# Rotary

MAY 2025

MAGAZINE



Years of clashes over the Klamath end with the world's largest dam removal and the ***reemergence of a sacred river***

—

page 26

Rotary

THE GREATEST CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME

THROUGH THE EYES OF THE GLOBAL HERO WHO CHANGED THE COURSE OF HISTORY

HISTORIC EVENT

AN EVENING WITH PRESIDENT

# LECH WALESA

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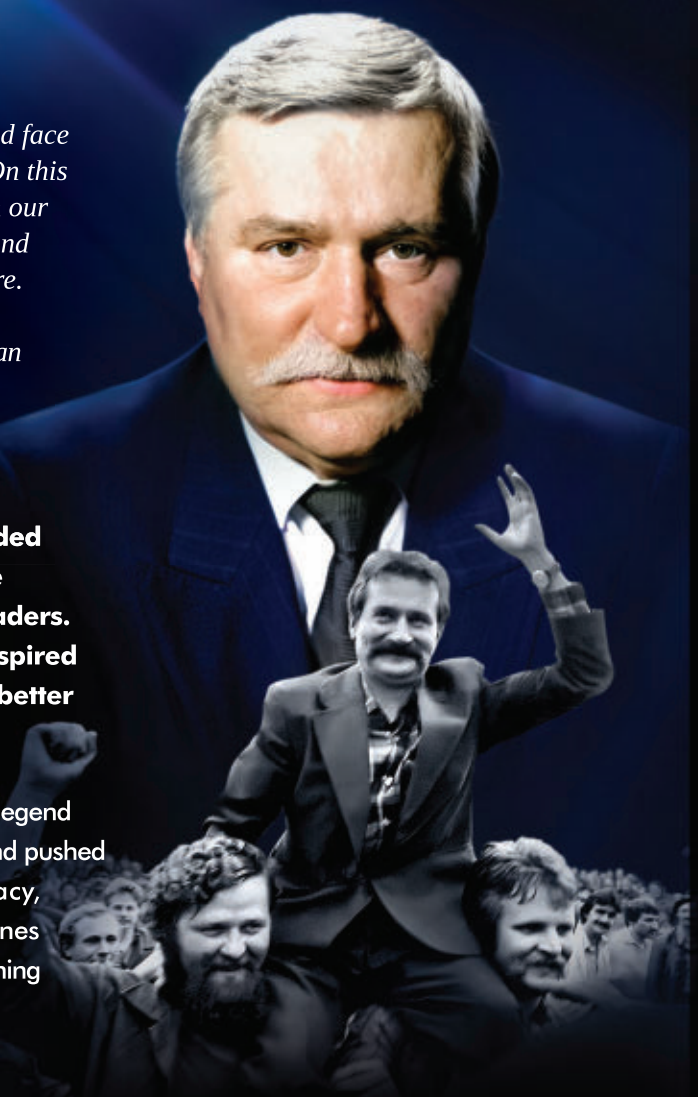

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## Rotary's young people of action

No matter how long we've been with Rotary, we all benefit from the energy and fresh perspectives of our young leaders. It is my privilege to place this month's presidential message in the capable hands of one young leader, Vitor Joventino. In his column, Vitor reminds us how teamwork and inclusivity can spark transformative change. As you read his message, I encourage you to reflect on its insights, share in his excitement, and embrace new opportunities to learn.

— STEPHANIE URCHICK

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF VITOR JOVENTINO

I remember the exact moment when I realized the power of Rotary's youth programs. It was a Saturday morning in Australia during my year as a Rotary Youth Exchange student. I stood among a group of young leaders at a Rotary Youth Leadership Awards event. The organizers challenged us to stand on a large tarp spread across the floor and, without stepping off, find a way to fold it in half.

At first, the task seemed simple. But as we moved, strategized, and adjusted, the reality set in — it required teamwork, agility, and constant communication.

Rotaractors and Rotarians guided us, but no one dictated how to succeed. The decisions were ours to make. And then something remarkable happened. Without being instructed, we collectively decided that no one would be left behind as our space on the tarp shrank.

One of our teammates was a person who uses a wheelchair, giving us an opportunity to adapt, ensuring that he was fully part of the experience. We shifted, lifted the tarp, and reconfigured our positions, using our time to think, plan, and act as a team. In the end, we successfully completed the challenge together.

As we celebrated our success, one participant said, "Society works the same way — challenges will come, but instead of leaving people behind, we must find ways to include everyone." It was such a profound thought for someone so young, yet it perfectly captured the essence of our experience.

Interact empowers young people to create service projects with real and lasting impact. Youth Exchange builds global citizens who return home with broader perspectives and stronger leadership skills. RYLA develops young leaders equipped to inspire and mobilize others. All of this is *The Magic of Rotary,* emerging through the actions of youth. These programs are the heart of Rotary's ability to grow and adapt in a changing world.

But the success of these programs depends on more than young leaders — it requires Rotary members who believe in their potential. I encourage you to sponsor an Interact club, host an exchange student, and support a RYLA participant. Your involvement does more than sustain these programs; it multiplies their impact and ensures that young leaders are not just beneficiaries of Rotary but active contributors.

To those already supporting youth programs, thank you. Your mentorship and commitment make all the difference. And to those considering getting involved, now is the time! Because youth leadership isn't just Rotary's future, it's Rotary's present.

**VITOR JOVENTINO**
*Rotaract Club of Penápolis, Brazil*

# WELCOME

**YOU ARE HERE:** Canyonlands National Park, Utah

**GALLERY OF CANYONS:** Its deep canyons, towering mesas, and lofty rock spires make Canyonlands a vast museum of nature's spectacular creations. These rock formations were sculpted by the Green and Colorado rivers, rain, and other forces of erosion over millions of years. The rivers divide the park into three districts: Island in the Sky, the Needles, and the Maze.

**MESA ARCH:** Canyonlands has more than 80 natural arches. One of the most visited is Mesa Arch (pictured). Sitting on the edge of a 500-foot cliff, the arch offers a stunning view of the La Sal Mountains, especially at sunrise.

**THE PHOTOGRAPHER:** Impressed by the beautiful vista "with lots of depth and contrasts," Ronald Gietter, a past president of the Rotary Club of Eugene, Oregon, snapped this picture while visiting Canyonlands in 2022. A retired financial adviser, Gietter joined Rotary in 1985 and pursues photography as a hobby.

**THE CLUBS:** The first Rotary club in Utah was formed in Salt Lake City in 1911. Today, there are 45 Rotary clubs and eight Rotaract clubs across the state, with more than 1,700 members.

*Photograph by Ronald Gietter*

# Rotary
MAGAZINE

**May 2025**

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Rotary

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# CONTENTS

**May 2025**
Vol. 203, No. 11

## FEATURES



**On the cover:** Dam removal brought more salmon back to a river that's important to tribes. **Photo by Katie Falkenberg**




## CONNECT



## OUR WORLD



## OUR CLUBS



ILLUSTRATION: ANJALI MEHTA; PHOTOGRAPH: (OPPOSITE) KATIE FALKENBERG

# CONNECT

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STAFF CORNER

## Alain Drouot

*Regional communication specialist*

**I was born in Haguenau,** a historic town in the province of Alsace, France, close to the German border. My father was in the military and we moved a lot. We lived in Germany in a French community, in a Paris suburb, and then in Lille, a city in northern France.

**Thinking that business school would land me a job easily,** I attended one in western France. After graduating in 1987, I served in the army for a year and was stationed in West Berlin. After World War II, Berlin was divided. While the Soviet Union controlled the eastern part of the city, Western Allied powers occupied the western side. At the height of the Cold War, both sides played strategic games through espionage and propaganda. We experienced a lot of that in the barracks.

**After visiting the U.S., I became fascinated with American culture,** including literature, movies, and music. I had left the military and lived near Paris. There was an English-language magazine, called *Paris Passion.* I placed an ad in it, seeking to connect with Americans living in France. The only response I got was from a woman in Chicago who loved Paris and was taking French lessons. Linda and I became pen pals and started dating after she came to Paris to pursue a language program.

**We got married and then moved to Chicago in 1991.** While working for a Dutch chemical company downtown, I learned about Rotary through a friend who had also married an American and settled in the Chicago area. Rotary hired him as a French translator. So, in 1998, when another translator job opened up, I applied and was hired.

**I've been with Rotary for 26 years.** My favorite part of the job is interpreting, a form of public speaking as you're often addressing several hundred people. Real-time translation at Rotary meetings

PHOTOGRAPH: HUGO MASSA/COURTESY OF ALAIN DROUOT

is more demanding and therefore more interesting. It requires good language skills and mental stamina. I also create social media content to support Rotary's outreach to French-speaking clubs.

**One of my memorable moments at Rotary** was putting forward a proposal to the Board of Directors to cover the cost of interpretation at the annual governors-elect learning seminar. It was adopted in 2020. I've also attended every Rotary Convention since 2002.

**I'm a music enthusiast and critic.** My interest ranges from rock and pop to jazz and classical. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, I attended about 200 concerts a year. I've freelanced for several jazz and classical music publications including *Cadence,* a well-known quarterly magazine. My writing includes musician profiles, album and concert reviews, and commentary. I also hosted a weekly jazz program at a student-run radio station at Northwestern University, and for about 10 years, I edited the newsletter of the Jazz Institute of Chicago. I love Chicago because it has a rich music tradition with a variety of styles and genres.

**Putting music into words is difficult,** especially when I write in two different languages. I switch between languages while reading, and I always read two books concurrently, one fiction and one nonfiction. ■

# Letters to the editor

## CAUSE FOR CONCERN

In "The recovery playbook" [February], we read of the incredible and growing losses from hurricanes: over $100 billion for Helene and Milton, with 95 percent of the losses uninsured. The article details the fantastic response of Rotarians, who gave financial and boots-on-the-ground help with recovery.

Left out of the article is why hurricanes are becoming more powerful and destructive, which scientists know to be global warming. Warmer air over the oceans evaporates more water, which can come down later in torrents like we have not seen in the past. Warmer ocean water increases the power of hurricane winds and storm surge.

Rotary and its members should continue our great work in helping ravaged communities recover from disasters like these. But unless we also address their cause — global warming — the loss of life and enormous costs will continue to get worse.

Do you or your club want to learn more or help? Join the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group at esrag.org. Future generations are counting on us to pass on a livable world. Now is the time to act.

**Alan Anderson,** Northfield, Minnesota

## WORDS TO LIVE BY

Charles Allen's essay "Martin and me" [February] beautifully weaves together the words of Dr. King and President Lincoln with Rotary's Four-Way Test. Well done and very thoughtfully true.

**Karl Hertz,** Thiensville, Wisconsin

The editorial by Charles Allen was particularly moving to me and, I expect, to many other Rotary members. The author's personal story and the hope he projects for a better future based on the words of Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Lincoln deserve to be heard again. It would be fitting for Rotary to keep the message alive since, as Allen points out, those words are echoed in our Four-Way Test.

My recommendation is that a 20- to 40-minute video based on the editorial be professionally produced and made available to clubs. The video could be premiered at a Rotary International Convention. It would be a ready-made centerpiece of a Rotary club meeting held near Martin Luther King Jr. Day or Presidents Day. The video would not only recognize a successful Rotarian, it would inspire all of us to live up to the high ideals of two great men in American history.

