century B.C.

Earliest documented evidence of hemp paper in China

Australia

A stroll inspired Rod Morrison to suggest that his Rotary club in southeast Australia offer public tours of a structure that has long loomed beside the Barwon River: the 1878 Fyansford Paper Mill. Though listed by Australia as a heritage site, the mill and its legacy hadn't received their due, says Morrison, a member of the Rotary Club of Highton. Rotary members pored over old photos and drawings to assemble displays for the 75-minute guided tours, which began in 2022. The mill made paper out of rags, ship sails, frayed rope, military uniforms, reeds, and other old fabrics until it closed in 1923. "It was one of Australia's first recyclers," Morrison says. During World War II the plant served as a secret sea mine facility for the Royal Australian Navy. The heritage tours have already generated more than US$12,000 for community projects, along with enthusiasm for history.

Rotary Club of Highton

GOODWILL

Breathe life into every speech

9 storytelling tips for weaving the personal with the universal

By Craig Valentine

Over the past 20 years, I've had some amazing opportunities to speak to audiences about the importance of leadership and presentation skills. The main tool I've used to accomplish this is storytelling. Storytelling helps both leaders and presenters motivate, inspire, and influence their listeners and be remembered.

Here are nine storytelling techniques I use that can help you breathe life into your next speech about a Rotary club project or fundraising appeal.

1 Use a "foundational phrase."
For each story, develop a foundational phrase your audience can easily remember and repeat. It should be audience-focused, simple to say, and preferably fewer than 10 words. For example, one of my foundational phrases is, "Don't get ready; stay ready." It sticks with my audience.

2 Get to your stories quicker.
There's way too much setup (what I call the "pre-ramble") for many stories. Get to the story and then go rapidly into the conflict and hook your audience.

3 Don't be the guru of your own story.
The guru is the person who gives you the advice that helps you overcome your conflict and changes your life for the better.

I share a story of how I wanted to leave the company I worked for in order to live my dream of being a professional speaker. The vice president kept offering to raise my salary so I would stay. When I asked my wife what I should do, she said, "I don't care how much they try to compensate you. Your dream is not for sale." I left and spoke more than 160 times in one year. My wife is the guru of that story. Having a guru helps you remain similar to your audience.

4 Don't just establish a conflict. Escalate it.
Think of it like the Titanic. Hitting the iceberg established the conflict, but then what happened? The water started rising. That escalation of the conflict led to a desperate need for a solution. You should show how your conflict escalates too.

5 Condense to connect.
When you deliver a scene with characters having dialogue, don't tell us everything — just tell us the main thing. Try not to go back and forth between characters more than a few times, because your audience will grow tired. Instead, put the important statements in those few lines of dialogue.

6 Make your audience curious from the beginning.
What questions can you plant in their minds that they'll want answered during the story? I start one story with, "The best leadership principle I ever learned was from the president of the United States in the early 1990s when I shared a golf cart with him." My audience likely has one or more questions:

Which president?
How did you get to be in a golf cart with him?
What is the lesson he taught?

Because of the curiosity, my audience anticipates coming along on the journey with me. Tease them before you tell them.

For tips on sharing stories that can inspire others, join Rotary and Toastmasters for a one-hour online workshop about storytelling on 25 April. To register, use your phone's camera to scan this code:

7 Don't keep repeating your message.
When your story is over and you've given your foundational phrase (that short phrase that is easy to remember and repeat), don't ramble on about the point. The story actually makes the point, and the foundational phrase makes the point memorable. If you keep talking and trying to drive the point home, your audience will want the ride to end.

8 Create characters.
When delivering the lines of your characters, use their posture, positioning, and maybe a slight change in your voice to make that person come alive. You might have a character that is stern, has a stiff posture, and crosses their arms and frowns when talking. Become that character.

9 With a few exceptions, keep your stories short.
The longer you work on a story, the shorter it should get. It's addition by subtraction. The story gets better not by what you put in but by what you remove. I try to keep mine under four minutes so I can leave my audience wanting more. ■

Craig Valentine is the 1999 World Champion of Public Speaking. This column is adapted from a December 2019 article in Toastmaster *magazine. Rotary and Toastmasters International are working together to provide members of both organizations with more opportunities for personal and professional growth. Find out more at* ***rotary.org/toastmasters.***

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ESSAY

All aboard!

A transportation expert maps a route toward climate solutions — and his ideas are electric

By Rod Diridon Sr.

Illustrations by John Mattos

Seeing Mother losing her clothes shocked me into action.

It was the early 1990s and I was home visiting my parents in Dunsmuir, California, a tiny town in the Upper Sacramento River Valley at the foot of Mount Shasta. "Mother" was the name we gave that mighty mountain when I was growing up. On this visit I noticed right away that her glaciers and snowcap had receded dramatically since my youth. My father told me that ski season was also significantly shorter. At the time I was in my mid-50s. I'd already had a long career in regional and state government in Northern California's Silicon Valley, where I had focused on designing and building a mass transit system. But the receding glaciers on Mount Shasta shocked me into seeking the reason for this undeniable and radical change.

As early as 1938, a British scientist named Guy Callendar provided empirical evidence that increasing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere had led to a dramatic and ongoing rise in the Earth's temperature. What's more, Callendar and, in the decades that followed, other environmental scientists linked that increase directly to human activity. The only problem? Few people were listening to these scientists, and when they did, not many took them seriously.

Standing in the shadow of a diminished Mount Shasta, I had no choice but to listen to those dire warnings of global warming. As I traveled the world to fulfill speaking obligations, I saw further evidence of how climate change was affecting not only the planet's mountain ranges but its oceans and forests, its lakes and rivers and seas. Given my background, I couldn't help but notice one other thing: Those countries with well-developed high-speed rail, linked to a network of electrically powered feeder systems, had found an effective way to drastically diminish carbon emissions.

At about that same time, I became aware of studies that evaluated carbon emissions per mode of transportation. Researchers found that petroleum-powered cars, buses, trucks, and airlines created the most carbon per seat per mile. Electrically powered high-speed rail, metro rail, and electric cars were exponentially cleaner. Sustainable public transportation systems could and were reducing carbon emissions worldwide.

Given all I'd seen and read, I resolved to focus my attention on sustainable transportation as a primary remedy to climate change. In the late 1990s, our family began using only electric cars. Recognizing that there were other solutions to climate change, we also installed 45 solar panels on the roof of our house. We celebrated *An Inconvenient Truth,* former Vice President Al Gore's 2006 documentary that sparked public awareness to the dangers of climate change. And I shifted the focus of my speeches to the importance of making the transition to electrically powered mass transit.

Around 2017, when (if I may immodestly mention) *The New York Times* identified me as "a tireless advocate of public transport for the Bay Area," the Rotary Club of San Jose asked me to deliver my speech to club members. I've been a member of the club since 1971, and after I spoke, several younger members came to me demanding that we fight for a better future for our children.

And we did: Club members in effect declared a code red on climate change and created a climate action committee. Climate action became such a magnet for new, young members that the then-governor of District 5170, which encompasses Silicon Valley, asked us to expand our climate initiative to each of the district's 50-plus Rotary clubs. Not long before that, Rotary International recognized the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group, which, with its attention to climate action, is especially attractive to younger Rotarians.

High-speed rail is the foundational building block of a worldwide remedy to climate change. It's an investment we must make.

Looking back, it seems that my DNA led me toward trains and the role they could play in a sustainable future. I had worked my way through college as a railroad trainman. In my five terms as a member of Santa Clara County's Board of Supervisors, I'd chaired the construction of nine rail projects. After 20 years, term limits forced me into retirement, and Silicon Valley's historic main depot was rededicated as the San Jose Diridon Station.

Much of my work was devoted to undoing the damage done not just to my region but to the whole country by the little-remembered National City Lines conspiracy. National City Lines was a company funded by General Motors, Firestone Tire, Standard Oil of California, and Phillips Petroleum (among other companies) that, starting in the 1930s, bought up and decommissioned municipal streetcar services. Their goal was to replace tracks with asphalt and trolleys with buses, all of which was good for automotive and gasoline sales.

It was a deeply cynical ploy, part of which was ultimately found to be illegal. Members of the National City Lines cabal were convicted of a criminal antitrust violation in 1949. By then, car ownership had become a necessity in many towns amid the turbocharged urban and suburban sprawl. As the journalist Jonathan Kwitny saw it, and as he wrote in a 1981 article about the conspiracy for *Harper's* magazine, "In many places, mass transit didn't just die — it was murdered."

Kwitny concluded: "What the transit conspirators did was destroy mass-transit systems that today could benefit millions of citizens and, ironically, make for improved national security by reducing reliance on foreign oil. And they did it for no greater cause than their own profit."

The damage done by this unseemly profiteering was alarming — and by eliminating existing rail lines then, it undermined the vast expansion of intracity high-speed electric rail lines that today would be a key initiative in staving off the dreaded sixth mass extinction. (Geologists tell us that excessive carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has likely played a role in most of Earth's mass extinctions; the most recent occurred around 66 million years ago with the mass die-off of the dinosaurs.)

As a representative of the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group and District 5170's climate action council, I make these points in my videoconference talks with Rotary members and other groups around the world. I begin by pointing out that 99.9 percent of research published in scientific journals supports the fact that human-caused climate change is out of control. There is no longer a debate among objective scientists. Citing only peer-reviewed research, I provide statistics about the alarming increase in heat-trapping carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases and the steady rise in global temperatures.

I go on to quote the March 2023 declaration by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres that "we are nearing the point of no return" — that moment when we will cross a global temperature threshold that will lead to the destruction of ecosystems, the disappearance of some countries lying at sea level, and unimaginable increases in destructive weather events, deadly pandemics, and mass migrations.

At the recent Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference in San Francisco, it was affirmed that China and the United States — the world's biggest carbon polluters — must immediately take the lead on climate-related remedial efforts if we're to have a future. As part of that, it only makes sense that we bring back many of the trolley systems eliminated by National City Lines. We must also expand our commuter rail system; convert to electric cars, buses, and trucks; and create more sources of sustainable solar, wind, and geothermal energy.

This rapid shift sounds like a pipe dream to many Americans who have become reliant on private cars. But over a dozen countries, including every major advanced economy outside of North America, have electric trains that travel at least 186 miles per hour, which meets the standard definition of "high-speed." It can be done. Elsewhere, France's ban on short-haul domestic flights went into effect last May, and European Union countries continue to expand their high-speed rail systems to connect most of the continent's major cities. Japan and China — which has 26,000 miles of high-speed rails accommodating trains traveling more than 200 miles per hour — are making similar efforts. The U.S. is sorely lagging in advancing its own high-speed rail network. We must do better, and quickly.

Standing in the shadow of a diminished Mount Shasta, I had no choice but to listen to those dire warnings of global warming.

Yes, it's expensive, but how much would you spend to protect your children's future? High-speed rail is the foundational building block of a worldwide remedy to climate change. It's an investment we must make. And as we reduce carbon in the Earth's atmosphere, it's an investment that will create jobs while advancing connectivity, supply chain efficiency, and economic competitiveness.

I turned 85 in February and am stepping aside for the next generation of climate activists, several of whom I've happily mentored through Rotary. But I'm more determined than ever to create a brighter, greener future for my four grandchildren and all the other young people who will inherit our endangered planet.

In less than a decade those dearly loved young adults will ask me if I did all I possibly could to ameliorate the climate crisis. I will honestly answer: yes. What will you say? ■

A member and past president of the Rotary Club of San Jose, Rod Diridon Sr. is a co-chair of the U.S. High Speed Rail Coalition and the chair emeritus of the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

Happy birthday, Paul Harris!

