

Rotary Facts

The world's first service club was the Rotary Club of Chicago, Illinois, USA. The club was formed 23 February 1905 by lawyer Paul P. Harris and three friends – a merchant, a coal dealer, and a mining engineer. Harris wished to recapture the friendly spirit he had felt among businesspeople in the small town where he grew up. The name “Rotary” was derived from the early practice of rotating meetings among members’ offices.

Mission

The main objective of Rotary is service – in the community, in the workplace, and throughout the world. Rotary volunteers build goodwill and peace, provide humanitarian service, and encourage high ethical standards in all vocations. The Rotary motto is “Service Above Self.”

Membership

Rotary members are professional men and women who work as volunteers to improve the quality of life in their home and world community. Club membership represents a cross-section of local business and professional leaders. The world's Rotary clubs meet weekly and are non-political, non-religious and open to all cultures, races, and creeds.

- There are approximately 1.2 million Rotary club members working in some 30,000 Rotary clubs in 162 countries.
- First admitted in 1987, women are the fastest-growing segment of Rotary's membership. There are about 2,000 women club presidents, and women are rapidly assuming regional leadership roles.

Service Today

- Rotary volunteers initiate **community projects** that address many of today's most critical issues, such as violence, drug abuse, youth, AIDS, hunger, the environment, and illiteracy.
- Rotary clubs are autonomous and determine **service projects** based on local needs. However, they are encouraged to base projects on the following topics: children at risk, disabled persons, health care, international understanding and goodwill, literacy and numeracy, population issues, poverty and hunger, the environment, and urban concerns.
- Rotary members work with and for **youth** to address challenges facing young people today. Through participation in Rotary-sponsored Interact clubs (for secondary school students), Rotaract clubs (for young adults), and Rotary Youth Leadership awards, young people worldwide learn leadership skills and the importance of community service.
- Rotary **Youth Exchange** gives high school students the opportunity to broaden their world view and build international friendships.

- Rotary volunteers have a history of building safe communities and working for peace. In places where **urban violence** has become rampant, Rotary's community-based network helps to prevent unrest. Rotary-sponsored violence prevention projects and conferences address the root causes of violence such as drug abuse, poverty, lack of role models, and gangs.
- **The Rotary Foundation** of Rotary International provides an opportunity for Rotary club members to work for international understanding and peace. Through their Foundation, Rotarians sponsor international educational and humanitarian programs.
 - **PolioPlus** is Rotary's commitment to eradicating polio by the year 2005. Through the efforts of Rotary and its partners in the fight against polio, more than two billion children worldwide have been immunized since 1985. In 1996, 154 nations reported no cases of polio, up from 85 when PolioPlus began. By the year 2005 Rotary contributions will reach a half billion US dollars to eradicate the crippling disease. Of equal significance is the huge volunteer army organized by Rotary International for social mobilization, vaccine transport and immunization activities.
 - Rotary's international network links people in need with Rotary club members in other countries that can provide resources. The Foundation's **humanitarian programs** provide health care and supplies, clean water, food, job training, and education -- particularly in the developing world.
 - The Rotary Foundation's **educational programs** include Ambassadorial Scholarships, the world's largest privately-funded source of international scholarships. Nearly 1,300 scholarships are awarded annually for study in another land. Grants are also awarded for university teachers to serve in developing countries and for professional exchange.

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