**James K. Pierce,** Lake Jackson, Texas


## LIFE PRESERVERS

Did anyone else notice the magazine's report on a Belgian Rotarian's photographic record of the Norwegian project that has created an Arctic repository of more than a million varieties of plant seeds from around the world [Dispatches from our sister magazines, "A backup for humanity, under the Arctic ice," February]? I am very encouraged that Christian Clauwers focuses his attention on the dangers of global warming, enlightening students everywhere he goes.

Moreover, he reports that Norway has similarly safeguarded "crucial data of humanity should a global calamity occur. The site is designed to be resistant to nuclear attacks and electromagnetic

## OVERHEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In January, we highlighted a project in which university art students in Egypt created illustrations to raise awareness about cervical cancer prevention.

I found this so interesting! The art is fantastic and tells a story.
**Pamela Ehlers Crawford**
**▶ via Facebook**

WOW - these are amazing. What a great way to shine some light on a very serious issue. Creative expression is valuable not only to us as individuals but also as a tool to educate and inform, to connect and engage. BRAVO!!!
**Cheryl Pauchuk**
**▶ via LinkedIn**

pulses." For a minute I thought I was reading a Ray Bradbury science fiction novel. Does anyone realize what this means? Should humanity destroy all life on Earth, there is preserved the seeds of plant life and knowledge of animal life.

Could anything be more frightening in a world experiencing war? This is reality, not science fiction. I truly hope others will heed the call of Rotary — for peace.
**Nathan M. Wise,** Old Saybrook, Connecticut

## ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

Three cheers for the cheerful news article, "Where all news is good news" [February]. If we choose to see good news, we will see good news.

Chicago Rotarian W. Clement Stone (now deceased) admonished, "Keep your mind off the things you don't want by keeping it on the things you do want." We could all learn from this.

Three cheers, also, for Rotary. Service Above Self can lead us toward a more cheerful life.
**Frank Rycyk,** Jefferson City, Missouri

## GREAT FOR WHOM?

I read with dismay the letter by Charles Cotten in the January issue [Letters to the editor, "Marriage problems"]. Cotten commented, "I take offense at the October cover and story," in reference to the article about Fraidy Reiss and her efforts to end teen marriages ["A bride too soon"]. Cotten pointed out that his mother was 16 and his father 18 when they married and that they were "happily married for 75 years with five children, 12 grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren, and 10 great-great-grandchildren."

While I applaud Cotten's parents for having a long and productive marriage, I believe he completely missed the point of that article. He asked, "How many of those 300,000 marriages [of minors in the U.S. between 2000 and 2018] turned out great?" I respond, "Great for whom?"

Fraidy Reiss founded Unchained at Last, which works to end forced and child marriage in the U.S.

Most of these marriages were between adult men and girls, some as young as 10. There is a great deal of difference between a young girl and a man in their ability to consent to a marriage and to get out of one they don't want to be in. If a girl's parents consent, she does not have the option to say no. In some states, even if minors can be legally married, they do not have access to divorce until they turn 18. They often can't sign a lease or get a job on their own.

Maybe some of these marriages are happy ones. But marriages that start out with such an imbalance of power are not healthy. It's time to end forced marriages and make sure that anyone entering into matrimony does so with full consent and agency.
**Everardo Aguilar,** San Diego

## A GRAND TOUR

As someone who loves to travel the world, I really appreciated the December Travel Issue. It gave me new ways to think of travel (off the beaten track), helped me reminisce (glühwein at Christmas markets), challenged me to pack differently (instead of always using my packing cubes) — and I was so impressed with the writing of Rotarian astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti that I ordered her book! Thanks for the great read.
**Gretchen Douthit,** Russellville, Arkansas

Rotary VOICES

### ON THE PODCAST

Safia Ibrahim is a Canadian polio survivor and global health advocate. She shared her experience onstage at a 2023 storytelling event co-hosted by the Moth and the Gates Foundation. Listen to the recording, along with a new interview with Ibrahim, on a recent episode of *Rotary Voices:* **on.rotary.org/podcast.**

PHOTOGRAPH: SYDNEY WALSH

Rotary

ROTARY CLUB CENTRAL

# TRUE OR FALSE

## ROTARY'S MOST SUCCESSFUL CLUBS SET GOALS — AND NOT JUST FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR.

**TRUE.** When club leaders think about the future and plan beyond their year, they set their club up for long-term success.

Start setting and tracking your club's goals now:

## ROTARACTORS CAN'T USE ROTARY CLUB CENTRAL.

**FALSE.** Rotaractors can access it and track goals, too! All you need is a My Rotary account to start planning your future.

## CLUB GOALS ARE ONLY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CLUB LEADERS.

**FALSE.** Every club member is responsible for their club's success. And as a Rotary member, you too can use Rotary Club Central to view your club's short- and long-term goals.

## MORE THAN HALF OF ROTARY CLUBS USE ROTARY CLUB CENTRAL TO TRACK THEIR GOALS.

**TRUE.** Club leaders use this free tool to set goals and record accomplishments, while tracking goals like membership growth, service activities, and Foundation giving.

## NEED HELP?

Head to the Rotary Learning Center and take the Rotary Club Central Resources course!

THE SPECIALIST

# Fire writer

*A Welsh artist becomes an accidental pyrographer*

**I didn't start out drawing with fire.** I was a painter and a calligrapher. But without much of an art scene in Wales, I joined a local craft guild. There, I got complaints: You're an artist, and this is a craft guild. I thought, well that's inverted snobbery! I said, tongue-in-cheek, Would it be OK if I did it on wood? After all, Leonardo painted some of his best works on wood, so perhaps I could get away with that. I borrowed a machine to burn pictures onto wood and started to play.

**Like most words that end in "graphy,"** pyrography is a way of drawing or writing. The "graphy" is writing, and the "pyro" is fire. Literally, "fire writing." At first, I drew with a pencil on wood and went over it. I thought, that's a waste of time, just draw it with the burner. That's how pyrography should be done; you should interact with the wood. You're not copying something. You're creating something.

**Richard Withers**
Rotary Club of Dolgellau, Wales

Pyrographer

**A farmer came to see me one day.** He said, I've got a load of timber just lying in the field, which I think you might like. The slices of wood were 2-3 feet across, stained and mottled. I chose some pieces and had them brought to my workshop. I looked at them and saw the picture in the grain. The picture is already there. I just bring it out so other people can see it. That was the beginning of something special.

**The wood I got from the farmer was mostly elm.** Elm is possibly one of the worst woods to use. It's a funerary wood. It's traditionally used to make coffins, and it has the smell of death. It doesn't burn cleanly. Sycamore is probably the easiest of woods to work with. You can get very fine detail. It also paints well.

**You learn a lot more about the raw material** that you're working with than if you were just working with paper. You become more than an artist. Not that I want to be compared with Leonardo or Michelangelo, but I compare it to the way they would have learned about marble.

**The next thing I knew I was this celebrated pyrographer** from Wales. There were people who had taken photographs of my work and posted them. I had no idea. It was very flattering. I don't know about financial return, but I got a modicum of fame from it. ■



*Photograph by Francesca Jones*

*The* **ROTARY ACTION PLAN**

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to try new things?
**The Action Plan can help.**

Learn about increasing your club's
ability to adapt:
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OUR WORLD



DISEASE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

# The threat underfoot

*Awareness may still be the best tool for rural areas to guard against the neglected problem of snakebites*

On a rainy morning two years ago, Mariamma caught a glimpse of something moving between the wood piled in her kitchen in southern India. Thinking she'd imagined it, she reached for an armful of twigs to light her stove and felt a stab of pain in her right hand. It took her a moment to realize she'd been bitten by a snake.

Unable to identify the kind of snake and afraid the venom would spread, her daughter tore off a piece of her sari and fashioned it into a tourniquet, tying it around Mariamma's arm. It was a grave mistake. The makeshift tourniquet concentrated the venom, and when they reached a hospital, half an hour away, Mariamma's hand was completely numb. She was dizzy and nauseous, had blurred vision, and struggled to breathe.

Mariamma received antivenom through an IV, but doctors had to amputate two fingers. "Nothing has ever been the same since," says Mariamma, who goes by a single name. She had to give up her job as a construction worker in the town of Tirumangalam and now gets by with odd jobs. "I'm grateful I'm alive, but the right side of my body feels weaker. I am slower and struggle with daily tasks."

Snakebites are a major cause of death and disability among residents of the world's poor rural areas, killing between 81,000 and 138,000 people a year and causing as many as 400,000 amputations and other cases of permanent disability. Yet snakebites are one of the most neglected public health issues globally, says Gnaneswar Ch, leader of the snakebite prevention project at the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust and Centre for Herpetology near Chennai, India.

The lack of attention to the problem has stifled access to antivenom and efforts to develop more effective, less costly, and more accessible treatments. On top of that, habitat loss and climate change are expected to alter where and how often people encounter snakes, leading to increased exposure to bites in some regions. Many consider prevention and education campaigns by community-based organizations, including Rotary clubs, to be the best — and often only — answer.

For over a century, the main treatment has been antivenom, produced in a painstaking method that has remained largely unchanged. Venom is extracted, or "milked," by taking the snake by its head and forcing it to bite the lip of a jar, causing venom to drip from its fangs. A small amount of the venom is then injected into horses, with the resulting antibodies harvested and added to IV solutions. When given to humans, these antibodies can boost an immune response and attach to and neutralize foreign substances, such as toxins. But the treatment has drawbacks.

Some patients have adverse reactions ranging from severe nausea and headaches to anaphylactic shock, meaning antivenom should be administered only in a hospital. Add to that the high financial cost

To learn more about fighting disease and all of our causes, visit **rotary.org/our-causes.**

**Above:** Women in a rice field encounter a Russell's viper in Tamil Nadu, India. **Right:** A spectacled cobra lifts its head on a farm in Kanchipuram in southern India.

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF GNANESWAR/MCBT

for many people. Antivenom produced in one part of the world may not work well in another, since it's generally only effective to treat bites from the same type of snake from which it was produced. Supplies can be scarce, because making the drug has thin profit margins that discourage larger companies from taking on mass production. In India, only a few companies make it.

Most of India's venom supply comes from a single source: a snake catchers' industrial cooperative called the Irula Co-op, where the reptiles are stored in wide-brimmed earthen pots, fastened shut with cotton cloth and string. Located at the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, the co-op is run by 350 members of the Irula tribal group who are adept at safely catching venomous snakes.

India, which accounts for at least a third of snakebite fatalities, uses a polyvalent antivenom developed from multiple species that can treat a range of snakebites, which is useful when people don't know what type of snake bit them. In India, it's produced for bites from the "big four": the spectacled cobra, common krait, Russell's viper, and saw-scaled viper. However, it is not always effective if someone is bitten by one of the many other types of snakes in India.

Few efforts have been made to modernize treatment. But researchers are testing a medicine that could be injected with a preloaded device similar to an EpiPen. And the biggest advance may come from a drug for snakebites in clinical trials called varespladib. It comes in pill form, making it easy to take at the time of a bite. It blocks and neutralizes a family of enzymes that are the

most lethal component of venom and are present in 95 percent of the world's venomous snakes. The medicine doesn't require refrigeration like antivenom.

For now, avoiding a snakebite in the first place is the best solution, experts say. Most bites happen when snakes are accidentally disturbed. "People in rural areas, having outdoor toilets or who work in agricultural fields, tend to be more vulnerable," Gnaneswar Ch says. "They can be exposed to snakes without even realizing it."