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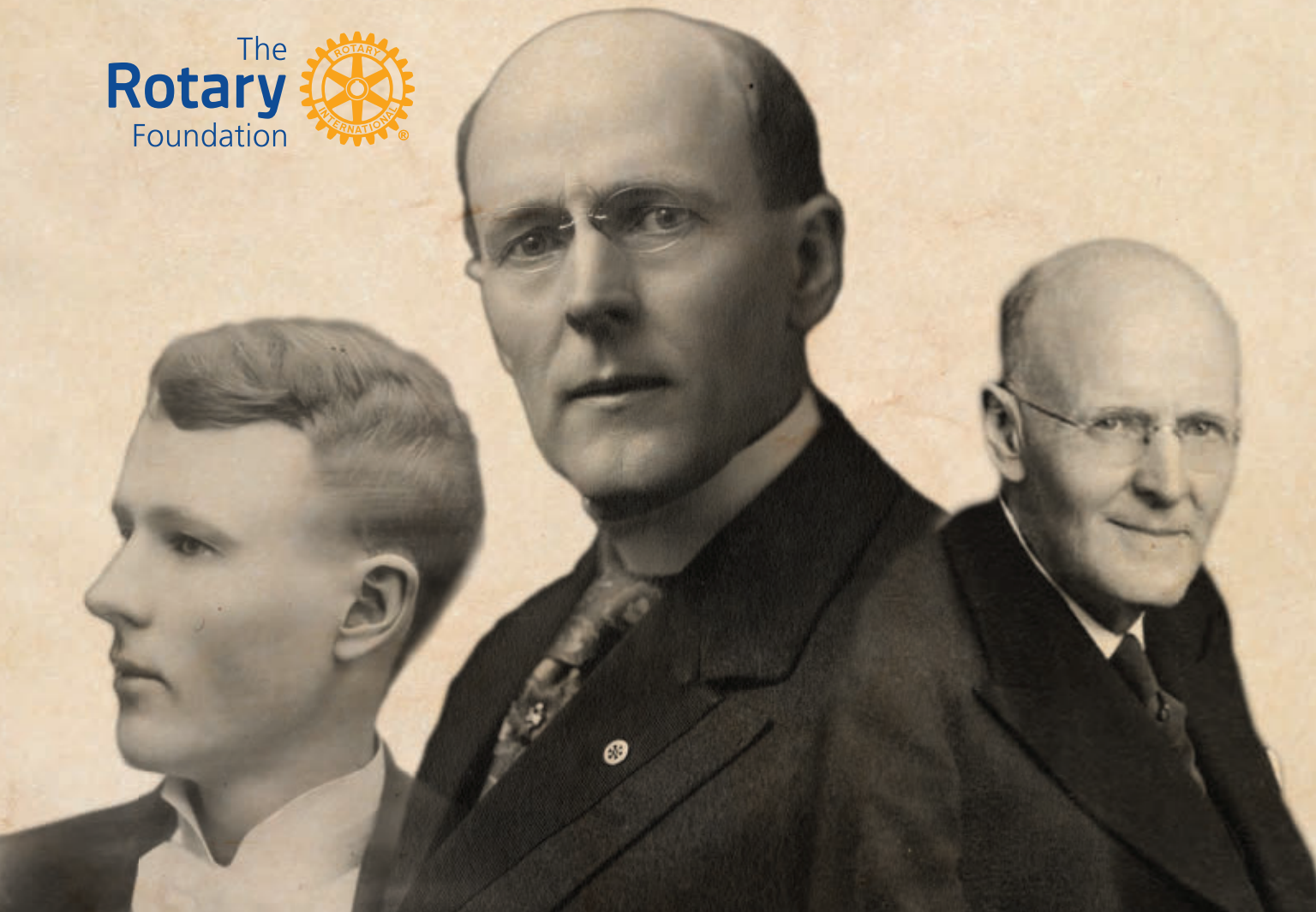


Health worker Melvina Tanze (right) checks on Nafisa Abubakar and her child, Halima Ode, during a home outreach visit in Nasarawa, Nigeria.

PROGRAMS OF SCALE

A labor of love

Supported by a Rotary Programs of Scale award, an initiative in Nigeria seeks to remedy the country's high instances of maternal death

BY DIANA SCHOBERG

Photography by Maryam Turaki

On the outskirts of Abuja, beneath a blistering November sun, a pregnant woman, leaning on the arm of her friend, shuffles across a courtyard and disappears into a brick shed. Moments later, from within the shed, come shouts of "Push! Push!" A few more minutes pass and the pair reemerge, only this time the woman is seated in a wheelchair pushed by the friend. Another woman walks alongside them carrying a newborn baby.

The woman in the wheelchair is in distress. From across the courtyard, a nurse runs toward her. "Why didn't you come to the health facility to deliver the baby?" the nurse laments while checking the woman's blood pressure. Other health workers cluster round. "She has lost a lot of blood," cries the nurse. "We don't want her to die here."

Their ministrations are futile. The woman slumps in the wheelchair. The nurse looks up and delivers a belated admonishment. "The safest way is to deliver in the hospital," she says. "You see what has happened to this woman? We have lost her. We have lost her!"

A second of mournful silence passes, and then from every corner of the courtyard — from the scores of people seated beneath blue tarps to the dozen or so clustered within the shadow of a solitary tree — comes a great wave of applause. The performance has been a great success.

That is exactly what this scene in the courtyard of the Kuchingoro Primary Health Care Centre has been: a performance, staged for the benefit of the nearly 200 people who have gathered this morning outside Nigeria's capital city of Abuja. The nurse is no actor but Victoria Okwute, the health center's chief nursing officer, and the occasion is a Rotary-supported workshop organized to address the shockingly high numbers of deaths that accompany childbirth in Nigeria.

No country has greater instances of maternal death than Nigeria. In 2020, 82,000 pregnant women and new mothers died there, nearly four times the maternal fatalities in India, where the second-most deaths occur.

One contributing factor? Sixty percent of births in Nigeria take place outside of a health center or hospital, meaning mothers and expectant mothers are far more vulnerable if complications arise. And they so often do: The top causes of maternal deaths include postpartum hemorrhage, obstructed labor, and eclampsia, when seizures develop from a complication that can cause high blood pressure and organ damage. "Most people view [the deaths] as a punishment from the gods or some kind of witchcraft," says midwife Ashezi David Alu. "But it's just a pure act of negligence because of poor management of those complications."

Now a $2 million Programs of Scale grant from The Rotary Foundation is addressing this problem head on. Its goal is to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality by 25 percent in target areas at the end of the three-year program. Known as Together for Healthy Families in Nigeria, the initiative is sponsored by Rotary District 1860 (Germany) in partnership with Districts 9110, 9125, 9141, and 9142 (Nigeria), as well as the Rotary Action Group for Reproductive, Maternal, and Child Health.

Unfolding in targeted areas within three Nigerian states and the Federal Capital Territory, the initiative builds on previous work by Rotary members in the country. It's hoped that, once the program demonstrates its effectiveness, it will be replicated across Nigeria and elsewhere. Critically, Rotary members are partnering with federal and state agencies in implementing the program to ensure the intervention and its benefits last far longer than the three years of the grant cycle.

That's part of the added value that Rotary brings to the initiative: Because its members live in the country, they have a long-term commitment to seeing that fewer mothers and babies die. "This project is going to birth more projects," insists Toyosi Adebambo, the program's manager.

Adebambo previously spent 16 years at USAID and its implementing partners in roles ranging from monitoring and evaluation, administration and human resources, to project management. He joined Rotaract in 2004 while he was a statistics major in college and later became a member of the Rotary E-Club of One Nigeria. When he heard about the Programs of Scale grant, he applied to work on the initiative. "When you start looking at what it will look like in 10, 20 years, you want to be there to make sure it actually works out," he says. "Nobody is going to do it better than a Rotarian."

Later that day, after the courtyard skit, an educational presentation, and a passionate speech from a venerated local leader, Faith Gideon leaves the Kuchingoro health center wearing a blue "Together for Healthy Families" apron. A community health worker, Gideon proceeds along a series of red dirt roads before arriving at the home of Theresa Andrew.

Seated across from Andrew, who is

Victoria Okwute (left) performs in a skit about the importance of giving birth at a health facility.

At the Rotary-supported workshop, health workers explain signs of maternal distress.

From left: Faith Gideon and Judith Anyah visit a pregnant Theresa Andrew; Gideon has been a health worker since 2013.

five months pregnant with her first child, Gideon encourages the expectant mother to visit the clinic at the first sign of trouble. "If you have any problems," she says, "if there is anything you don't understand, if the baby is not kicking, anything at all."

Gideon goes on to talk about the dangers of malaria for pregnant women and gives Andrew a mosquito net. She also presents her with a birthing kit, which contains a bedcover, soap, umbilical cord tie, latex gloves, razor blade, and gauze. One of the reasons women give for not delivering at a clinic is the perception that it costs more, in part because they are often required to bring their own supplies.

Gideon makes this walk along the community's red dirt roads three times a week to visit with pregnant women and new mothers. She's one of 84 community health workers who, over two days last July, received training through the Rotary-supported initiative. The health workers were already engaged in primary health care in their communities, and this new round of training helped increase their knowledge about maternal and child health. Top participants at these trainings will become trainers themselves, helping to further expand the program.

The health workers learned about topics including basic prenatal and postnatal care, pregnancy complications, clinic referrals, home birth risks, and modern family planning methods. They learned how to educate expectant and new mothers on such topics as prenatal nutrition, breastfeeding, childhood immunizations, and when to introduce solid foods.

Program organizers originally planned for these outreach visits to occur three times each quarter; they quickly pivoted once they realized their effectiveness. Now the health workers make the rounds three times each week — which means that, in its first three months, the initiative surpassed its three-year goal for number of visits. That frequency helps make the health workers familiar and trusted faces in their communities. "When we get to people's homes, we relate to them, we talk to them," Gideon says. "It makes them feel comfortable and encourages them to come to the health center."

Program organizers originally planned for these outreach visits to occur three times each quarter; they quickly pivoted once they realized their effectiveness.

Gideon grew up in this community and has been a health worker since 2013. She's seen her share of women who have chosen to deliver at home, as well as the unfortunate consequences that follow when complications arise and women arrive at the health facility too late. But she's also seen evidence of this new program's immediate impact. "As we keep educating women, they see the reason to come to the health center — and more of them have been coming."

And all of this is because of a chance meeting in a California hotel 30 years ago.

In March 1994, at the Anaheim Hilton and Towers, Emmanuel Adedolapo Lufadeju and Robert Zinser struck up a conversation. The two men were district governors-elect, and they had traveled to California for Rotary's annual International Assembly. Lufadeju, now a member of the Rotary Club of Ibadan-Jericho Metro, Nigeria, described a visit he'd recently made to a hospital maternity ward in Nigeria; Zinser, a member of the Rotary Club of Ludwigshafen-Rheinschanze, Germany, listened intently. That conversation sparked a 30-year partnership between Nigerian and German Rotary members who worked to improve maternal and child health and birthed the Rotary Action Group for Re-

Emmanuel Adedolapo Lufadeju began working with German Rotarians on maternal health efforts in 1994.

productive, Maternal, and Child Health, culminating in the recent $2 million Programs of Scale grant.

Along the way, Rotary members began to focus on collecting data on maternal deaths to uncover quality of care issues and help determine which interventions made the most sense. Their surveillance work became integrated into the Nigerian health system. The Rotary project trained medical officers to collect and review the data, which includes information on when, where, and why women and babies die. Rotary members supported government officials in introducing a bill, passed by the Nigerian Parliament in 2021, that required the accurate reporting of maternal deaths. Since the majority of women in the country give birth outside of medical facilities, no records had previously been kept on the cause of their deaths.

The Together for Healthy Families in Nigeria initiative is looking at compliance rates for this reporting, focusing on facilities in three states and the Federal Capital Territory where the program was initiated. In the first quarter of 2023, only 8 percent of facilities were properly reporting their data. The team held a flurry of meetings and calls with government leaders, and by the end of the fourth quarter, they had increased that rate to 90 percent. Rotary members continue to advocate with government officials to keep records officers in their positions once they're trained and to train backstops who can keep the data consistent.

> "The king and chief of each place have started talking about *how* to help us. It's not really a question anymore about *if* they'll help us."

To verify the figures' accuracy, program team members compare data from the national data collection platform, state systems, and the health facility register, which logs client intakes and referrals. "The next stage is to relate this data to quality of care and have discussions with ministers of health in various locations about what we're finding and what they will do to rectify any issues," Lufadeju says. "Luckily we have good relationships."

Lufadeju, a Rotary member since 1980, possesses an air of quiet authority. Most everyone, from the team working on the Programs of Scale initiative to government officials, calls him "Prof" in recognition of his many years as a professor of agriculture who worked with the country's smallholder farmers. In August 2023, Lufadeju was appointed chair of a subcommittee

Rotary members (from left) Toyosi Adebambo and Emmanuel Adedolapo Lufadeju at the palace of a traditional leader in Ekiti state.

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF OLUBUNMI AFOLABI

on safe motherhood within the Nigerian health agency, and his presence threw a spotlight on the important role that Rotary is playing in maternal and child health. "When you get recognized like that," says Lufadeju, "it's an indication you are doing something right." That new assignment helped open doors for Rotary members to advocate for additional resources. "When I ask for a meeting [with federal health officials], they don't say no," Lufadeju says. "They cannot tell me they don't have time, because I am a principal stakeholder. I am part and parcel of their system."

At the National Primary Health Care Development Agency in Abuja, Lufadeju warmly greets Chris Elemuwa, the agency's director of social mobilization and community development. Lufadeju is here to petition the agency to absorb responsibility for the community dialogues and the maternal and child death data. Part of the Rotary program team's strategy is not merely to execute the interventions over the next three years, but to convince the government to take them on long term.

Lufadeju had for years tried to make inroads at the agency, which supports community health workers throughout the country. Finally, as the Programs of Scale grant was coming together, he emailed Elemuwa and requested a meeting. "We struck a real brotherhood," says Lufadeju. "Everything we're doing would not be possible without him."

"Rotary played a fantastic role when they supported us with polio eradication," says Elemuwa, who worked on polio surveillance early in his career. Now, he's excited for the opportunity to work with Rotary on maternal and child health, and he has attended some of the program's community dialogues and training sessions. "It's not easy to build a program the community embraces," he says. "They're doing a great job."

Two days after the meeting between Lufadeju and Elemuwa, the program team engages in another advocacy visit, this time with the Ministry of Health in Nasarawa, a predominantly agricultural state southeast of Abuja. Along one side of a long conference table sit six directors within the ministry, people who oversee everything from medicine and reproductive health to — and this is key — finance and planning. On the other side of the table sits the Rotary program team.

After a few jokes and an exchange of complimentary speeches, the two teams get down to business. The state has started using some of its staff to supplement the program's home outreach visits, and government officials are interested in a midterm assessment to see which interventions are supported by data. They also want to know what they should be doing differently right now in communities outside of the program locations. The finance director is already looking to make sure pieces are in place for when the Rotary program is complete. "We want them to take it over, and the only way they can take it over is to embed it in the state program and budget for it," Lufadeju explains.

The Rotary program team is doing similar advocacy work on the community level, working with local religious, traditional, youth, and business leaders and asking them what they'd like to see. And because Rotary members are now executing the leaders' objectives, they have full buy-in. "The king and chief of each place have started talking about *how* to help us," recalls Adebambo, the program manager. "It's not really a question anymore about *if* they'll help us."

Home outreach visits supported by the program encourage families to visit health facilities.

A tour of the Wamba Road Primary Health Centre in Akwanga, Nasarawa state, shows the Programs of Scale initiative at work, while also demonstrating the effectiveness of the community visits. Outside the clinic, women and children have gathered for an immunization event. Inside, where they are serenaded by a baby's wail, two expectant mothers sit in a small waiting room. As part of the program, pregnant women have been assigned to cohorts depending on their due dates, and the members of those groups come together to the clinic for each of their seven prenatal visits.

Research backs this kind of group approach to prenatal care. It creates a sense of social camaraderie among the women, further reinforcing the necessity to keep up with their prenatal visits and allowing time for peer discussion. Surprisingly, even as the number of women coming to the clinic increases, the ability to accomplish a number of tasks collectively

decreases the workload for the clinic staff.

When the program started, this center received about 75 prenatal visits per month. In the first six months of the program's implementation, the number increased to about 185. The community outreach portion of the program started in June, and after that, visits skyrocketed to about 570 per month. Not all of the women who come to the prenatal clinics are giving birth at the facilities, but still, those rates are climbing, jumping in three months from 18 percent of prenatal attendees to 66 percent. Postnatal care, including immunizations, leaped from 2 percent of attendees to 70 percent. "The impact is huge," Adebambo says. "That is the fun part of it."

Charity James and Sabina Gyado, nurses who help staff the clinic, pull out folders containing the curriculum for each of the seven visits, with topics such as family planning, hemorrhaging, preterm delivery, and infant care. There are facilitator notes as well as simple illustrations that help emphasize certain points for the women who attend. One illustration shows a picture of a baby with an irritated umbilical cord. "We emphasize that if you see a hot, red umbilical cord, come to the hospital," James says. "If it's your neighbor, get them there."

In the clinic's labor room, a lightbulb protrudes from the wall above a counter near one of the hospital beds. The device, provided as part of Together for Healthy Families in Nigeria, keeps babies warm, like an incubator, as they are cleaned up and their mothers recover. "You don't see this at other primary health centers in Nasarawa state," says Ashezi David Alu, who works for the Rotary program as the chief midwife for the state. Next to the counter is a cabinet with medical supplies — such as vitamin A, eye ointment, vitamin K, and other essentials — that was stocked by the program.

The Nigerian government has traditionally underbudgeted for the health sector, leading to poor infrastructure and a lack of skilled providers and supplies. Poor quality care, rather than lack of access to a health clinic, contributes most greatly to maternal and newborn deaths worldwide, research finds. Quality health care could avert half of maternal deaths and 58 percent of newborn deaths in Nigeria, according to a 2023 progress report on the topic by several United Nations agencies.

Addressing this gap, the Programs of Scale-backed initiative provides trainings for health workers in emergency obstetrics and neonatal care. During the emergency care trainings, doctors, midwives, nurses, and paramedics at both primary and secondary facilities learn skills, such as newborn resuscitation and the management of vaginal bleeding, that can help when complications arise. Program organizers have since heard anecdotes of health workers using their new skills to resuscitate babies with asphyxia, or lack of oxygen, at birth.

In the third quarter of 2023 alone, 210 health workers across the three states and the capital territory covered by the initiative received this training. Now, Alu and other midwives hired by the program conduct monitoring visits to ensure staff members are employing the best practices they learned and collaborate on an action plan in cases where they aren't.

Health workers also had training in respectful maternity care, which emphasizes the rights of women, children, and their families, allowing women to enjoy their personal and cultural birthing preferences while still receiving quality care. In addition, health workers were also counseled on how to respond in emotionally charged situations. "Health workers are always at the front line of this," Adebambo says. "We train them on how to react and respond to people."

An entirely different scene is unfolding outside the nearby Gwanje Primary Health Centre, where several hundred people have gathered, congregating in the shade: teens, expectant mothers, and women with their children under striped tents in the middle; men under a mango tree to the women's left; and some boys hanging out under the support for a water reservoir to their right. Fields of maize wave beyond

Poor quality care, rather than lack of access to a health clinic, contributes most greatly to maternal and newborn deaths worldwide.

Charity James (left) and Ashezi David Alu examine supplies provided through the program.

the cement walls of the compound.

The need to include both women and men becomes apparent when the topic of family planning comes up. The crowd laughs when a health worker takes a wooden penis model out of a bucket marked "demonstration." The boys, who until this time had been lounging around, snap to attention, eyes wide, as they watch her demonstrate how to use a male condom. Later, during a Q&A session, a woman with six children says she'd like to try family planning, but her husband refuses to allow her. "Is he here?" asks the facilitator. "Yes, he's here. Right there!" she points. Once again, the crowd erupts with laughter. The facilitator declines to give a solid answer, saying this is a conversation to be had at the family level.

Researchers have identified four tenets that lead to a risk of increased maternal deaths: becoming pregnant too frequently or when you are too young, too old, or too close to your last pregnancy. Contraception addresses all four. "What we do in family planning is allow the woman some space to get her energy back, allow some space so that the children at home can be taken care of well," Alu says, "so that subsequent pregnancies will be safe for her."

Nigeria's national goal is for 27 percent of the country's women of childbearing age to use modern contraception methods, but right now only 14 percent of women do so. Program organizers credit the unmet contraceptive need to weak demand and shortages of trained providers, information about options, and funding for procurement. "We enlighten people to know the difference between child spacing and not giving birth at all," Alu says.

As the clinic's community dialogue winds up, the sound of drums thumping and horns blazing permeates the air. Dancers wearing seedpod anklets stomp and shake to the beat. The crowd draws in closer to watch and join in, and as they do, the ring of dancers grows wider and pulses with energy. Unable to resist, Lufadeju sheds his professorial demeanor and enters the throng, one more member of Rotary contributing to this animated emblem of the circle of life. ■

Find out more about applying for a Programs of Scale grant on page 54.

Ashezi David Alu speaks at a community dialogue at the Gwanje Primary Health Centre.

The $2 million Programs of Scale grant has a goal of reducing maternal and neonatal mortality by 25 percent in its target areas at the end of the three-year initiative.


HOT

As temperatures rise, cities transform heat islands with tree cover, “cool pavement,” and other adaptations

SPOTS

By Kate Silver

Photography by Jordan Vonderhaar

It's noon in mid-August and the Houston heat is creeping into triple digits. Again. Coupled with the humidity of a steam bath, it's enough to make eyeglasses fog, airways constrict, and skin sizzle in the direct sun.

All across town the heat — extreme even by Texas standards — has been unbearable for most of the summer. But in some parts of the city, it's even worse. The sprawling urban core, crosshatched by massive freeways, punctuated with skyscrapers, and roaring with never-ceasing construction, suffers from something called the urban heat island effect. All of that concrete, pavement, steel, and glass — everything that makes a city a city — absorbs the sun's heat throughout the day and then radiates it back into the air. In these hottest "islands," temperatures can be 15 to 20 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than the grassy, leafy suburbs. That's the difference between a sweltering 105 in a mall parking lot and a relatively pleasant 85 degrees on a tree-lined street elsewhere in the same metro area.

In Ed Pettitt's neighborhood, the Third Ward, the heat island effect is palpable. Pettitt, who is president of the Rotary Club of Houston Skyline, could close his eyes and tell you where he is in the neighborhood based on temperature. Where developers recently knocked down a bunch of old trees, it's scorching. "We're being cooked," he says, gesturing to the result of the construction: a series of new but soulless bright white and gray, three-story town houses that he describes as "filing cabinets." A couple of blocks away, dead tree branches and roots pepper another lot being cleared for development, the name of the street — Live Oak Street — an ironic punchline. The road is a stark contrast to the surrounding streets, where Pettitt and his longtime neighbors live in compact, older bungalows and narrow shotgun-style homes shaded by massive oak trees.

Among U.S. cities, Houston has the fourth most intense urban heat island effect after New Orleans; Newark, New Jersey; and New York City, according to Climate Central, an independent research group. In a troubling dimension to the problem, the differences within cities, from hot to really hot, correlate strongly to income and race, with low-income communities of color often located in areas of cities with a lack of parks and an abundance of dense housing and polluting industries.

Pettitt, a graduate research assistant at the Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice at Texas Southern University, has been educating people about heat islands and, through Rotary, working to try to bring down the temperature. "Houston's heat problem is everyone's problem," says Pettitt, who is tall and sturdy with big brown eyes and a baby face. "By addressing urban heat islands, we're taking a crucial step toward a cooler and more equitable future for our city."

Ed Pettitt, president of the Rotary Club of Houston Skyline and a doctoral student in urban planning and environmental policy, is raising awareness and, through Rotary, working to address heat islands.

Last year shattered records: It was by far the planet’s hottest since modern data collection began in the mid-1800s — and probably the hottest in more than 100,000 years, judging by tree rings and ice core samples. The biggest factor driving up temperatures is the buildup of heat-trapping gases released by burning fossil fuels.

While many people dismiss heat as a nuisance, it’s the leading cause of weather-related deaths in the United States, according to the National Weather Service. High temperatures can trigger heat exhaustion and heatstroke. They can contribute to heart attacks and strokes and worsen other health conditions.

As temperatures rise, people living in urban areas especially feel the effects, says Victoria Ludwig, a climate specialist with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Community Revitalization. In the U.S., urban dwellers are more than 80 percent of the population. “A lot of people don’t think they’re at risk,” says Ludwig. “It’s known as the silent killer because people don’t realize you can die from it. And it’s actually not that hard, to be blunt.”

In urban heat islands, those risks intersect with other vulnerabilities, especially in low-income areas. People may not be able to afford air conditioning or higher electric bills. If they’re renters, their landlords may not be required to provide relief from the heat, or if they have asthma, poor air quality can trigger attacks and heat can exacerbate symptoms.

The heat has had health effects for Trinity Pasco-Stardust, a resident of Houston’s Third Ward for over 10 years. She has multiple sclerosis, and the heat worsens her symptoms, even causing her to have seizures. She says she’s never felt heat like the summer

of 2023. "This summer has been intense," she says. In July and August, the long-lasting triple-digit heat forced her to make choices every day that altered her plans. "I cannot go out," she says.

For Pasco-Stardust, learning that she lives in an urban heat island — on top of life's other challenges and injustices — was crushing. She says that much of her neighborhood is a food desert. There are no banks she can easily get to. And gentrification has driven up prices, making it hard to find a barber she can afford for herself and her three kids. "I always feel like we're fighting to get something," she says.

More and more cities are grappling with heat as an environmental justice issue, focusing efforts to lessen its effects in low-income communities of color. Cities around the world and in the U.S., like Phoenix, have even appointed chief heat officers. "We have mapped out our entire city, including heat islands, and it helps us make smart public infrastructure decisions," explains Kate Gallego, the Phoenix mayor.

To cool the scalding streets, Phoenix has undertaken the country's largest "cool pavement" program, which includes covering more than 100 miles of city streets in a light-colored sealant that reflects more sunlight and absorbs less heat, keeping surfaces 10 to 12 degrees cooler. Gallego says the city is also planting more trees, especially in lower-income neighborhoods and in areas with high foot traffic, such as around schools and libraries. Other strategies include increasing tree cover and installing reflective sealants on rooftops.

Phoenix broke local heat records when temperatures topped 110 degrees for 31 days straight last year. Yet Gallego is upbeat about the future of heat-reducing efforts. "One of the great political wins of this summer is that it's become clear that heat is an American issue felt in every part of our country," she says. "I believe that will give us more momentum to get national solutions." And in Houston, for decades a center of the oil and gas industry, residents, the city government, and Rotary members are taking steps to address heat and climate resiliency.

Houston's Third Ward is where Beyoncé grew up, and George Floyd, whose 2020 murder in police custody in Minneapolis sparked a social justice movement. It's where, in the 1960s, a group of Black college students became a part of the Civil Rights Movement when they protested segregation at a lunch counter. It's home to Emancipation Park, which formerly enslaved people purchased more than 150 years ago to celebrate their freedom, and also to Cuney Homes, Houston's oldest public housing project.