Vedhapriya Ganesan, a wildlife rehabilitator who works with the Rotary Club of Madras Coromandel, India, on environmental education projects, rescues snakes in Chennai. She receives frantic calls when people encounter them in homes or public spaces. As part of her work supported by the club, she speaks to hundreds of students at schools and colleges about snakebites. "Children are more vulnerable," she says.

She teaches them to be alert to their surroundings and not to panic. "I tell them to keep your distance and if the snake is too close, then stay still as a statue," she says. "It won't bite unless it feels threatened."

Snakebites will continue to be a global problem, she says, as long as our cities keep expanding into the animals' natural habitat. "Now snakes are adapting to live alongside humans. And climate change, which makes severe cyclones and floods more frequent, increases our exposure too," she says. "In such a situation, awareness is a powerful tool."

Rotary clubs in Nepal and Australia have also been campaigning to create awareness. In 2019, the Rotary Club of Kathmandu Mid-Town held a conference on snakebite prevention with international experts. In 2020, the club received a Rotary Foundation global grant of $84,000 to support a four-year awareness project including radio spots.

A member of India's Irula tribal group milks venom from a snake at a co-op that produces most of the country's venom supply for manufacturing snakebite treatments.

An absence of robust data on snakebite cases, which are underreported, is a challenge in Nepal, says Nirmal Rijal, a member of the Kathmandu club. He works with other members to gather data and direct victims to the 120 health facilities in Nepal designated as snakebite treatment centers, with stocks of antivenom.

Aiding their efforts is the World Health Organization's Geographic Information System Centre for Health, which uses open data and geospatial tracking to connect victims with antivenom. The effort includes updated range maps of all venomous snakes and a database of available antivenoms that will eventually offer information on providers.

In Australia, the Rotary Club of Melbourne is supporting the Papua New Guinea Snakebite Partnership, an initiative of both countries' governments, with resources including solar-powered refrigerators, mobile ventilators for ambulances, and training. In some parts of Papua New Guinea, deaths from snakebite are three times higher than those from malaria or tuberculosis. "To date over 2,000 lives have been saved," says Melbourne club member Anthony Battaini.

Despite her pain and loss, Mariamma is grateful to have survived her ordeal. Now, she advises her neighbors to clean up around their homes. "Look for places where snakes could hide and pay attention to where you're putting your hands and feet, especially at night," she tells them. "Even a little awareness can save life and limb."

— KAMALA THIAGARAJAN

**BY THE NUMBERS**

**81,000+**
Estimated number of people killed each year by snakebite

**1890s**
Antivenom first introduced

**77%**
Share of fatal-snakebite victims in India who never make it to a hospital

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF GNANESWAR/MCBT

**Short takes**

Rotary's blog has a new name and a fresh look. Find inspiring stories from Rotary members and insights from experts at *Rotary 360*: **blog.rotary.org.**

The RI Board approved 121 members to receive the 2024-25 Service Above Self Award. They will be honored next month at the Rotary Convention in Calgary.


PROFILE

# Ringing in a peaceful world

*A past district peace chair chimes in*

**Doug Sturomski**
Rotary Club of Greater Newburgh, New York

In 1992, a few months after the Soviet Union collapsed, Doug and Martha Sturomski were invited to the United Nations Headquarters in New York City to perform their bell ringing routine. "A bell is one of the most ubiquitous instruments on earth," Doug Sturomski says. "It's in almost every aspect of humanity, from communication to transportation, from science to religion."

In 2009, he founded the Peace Bell Foundation, a nonprofit devoted to planting peace poles, spreading messages of peace through handbell ringing, and moving humanity "from the love of power to the power of love." The couple have performed at Lincoln Center, the Harvard Club, and Carnegie Hall in New York and at over 1,000 school programs. Through his Rotary club, Sturomski has led a project to plant peace poles in his community. During Rotary Day at the UN in 2015, the club received a Peace Through Service Award from RI representatives to the UN for its efforts.

Sturomski takes a metaphysical approach to peace and encourages everyone to think about these questions: "Why are we here? Why am I here? What am I going to do about it?" When he was a child, his father suggested he become a priest. "I've been like this since I was a little kid," Sturomski says.

Now, with eight grandchildren, Sturomski is looking to the future, noting the negative outlook of the Global Peace Index, which ranks the number of conflicts at the highest point since World War II. He's reminded of what's at stake every morning that he takes his grandkids to the school bus. "Just to experience that wonder they have and the simplicity of it, the innocence of it. We have to understand that we're just like those children." — JP SWENSON

RI General Secretary John Hewko wrote an op-ed for the *Chicago Tribune* about Rotary's ability to combat isolation. Read it at **on.rotary.org/tribune.**

This month marks the centennial of Rotary in Guatemala, where the Ciudad de Guatemala club was chartered 11 May 1925.

New promotional videos feature members talking about Rotary's impact on their lives. To view and share, search "testimonial" at **brandcenter.rotary.org.**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CRISTIAN BARBA CAMARENA

*Photograph by David Degner*

# People of action around the globe

By Brad Webber

**United States**
Inspired by the American flags placed beside headstones at military cemeteries, Rick Clark asked officials at Miramar National Cemetery in San Diego if Rotary clubs could similarly pay tribute to service members interred there. Clark, a past president of the Rotary Club of La Jolla Golden Triangle, is a Vietnam veteran who served as a Seabee, as members of the U.S. Navy's construction battalions are called. He enlisted District 5340 leaders to recruit 400 volunteers to participate in the project, dubbed 2024 Operation Flags for Vets. "It was a powerful event that impacted so many people, including countless survivors who expressed their gratitude," says another organizer, Michael Fuqua, a member of the Rotary Club of Rancho Bernardo and a retired naval captain. The district plans to repeat the event this Memorial Day. The initiative is supported by a new district committee formed to coordinate projects related to military members and veterans. The committee helped raise about $14,000.

Rotary District 5340

**18,000**
Flags installed by the district's veterans memorial project in 2024

**Mexico**
Dogs, cats, rabbits, and other pets took center stage during a Blessing of the Animals event co-organized by the Rotary Club of Tehuacán Granadas in Puebla state in January. "Around 1,000 pets and approximately 3,000 people attended the event this year," reports Paola Ortiz Gómez, president of the club, which partnered with TAC Una Protección al Entorno A.C., a nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of animals. Since 2022, the club has organized and promoted the special Mass. "We all believe that by fostering a culture of respect for nonhuman life, it teaches us to respect human life as well," she says. "It fills us with satisfaction to see that entire families attend and not only receive a blessing for their pet but at the same time receive veterinary care," learn about animal adoptions, and donate to the care of homeless animals.

Rotary Club of Tehuacán Granadas

**80 million**
Pets in Mexican households

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF ROTARY CLUBS

**Austria**
To celebrate the centennial of Rotary in Austria, two journalists and longtime Rotarians created a podcast to inspire members and nonmembers alike. Christian Haubner, of the Rotary Club of Freistadt, and Verena Hahn-Oberthaler, of the Rotary Club of Perg, launched the *Rotary Reloaded* podcast in December. The German-language show features conversations with well-known guests inside and outside of Rotary. "We are targeting both Rotarians and non-Rotarians," Haubner says. "And we want to do so from a personal perspective. This is our differentiated approach, giving guests personal insights that show how meaningful Rotary can be in people's lives. We also talk about Rotary still being modern and needed by society." His co-host agrees. "With the momentum of 100 years of history, we look into the future of Rotary," Hahn-Oberthaler tells *Rotary Magazin*, the regional magazine for members in Germany and Austria.

Rotary District 1920

**$2.8 billion**
Podcasting market value in 2023

**1728**
Cricket's first recorded rules

**Australia**
Athletes with disabilities can enjoy all the beamers, googlies, and dibbly-dobblies through the cricket-themed activities organized by Australian Rotarians and Dream Cricket Australia. "The program's core mission is to foster inclusivity and promote physical activity" in a supportive environment, says Ankit Agarwal, a member of the Rotary Club of Adelaide and a board member of the cricket organization. In November the club capped a series of athletics outings with its first Dream Cricket Gala. Agarwal was among club members who organized the day and mentored participants. The club supported the activity with a grant of more than $3,000 and recruited volunteers from high schools.

Rotary Club of Adelaide

**South Sudan**
More than 100,000 books shipped to South Sudan have been unloaded and are in the hands of students. The materials, received in 2024 by the Rotary Club of Juba, include legal, pharmaceutical, and other science textbooks, along with 11 computers loaded with an additional 33,000 textbooks. The shipment had a value of over $1.5 million. "The books are of great value to the students because not all of them could access online information due to internet issues," says Simon Yongo, a past president of the Juba club. The shipment was coordinated by Books for Africa, a Minnesota nonprofit supported in part by Rotarians. Charles Cogan, a member of the Rotary Club of Northfield, Minnesota, who led the project, says senior Rotary leaders helped the project coordinators connect with UNESCO and the humanitarian arm of the U.S. Defense Department. "The partnerships were the key here and turned a smaller project of one container into five containers with 100,000-plus books," Cogan says. The project was supported by the Juba club as well as 14 clubs in Minnesota and Wisconsin and a District 5960 matching grant.

Rotary Club of Juba

**$129 billion**
Annual global book publishing revenue

GOODWILL

# The problem that isn't

To get at the real issue, start with a community assessment

Even with the best of intentions, sometimes a project can go awry. Toilets end up underutilized because they're seen as a luxury. A water system is abandoned once people realize that the cost to power it will drain household incomes. Donated medical supplies remain stockpiled because a hospital didn't need or can't use them, or nobody has the time to sort them.

Identifying the precise problem that a community wants to address will help avoid such outcomes. Say you learn that girls are dropping out of school and you want to develop a project to help. Is their primary obstacle the cost to attend school? Is it related to something else, like menstrual hygiene and a need for better facilities? Or perhaps they are bullied.

To find out, you need to ask. Conducting a community assessment helps a club better understand the place it's working in and encourages residents to take ownership of the project.

"You are not to suggest your solutions," says Marcel van Opstal, a member of The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers, a group that helps Rotary members plan and carry out grant projects around the world. "You are there to implement their solution. They are the ones to decide."

If you're not sure where to start when doing the community assessment, try working with someone from the Cadre or an expert from a Rotary Action Group. If it's a peace project, a Rotary Peace Fellow or a Positive Peace Activator may be able to advise. Or check with a local university or Rotaract club to find someone with expertise in project management, suggests van Opstal, a Cadre member in Colombia. You can connect with experts and other potential partners through your district resource network. Think of it like an in-house consulting firm made up of fellow Rotary members.

The point within a project when members conduct the assessment will vary, says Brenda Anena, a Cadre member from Uganda. If someone in your club sees a need and brings it to the club, do a community assessment before proceeding. Do likewise if someone in the community comes to the club with a request.

And remember that a community assessment is different from a feasibility study. A community assessment focuses on understanding the community's main concerns and the underlying causes, rather than analyzing the practicality of a proposed initiative. Your project should be related to the findings from your community assessment.

Sometimes clubs will do a comprehensive community assessment to evaluate a variety of needs in a community, identifying several projects to conduct over a period of time. Then, before each project begins, they complete a more specific assessment with residents and others involved.

One of the biggest challenges can be identifying who should be involved. "Sometimes the loudest speakers, the politicians and all that, are not the people you need to listen to," Anena says. "You need to listen to the people at the back." Meet people in their community or on neutral ground, rather than having them come to you, to help them feel more comfortable sharing their priorities.

A community assessment can take many forms: an inventory of assets related to the issue you are exploring, community mapping, a review of documents and policies, community meetings, focus groups, interviews, and surveys. Other local institutions or partners often have already gathered some of the information you need and are familiar with the community. Don't be afraid to ask, van Opstal says.

"Keep it simple. Don't complicate it too much," he says. "Otherwise, you can go and go with no end in sight." ■

## A HOW-TO GUIDE

Rotary recently updated its guidebook on how to involve community members in setting priorities and designing a project. The following are tips from the Conducting Community Assessments handbook, available on Rotary.org:

- **Make sure local clubs are involved.** Their members will help build ongoing relationships and ensure a deep understanding of the community.
- **Choose participants carefully.** Include a representative cross section of groups, considering gender, age, ethnicity, religion, income level, and vocation. Talk separately with people from frequently marginalized groups if that makes them more comfortable sharing their perspectives.
- **Determine what data is relevant.** Seek out available data from other organizations and government entities. Consider who will collect the data and how. Collaborate, don't duplicate.
- **Learn from what hasn't worked.** Find out why.
- **Go to the community.** Meet in community members' space rather than asking them to travel to a place where they might feel uncomfortable or incur travel costs.
- **Listen without judgment.** Suspend your preconceived ideas and focus on learning and understanding other perspectives. Speak with people in the community, not at them, and find ways they can be actively involved.

Download the Conducting Community Assessments guidebook at **on.rotary.org/communityassessments.**

# PRESS PLAY

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Rotary

# The lesson of a lifetime

A childhood encounter with Mahatma Gandhi taught a future RI president the value of telling the truth

By Rajendra K. Saboo



*Illustrations by Anjali Mehta*

*Kahan se tu aaya hai, aur kahan tujhe jaana hai, khush hai wohi jo is baat se begana hai:* A person who is blissfully ignorant of where he is coming from and where he is going to is a happy soul.

Ignorance may be bliss for some, but when talking about their life, a person needs to trace the beginning. As a line in a song from *The Sound of Music* goes, "Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start."

I was born 11 August 1934 at Birlapur, a town situated on the bank of the Hooghly River in Bengal, India. When the Second World War set in and Birlapur was converted into an army station, I and several of my siblings were sent to live with our grandparents in Pilani, our ancestral home. The journey was an altogether new experience for us. We took a train to Delhi, and from there took another narrow-gauge train. In the middle of the night, we had to disembark at a place where the train stopped for only about half a minute. From there we went on a camel cart, traveling for almost four hours over sand dunes. For a 6-year-old child, it was a thrilling experience to get up in the dead of the night and travel on a camel cart.

We stayed in Pilani for more than two years, from 1941 to 1943. I remember one day rather vividly. It was 1942, and the elders in the family had been talking about Mahatma Gandhi going on a fast or being placed under arrest. Only later did I realize that it was at this time that Gandhi had started the Quit India Movement, demanding an end to British rule in India. That day in school, a few senior students started an agitation, leaving their classes and shouting slogans. Our headmaster ordered the gates to be closed, but those older students jumped over the gates. We younger students could not follow them.

I felt anguished, and when I went home, I was crying. My grandmother listened to my story. I asked her if I could get a tricolor flag emblazoned with a charkha, the spinning wheel that was the symbol of India's independence and self-reliance. My grandmother called a few women who were professional dyers. They provided us with orange and green pieces of cloth. We already had white cloth at home. Within two hours I had a flag with the image of the charkha in the middle.

I got five or six friends from our school and neighborhood. With the flag attached to bamboo sticks, we set out shouting slogans. I was holding the flag high leading the procession. By the time we reached the bazaar that was the hub of the town, we had almost 150 people with us shouting slogans. We were stopped by the police, and four or five of our so-called leaders were taken to the police station to be questioned. We did not have many answers except that we believed in the freedom of our country. My grandparents were concerned when they learned that we had been kept detained in the police station, but they could not do anything. After two hours or so we were released with a warning.

I still do not know what had compelled me. I was too young to be driven by the cause or understand the ramifications of the freedom struggle. In hindsight, it was probably because I felt that I too had to do something to follow in the footsteps of the senior students in school who had defied the teachers to start an agitation.

I returned to our home in Birlapur in 1943. The war had intensified by that time. The Japanese had occupied Burma (now Myanmar) and were carrying out sorties over Indian territory. I remember Japanese planes flying over us heading towards Calcutta. In our residential compound, we had a dome-shaped concrete shelter with a refrigerator and some food and water in it. It could accommodate 30 to 40 people. As soon as the Japanese planes were spotted, there would be warning sirens and we rushed into the shelter.

This was a period of acute scarcity. Provisions had to be brought from Calcutta, and they were meager in quantity. We used to get one loaf of bread a week for the entire family. Fortunately, we were growing vegetables and fruits in our compound, and we owned cows, so getting milk was not a problem. Rice was scarce and considered a luxury, and there were restrictions on clothes as well.

I still do not know what had compelled me. I was too young to understand the ramifications of the freedom struggle.

One of my most enduring memories of the time was meeting Gandhi. It was sometime in 1944, and the Mahatma was staying at Sodepur Ashram in a suburb of Calcutta. My father had collected some funds to support Gandhi's campaign to end the custom of untouchability in India. We reached Sodepur early in the morning. Gandhi was in the midst of his morning walk with two or three children and a few followers.

My father had a small pouch of cash that he wanted to present to the Mahatma. But as we approached Gandhi, my father slipped his hand behind his back, keeping the pouch out of sight. After we exchanged greetings, Gandhi, speaking in Hindi, asked, "Why are you hiding what you intend to give?" And he laughed. We touched Gandhi's feet and started walking with him. I was fortunate to have his hand on my shoulder as we walked around for about 15 minutes.

There is another unforgettable episode vivid in my memory. I had received a 5-rupee note from my father, but I lost it. That was quite a substantial amount of money at that time, and I could not muster the courage to tell my father what had happened. I dreaded the punishment that I might receive. My father had once punished me by making me stand on the parapet outside our home. I had to cling to the wall, and if I moved, I would fall down. (I later learned that there was some protection in place in case I had fallen.) When my elder sister came to know of my predicament, she took a 5-rupee note from her pocket money and rubbed it with dry mud. I took the note and then told my father that it must have fallen somewhere in the garden, but luckily I had found it. It was a blatant lie, but I was grateful to my sister for having saved me from being punished severely.

In 1945, I visited Sodepur once again when Gandhi was residing there in his ashram. At that time, one could buy Gandhi's photographs from the shop in the ashram complex and then line up to have him autograph them. I had 15 rupees and

bought three photographs. The autograph seekers were all lined up on one side of a barricade. Gandhi emerged from his cottage, approached the barricade, and signed the photographs. I was standing somewhere in the middle of the line. Gandhi autographed the first of the three photos stacked in my hand and then moved on to the next person.

After Gandhi left, I started arguing with the volunteer. I said that I had paid 15 rupees and purchased three photographs, but Gandhi had signed only one of them. From the verandah of his cottage, Gandhi saw the disturbance at the barricade and heard the arguments between me and the volunteer. He asked what the problem was, and the volunteer replied saying that I was arguing about the autographs. Gandhi called me over and made me sit next to him. He was sitting on a mattress with his low writing desk before him. He asked me what I wanted, and I explained that I had purchased three photographs and got only one autographed by him. To substantiate my statement, I informed him that these photographs were not available elsewhere, and the fact that I had three of them meant that I had paid 15 rupees.

Gandhi looked at me calmly and enquired, "Are you telling the truth?"

My reply was emphatic. "Yes, I am!"

Gandhi smiled and signed the other two photographs, but this time he prefixed his short formal autograph with a special phrase: *Bapu Ne Aashirwad*. Blessings from Bapu. Father.

This was the value of telling the truth, the lesson of a lifetime for me and something I've adhered to ever since. If I had had this encounter with Gandhi earlier, I would surely not have told the lie about the 5-rupee note to *my* father.

One more memory to share. In 1992, during my year as Rotary International president, I was invited to be the chief guest at a reception in the town hall of Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. It was in that city, in 1893, that a young lawyer from India named Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was ejected from a train's first-class carriage by a police constable despite the fact that he had a first-class ticket. His removal, as Gandhi describes it in his autobiography, was "only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice." As the train sped away — without him on it — the young lawyer, seated in a cold, dark waiting room at Pietermaritzburg, vowed to eradicate that disease.

From the verandah of his cottage, Gandhi saw the disturbance at the barricade. He called me over and made me sit next to him.

Now, 99 years after that incident, the mayor of Pietermaritzburg addressed me at the reception in the city hall. "Mr. President," he said, "this is the place where your famed countryman Mahatma Gandhi was unceremoniously pushed from the train to the platform — and now the city is building a statue in his honor." As he spoke, my throat was choking with emotions, and today, that bronze statue, which was unveiled by Desmond Tutu in 1993, stands around the corner from the Pietermaritzburg city hall.

I have relived my memories of Gandhi on a number of occasions: while watching Richard Attenborough's great movie about him or when reading books and memoirs. In 1939, on the occasion of Gandhi's 70th birthday, Einstein wrote, "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth." And each time I read those words, tears come to my eyes. ■

*A member of the Rotary Club of Chandigarh, India, Rajendra K. Saboo was the 1991-92 president of Rotary International. This essay is adapted from his recently published autobiography,* My Life's Journey: A Personal Memoir.


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Rotary

WASH Rotary Action Group
WATER - SANITATION - HYGIENE

# *HEALING WATER*

***A river in the Pacific Northwest flows freely*** for the first time in over a century, thanks in part to a diplomatic Rotarian

BY BRYAN SMITH

Photograph by Katie Falkenberg

In that dismal December of 2015, it was hard to say who was more bereft. Was it the Native American tribes whose members had watched their sacred waterway suffer another, perhaps fatal blow? Was it the scores of people who had worked alongside them: the environmentalists and scientists, the community organizers and activists, the civil servants at the government parks and the natural resource agencies? The concerned business leaders who, like all the others, had dreamed of seeing the 263-mile-long Klamath River again flow pristine and unimpeded across Oregon and California as it made its way toward the Pacific Ocean?

Or perhaps it was impossible to calibrate the differing degrees of despair and regret. And did it even matter? Because after years of work dedicated to the removal of the four hydroelectric dams on the Klamath River — the dams that had scarred the land, nearly destroyed the native salmon population, and ignited bitter fights — all that work had come to naught just as victory was in sight. The failure of the U.S. Congress to pass legislation to implement a set of Klamath Basin restoration agreements sank all hope that the impossible dream of removing the dams would finally be realized. The agreements, so assiduously crafted, were dead in the water, an apt metaphor given what was at stake.

"When we started this struggle 25 years ago, there were a number of us tribal folks who understood that this was a battle that we couldn't afford to lose," says Leaf Hillman. "We knew that if the dams were relicensed for another 50 years, it was all over. The salmon and the Klamath were doomed, and that meant that the tribes on the Klamath were doomed."