Southeast of downtown, the Third Ward is alternately described as culturally rich and marginalized,

IN A TROUBLING DIMENSION TO THE PROBLEM, THE DIFFERENCES WITHIN CITIES, FROM HOT TO REALLY HOT, CORRELATE STRONGLY TO INCOME AND RACE.

where both redlining (in the past) and gentrification (now) are stark realities. Pettitt moved to the area 13 years ago after returning to the U.S. from Botswana, where he served in the Peace Corps. In the Third Ward, he could be close to his job at the time as a senior project coordinator with the Baylor College of Medicine International Pediatric AIDS Initiative at Texas Children's Hospital. He loved the neighborhood. "People actually sat on their front porches and spoke to each other and knew their neighbors and waved to each other and barbecued outside in the evenings," he says.

But he also saw his neighbors' struggles. About one-third of families live below the federal poverty level, and the past redlining by the federal government that prevented homeownership by Black Americans makes the neighborhood more vulnerable to a variety of risks. The prevalence of health conditions such as diabetes, asthma, neck problems, and hypertension is higher than the national average. Access to transportation is limited. Many people face the daily decision of buying food or paying for other things they need. On top of that, they don't have easy access to amenities taken for granted in wealthier neighborhoods, like sprawling shaded parks or healthy food.

His first year living there, Pettitt enrolled in a graduate program at the University of Texas School of Public Health. "I realized that many of the public health challenges I saw were tied to inequities in the built and natural environments, such as limited access for residents to the city's trails and greenways network," he says. In time, he purchased a home in the neighborhood and got more involved in community work. He bought an electric scooter and became a frequent user of the nearby Columbia Tap Trail, a former railroad route repurposed as a hike/bike trail in 2009.

It was around 2020 when Pettitt started paying close attention to the idea of heat islands. That was the year that a massive federal heat-mapping project led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration came to Houston. The citizen-science project, which has mapped dozens of U.S. cities, sent

Houston's Discovery Green is an oasis of cool. Two massive parking lots were transformed into a lush, 12-acre urban park, complete with shade trees, a water park, a performance space, and a pond.

HOUSTON, FOR DECADES A CENTER OF THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY, IS TAKING STEPS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE RESILIENCY.

84 local volunteers across 320 square miles on a hot August day to record temperatures. An area near the southwest neighborhood of Gulfton, which is dominated by large apartment complexes and sometimes called the Ellis Island of Houston for its diverse immigrant population, hit 103.3 degrees, while a spot in Channelview, a modest suburb of single-family homes and numerous waterways, was a more manageable 86.2 — a staggering 17-degree difference.

Pettitt noticed that temperatures in his own neighborhood seemed to depend on the amount of shade and vegetation versus concrete. He decided to pursue his PhD in urban planning and environmental policy, studying the effects of heat, green space, and energy equity issues.

When the Rotary International Convention came to Houston in June 2022, in the thick of summer, Pettitt and other local Rotary members saw an opportunity to share their work on the environment and heat. They offered attendees the opportunity to offset their carbon emissions from travel by donating money toward tree planting in an especially hot area of Houston's Columbia Tap Trail. They spoke to local TV reporters. And Pettitt spearheaded the design of a 3D heat model of Houston, constructed by nonprofit makerspace TXRX Labs and funded by Rotary clubs in District 5890 and the convention's Host Organization Committee. Using overhead projection, colored lights were cast on 68 buildings and their surroundings, making it easy to distinguish hot spots (on top of and in between buildings) from cooler areas (along waterways and green space). "Our mission extends beyond Houston's borders," Pettitt says. "We hope to encourage Rotary clubs everywhere to embrace environmental initiatives and prioritize the health of their communities."

Houston's Green Building Resource Center is tucked in a corner of the Houston Permitting Center, where builders and businesses must go for licenses and permits. If most of the first floor feels like an orderly, business-as-usual government building — eerily quiet except for the white noise of hushed conversations and heels clicking on tiled floors — the resource cen-

Want to tackle the urban heat island effect in your Rotary district? Ed Pettitt of the Rotary Club of Houston Skyline created an online toolkit with insights and ideas. It's available at **bit.ly/heat_islands_toolkit.**

Left: The Gulfton neighborhood, which a 2020 study found was 17 degrees hotter than other parts of Houston.
Center: Pettitt spearheaded the design of a 3D heat model of Houston.
Below: Steve Stelzer, program director at the Green Building Resource Center.

ter feels like an interactive children's museum, overflowing with attention-grabbing displays on water-efficient toilets and urinals, recycling facts, photos of low-water plants and drought-resistant trees, and options for design elements like recycled flooring and permeable pavers. "It's like the Disneyland of innovative building technologies," Pettitt says with a smile.

Although the center opened in 2009, Program Director Steve Stelzer says for years no one paid much attention to its work. Then, in 2017, Hurricane Harvey rolled into Houston and unleashed the worst flooding in the city's history, with some parts of town deluged by more than 2 feet of rain in two days. It was the third major flood in three years, says Stelzer, and the mayor made clear that the denial needed to stop.

He's referring to Mayor Sylvester Turner, who became a fierce advocate for climate action during his eight years in office, which concluded early this year. Turner launched climate resiliency plans spotlighting the need for Houston to address heat islands, including through tree planting, with a goal of 4.6 million new native trees by 2030, prioritizing underserved neighborhoods. The plans emphasize the need to protect vulnerable communities and call for light-colored and green roofs, lighter-colored pavement, and more vegetation, for starters.

Last July, the Green Building Resource Center added a new display: It's now the permanent home for the heat island model that debuted at the Rotary Convention. The model is surrounded by signs about the causes of hot spots: areas with homogeneous building design, wide parking surfaces, little vegetation, and roads and highways.

And there are suggestions on how to establish cool corridors. "This is exactly what I want Rotary to do," Pettitt says. He envisions the Columbia Tap Trail as a linear park, shaded by trees and structures for its entire 4 miles. "There's elderly folks right now that get on that trail to get to the corner store or the laundromat and it's just blazing hot, but it has great potential, if done right, to be a cool corridor that people can actually get to and recreate along and use as a transport corridor that's cooler on their bikes, on their scooters, their wheelchair, or pushing their walker."

If the idea sounds relatively simple, it's not. Of the 18 trees Rotary clubs planted on the trail in 2022 for the convention, about half have died from the heat and drought. Pettitt is in talks with an arborist to get advice on drought-resistant trees and irrigation systems. He's also consulting with the tree specialist about one of his club's current projects: helping to restore the vegetation and trees of the Texas AIDS Me-

morial Garden elsewhere on the Columbia Tap Trail. The garden was established along what was then an abandoned railroad trail by community resident R. Michael Lee in the late 1980s to honor friends lost to AIDS. He created a bioswale, a channel that collects rainwater, and planted bald cypress trees, flower beds, and lush greenery.

Over the years, the oasis has fallen victim to development. The city bulldozed through it to pour concrete for the hiking and biking trail. "I woke up and there were bulldozers coming through," says Lee. "Right through the rose garden." Last summer, a utility provider cut down several of the majestic, towering bald cypress trees that Lee had planted almost 40 years ago.

Determined to help preserve the remaining green space and the shade that it offers, Pettitt offered to help. Because of the mature growth, the garden is the only comfortable section of the trail on a hot day, he says. Lee, who has been caring for the garden mostly by himself since he planted it, was relieved by the offer. "I'm the only person, until Ed, who tried to protect it," he says. "There was no other protection. That was it."

Last summer, when strolling around his neighborhood, Pettitt saw something that stopped him in his tracks. Two new houses were being constructed on a block not far from his home. But this time, work crews weren't cutting trees down. They were saving them: three trees, to be exact — a sweet gum, a pecan, and a towering oak. "I was so shocked," says Pettitt.

The architect designing the homes, Donna Kacmar, is known for her focus on the environment and use of sustainable materials. Still, she says the decision to save vegetation ultimately falls to the property owner, in this case, a woman who grew up on the site. "She loves the trees. She had an arborist take care of them for decades," Kacmar says. "They're huge and beautiful."

Preserving them is no small feat. Kacmar, also a professor at University of Houston's Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design, says construction plans have changed slightly to avoid harming the tree roots. She worked with the city to get permission to reduce the sidewalk width and use gravel instead of concrete near one of the trees. It's an effort she wishes more home developers would make. "Trees help everybody. They keep the house cooler. They're beautiful to look at. They keep the street cooler," she says.

In addition to advocating for trees, Kacmar frequently consults with clients on incorporating environmentally responsible elements into their home designs, like light-colored roofs and even the orientation of the home to reduce heat from the sun. She's an advocate for small-house design and wrote a book on it called *Big Little House: Small Houses Designed by Architects.* And she's a fan of covered exterior space, like screened porches, because they allow people to enjoy a larger home without the extra energy demands. "Start with the low-technology kinds of decisions first," she says. "I would do all of those things before I would add solar panels or anything fancy."

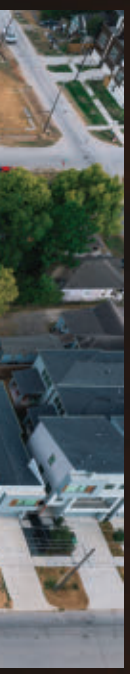
Above: Building lots where trees have been cleared for new home development in Houston's Third Ward.
Right: Architect Donna Kacmar is designing sustainably built homes in Houston.

Everywhere you look in Houston, some kind of effort aimed at sustainability is taking shape. To use former Mayor Turner's words, the so-called energy capital of the world is taking steps to become the "energy transition capital of the world."

Discovery Green, which opened in 2008, is an early success story: Two massive parking lots were transformed into a lush, 12-acre urban park, complete with shade trees, a water park, a performance space, and a pond. About a mile away is Post Houston, a new, gargantuan post office-turned-food hall/office space/entertainment venue with a 5-acre rooftop park and organic farm. Greentown Labs, which says it is the largest climate tech startup incubator in North America, set up shop in Houston in 2021. Renewable energy now powers all municipal buildings. And, in a car-centric town, bike lanes now cover more than 400 miles.

To the benefit of his Third Ward community, Pettitt is driven to be a part of these changes, and he hopes to inspire other Rotary clubs to do the same. "To fellow Rotary clubs, our message is clear: Planting trees is not just about shade," he says. "It's about creating a more equitable and sustainable future for all." ■

Visit **rotary.org/our-causes** to learn more about Rotary's work to protect the environment and to get involved.



“TREES HELP EVERYBODY. THEY KEEP THE HOUSE COOLER. THEY’RE BEAUTIFUL TO LOOK AT. THEY KEEP THE STREET COOLER.”

CONVENTION Q&A

Part *of the* movement

Singapore entrepreneur Claire Chiang reflects on a life — and business — of purpose

It was close to midnight, Singapore time. Claire Chiang exuded energy and grace, despite the fact that she had just returned home after spending 68 days on the road, visiting her businesses in countries from China and the United Arab Emirates to the Maldives and Japan. ¶ A charter member of the Rotary Club of Suntec City, Chiang is known as an entrepreneur, social activist, author, and champion for women's issues and sustainability challenges. She and her husband, Ho Kwon Ping, founded Banyan Group, a global developer and operator of 76 resorts, hotels, and spas in 23 countries. ¶ For Banyan Group, Chiang is executive director of Banyan Gallery and chairs China business development, global learning and development, and the Banyan Global Foundation. She holds directorships with the Mandai Nature Fund and Mandai Park Holdings and is an advisory committee member for the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She is chair of the Singapore Book Council and the Shirin Fozdar Program at Singapore Management University. Her book, *Stepping Out: The Making of Chinese Entrepreneurs,* tells the stories of early Chinese immigrants to Singapore, and it was made into an award-winning TV series. ¶ Chiang has accepted an invitation to speak at the Rotary International Convention in Singapore, to be held May 25-29. *Rotary* magazine caught up with her over a video call to learn more about her story and what makes Singapore special. →

You are the daughter of Chinese immigrants to Singapore. How much did your grandmother and mother shape your life?

I feel privileged to have grown up with strong women. My paternal grandmother migrated from China's Hainan Island to Malaysia in the late 19th century to join her husband as a rubber tapper collecting latex from rubber trees at plantations. After her husband died, she followed her son, my father, to Singapore. Like millions of immigrants, they left their homeland in search of better opportunities. Singapore was that beacon of hope and a new beginning. If you saw my grandmother's blistered hands, you would think she was a woman without education, but she managed the world with that pair of capable hands. Growing up, I shared a room with my grandmother and became very close to her. She taught me a lot about life. I still remember her advice about dating: You need to control your own life first. And then you choose the person you love and build a life together. In that era, her ideas were considered progressive.

In the 1950s, Singapore was merely a deepwater port with few resources. It had to import most of its food, water, and energy. As a child, I used to queue for water, which was rationed. My brothers and I would each carry a pail of water home for cooking. Our meals consisted mainly of rice and vegetables. Meat was a luxury reserved for special occasions. But we never felt poor or deprived. We learned that we needed to deliver our best to create value in life. This parental guidance and discipline propelled me to study hard and excel in school.

My mother was born in Malacca, Malaysia, and moved to Singapore in the late 1930s. She had to quit school to sell bread on the streets and later worked in a laundry. She met my father, who was a teacher by night and office clerk by day. My mother raised six of us children with a tight fist, stretching every dollar to provide us shelter and protection.