A former vice chairman of the Karuk Tribal Council and a former director of the Karuk Department of Natural Resources, Hillman played a significant role in attempting to develop agreements to remove the four Klamath dams: the J.C. Boyle, Copco No. 1, Copco No. 2, and Iron Gate. Born and raised in the traditional Karuk homeland, he knows as well as anyone the catastrophic impact the dams had on the people who had lived along the river for centuries. Members of one tribe, Hillman says, "were forcibly removed from their lands, which were then covered up [by water] for 100 years. These were ceremonial places, village places. Their people, their language, their customs, their culture, their religion were basically decimated."

Jim Root, another crucial player in forging the agreements, also had a visceral reaction in the aftermath of their collapse. "There was a period of hopelessness," he says. "So much hard work had gone into getting agreement among what was some 45 different entities. It was devastating."

PHOTOGRAPHS: (LEFT) SWIFTWATER FILMS; (RIGHT) NASHCO PHOTO

**Previous pages:** (from left) Toz Soto, Wendy "Poppy" Ferris, and Leaf Hillman, members of Indigenous groups in the region of the Klamath River, fought for the removal of four dams to restore the river's ecosystem. **Left:** The removal of the Copco No. 1 Dam began in early 2024 with the draining of the lake behind it. **Above:** Jim Root, Rotary member and former president of the Klamath River Renewal Corp., in 2016.

I first met Root almost a decade ago when, on assignment for this magazine, I visited him in Oregon. A member of the Rotary Club of Medford (Rogue), Root was the owner of a prosperous fruit processing business when he and his wife bought a ranch near Chiloquin in 1992. He was unaware at the time that the region sat smack in the middle of what became known as the Klamath Water Wars, but he was introduced to the highly charged conflict soon enough. And as it happened, he was uniquely positioned to help.

Wearing jeans, cowboy boots, and wire-rimmed glasses, Root comes across as slow-spoken, gentle, and reserved with a preternatural knack for putting people at their ease. While attending his first Rotary International Convention — in Birmingham, England, in 1984 — he had seen firsthand the effectiveness of gathering opposing sides in small groups out of the prying eyes of the media to help resolve difficult disputes, in this case, the stalemate between the United Kingdom and Argentina over the Falkland Islands.

Back in Oregon, Root brought that knowledge to bear on the Klamath Water Wars. As the magazine's December 2016 cover story related, he organized low-key, off-the-radar meetings among the scores of constituencies battling fiercely over the river's water rights. That article, brimming with possibility and showcasing the power of Rotary's conflict-resolution strategies, concluded abruptly with the collapse of the long-desired agreements.

But the story wasn't over. For beneath the mule skinner cowboy hat of mild-mannered Jim Root there still burned an ember of hope.

As the shock from the agreements' collapse dissipated, the people devoted to the restoration of the Klamath slowly reassembled. They began to wonder if there might be a way to remove the dams that didn't rely on the federal government. That led to the creation of a private nonprofit that could manage the process: the Klamath River Renewal Corp. Its board of directors included members appointed by tribal leaders, by the governors of California and Oregon, and by conservation and fishing groups. Root would eventually serve as president of the organization known by its initials KRRC, and today he continues to sit on the board.

With the KRRC taking responsibility for the removal of the dams, a new agreement was forged in 2016 by the cooperating parties, including the states of California and Oregon and the dams' owner, the energy company PacifiCorp. As the earlier agreements had stipulated, the cost for dam removal, roughly estimated at $450 million, would be funded by nonfederal sources. Some $200 million came from a monthly surcharge on PacifiCorp customers' power bills, primarily in Oregon. About $250 million was drawn from a California state fund set aside as part of a ballot measure that authorized water projects.

PacifiCorp, a subsidiary of Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway, had long been predisposed toward taking the dams down. The amount of power generated by the dams had become relatively miniscule; more important, the company was facing a licensing renewal process that would require it to make upgrades, including costly fish ladders for salmon to swim past the dams to spawn.

"To bring these dams up to modern standards would cost PacifiCorp [any financial gains from] the entire 50-year license to pay off those upgrades," says Ren Brownell, a KRRC spokesperson. "Fitting the dams with fish ladders alone would have cost way more than the cost of their removal."

When PacifiCorp signed on to the dam removal plans, the company wanted to be indemnified against any and all damage that might occur, or any lawsuits that might arise, as a result of what would be a massive demolition project. In 2018, Root says, PacifiCorp

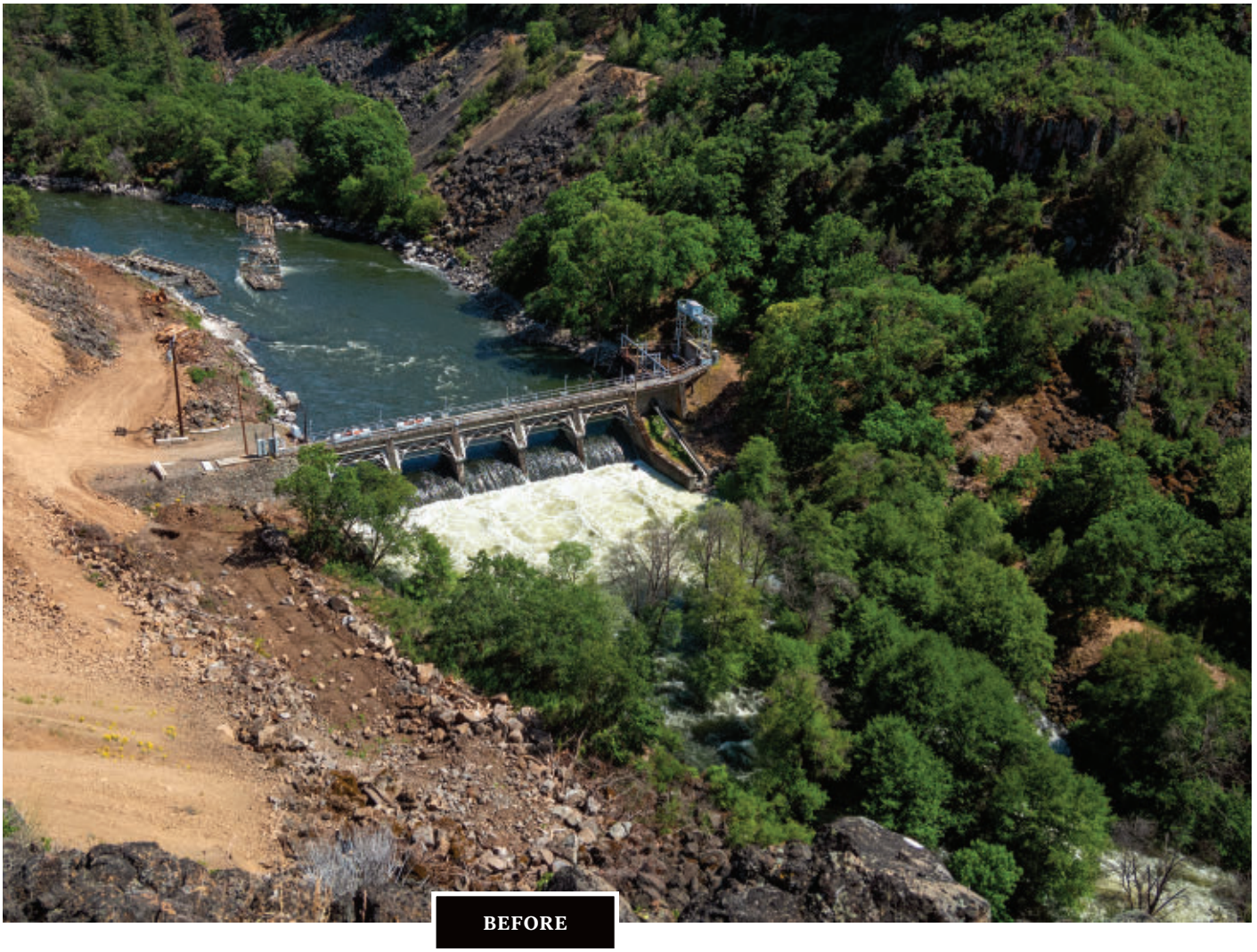
**Above:** Hillman, former director of the Karuk Tribe's Natural Resources Department, helped develop agreements to restore the Klamath Basin. **Right:** Soto reaches into the river. **Opposite:** A test blast in March 2024 sends smoke above the Copco No. 1 Dam.

**When we started this struggle 25 years ago, there were a number of us tribal folks who understood that this was a battle that we couldn't afford to lose.**

PHOTOGRAPHS: (OPPOSITE) KATIE FALKENBERG; (THIS PAGE) SWIFTWATER FILMS

sued to ensure total protection from any possibility of liability, including what he calls "microliability issues." By doing so, Root says, "PacifiCorp managed to delay the start of the project for two years. We kept working, but we had this kind of Sword of Damocles hanging over our heads." Then, in 2020, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved a partial transfer of the dams to the KRRC but required that PacifiCorp remain a co-licensee, which meant it could still be liable.

To resolve the impasse, Root hearkened to the methods he had learned at the 1984 Rotary Convention in England. He again initiated small group discussions that included representatives from California and Oregon, PacifiCorp, the KRRC, and the tribes on the Klamath. "Everybody could freely express their opinions," says Root, "and there was no reporting back and no media." And once again, the process worked. Oregon and California agreed to share the dam license with the KRRC, fully relieving PacifiCorp of any ongoing liability. The group's solution included an extra $15 million in funding from each state, and $15 million more from PacifiCorp, as a backstop for unforeseen expenses. The revisions




satisfied the federal agency, which had final say in the matter, and in 2021, the agency approved the full transfer of the dams.

Elsewhere, protests against removing the dams had intensified. In one instance, residents of a community that had sprung up around an artificial lake created by the Copco No. 1 Dam rebelled against losing their recreational opportunities. They had created areas for picnicking and hiking, and the lake had become a mecca for kayaking, fishing, swimming, and boating. There was a downside: During the summer, the lake sometimes slicked over with toxic blue-green algae that made the water unsafe.

Ultimately, arguments about the negative environmental effects of the dams won the day. After generations of effort and heartbreaking near-misses, the path had been cleared. The dams would come down. "The mood had gotten very pessimistic, but now that pessimism lifted and [the mood] changed to very optimistic," recalls Root. "We tried to tamp down any premature celebration. We had a lot of hard work to go."

Even before the KRRC took ownership of the dams, it had to hire engineering firms with the capacity to handle the massive scope of the project — by some estimations, the world's largest dam removal and river restoration project ever attempted. After all, pulling down the four dams was by an order of magnitude far more complicated than sticking some dynamite at their bases and blasting away. "They had to install a bridge, had to start building a fish hatchery, improving roads, and so on," Root says.

The logistics of how and by what volume to drain the reservoirs behind three of the dams posed another challenge. Releasing too much water all at once could cause flooding; too little would not provide sufficient force to drain the 15 million cubic yards of sediment, 90 percent of which was dead algae. Once the reservoirs were drained, the dams themselves had to be dismantled with a combination of dynamite blasts and earthmovers clawing apart the remaining cement and rebar and clearing as much rubble as possible.

All that dead algae, which had accumulated over the course of more than 100 years, was a major complication all on its own. "The dams not only block fish passage, but they capture water that sits out under the hot summer sun," explains Brownell. "In this kind

**Above:** Copco No. 2 Dam in May 2023, shortly before crews began to demolish it. The smallest of the four hydroelectric dams on the Klamath River, it was the first scheduled for removal in part because it lacked a reservoir.
**Opposite:** The same site six months later, after the dam was removed.

AFTER

of high desert area, that promotes huge toxic algae blooms. In the fall, the algae dies and sinks to the bottom" where it's unable to decompose because it's not exposed to oxygen.

Removing the dams and releasing that dead algae posed a potentially fatal threat to the river's fish. "As these dead organic materials get stirred up as they are sent downstream during drawdown, that material's getting exposed to the oxygen as it's tumbling over rocks and things," Brownell says. "This material will suck all the oxygen out of the water and crash the dissolved oxygen levels. That was the risk that we were concerned with regarding fish health — that we were going to crash the dissolved oxygen with the introduction of all this dead, organic, deoxygenated sediment."

It was understood from the outset that there would be short-term negative effects of releasing the sediment. To ensure that native salmon and trout were protected as much as possible, engineers and scientists designated specific time periods when fewer fish would be in the main stem of the river. But there was no way to protect non-native fish species, and experts knew there would likely be a massive fish kill immediately after the dams fell. In addition, the banks of the river would, for a time, become a stark, muddy landscape crisscrossed with tracks left by heavy machinery and with virtually no verdant growth. Armies of planters would descend on the affected areas, spreading seeds that would quickly green up the vast patches of mud, but project planners knew they would have to brace themselves for a rough stretch of anger and alarm from residents.

That is why, Brownell explains, the KRRC organized and worked closely with a group "composed of every fish-focused agency that you can think of," including Oregon's and California's departments of Fish and Wildlife, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the tribes' fisheries departments. "They directed us to implement drawdown when the fall run had already come up and spawned out, the juveniles were not yet out migrating, and you just didn't have a ton of salmon in the river."

And, the group concluded, the ideal time for the drawdown to occur was the first or second month of 2024.

PHOTOGRAPHS: SWIFTWATER FILMS

**It's unbelievably hard to describe what it meant. Seeing friends from the**

On 23 January 2024, an explosives specialist with the project's blast team loaded a raft with dynamite and took to the Klamath River just north of the Copco No. 1 Dam in Northern California. To safely draw down the water halted by the dam, engineers had drilled a 90-foot-long, 10-foot-wide tunnel through the base of the dam, left the upstream end of the tunnel plugged with concrete, and inserted a steel pipe into the downstream end. The specialist paddled down to the tunnel's upstream end, mounted the explosives, and then glided away. The detonation that followed unleashed a frothy geyser that, fittingly, resembled the spume erupting from a celebratory bottle of Champagne.

"Watching the reservoirs drain was one of the most magical things I've ever seen," recalls Brownell. "These were landscapes that hadn't seen the light of day in a century. I got to watch the river come back to life and carve its new path. It was like watching 1,000 years of geology happen over the course of two weeks."

"It's unbelievably hard to describe what it meant," Hillman says. "Seeing friends from the Klamath and Modoc tribes, men my age who are part of this struggle and have never in their lifetime seen a salmon spawning in the river, seeing them take their grandkids to watch salmon spawning ..." His words trail off in wonder.

The demolition and removal of the dams was completed a few months later and was followed by the restoration of the river basin, efforts led by Resource Environmental Solutions. "The first round of vegetation, all native species, was to hold the sediments in place and stabilize things," says Brownell. "The initial round of seeding actually ended up being even more successful than we imagined. We didn't know how well these native species would grow in all of this dead algae."

Resource Environmental Solutions contracted with the Yurok Tribe as the primary revegetation group. "We also contracted with the Karuk Tribe with water quality monitoring and on relocating endangered coho salmon," says company spokesperson Dave Meurer, and other tribes are participating in different facets of the river renewal. "When you're on the ground looking at who's doing a lot of the physical work, you're definitely going to see tribal members front and center," Meurer says.

As expected, there were difficult moments after the dams fell. The areas around the demolished dams looked like lunar landscapes, and the sight of yellow excavating machinery gouging into the banks was jarring. As predicted, the casualty rate among non-native fish species was distressing — in the millions, says Brownell — as the dissolved oxygen level in the water crashed following the release of so much sediment.

PHOTOGRAPHS: (SONAR, SALMON) CALIFORNIA TROUT; (FISHING) CRAIG TUCKER; (IRON GATE) MATT MAIS

## Klamath and Modoc tribes take their grandkids to watch salmon spawning.

**Clockwise from top left:** Scientists install sonar technology on the Klamath River after the dam removals to monitor the migration of fish; a salmon swims past a former dam site; Karuk tribal member Ron Reed catches fish at a waterfall on the river; onlookers celebrate as crews remove the last portion of the Iron Gate Dam in August 2024.

"I knew it was coming, but it was hard nonetheless," Brownell says. "I saw dead trout and sucker fish wash up in front of where I took my dog for walks. It was not an easy thing to see, but it was nothing compared to what we were bracing ourselves for."

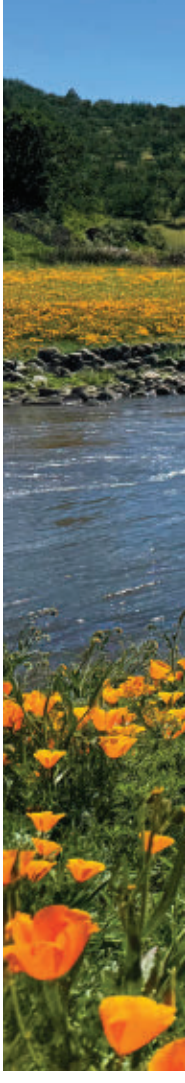
Salving those wounds was an extraordinary sight that appeared within weeks of the dams coming down: salmon and steelhead trout back in the upper reaches of the river and its tributaries. "Nothing compares to the feeling of the first time I saw fish up above the dam sites," Brownell says.

After the Iron Gate Dam came down, the conservation group California Trout installed a sonar device at the site. It allowed scientists to watch real-time images of fish as they swam past. Researchers carefully tallied those images and the results were astonishing: more than 6,000 fish, mostly Chinook salmon and steelhead trout, over two weeks in October. Soon, endangered coho salmon and Pacific lamprey were also spotted migrating beyond the now-demolished dam site.

"When I visited those sites up in Oregon, it looked like something out of Alaska," says Damon Goodman, regional director with California Trout and one of the scientists charged with tracking the return of the fish. "It's amazing what happens when you take down a wall that fish have been banging their heads against for a hundred years. We pulled that out of the way, and they were just ready to go."

On a cloudless late afternoon last October, as the Pacific Northwest sun flooded the landscape with light, groups of people arrived at a clearing in Yreka, California, near the Shasta River, one of the largest tributaries of the Klamath River. Large open-air tents had been mounted on the lot, under which sat rows of chairs and a stage set with microphones. Indigenous music serenaded the growing crowd, with many people hugging, smiling, laughing. They were members of the regional tribes, from infants to elders, as well as activists, members of nonprofit organizations, and residents who lived along the Klamath or its tributaries. They had all joined hands with the tribes to bring about this moment when, for the first time in more than a century, the Klamath River coursed unencumbered between southern Oregon and the Pacific Ocean.

Over the next several hours, the gathering wept, sang, and cheered speeches celebrating a day many were certain would never come. "This is kind of a dream come true to see the dams out and the salmon coming home," Toz Soto, fisheries manager and lead biologist for the Karuk Tribe, told a videographer recording the moment. "I've been involved in dam removal pretty much my whole career, more than 23 years. This is a miracle. I can't describe it in any other way. ... It just goes to show that if people come together, work hard and never give up, and have faith that something that we all know is right can happen,



PHOTOGRAPHS: (PLANTING) MATT MAIS; (GROUND) SWIFTWATER FILMS; (RIVER) RESOURCE ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS

**This is kind of a dream come true to see the dams out and the salmon**

**coming home. This is a miracle. I can't describe it in any other way.**

**Opposite:** (from left) Kayla Salinas, of the Yurok Tribe Wildlife Department, scatters seeds on a prairie in the Klamath Basin; drained reservoirs are being revegetated with about 100 native species. **Above:** California poppies planted by restoration workers brighten the banks of the Klamath.

it will. And it did, and now we have ... a river that's connected and a river that's going to heal itself."

And then, in a moment filled with symbolism, Wendy "Poppy" Ferris, a member of the KRRC appointed by the Karuk Tribe, took to the stage bearing a gift for Mark Bransom, the KRRC CEO, whom Jim Root had found and recruited. "I think I have a gift that will mean a lot," Ferris said, her voice trembling with emotion. "It signifies what you did for our children. ... Long after we're all gone, the babies and children will still be able to live their culture like I did when I was young. So we want to give you this."

Ferris handed the KRRC CEO an authentic tribal handwoven baby basket. Bransom bowed his head, hugged Ferris and, shedding tears, humbly accepted the symbol of life and renewal. ■

*Read "Water Wars," the magazine's 2016 cover story about Rotarian Jim Root and the Klamath River, at* ***on.rotary.org/water-wars.***

With minority business awards, a Texas Rotary club lifts the fortunes of enterprises with heart, itself included

# A profitable path


By **Mary Beth Gahan**





Photography by
Raul Rodriguez

"A lot of times, lawyers are not seen as business owners, even though you have to know how to run a business."

As a child, Rosa Maria Berdeja couldn't imagine she would go to college, much less become a successful attorney. Growing up in the 1980s in the Texas border town of Brownsville, she was told by her mother that she could drop out of high school as soon as it was legally possible, as long as she got a job to help pay bills. That's what her five older siblings did, and she assumed she would too.

**BUT WHEN BERDEJA WAS 14,** her mother moved to Florida with her new husband, leaving the teen essentially homeless in Texas. School was the one place she knew she could get two free meals each day. Of the nine children in her family, she was the only one to earn a high school diploma. "It wasn't that I wanted to get an education to better myself. I didn't know that was possible," Berdeja says. "The only reason I didn't drop out was because we were poor."

At 18, she moved to the Dallas-Fort Worth area, nearly 500 miles north, because she heard there were more job opportunities there. She started working as a receptionist in a small law firm and made extra money by convincing the attorney to let her take on the cleaning too. Over time, she was promoted to paralegal. "I was good at it," she says. "The more I would do, the more I realized I could do."

After she got a job at a bigger law firm that required paralegals to have a bachelor's degree, she enrolled in college, attending classes on nights and weekends. Once she earned the degree, she figured that was the end of school for her. But one night while working late, an associate attorney needed her help to fill out a package shipping label. As inconsequential as the interaction might seem, it carried a life-changing revelation for Berdeja. "That's when I knew I could be a lawyer," she says with a smile. "I thought, 'If you've gotten this far without learning how to ship a package, I'm going to excel.'"

While in law school at Texas Wesleyan University, Berdeja did pro bono work to help obtain visas for people who had been victims of violent crimes. "It was so touching to be able to take something horrible and get something positive out of it," she says. "I realized this [immigration law] is where I could do the most good."

More than a decade after passing the bar exam, Berdeja was doing just that, having established her own immigration law practice in Fort Worth. She helped people become U.S. citizens, advised them on how to get visas for family members, and provided legal aid to those facing deportation. Friends suggested she join Rotary to network with other business leaders, but she brushed them off, believing the weekly meetings would be too much of a commitment.