I was the only daughter. Though I was born a preemie, my mother never gave up on me. She kept me alive and strengthened me with goat's milk. I'm grateful that she was a tiger mom. In a culture where women were once considered, as a common expression said, "like the throwaway water from a bucket" because they would eventually be married off, she invested a lot of our family resources in me. She made me attend two schools in one day, a Chinese school to keep my traditional values and an English school to ensure my ticket to a good career. She encouraged me to play piano and take ballet and Chinese dance lessons. Because she lost her opportunity to receive a good education, she refused to let that happen to me. She saw education as a lifeline.

My mother suffered a stroke when she was only 47. Over the next 35 years, she lived with all sorts of medical hardships, including breast cancer and kidney failure. She never gave up. Her perseverance and resilience continue to inspire me.

In your public lectures, you talk about events that defined your life. Could you share a few?

The first turning point in my life was leaving my homeland and moving to Hong Kong. I received my bachelor's in sociology from the University of Singapore and secured a job teaching behavioral science to medical students at Hong Kong University while working on my master's there in industrial sociology. For about four years, we stayed on Lamma Island, where there were no vehicles and no roads. I lived the life of an islander, taking the ferry and a bus every day to go to the university. That two-and-a-half-hour journey exposed me to local people and their cultures.

For my thesis, I spent three months in a factory and came to know many female workers, some of them as young as 16. They had no formal education and were paid little. We held study groups, and I taught them to speak English. Through my friendships with them, I came to see the importance of sisterhood, collaboration, and mentorship.

My husband was trained in economics and worked as an editor for the *Far Eastern Economic Review.* Since he covered Asia, I traveled with him in the region. These travels enabled us to understand the geopolitical conditions, paving the way for our hospitality business later. In those days, we were students of development. We agonized over contradictions between capital and labor, between profits and justice, and equity between men and women. I think the dreams and the legacy of Lamma Island in Hong Kong were incorporated into the way we built and operate our business now.

How did you start your business?

That came about quite by accident. I call that my second turning point in life.

As a child, I vowed never to marry a businessman. So I married a journalist, and a poor journalist at that. He turned to business through no fault of mine. Soon afterward, I followed him and also became a businesswoman.

In 1987, we moved back home because my father-in-law, a diplomat and businessman in Singapore, had a stroke. So I abandoned my job and my studies. We didn't have a house of our own, and I longed to find a secluded place that we could call ours and spend quiet and relaxing weekends. That's why we flew to Phuket, Thailand, to look for a place to build a small getaway. We discovered a stretch of land that had been the site of an old tin mine. We loved the beautiful sunset over a blue lagoon and a Casuarina evergreen forest, but little did we know that the lagoon's color was actually due to pollution from the mine. That explained why nobody wanted that piece of land. But we were quite foolish. We didn't do our due diligence before we bought it.

And there's something that my husband and I both share — we never give up easily. We consulted with experts and rehabilitated what became Laguna Phuket. It took us two years and lots of effort and money. But we stayed the course and developed it into Laguna Phuket, an integrated resort. So leadership is really about experimentation and seizing opportunity; our initial ignorance led us to a journey of discovery that paid off, in that sense.

And your third turning point in life?

The third was an unfortunate one. In 1988, six months into my pregnancy with my third child, my water broke early. I was rushed to the hospital. The doctor did all he could, but my baby didn't make it. It was devastating. Why did this happen to me? I had this tremendous feeling that I had failed as a woman. I sank into a

Hear Claire Chiang speak at the Rotary International Convention, May 25-29 in Singapore. Register at **convention.rotary.org.**

severe depression and closed down. I literally was not able to speak to anyone. I went to a sign language school and began healing in a world of silence.

→ Claire Chiang and her husband, Ho Kwon Ping (center), pose with their extended family.

While trying to make sense of the loss, I volunteered at SOS or Samaritan of Singapore, a hotline that provides emotional support for individuals facing a crisis. I persuaded the counselors there that my pain might make me able to empathize with people looking for support. I staffed the hotline for four years. Hearing other women's stories, their personal struggles with trauma and domestic violence, helped me heal too. Gradually, I switched my mindset from one based on the question "Why me?" to "Why not me?" I was able to walk away from my imprisoned self and embrace the world once more. Though I continue to feel the pain today, I found a way of loosening its grip. I became more accepting of myself. This also marked the beginning of my journey on women's empowerment.

How do you use your business to help women?

My father-in-law, who used to be Singapore's ambassador to Thailand, introduced me to activist Shirin Fozdar. In the 1950s, she campaigned to end polygamy in Singapore and then moved to Thailand, where she strove to provide education for village girls and helped create jobs for women. When I met her, she was in her 80s. She asked me to buy two cushions, a type of traditional handicraft well known in Thailand. She said: "If you buy these two cushions, I can get one girl to go to school in the northern part of Thailand." I did a quick calculation: If I were to buy 2,000 cushions or if I could get a whole network of people to buy them, I could help girls in the whole village. That was when I began to see that business could be a force for change.

That encounter inspired me to start the Banyan Gallery, which is a marketing platform to curate work done by women in the rural sector. I can cut out the middlemen and go directly to the producers and give them their fair share of the revenue. I call the concept "communitarian capitalism." The gallery works with village cooperatives and not-for-profit marketing agents to create employment for artisans in communities around my businesses to help support local cultural heritage. We have supported 82 community suppliers worldwide and 127 communities big and small. And for this work, two cushions changed my life.

> I started off disparaging business, and my view changed when I saw the positive role it could play.

I started off as an academic, disparaging business, and my view changed in later years when I saw the positive role it could play. In recent years, I've noticed a shift in business discussions. The concept of stakeholder capitalism is gaining momentum over that of shareholder capitalism. It's not all about creating wealth. It's also about creating value for the community and co-creating shared prosperity.

How did you discover Rotary?

In high school, I was part of an Interact club and remember visiting community agencies to learn about what it means to do good and support our communities. Years later, in 2000, a friend invited me to join Rotary, but I was a bit reluctant at first because I always thought it was a club for rich men. He corrected me, saying that it is a club for businesspeople and anyone who wants to make a difference. Given my past connection with Rotary, I decided to give it a try with the idea that Rotary could be a platform to do good and to do well. So I became a charter member of the Rotary Club of Suntec City. Then, I served as our club president. I think Rotary has given me that sense of hope about a better world. It is a movement that pushes the envelope to create this betterment. That's where I felt the alignment and excitement. And I am honored to be part of the movement.

You've been invited to speak at the Rotary International Convention in Singapore. What do you hope visitors take away from Singapore?

We are a place where the influences of East and West, North and South are concentrated in a small island city-state. Our guests will enjoy our rich and diverse food and culture, but they'll also see Singapore's successful experiment in how people of different races and cultural backgrounds live and work together harmoniously. We continue to learn how to balance modernity and traditions to achieve a better way of living and working together. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF CLAIRE CHIANG

OUR CLUBS

VIRTUAL VISIT

Make some noise

Rotaract Club of Dhaka Orchid, Bangladesh

It started with a bit of small talk. Several members of the Rotaract Club of Dhaka Orchid in Bangladesh's capital city were telling fellow members about a rock concert they had attended a few days earlier. They were especially struck by the energy and enthusiasm of the younger music fans.

As the excitement spilled into that conversation back in January 2023, the club's charter president, Saddam Hossain Roni, got an idea. Not a fan of rock himself, he nevertheless saw the potential in having the club organize a concert of some of the top rock and metal bands in the country to boost Rotaract's profile, attract members, and raise funds for projects.

"I felt like this was huge," Roni recalls. "This generation of youth in Bangladesh is crazy about concerts and musical events. I felt that if we did something really big it would let people know about us and the activities we have been doing for the past 50 years. They would see that Rotaract is not just a local club — it's part of an international movement."

The Rotaractors were excited by the idea, even though the upfront costs of staging the event were daunting. On 2 June, after a few months of research and planning, 12,000 young music fans streamed into a Dhaka convention center for the charity concert the club called Empathy 2023.

On the lineup were nine of the country's top rock and metal bands, including Artcell, Warfaze, Shironamhin, and Ashes. Lights flashed from the stage, guitars wailed, and the crowd sang along. Most importantly for the club, concertgoers got a primer on Rotaract and many received T-shirts featuring both concert and Rotaract logos.

After the event, more than 670 people contacted the club to express interest in joining Rotaract, Roni says, and plans were made to charter more than 30 clubs in the city. The nine bands promoted the concert and Rotaract to millions of followers on their social media channels, and the club saw a spike in its own social media traffic. Numerous media outlets covered the event. "For weeks after the concert, we would see youth wearing our T-shirts in the streets," says Roni.

The Rotaract Club of Dhaka Orchid was chartered in 2015 after Roni moved from the eastern city of Comilla to Dhaka to study electrical engineering. He had by then become active in Interact, serving as treasurer of the Interact Club of Comilla Lalmai, then president of the Gomoti Interact club. His election as district Interact representative further expanded his contacts and leadership skills. "I made new friends, received support from others, and was inspired to develop myself further to bring change to my community," he says.

One of those new friends is Faysal Kanan, who shares Roni's passion to get young people involved in service. Prior to the concert, Kanan says, members had to spend a lot of time explaining to people what Rotaract was and how Rotary is dedicated to the eradication of polio, among other causes. "I felt if we could interest more young people to serve in Rotaract clubs, we could show them how they can serve everywhere at any time," Kanan says.

The Rotaractors have demonstrated just that through their passion for helping communities affected by flooding or other disasters, especially in hard-to-reach parts of the country. In 2016, they provided clothing and supplies to Santal people who lost homes during ethnic clashes over land rights. In 2019, they traveled to the remote Kurigram district in northern Bangladesh to provide flood relief in the form of food, clothing, and medicine.

Roni remains connected to Interact through the Interact Alumni Association of South Asia, which he helped found. In 2022, he joined with Tahsin Miti, then a district Interact representative and past president of the Interact Club of Dhaka Paramount, to organize Interact and Rotaract clubs to deliver flood relief in the city of Sylhet after summer monsoons.

Some of the money raised through Empathy 2023 helped provide winter clothing to families. The club is planning a bigger event for 2024 in an open-air stadium that they hope will raise enough money to build permanent shelters for people affected by flooding.

The club received help at the concert from other young people. Miti, now a Ro-

Members of the Rotaract Club of Dhaka Orchid, including (from left) Didarul Alam, Ahanaf Adib, Tahsin Miti, Saddam Hossain Roni, and Faysal Kanan, use popular music to boost Rotaract's profile, attract members, and raise funds for projects. Several club members have formed their own band.

taract member, organized volunteers and encouraged Interactors to promote the event. "I think we succeeded in showing many people a different image of Rotary," Miti says.

Roni is using industry connections he made to line up other celebrities, including a well-known comedian and magician who joined the club last year. Several club members, including Kanan and Miti, have formed their own band, Shadow, which has performed at Rotary and Rotaract events. The group plans to take the stage at the stadium concert this year.

"If we can promote our own band in the music industry, I think we can get even more youth interested in Rotaract," Roni says. "This generation is so busy with their studies and their careers. But they are hungry for culture. If we can use music to show them Rotaract, we can get them excited about service and show them the difference it can make."

— ARNOLD R. GRAHL

PLAY LOUD, BE HEARD

Not every club can pull off a large-scale concert, but the Rotaract Club of Dhaka Orchid has these tips for recruiting members and raising your profile through pop culture events large and small.

Piggyback on popular culture. In Bangladesh, that means rock and metal music. The club's charter president, Saddam Hossain Roni, wasn't a fan himself. But he recognized the genre's following as an opportunity. Create an event celebrating your community's popular music, art, or food.

Enlist influencers to promote your event. Weeks before the concert, young people all over Bangladesh heard about the club and the event through the performers' social media channels.

Don't forget the merch. For weeks after the event, T-shirts with the club's logo could be seen on the streets of Dhaka.

Bring the fun back to your club. Tahsin Miti, a vocalist who plays the harmonium, is one of several club members who formed their own band and jam after meetings. "Members always want us to sing and play," says Miti. "It has been attracting people, and our members increase day by day."

Dream big and don't take no for an answer. Some were skeptical the Rotaract members could pull off a major concert. They decided to try anyway. Since then, more than 670 people have inquired about joining.

Photograph by Reza Rahman

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Interspecies diplomat

To help communities manage conflict with wildlife, a conservation biologist starts by listening

"If I hadn't had that [Rotary global] grant," says Gabi Fleury, "I probably wouldn't be in this field."

The first time Gabi Fleury heard a wild cheetah's heartbeat, through a stethoscope placed on the sedated animal's spotted fur, the conservation biologist couldn't help but cry. It was the realization of a childhood dream and one of the turning points in a young life full of them, including a cancer diagnosis that nearly made it all impossible.

"What hit me in that moment was a sense of incredible fragility. Being able to hear that cat's heartbeat and thinking there's fewer than 7,000 of them left and they could be wiped out," Fleury says of that moment in 2018 while working with the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Namibia.

Today, Fleury, a 2015-16 Rotary global grant scholar, helps communities find creative ways to lessen human-wildlife conflict, primarily involving carnivores like cheetahs, leopards, and African wild dogs that get too close to domestic livestock, homes, and farms. Because of habitat loss and conservation measures themselves, human-wildlife conflict has grown in complexity, whether it involves car collisions with deer in North America or crop raiding by elephants that contributes to food insecurity in parts of Africa or Asia.

Fleury splits her time between fieldwork she's starting in Botswana's Kalahari Desert and the heavy workload of a PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For Fleury, conservation is as much about preserving the livelihoods of livestock producers as it is about saving wildlife, leading her to call herself an "interspecies diplomat."

Fleury's fascination with wildlife began as a child in Boston and deepened during a long recovery from osteosarcoma, a type of bone cancer, with which she was diagnosed at age 7. She went through 21 rounds of chemotherapy, the removal of a significant portion of one of her lower leg bones, and years of physical therapy to learn to walk again. "A lot of my experience of nature wasn't through hiking or camping because I physically couldn't do it," she says. "It was more through books and documentaries." Most fascinating of all to Fleury was the cheetah, an

Photograph by Sharon Vanorny

animal with such speed and beauty but whose survival was precarious.

As a cancer survivor, Fleury understood time was not a given. To recover and work in conservation, she remembers thinking, "I'd better get cracking." "Conservation is what got me physically able to walk again because I wanted to be a conservationist so badly."

Fleury, who spent several weeks in the field last summer, shows off a customized leg brace covered in graffiti art that she's been using. "I am very open about it because there isn't a lot of representation of people with physical limitations in the wildlife field," she says. "And it's good to show that with adjustments we can do anything other people can do."

There were other obstacles to overcome. The field of international wildlife conservation is wildly competitive. Fleury compares it to trying to become an astronaut. And the expense of an advanced degree was out of reach. Fortunately, Fleury heard about Rotary scholarships from her undergraduate thesis adviser and applied. She was awarded a $30,000 Rotary Foundation global grant scholarship, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Roggebaai, South Africa, and Rotary District 7570, which fully funded her 2016 master's degree at the University of Cape Town.

"If I hadn't had that grant, I probably wouldn't be in this field," Fleury says, as her cat wanders in and out of view during a video interview from her home in Madison.

Today, Fleury is part of a generation of community-centered conservationists sensitive to the needs and traditions of local people, many of whose livelihoods — and even mental health — are at stake in conflicts with wildlife. Fleury's work starts with listening. "A common misconception is people are just upset about losing a calf or a sheep; that it is an economic loss only. But there are psychological components as well," Fleury says. "It's not just an attack on their economics, it could be an attack on who they are as a person, their status in the community, and it could even impact their sense of safety."

During her time in Namibia, a farmer called Fleury's team members, urging them to "come get your cat" and threatening to shoot the cheetah if they didn't arrive within the hour. "We drove as fast as we could," Fleury says, but it was too late. "The sad part about that is when we examined the calf that had been killed, which had started this whole thing, it was clearly a leopard kill." But the team talked to the man about what to do in the future and thanked him for at least calling them.

Many creative solutions come from the communities themselves, with their deep ecological knowledge. In Botswana, Zimbabwe, and other parts of Africa, for instance, villagers often dig trenches to protect gardens from elephants, which can't easily jump across. They sometimes use chiles that irritate elephants and act as a deterrent, or plant diversion crops to draw animals away from other fields.

As a side project, Fleury worked with a software engineer to design a first-of-its-kind video game on how to prevent livestock losses. The game, *Operation Ferdinand*, uses only pictures to reduce language barriers when being used internationally.

Beyond fieldwork, Fleury is helping shift the narrative about who belongs in the conservation space. Fleury's racial heritage is diverse: Her mother is of Irish and German descent and her father is Brazilian of mixed African and Indigenous Brazilian descent. Fleury is a founding member of the Black Mammologists movement celebrating Black and Indigenous scientists. Diversity enriches the field, but Fleury believes it's also essential to its future by eliminating barriers.

Other goals on Fleury's radar include drawing attention to understudied areas such as Botswana's portion of the Kalahari, home to one of the largest remaining populations of cheetahs, and learning more about local techniques to mitigate conflict. What keeps her going is the complexity of what she calls the "wicked" problems of science. Thinking about them and the potential solutions, her face lights up with an infectious smile. "I like a challenge." — DHRUTI SHAH

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF GABI FLEURY

Gabi Fleury

- **Rotary global grant scholar,** 2015-16
- **PhD student in environment and resources,** University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2022-present
- ***Forbes* 30 Under 30 Science list,** 2021

From left: In Botswana, Fleury studies cheetahs in the Kalahari Desert; with Rotary's help, she earned her master's degree at the University of Cape Town.

DISPATCHES FROM OUR SISTER MAGAZINES

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Members of the Rotary Club of Leefklimaat (Living Climate) clean up plastic waste in a forest. "We roll up our sleeves," says Rebecca Siebinga, a member of the e-club.

Rotary Nederland (The Netherlands)

People of 'green' action

"Everyone can do something to improve our environment. It's very easy; small steps help," says Rebecca Siebinga, of the Rotary Club of Leefklimaat (Living Climate) in the Netherlands. Marielouise Slettenhaar-Ket, of the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group, adds that protecting the environment, Rotary's newest area of focus, is of great importance and well aligned with Rotary's other causes. "Climate action must also be done locally," she says. "Rotary clubs play a facilitating role in this."

The editor of the regional Rotary magazine for the Netherlands interviewed both women on a video call. This way no one needed to drive, avoiding carbon emissions. That's a small contribution to a better environment. And there are many other small things you can do as individuals. "I put a filter in my washing machine to filter out microplastics," says Siebinga. "Saving water, bringing your own reusable bag when you are grocery shopping, installing an insect hotel in your garden, or riding your bike more often — all these actions help. The important thing is to get the message across in an enthusiastic way. Discuss it with friends and family and brainstorm how you can contribute."

"Act and talk about it, but in a personal, not a dogmatic, way," adds Siebinga, who two years ago had the idea for a new cause-based Rotary club. That idea has grown into the leefklimaat e-club, which has 25 members. Why she founded this club is clear: As Rotary modernizes and adapts, many members are paying more attention to the environment and climate. "If this planet becomes uninhabitable, everything will end," she says. "We have to make sure our children and grandchildren have a chance on our planet. It is necessary to think about that together and do something about it together."

There are many wonderful green initiatives within Rotary. Check out what activities will suit your club. Just start; you don't have to be an expert. "At our club, we invite speakers to talk about different aspects of sustainability and climate," Siebinga says. "And we roll up our sleeves. We clean up plastic at roadsides and in forests. On the island Texel we had a nature excursion and together we visited the company Save Plastics in the city of Arnhem where they produce new products from waste plastic."

The Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group is a global organization within the Rotary family that advances and promotes environmental projects. "We try to form alliances with others who also think protecting the environment is important. We share knowledge, conduct webinars, and help clubs apply for global grants," says Slettenhaar-Ket, a member of ESRAG Europe's management team. "Going green together over and over again, that's what it comes down to. We need to take climate-friendly actions on an individual and a club level. We have to act together. Let education, culture, and sustainability come together."

Rotary is ideally suited for this, Slettenhaar-Ket believes. "With the Rotary Club of Voorburg-Vliet, we supported a revegetation project called Molenwei, a nature and recreation farm. It is close by and well-known locally, and works with

PHOTOGRAPHS: (NETHERLANDS) RUTGER MAZEL; (TAIWAN) PO-CHANG YU

Rebecca Siebinga poses in a mobile plastics recycling lab.

several partners apart from Rotary. Together with school children we planted a tiny forest there." Rotary members play a facilitating role. With their enthusiasm, they inspire the people in their communities to get involved. "Our 1.4 million members make us a reliable and credible partner," Slettenhaar-Ket says. "People see that Rotary helps even with protecting the environment."

Four of the seven Dutch districts have an environment/sustainability committee where they share knowledge, ideas, and tips. At the international level, Rotary's newest area of focus is also gaining traction. The Dutch initiative End Plastic Soup has grown from Rotary members in Amsterdam into a network of clubs around the world. Rotary International was represented for the first time last year at the United Nations climate summit in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. And this August, RI Director Hans-Hermann Kasten's Rotary Institute/European Summit in Bonn, Germany, will be devoted largely to protecting the environment. — RUTGER MAZEL

For more information and to get involved, visit:
- **esrag.org**
- **endplasticsoup.org**
- **rotary.nl/leefklimaat**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Bike more, drive less.
- Get involved in the community and volunteer.
- Reduce, reuse, recycle.
- Be mindful with water.
- Choose sustainable food, even when choosing fish.
- Buy less plastic.
- Use a reusable shopping bag.
- Use energy-efficient LED bulbs.
- Choose nontoxic cleaning products.
- Collect trash during hikes.

Rotary Taiwan

A coral restoration coalition

Schools of fish used to pass through Penghu. Every inch of land and water revealed the natural beauty throughout this archipelago of 90 islands and islets in the Taiwan Strait. In recent years, however, this paradise has faced serious challenges. Environmental damage, marine pollution, and overfishing have left the marine ecosystem increasingly fragile. And waters warmed by climate change are threatening the coral.

The members of the Rotary Club of Taipei Great Pacific became aware of these changes and discussed what needs to be done. Their conclusion: Only when the community, academia, and public organizations join forces can the problem be solved long term. The club applied for a Rotary Foundation global grant and, with the help of Penghu University of Science and Technology, started the Penghu Coral Restoration Project. The project supports the university's coral research, which is using the latest technology to observe the environment where corals grow and conducting coral transplantation based on the research results. In addition, the scholars have researched the causes of coral damage to find the best protection and restoration methods.

Coral restoration also requires public awareness and support. Collaboration with local communities and media is a key to the project's success. The club and its partners raised funds, trained volunteers, purchased equipment, and organized activities to raise public awareness of coral restoration and protection.

The club even involves tourists visiting the scenic spots of West Lantau, which is close to the coral restoration area. With flyers and presentations, the club educates visitors and the public about the importance of corals for the health of the ecosystem and calls for people to get involved. The message: Every visitor and resident can do something. Whether it is supporting environmental organizations, reducing the use of plastic, participating in environmental education, or taking part in beach cleanups, every small effort has significance to the future of Penghu and beyond. — PO-CHANG YU

HANDBOOK

Ready to scale

How to know when you've got a Programs of Scale contender

Congratulations! Your Rotary club or district has had success with a large project. Maybe the outcome was so good that now you're wondering if the initiative should be expanded and what to do next.

For starters, you need to have a scaling mindset, explains Larry Cooley, an international development and scaling expert and a member of the Rotary Club of Washington Global, based in Washington, D.C. "Big problems require big solutions," he says in a webinar on Rotary's Learning Center.

Then, of course, there's the funding required to go big, usually more than a typical global grant. The Rotary Foundation offers $2 million in funding each year to one large-scale, high-impact project through its Programs of Scale grant competition. The first three awards went to programs addressing malaria in Zambia, maternal and neonatal mortality in Nigeria, and cervical cancer in Egypt.

How do you know if your project is a good candidate? Before you hit "submit" on your application, ask yourself these questions.

1 Is your project ready to scale?

A project that's a good candidate builds on proven interventions. Is there evidence that what you're proposing has addressed the issue it intended to? Things like a research study, recommendations from the World Health Organization, or an external evaluation are good benchmarks; a self-produced final report from a global grant is not. Has the effort been tried in the setting you're proposing? If not, consider a pilot project first and add in robust monitoring and evaluation systems to understand if it has the effect you wanted.

In Egypt, for example, Rotary clubs built on prior success and known interventions when designing their Programs of Scale initiative by increasing demand for vaccines to prevent cervical cancer through awareness-raising activities.

2 Do you love your problem?

Bringing a project to scale takes an average of 15 years, Cooley says. "The idea that you'll develop something of great importance and walk away is an unrealistic expectation," he says. "Look at polio."

In a way, it's like raising a child, minus the fights over screen time. Do you love your problem enough to change course when you learn things aren't going as planned? And are you keeping the long game in mind: that your goal is not to support your child — er, project — forever but to guide it to functioning independently?

APPLICATION TIMELINE

PHASE 1

March
Concept note template available

1 August 2024
Concept notes due

Find out more in Rotary's Programs of Scale Grant Competition Handbook, available at **on.rotary.org/scalehandbook.**

3 Is your project built for sustainability?

"The only real way to make a permanent change is to make a change to the system itself," Cooley advises. By "system," he most often means governments or economic markets, which have the necessary infrastructure, incentives, and budgets.

A sustainable project is designed in collaboration with the communities and institutions that will implement it and sustain it after the grant is over. It must be integrated into a local, regional, or national system with clearly identified financial support.

The team in Nigeria, for example, is working with the state and national ministries of health to embed elements of the maternal and neonatal health program within their budgets so that it becomes a government program rather than a Rotary one. (See our story on page 24 for more.)

4 Does your project promote learning?

A Programs of Scale-worthy initiative uses data to understand what's working and what's not, and changes direction as needed. Are you willing to share the lessons you learn with the governments and other entities you are working with, as well as with the broader Rotary world?