Then, in 2023, the Fort Worth Hispanic Chamber of Commerce nominated Berdeja's firm for the Rotary Club of Fort Worth's Minority Business Awards, a program that recognizes outstanding businesses in the community owned by minorities. To her surprise, her firm won second place. "It was a huge honor for a number of reasons," Berdeja says. "A lot of times, lawyers are not seen as business owners, even though you have to know how to practice law and how to run a business."

The honor came with a three-minute professional promotional video for her business and a complimentary one-year membership to the club. "When I won this free membership for a year, I thought, 'Oh, yay, I get free lunch every Friday.' Even now, I can afford to buy food, but I still have that mentality of: 'Free meal? I'm not going to pass that up,'" Berdeja says.

Since then, she has found the club to be much more than a weekly meal.


Rosa Maria Berdeja, who found purpose as an immigration lawyer, became an enthusiastic member of the Rotary Club of Fort Worth after her firm was recognized by the club's Minority Business Awards.

**THE FORT WORTH ROTARY CLUB** was chartered in 1913. At an organizing meeting, a visiting Rotarian informed the attendees about the purpose of Rotary, then less than a decade old. "He told of its social advantages and said it was not an organization for the exchange of trade favors, but a club where business talks and experiences are to be told," reported the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

By 1990, the Fort Worth club was one of the largest in the world, with more than 700 members. But from then on, as

The Rotary Club of Fort Worth announced the 2025 Richard L. Knight Minority Business Awards in April. Visit **rmba.dudasites.com** to learn more.

Carlo Capua helped launch the awards program when he was club president in 2020-21.

with many other service clubs in the U.S. during that time, membership declined. Three decades later, the number had dropped to around 200. "We knew we needed to do something to reverse this trend or eventually we could be extinct, irrelevant, or both," says Carlo Capua, the club's 2020-21 president.

The problem wasn't a lack of potential members. At the same time the club was shrinking, the city was experiencing a population boom. Between 2010 and 2020, Fort Worth grew by 24 percent and topped 900,000 people.

Capua, now Fort Worth's chief of strategy and innovation, began thinking about ways to show the value of Rotary to the broader community. He told Chris Jordan, who was on the club's board at the time, that the club should be a place where people could discuss difficult and even controversial subjects. "He said, 'We're not relevant as a club. We need to have conversations that people aren't eager to have,'" Jordan remembers.

In the summer of 2020, Capua set up a series called Courageous Conversations, which included panel discussions about politics, religion, and race — topics that Rotary clubs often avoid because of Rotary International's status as a nonpartisan, secular organization. The idea was not to advocate for any particular views but to engage and inform people about issues important to them and to model respectful civic discourse at a time when that seemed to be in short supply.

The club invited speakers from local organizations and partnered with groups like the NAACP and the League of United Latin American Citizens to help shape the conversations. One event brought together a rabbi, an imam, and a Baptist preacher — "kind of like the start of a joke," Jordan quips — for a discussion about the place of organized religion in society.

"We really had some edgy conversations, but the one that got the most traction was on increasing business in the minority community," Jordan says. That talk included former leaders of Fort Worth's Black and Hispanic chambers of commerce and was moderated by Courtney Lewis, a bank executive who served the following year as the club's first Black female president.

Capua and other members had become interested in the topic after studies showed that the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately hurt businesses with owners from minority groups. The Rotarians wanted to support those small business owners in Fort Worth and "quickly realized that none were members of our club," he says. In fact, there were few people of color in the club at all. That year, when the police killing of George Floyd spurred nationwide protests and put a spotlight on race relations in the U.S., more than 90 percent of the club's members were white, while less than half of Fort Worth residents were.

Around the same time, Jordan read a book that offered practical ways for Americans to respond to racial inequities, suggesting, for instance, that people break out of their social networks and get to know people of other races. It helped Jordan understand that businesses owned by minorities often lack access to networking to succeed at the level of businesses owned by white people. "Bingo. I got it at that point. Rotary offers relationships; that's really what we're about," Jordan says. "My company won awards over the years, and it did a lot for market share and business."

Jordan, who founded a company that designs and installs audio and video systems, approached the other board members with the idea of an award for businesses owned by people from minority groups that comes with an invitation to join the club. The plan was unanimously approved.

The club first presented the Minority Business Awards in 2021 and has annually since. Nominations are open to the public, with business owners allowed to enter themselves. The only requirements are that the business is within the Fort Worth city limits and qualifies as a minority business enterprise as defined by the National Minority Supplier Development Council. That means it must be at least 51 percent owned and operated by one or more individuals

**Above:** Fort Worth club members (from left) Sameer Vaidya, Samantha Renz, Chris Jordan, and Carlo Capua review nominations for the 2025 awards. **Below:** Jordan pitched the club on the idea for the awards program.

*"We wanted to highlight minority-owned companies who had a heart for the community."*

who are Asian, Black, Hispanic, or Native American.

To get the word out, members reach out to the area's chambers of commerce for minority groups and secure local media coverage. Once the nominations come in, the club assigns a Rotarian advocate to each business. The advocates help the business owners through the application process and bring them to Rotary meetings to start connecting with members. Next, a committee uses a point system to winnow the nominated businesses to six ranked winners announced at an awards luncheon in April.

"The criteria for the award mirror Rotary's Four-Way Test," Jordan says. "We wanted a values-based award instead of sales, growth, or number of employees. We wanted to highlight minority-owned companies who had a heart for the community, demonstrating Service Above Self."

The prizes have varied over the years. Now, the first-place winner gets a free one-year membership to the club, and the group covers Rotary dues for six months for the next four finalists. The owners of the top three businesses receive $15,000 scholarships toward an MBA from the University of

Texas at Arlington, as well as professional marketing videos, which are shown during the luncheon. And the mayor of Fort Worth presents plaques.

Four years after the first awards were given out, the benefits for recipients are clear. When their free membership period is up, many of them decide to stay on as fully invested members of the club. They can see the positive results of networking with like-minded people, and some even pursue club leadership positions. "All the award winners, they got all that publicity within the club itself. Now they're becoming part of the natural network that exists," Jordan says. "Not only have winners stayed in the club, they've led committees."

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**AWARD WINNER JEFF POSTELL,** whose business took fifth place in 2021, started in the construction industry when he dropped out of college at 19. He had enrolled at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, to study biology, but he says he spent more time hunting and fishing. Within a year, he was on academic probation.

His first construction job involved kneeling on ceramic tile and using a toothbrush-sized wire brush to scrub grout lines. Through the years, he worked his way up to supervisor and project manager roles and went back to college for degrees in construction engineering and business management.

Now, he's the owner of Post L Group, a contracting business in Fort Worth. He also runs a nonprofit, Building Pathways, that gives young people from disadvantaged communities opportunities in the construction industry and guides them through the start of their careers. "I think people are concerned about the bottom line and growth in their business, but not the growth of humans and these communities," Postell says. "Construction is the quickest way for neighborhoods to flip themselves and for people to make money over the poverty line."

When Postell's company won the Minority Business Award and he started attending Rotary meetings, he realized the club's mission aligned with his nonprofit's purpose. "Rotary, to me, is one of the best organizations in Fort Worth," Postell says. "I love our mission. It's a breath of fresh air every Friday for me."

After joining the club, Postell found common ground with a fellow Black member, Richard L. Knight, who was vice president of Knight Waste Services. The two men became fast friends, Postell says, often going on bike rides together. They bonded over their shared experience as fathers, and Knight introduced Postell to potential clients. "We had these great conversations. We both had big hearts for our communities and wanted to hire local people from neighborhoods so they could grow their capacity," he says.

Knight was an ardent supporter of the awards program and for a time served as its chair. After he passed away unexpectedly from a heart attack in May 2024, the award was renamed the Richard L. Knight Minority Business Award.

**Above:** Katrina Rischer owns Carpenter's Cafe & Catering, one of more than two dozen businesses that the club has honored since 2021. **Left:** Jeff Postell's contracting company, Post L Group, was among the inaugural class of winners.

That honor inspired Postell to step up. This year, he contributed $15,000 to become a presenting sponsor for the awards, which gave him a seat on the judging panel and a speaking slot at the luncheon. "God put it on my heart at that moment that I wanted to sponsor this first event after his death. I wanted to make sure I do things with him in mind. His name being tied to Rotary with this award is a big deal for me," Postell says.

**IN LATE JANUARY, BERDEJA WAS** at the historic Fort Worth ballroom where the club regularly gathers, eagerly waiting for a meeting to start. The club had taken a break over the holidays and then had to cancel a meeting because of a rare winter storm. "Friday is my favorite day of the week because I get to see all my friends," she says. "I just can't imagine not going every week."

Berdeja believes that the learning and networking opportunities that the club provides have made her a better leader and business owner, which, in turn, has led to more referrals for her law firm. She recently joined the program committee to find out how the club gets its top-tier speakers, like Mike Maddux, the pitching coach for the Texas Rangers, and Joseph Martin, a retired four-star general who served as the U.S. Army's vice chief of staff.

Having become a stronger leader, Berdeja is paying it forward, serving on the board of a foundation that supports the Young Women's Leadership Academy of Fort Worth and promoting the value of education. "I never thought education was the key to my success," she says. "Years later, I'm so glad I went to school because my life would have been so much different had I not."

Less than two years after winning the award, Berdeja was the one standing at the podium to introduce a new member she'd proposed and helped through the process. And the crowd she spoke to looked different than it did a few years ago, when Jordan floated the idea of the Minority Business Awards. Back then, there were only 13 people of color in the club. Now there are 53. The club also reversed the decline in membership as a whole, and today it boasts about 250 members.

That's thanks in no small part to Berdeja and the other award alumni who promote Rotary, bring guests to meetings, and persuade them to join. "Every Rotarian goes full Rotary. It becomes their identity," Berdeja says. "Everyone's like, 'Here comes Rosie, inviting us to Rotary again.'" ■

**2025**
**Rotary Convention**
**speaker**

This climate communicator wants us to speak to the heart

# *You're the perfect messenger*

**Katharine Hayhoe crunches the data.** She analyzes the models. Then she explains it all, in terms the rest of us can understand — the enormity of our climate crisis, how it magnifies virtually every other serious challenge, and how all hope is not lost. Not by a long shot. ➠

*Illustration by Luis Mazón*

**Hope remains as long as there are people who care enough to have a conversation, which, it turns out, is most people. In a 2023 survey, 63 percent of Americans reported they were somewhat or very worried about climate change. In Canada, that figure was 71 percent. In some of the countries with the largest numbers of Rotary members, places like Brazil and India, it was over 80 percent.**

"Those are the most important people to have conversations with, and most of those people are our friends, neighbors, and family," says Hayhoe, an atmospheric scientist (and that's just the start of her mind-bending resume). "It's not about arguing with people. It's not about going out and looking for that relative or neighbor or colleague who's just obsessed with the idea that climate change isn't real."

Hayhoe is a specialist in finding common ground when talking about climate change, a skill she'll demonstrate at the Rotary International Convention in Calgary in June. A Canadian living in Texas who is married to an evangelical pastor, she will talk on the subject to anyone who will listen, from Rotary clubs to churches to moms groups to the 4 million-plus people who have viewed her TED Talk. "Each of us is the perfect person to have a conversation with people who share our values, interests, and priorities in life," she says. If you're a dog person, talk to another dog person about climate change; if you play golf, talk to another golfer; if you are in Rotary, well, you guessed it.