As one example, community health workers supported by the malaria project in Zambia enter data about cases. The data goes to the Ministry of Health and helps determine which districts need additional malaria tests and treatment, and which districts have higher malaria cases.

5 Does your project represent Rotary?

An ideal Programs of Scale project gives Rotary members a role beyond executing funding, using their expertise, networks, or influence to advance project goals. For example, through their membership on the End Malaria Council, members in Zambia advocate for consistent supplies for malaria testing and treatment.

6 Has your project attracted partners that are invested in understanding what works to solve certain problems?

The Programs of Scale vision stresses the need for two types of partners: one to help implement the solution and another to provide financial resources. (The same organization could be both kinds of partners.) Starting with the 2024-25 grant competition, The Rotary Foundation Trustees have mandated external contributions of at least $500,000. Co-investment can indicate that the resource partner believes in the proposed intervention's potential effectiveness, and early investment supports learning alongside Rotary to understand what works — which can lead to greater investment beyond the original grant.

This is what happened in Zambia, where success led to help from Rotary's partnerships with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and World Vision for a new disease prevention and treatment funding opportunity, the Rotary Healthy Communities Challenge, which will be implemented in four countries from 2024 to 2027.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GWEN KERAVAL

August-September Concept notes review	**October** Most-qualified applicants invited to submit proposals	PHASE 2	**January 2025** Proposals due	**January-March 2025** Proposal review	**April 2025** Applicants notified of results

Watch the Increase Your Impact webinar on Rotary's Learning Center at **on.rotary.org/IncreaseYourImpact.**

TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

To make change, just get started

For many, the Bahamas is a place to escape colder climes, relax on white-sand beaches, and snorkel in clear, turquoise waters. For me, it's home. I grew up sailing on these waters and to this day, anytime I can, I am out on the water with family and friends. It's where my heart is.

The environmental threats my country is facing are real. Our coral reefs, vital for biodiversity, are in danger due to warming seas and pollution. Hurricanes and tropical storms seem to get more intense with each passing year. Rising sea levels pose an existential threat to the Bahamas, eroding our beautiful coastlines as saltwater intrudes on our precious and limited freshwater resources.

Late last year, I was fortunate to represent Rotary at COP28, the United Nations climate change convention in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The consensus coming out of the meeting was that progress on addressing climate change has been too slow. Participants said the world needs to pick up the pace to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, help communities become more resilient to climate change, and better support countries that are most vulnerable to it.

Rotary can be part of the solution.

As you know, protecting the environment is one of Rotary's areas of focus. Many clubs are active in their communities with projects such as beach and roadside cleanups. With The Rotary Foundation, you can increase your impact by pooling resources with clubs and districts around the world. Foundation grants let you put the generous contributions of your fellow Rotary members to work to make the world better.

Imagine the possibilities. Perhaps Rotary districts in Canada and Australia could protect wetlands in New South Wales in Australia. Rotary leaders from Brazil, India, and Taiwan could lead grant projects to train farmers in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh in sustainable agriculture. Rotary and Rotaract clubs from the Bahamas, South Africa, and New York could work with their districts to help my country restore its natural resources, one reef or mangrove at a time.

The problems our environment faces seem overwhelming until you realize that many are fixable. There are so many ways to help through Rotary. Even if we don't lead a grant or volunteer on the project, we can all help protect the environment through our giving to the Foundation.

Rotary can't save the planet all by itself. But as our progress in ending polio proves, Rotary's impact is great when we put our vision for a better world in motion, and just get started.

BARRY RASSIN
Foundation trustee chair

SERVICE ABOVE SELF

THE OBJECT OF ROTARY

The Object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster:
First The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;
Second High ethical standards in business and professions, the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations, and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society;
Third The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business, and community life;
Fourth The advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.

THE FOUR-WAY TEST

Of the things we think, say or do:
1. Is it the **truth**?
2. Is it **fair** to all concerned?
3. Will it build **goodwill** and **better friendships**?
4. Will it be **beneficial** to all concerned?

ROTARIAN CODE OF CONDUCT

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

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

Illustration by Viktor Miller Gausa

CALENDAR

April events

SWEET TREATS

Event: Taste of Chocolate
Host: Rotary Club of Rincon (Tucson), Arizona
What it benefits: Local educational organizations
Date: 7 April

In its 13th year, this gathering is expected to draw about 1,000 dessert lovers to sample over two dozen chocolate-based confections created by Tucson-area chefs. An awards ceremony honors the best of the bunch, as judged by a panel of radio and TV personalities and other local celebrities. The event also includes live and silent auctions.

SPRING FORWARD

Event: Pat & Ed Northey 5K and 10K River Run
Host: Rotary Club of DeBary-Deltona-Orange City, Florida
What it benefits: Local youth programs
Date: 13 April

This annual race in DeBary's Gemini Springs Park, a lush recreation area that boasts a pair of natural springs, leads runners on a flat course shaded by a canopy of live oaks covered in Spanish moss. All participants receive medals, with awards for the fastest runners overall and in various age groups. The race is named after club member Pat Northey, a longtime county councilwoman and trail advocate, and her late husband.

AN ABUNDANCE OF ART

Event: Chesapeake Spring Arts Festival
Host: Rotary Club of Chesapeake, Virginia
What it benefits: The club's Coats for Kids program and local youth arts programs
Dates: 20-21 April

At the annual festival, which the club organizes with the Chesapeake Fine Arts Commission, more than 130 artists will display work ranging from paintings and photography to glass, wood, and ceramic art. Cash prizes are awarded in several categories, including $1,500 to the artist judged best in show. Attendees can also expect live music from a 1980s cover band, a craft activity tent for kids, and food and drinks for sale.

A SPIRITED SPRINT

Event: Run to Feed the Hungry
Host: Rotary Club of Mandarin, Florida
What it benefits: Local food pantries
Date: 27 April

The club teams up with a local running store to organize the annual 5K race and 1-mile fun run through Jacksonville's scenic Mandarin neighborhood. The event is designed to attract younger members and supporters of the club. "A race is a great symbol of youth and energy, which is something our club and most Rotary clubs need," says member Marc Hassan, who came up with the idea when he was president-elect in 2021-22.

BY THE NUMBERS

Event: Bingo Night
Host: Rotary Club of Radium Hot Springs Sunrise, British Columbia
What it benefits: Local and international projects
Date: 25 April

Several years ago, the club began hosting regular bingo nights to bring the community of Radium Hot Springs together and raise money during the non-summer months — typically a quiet time for the Canadian Rockies resort town. This month's edition, the last one before fall, features five bingo games, a 50/50 raffle, and door prizes.

TICKLE THE TASTE BUDS

Event: Taste of Claremont
Host: Rotary Club of Claremont, California
What it benefits: Local and international nonprofits, scholarships, and youth programs
Date: 27 April

More than 40 vendors representing local restaurants, specialty food shops, wineries, and breweries will serve some 800 attendees at this festival of eating and drinking. In addition, the evening includes a raffle, an art exhibition, and live music. During the event's 22-year history, the club has raised more than $1 million.

Tell us about your event. Write to **magazine@rotary.org** and put "calendar" in the subject line. Submissions must be received at least five months before the event to be considered for inclusion.

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

Health workers immunize children against polio in Uttar Pradesh, India.

Deepak Kapur (left) helps plan a Subnational Immunization Day in India in 2008.

POLIO ERADICATION

Lessons from India

The most populous nation on earth has been polio-free for a decade

Southeast Asia is celebrating the 10th anniversary of being certified polio-free. The achievement was officially declared on 27 March 2014, after India went three years with no cases of wild poliovirus in the face of a highly sensitive surveillance system. The World Health Organization region includes the countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, North Korea, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. As chair of the India PolioPlus Committee since 2001, **Deepak Kapur** played a pivotal role in the accomplishment. India was at one point considered the epicenter of the polio epidemic, but with the work of Rotary and its partners in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, the country saw its last wild polio case in January 2011. The magazine checked in with Kapur, a member of the Rotary Club of Delhi South, to find out more about the milestone and what it means as the world approaches the end of polio.

What lessons did you and Rotary members in India learn while participating in polio eradication efforts?
There were lessons galore to be learned from the campaign. The first was that we could do it. The self-confidence that success brought in its wake was the shot in the arm that Rotary needed to tackle challenges that it had hitherto thought to be insurmountable.

Before the polio campaign began, the public perception was that Rotary club members met in five-star hotels to eat and drink and on occasion donate sewing machines to a few needy people. The polio campaign meant the public saw Rotarians out in the field, braving the heat and the dust to immunize children. The public perception soon changed.

Political leaders, bureaucrats, and the general public began to see Rotary as an organization that seriously wanted to bring about a change for the better by safeguarding the health of children. The doors to hitherto inaccessible offices in the government began to open to Rotarians. Government officials from the district magistrate right up to the prime minister began to recognize the Rotary wheel, and the women in the slums started accepting the yellow apron-clad volunteers into their homes. Gradually the polio immunization drives became a people's movement. Rotary learned how to generate demand for free vaccination services that the government was providing.

What was the impact of the many Rotary groups that traveled to India to participate in National Immunization Days?
Whenever spirits were flagging and program fatigue was setting in, the arrival of volunteer Rotarians from overseas reenergized the local Rotarians and the local administration. The overseas Rotarians were invariably accompanied in the field by local Rotarians, which pressured health officials to also actively participate in the immunization drive.

What was the biggest challenge in eradicating polio in India, and how did Rotary and its partners overcome it?
There were different challenges at different times that were extremely daunting. For instance, it was with great difficulty, after years of effort, that Rotary managed to convince the government in 1995 to adopt the strategy of conducting National

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALYCE HENSON

Immunization Days to reach children missed during routine immunization.

Another challenging task was to constantly combat the program fatigue that was evident in the later years of the long campaign — the fatigue of political leaders as well as parents.

Delivering the final knockout punch to the virus was especially hard. Despite India having reduced the number of polio cases by 99 percent, the virus continued to survive in high-risk areas. Also, poliovirus types 1 and 3 were constantly seesawing. When the virus was attacked with the oral polio vaccine that targeted type 1, the number of type 1 cases fell, but type 3 reared its head. The final nail in the coffin was the bivalent oral polio vaccine, which tackled both at the same time. Rotary was part of the partners group that came up with this suggestion.

What was the significance of India becoming polio-free for the global health community?

India becoming polio-free was considered nothing short of a miracle by policymakers and health officials all over the world. It had been widely perceived that India would be the last country to get rid of polio because of its massive population, population density, unsanitary conditions, impure drinking water, malnourishment, and a huge incidence of intestinal diseases. But India showed the world that polio could be countered by drowning the populace in vaccine.

What has been the key to sustaining India's polio-free status?

Top-class surveillance and commitment to universal immunization are the keys to India's success in keeping the virus at bay — despite it being endemic in the country's immediate neighbor, Pakistan.

What gives you hope that the goal of a polio-free world will be achieved?

Given that we are down to just a dozen cases of wild poliovirus in 2023 and that the best practices so successfully implemented in India are being deployed in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the two remaining endemic countries, I'm confident that we are on the cusp of eradicating only the second human disease ever from the world. It is no longer a question of if polio can be eradicated, but a question of when.

PHOTOGRAPH: MONIKA LOZINSKA

IN MEMORIAM

Agent for change

Ray Klinginsmith, 1937-2024

Ray Klinginsmith, a past Rotary International president who made it his focus to enhance the vitality of clubs and enable them to succeed, died 17 January at age 86.

Klinginsmith's involvement with Rotary began when he studied in South Africa in 1960-61 as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar. It was during his year in Cape Town that he encountered the phrase "wind of change," which would shape his thinking about Rotary's need to adapt.

His 2010-11 presidential theme, *Building Communities — Bridging Continents,* sought to capture what Rotary does best and what it needed to keep doing to create change in the world.

"These four words aptly reflect who we are and what we do as Rotarians," Klinginsmith said at the 2010 International Assembly. "We are a unique and a premier organization, certainly one of the best in the world. We build the spirit and resources of our local communities in an important way."

During his presidency, Klinginsmith talked about the need to make clubs "bigger, better, and bolder," reflecting his belief that it was the clubs that improve lives. He also was fond of using the phrase "cowboy logic" to explain his approach of problem-solving with simple solutions, taking inspiration from a country song with that title by Michael Martin Murphey.

"More than anything, Ray was an amazing agent for change," said Tom Thorfinnson, former chief strategy officer for Rotary International and RI vice president during Klinginsmith's term. "He really felt Rotary needed to continue to evolve and adjust and look at new ways to move forward."

Klinginsmith joined Rotary in 1961 and was a member of the Rotary clubs of Unionville and Macon, Missouri, before joining the Rotary Club of Kirksville, Missouri, in 1974. He served on the RI Board of Directors in 1985-87 and was a trustee of The Rotary Foundation in 2002-06 and again in 2012-16. He was trustee chair in 2015-16.

He received The Rotary Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service and the Foundation's Distinguished Service Award. He and his wife, Judie, were Major Donors, Bequest Society members, and Paul Harris Fellows.

Klinginsmith received his law degree from the University of Missouri and practiced law in the state for many years. He also served as general counsel, dean of administration, and a business professor at Truman State University in Kirksville. He helped found the Chariton Valley Association, a nonprofit that provides services to people with developmental disabilities.

In addition, Klinginsmith served as an executive board member for the Great Rivers Council of the Boy Scouts of America, president of the Macon Chamber of Commerce and of the Macon Public Library's board of trustees, and a lay speaker for the First United Methodist Church in Kirksville.

Klinginsmith was preceded in death by his wife, Judie. He is survived by his son, Kurt; his daughter, Leigh Perkins, and her husband, Bob; and three grandchildren.

— ARNOLD R. GRAHL

PEOPLE OF ACTION

Impact makers

RITA AGGARWAL

Rotary Club of Nagpur, India

■ Wellness in a Box — Nagpur

Rita Aggarwal has been a consulting psychologist for 35 years. In 1992 she established Manodaya, a private mental health clinic in central India. She is an officer of the Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives.

A community assessment carried out by members of the action group and a study published in the *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine* both found that mental health literacy among young people in India was very low. To address the high number of students who showed signs of anxiety, depression, and other psychological problems, effective mental health services were needed.

The action group had developed a toolkit called Wellness in a Box, and Aggarwal applied it in her hometown of Nagpur. The project created a curriculum for 14-year-olds that covered depression awareness and coping skills, which helped counter the stigma that surrounds mental health care. It also taught teachers counseling skills and established sites for fieldwork. Twenty teachers have taken a yearlong counseling course.

Wellness in a Box — Nagpur has trained 2,280 students and 768 parents and faculty members in the Break Free from Depression curriculum. One hundred young people have volunteered for further training as peer mentors.

EVANGELINE BUELLA MANDIA

Rotary Club of Marinduque North, Philippines

■ Mangrove Rehabilitation and Aqua-silviculture Project

Evangeline Buella Mandia is the Foundation chair and a past president of her club and the dean of the College of Environmental Studies at Marinduque State College. She is a member of The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers.

Mandia's project addressed the decline in mangrove populations in parts of the Philippine province of Marinduque. This decline, caused by deforestation, pollution, and climate change, has increased coastal erosion, degraded water quality, and led to a loss of biodiversity. Rotary members raised funds to plant mangrove seedlings and rehabilitate existing forests as well as train community members in mangrove propagation and aquaculture. The project also established a seedling nursery and a long-term mangrove conservation plan. Mandia oversaw daily operations, communicated with everyone who was involved, and ensured that the project's objectives were met.

Local fishers and farmers gained better job prospects and higher earnings, while the entire community enjoyed a more dependable supply of fresh, local food. The revived mangroves protect against storm surges and reduce coastal erosion. Training improved community members' understanding of their environment and ability to take care of it.

STEVE DUDENHOEFER

Rotary Club of Puerto Barrios, Guatemala

■ Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund

Steve Dudenhoefer founded the Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund and Asociación Ak' Tenamit in the early 1990s after moving from the United States to Guatemala to serve as a full-time volunteer accompanying rural Indigenous Central American communities in their sustainable development processes.

The Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund helped develop a program of work-based learning and job placement for young Indigenous people in the country. One thousand Indigenous girls and boys receive vocational training at rural residential schools. Community education promoters visited communities to recruit students and offer scholarships. Teachers were trained in improved methodologies and taught how to provide psychological support to students who had been abused. More than 4,000 students have graduated from the program, and 86 percent are employed.

Members of five Rotary clubs in Guatemala and 36 clubs in the U.S. worked together with Asociación Ak' Tenamit, the Guatemalan Ministry of Education, and local municipalities to ensure the project's long-term financial and operational sustainability. The project is now managed by a board of directors composed of Indigenous graduates of the program.

Rotary recognized six extraordinary members in January as People of Action: Champions of Impact. This distinction highlights the honorees' success with projects that had positive, long-term impacts. Their projects addressed several of Rotary's areas of focus, including fighting disease, growing local economies, and protecting the environment. — ETELKA LEHOCZKY

AMAL EL-SISI

Rotary Club of El Tahrir, Egypt

■ Heart2Heart

Amal El-Sisi is a longtime Rotarian, a professor of pediatrics, and a member of The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers. For four years, El-Sisi led Heart2Heart, which helps children in remote parts of Egypt, Kenya, Libya, and Yemen who have heart conditions. El-Sisi recruited 30 local Rotary clubs and 10 clubs in other countries to collaborate on the project. Rotary members also raised funds and secured global grants for the project and used surveys of community members and care providers to measure its success.

Heart2Heart treats children born with heart disease through state-of-the-art, less invasive catheterization procedures. Before it was started, patients and their families in the remote areas targeted by the project had to travel to cities to get these lifesaving procedures. Those who could not make the trip faced suffering and even death.

The project treated 120 children with catheter procedures. It also trained 20 doctors and 50 nurses and technicians. With El-Sisi's leadership, Rotary members oversaw the monitoring and evaluation of all of Heart2Heart's activities, including follow-up with patients and health care providers.

BINDI RAJASEGARAN

Rotary Club of Ipoh Central, Malaysia

■ National Coalition for Mental Wellbeing

Bindi Rajasegaran is a past Rotary club president and a past governor of District 3300. A member of the Mental Health Promotion Advisory Council to Malaysia's Ministry of Health, she helped establish the National Coalition for Mental Wellbeing in 2019.

Rajasegaran's project addressed youth mental health. A study found that more than 400,000 children in Malaysia have mental health problems, but many do not seek care. Family and societal pressures, bullying, and loneliness all contribute to poor mental health.

The project helped school counselors develop their crisis management skills through a Mental Health First Aid certification course. It also showed counselors how to foster supportive and inclusive school environments that promote mental wellness and reduce stigma. A series of awareness campaigns encouraged students to discuss mental health issues and seek help when they need it. The project also developed an online platform where counselors recorded case data so the results of their efforts could be measured.

WALLEY TEMPLE

Rotary Club of Calgary, Alberta

■ Towards the Elimination of Cervical Cancer in Guatemala

Walley J. Temple is a professor emeritus in the departments of oncology and surgery at the University of Calgary and the Tom Baker Cancer Centre. He established a surgical oncology training program that has drawn trainees from around the world.

Temple's project sought to identify and treat the conditions that lead to cervical cancer and focused on Guatemala, where 1 in 45 women will contract the disease in their lifetime. Predominantly caused by the human papillomavirus, the disease can be prevented by vaccinating girls ages 8 to 15 and screening women ages 30 to 55. The equipment that is needed for screenings is low-cost and can be carried to even the most remote communities by mobile health care teams.

Under Temple's leadership, teams of clinicians conducted training, did examinations, and provided treatment. Temple and his team purchased mobile screening equipment and trained nurses in its use. The project has screened more than 8,000 women, educated more than 3,000 women about cervical cancer, and trained and certified 65 health care practitioners.

2024 CONVENTION

Breakouts tailored to you

Attendees at the Imagine Our Rotaract Journey breakout session at the 2023 convention.

At the Rotary International Convention main stage, you feel Rotary's sweeping influence while cheering with thousands of fellow members. And when you shift to smaller breakout sessions, that's where you get to do the in-depth work of digging into focused topics that interest you.

Choosing among dozens of sessions in Singapore, you'll take away bold ideas about how to improve your club experience, your community, and the world.

You can learn ways to combine the strengths of Rotarians and Rotaractors, solve any challenges with recruiting and keeping members, and boost mental well-being — for yourself and the people around you.

Maybe you want to run a carbon-neutral club or event, collaborate with partners like Habitat for Humanity, pull in experts for project advice, or regrow Interact membership. There are breakouts that address each of those.

Get tips to make new projects and long-time initiatives even more successful and grow a lifelong love of Rotary among your club's members. These are just some of the themes up for discussion: measuring results to show impact, building bridges among members of all ages, making the club you always wanted, and using artificial intelligence in Rotary.

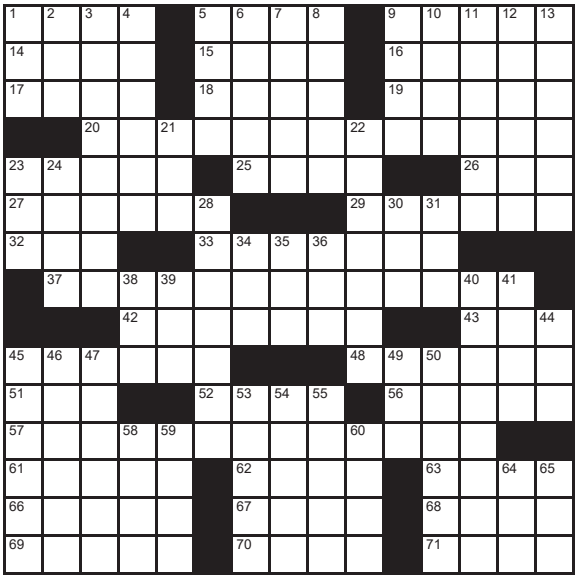
Registration isn't required for the sessions 27-29 May, but you can browse the full preliminary list on the convention website to plan how you'll be *Sharing Hope With the World.* There's even a session that fits perfectly with that theme: Spreading Global Kindness — Starting in Singapore.

Learn more and register at **convention.rotary.org.**

CROSSWORD

Green time

By Victor Fleming
Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas



Solution on **opposite page**

ACROSS

1 Word before transit or media
5 Lettuce type
9 Cause embarrassment to
14 Aid, as in a crime
15 Candidate for rehab
16 Ex ____ communication
17 Final Four org.
18 In ____ land (dazed)
19 Cartoonist Jack who drew *Mark Trail*
20 37-Across concern
23 Singer Simon
25 Mobile phone, casually
26 Air show formation
27 "Be right with ya"
29 Make contact with
32 Compass dir.
33 Short opera piece
37 April is ____ Month for Rotary
42 Late, as a payment
43 Family gal
45 Osculation directive
48 Advise
51 Bothersome tot
52 Not quite closed, as a door
56 More prudent
57 20-Across, in other words
61 Gold purity measure
62 Rouse
63 Estate receiver
66 Digital document
67 Serenader's delivery
68 Beach erosion cause
69 Amber material
70 End for smack or switch
71 Adult male deer

DOWN

1 "You da ____!"
2 *Abbott Elementary* airer
3 Shade of the ocean
4 Delays on purpose
5 Filament housing
6 Biblical father of twins
7 Ball attendee
8 Barroom ____
9 Copycat
10 Healing ointment
11 Achieve stardom
12 Rocks
13 Bushes between yards
21 "____ Como Va" (Santana hit)
22 Adolescents' support group
23 Pro's counterpart
24 *French Braid* author Tyler
28 Infant's auto accommodation
30 Cardboard pkg.
31 Garfield or Felix
34 Go bad
35 Gary's state (abbr.)
36 Aussie runner
38 Some corp. execs
39 "Take me as ____"
40 "From my view"
41 Bowl of cherries, in song
44 Damascus locale (abbr.)
45 Field goal specialist
46 "Gotta run!"
47 Steeples
49 "Mind your ____ business!"
50 Cirque du Soleil garb
53 54-Down Plemons
54 One playing a role
55 African beast
58 Full-length skirt
59 Abbr. before a colon
60 Jason's boat
64 Boise is its cap.
65 Avg., sizewise

PHOTOGRAPH: BRITTANY ANNE SCOTT

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A feast for a Friday

Sayadieh's many variations add up to a tasty tradition

Cuisines all over the world owe a delicious debt to religious dietary rules, and Lebanon's is no exception. There, the Catholic custom of foregoing meat on Friday gave rise to the popularity of a fish-centric standby. Sayadieh (the name means "catch") transforms humble whitefish and rice with a fragrant spice mix, briny broth, caramelized onions, and crunchy nuts. "Most restaurants that serve Lebanese food have it on their menus, and you can always ask for sayadieh when it's a Friday," Ron Farra says.

There are all sorts of variations within the basic formula of fish, rice, and spice — both within Lebanon and in other countries where the dish is popular. "Most of North Africa now makes sayadieh — Egypt, for example — and each country has its own tradition for making the dish," Farra says.

THE FISH: Cooks may use cod, haddock, halibut, or another mild, meaty whitefish. Some chefs remove the bones in advance, stewing them with the head to make a fragrant stock. The rice is then cooked in the stock for an extra-rich taste. But it's the spice mix that makes sayadieh so tasty. "There is cumin, caraway, cinnamon, and coriander — all these add to the special taste of this plate," Farra says.

THE TOPPINGS: Once the fish and rice are ready to serve, they're covered with the browned onions and toasted nuts. Cooks may use pine nuts or almonds, though the former is more traditional in Lebanon, which has many pine forests. For a final shot of flavor, sayadieh is often accompanied by a lemon-tahini sauce on the side.

— ETELKA LEHOCZKY

Ron Farra
Rotary Club of Beirut Cedars, Lebanon

What food is your region famous for? Tell us at **magazine@rotary.org** and you may see it in an upcoming issue.

Illustration by Maya Fidawi

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