Chief scientist for the Nature Conservancy and a professor at Texas Tech University, Hayhoe helps people understand the effects of climate change at a local level. She's worked with civil engineers and water managers to assess the impact of climate change on their infrastructure and with cities and states to evaluate how they could be affected.

Hayhoe has won many awards and been named to lists including *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People. The author of the best-selling book *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World,* she writes a weekly newsletter highlighting good news, not-so-good news, and actions you can take.

In advance of the convention, Hayhoe spoke with *Rotary* magazine senior writer Diana Schoberg about the history of climate science, what steps individuals can take, and hope. "The number one answer that most people gave for why they cared about climate change was love, especially love for the next generation, for our children," she says. "Climate change is what stands between them and a better future."

**You often talk about an experience you had at a Rotary club meeting. Can you recount that story for us?**

I still remember the first time I was invited to speak to a Rotary club in West Texas. I walked into the lunch, and right there was a giant banner of The Four-Way Test. And I looked at it and thought, this is the perfect test for climate change.

Is it the truth? It absolutely is. We know the climate is changing, and we know humans are responsible. We know the impacts are serious, and the time to act is now. We've spent over 150 years as scientists checking that.

Is it fair to all concerned? That one really hit me in the heart because that's why I became a climate scientist. When I learned that climate change affects us all, but it doesn't affect us equally — how the people who have done the least to cause the problem are the most impacted — the first thing I thought was, it's not fair. The second thing I thought was, I need to do everything I can to help address this problem.

Will it build goodwill and better friendships to take action? The answer is clearly yes. When communities come together to make sure that they're prepared to cope with flood or drought, storms, hurricanes, or wildfires, it builds goodwill and better friendships. Will climate action be beneficial to all concerned? Absolutely.

So instead of sitting down and having the chicken lunch, I parked myself on a chair in the corner and reorganized my whole presentation around The Four-Way Test. I'll never forget, one of our neighbors, who's a banker, stood up at the end and he said, "Well, you know, I never really thought this whole global warming thing was real, but it passed The Four-Way Test."

**Was there something about that encounter that changed the way you approach talking to groups?**

As a Christian, I often speak to Christian groups and start with our shared faith. But this really brought home to me the power of framing what I had to say in someone else's values. The impact was so profound on the Rotarians who were listening that it underscored the power of beginning with what we have in common and speaking to our hearts rather than our heads.

**How could climate change impact the causes Rotary supports, like literacy, promoting peace, fighting disease?**

One of the best descriptors I've heard of climate change comes from the U.S. military. They call it a threat multiplier. In other words, 9 times out of 10, we don't care about climate change because of what it's doing itself — if the planet were warming by a degree or 2 and that was all, it'd be a scientific curiosity. But we care about climate change because that warming of the planet is loading the weather dice against us. It is causing wildfires to burn greater area. It's making hurricanes stronger. It's causing sea level to rise. It's causing extreme rain events to become more common, and droughts to become stronger, and heat waves to become a lot more dangerous. All of these changes are affecting our food, our water. They're affecting the safety of our homes. They're affecting people's ability to have access to health care or education.

It's like we have these buckets of issues that we care about. We care about education, we care about poverty, we care about hunger, we care about health and disease. We're putting all this effort and time and funds into these buckets to help address these very, very urgent issues. But the buckets have holes in the bottom, and that's climate change. Climate change is the hurdle we have to get past in order to actually fix the issues that we're working on that we care about so passionately.

Katharine Hayhoe will be a keynote speaker at the Rotary International Convention in June. Register at **convention.rotary.org.**

**You mentioned that scientists have been investigating climate change for over 100 years. When and why did it become so contentious?**

By the 1850s scientists knew that digging up and burning coal produced heat-trapping gasses that, as they built up in the atmosphere, would cause the planet to warm. In the 1890s a Swedish scientist named Svante Arrhenius calculated by hand how much the planet would warm if we doubled or tripled levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It was the very first climate model.

By the 1960s, scientists were worried enough that they warned U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson of the risks of climate change. And by then all the big oil and gas companies and all the big car companies had their own scientists doing their own research showing what would happen if we continued our addiction to fossil fuels and gas-powered cars.

So did the whole world immediately change? No. In fact, something like 70 percent of all our carbon emissions have happened since the 1970s. A big part of it is due to our human psychology. We typically don't make changes until we actually see the impacts with our own eyes.

So when did it begin to matter? In 1988 there was a very hot summer. NASA scientist James Hansen testified to Congress saying, yes, global warming was making heat waves more common. *Time* magazine had a cover with the planet on it. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change came together in 1992, and every country in the world, including the U.S., agreed to prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

When fossil fuel companies realized that climate change was transitioning from a future issue to a present issue, they funded some of the same people who had worked with the tobacco industry to muddy the waters on whether smoking actually causes cancer, as described in great detail in the book *Merchants of Doubt*. They said, we don't have to convince people that climate change isn't real. We just have to say we're not sure.

Nobody, not even the scientists who work for the fossil fuel industry, had ever had a problem with the basic science. It's the same science that explains how stoves and fridges heat and cool food, and there aren't a lot of people who think stoves don't work. People started to question the science not because they actually had a problem with the science but because they didn't want people to act. And the best way to prevent action is to say it's not a problem in the first place.

**Do the actions of an individual matter?**

Having solar panels, eating a plant-based meal, taking public transportation, or switching your light bulbs all eliminate a little bit of those heat-trapping gasses. But I crunched the numbers, and I realized that even if everyone who's worried about climate change and who has the resources to make changes did so, it still would only address about 20 percent of the problem.

*The Four-Way Test is the perfect test for climate change.*

Looking at history, abolitionists boycotted sugar and cotton because those were typically produced by slave labor, but boycotting sugar and cotton was not what led to slavery's abolition. Women got the vote, civil rights were enacted, apartheid ended, gay marriage was legalized because people used their voices.

Now, you'll see pinned to the top of my social media accounts a list of the actions that individuals can take that make the biggest difference, based on the social science. Number one is to have a conversation about why climate action matters and what we can do: not just polar bears and ice sheets, but what's happening in my life and to the people and places and things I love, and then what can my school, my organization, my Rotary club, my business, my church, what we can do together to make a difference.

The second thing is join a climate action group to amplify your voice even more. Number three is to start conversations where you work or where you study. You see a common theme here. Number four is to look at where you keep your money, because often we don't realize that investing $1,000 in a bank that invests that money in fossil fuels produces the same amount of carbon as flying from New York to Seattle once a year. And then use our voice with elected officials. In the U.S., 99.9 percent of elected officials are not federal, and research by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication has shown that elected officials systematically underestimate how much their constituents care about climate change because they never hear from them.

And then the last thing on the list is make changes in your personal life. But make those changes contagious by talking about them. Individuals have changed the world before, and I'm convinced we can do it again. It all begins with using our voice.

**I was struck by your newsletter. Have you had criticism that it's too hopeful?**

For some reason, we are just obsessed with the idea that guilt, shame, and fear are enough to not only spark but to maintain long-term behavioral change. Fear certainly wakes us up. We have to understand there's a problem — that's one side of the coin, but we also need the other side of the coin. We need to understand what we can do about it. In the U.S., two-thirds of people are worried. But you know what percent are activated? Eight percent.

If they're worried but not activated, more worry is not going to activate them. More worry is just going to paralyze them. What they're missing is what social scientists call efficacy. Efficacy is often what we might refer to as hope — the idea that if I do something it will make a difference.

It isn't wishful thinking. It's not burying my head in the sand. Hope requires action, and action breeds hope. The social science is clear that doom and gloom messaging wakes us up, and it gets the most clicks and shares on social media. But, and these are the words of the researchers, it is the absolute worst at motivating people to act. Instead, it simply paralyzes us, and that is the last thing we need right now. We need to be empowered to act. ■

# OUR CLUBS

VIRTUAL VISIT

## Class act

Rotary Club of Palo Alto, California

**Going back to school** full time in his late 30s, Brandon Ricks encountered challenges beyond just keeping up with his studies. He had a new baby to care for. His wife's teaching salary wasn't enough to support their small family in California's pricey Silicon Valley. And even if he could have picked up a part-time job, it wouldn't have covered the necessary child care costs. "We were really struggling with bills," he recalls.

But he was tired of living paycheck to paycheck, and community college was a path to a better career. To save on costs, they had moved in with his mother-in-law. And one of Ricks' teachers at Foothill College allowed him to attend class through video conferencing so he could care for his daughter. While changing diapers, he would listen to lectures as he studied for his degree in radiologic technology, the health care field that involves X-rays, MRIs, and other medical imaging.

Another crucial lift came in the form of a scholarship sponsored by the Rotary Club of Palo Alto. Now in its 18th year, the club's scholarship program has awarded $350,000 in need-based vocational scholarships to 165 students attending local community colleges, according to Club President Rebecca Geraldi. "We don't insist that the money solely go to school expenses. We just want to help make their lives a little easier," Geraldi says.

This year, the club will award a total of $40,000, up from $35,000 in 2024, she says. The scholarships help fill a gap in educational funding, which is often focused on students planning to attend four-year universities, says club member Dana Tom, who has been involved in the scholarship program for years. An education consultant and former software developer, Tom also has extensive experience serving on his local school board.

"These students don't get enough attention," Tom says. "Our applicants are adult students, only rarely right out of high school, and they're working so hard to lift themselves up. I feel like we're just helping them over the hump."

Leading reasons students leave community college programs include employment conflicts, financial stress, and child care needs, according to a 2023 study from the think tank New America. That's a big reason why the Palo Alto club's scholarships are need-based and don't have to be used for tuition. The only requirement is that applicants be enrolled at least part time in a vocational certification or degree program.

"I had no idea the scholarship existed," says Ricks. "I heard about it through the director of my program. She knew I was

### TIPS ON SCHOLARSHIPS

**Interested in starting a vocational scholarship program in your area? Try these tips from the Rotary Club of Palo Alto:**

**Reach out to local community colleges.** Learn how they handle financial aid and scholarships. If you're unfamiliar with the community college system in your area, start with your state's department of education. The American Association of Community Colleges also has a college finder resource at **aacc.nche.edu/college-finder.**

**Identify funding.** Find a steady source to cover the scholarships' cost. The Palo Alto club hosts an annual fundraising dinner. It also has an endowment and fundraising events throughout the year.

**Build relationships.** Reach out to community college teachers, advisers, counselors, and the chairs of vocational departments. These individuals are best equipped to identify hardworking students in need of financial help.

**Rely on teacher recommendations.** Many of the most deserving students are too busy to look for scholarships, often because of job and family commitments.

Members of the Rotary Club of Palo Alto — including (from left) Sally Tomlinson, Dana Tom, Rebecca Geraldi, Joy Oche, and Pamela Krudop — provide need-based scholarships to community college students.

struggling with paying for books and all the things I needed." Ricks was awarded $3,500 to use however he needed.

During the selection process, students write a personal essay and get a recommendation letter from a teacher or counselor. Finalists are interviewed by a panel of Rotary club members, who say the process is deeply moving. Geraldi notes that past recipients include a woman who fled her abusive husband with her 1-year-old daughter. One young man had been kicked out of his childhood home when he told his parents he is gay. Others had been living on a friend's couch or in a garage, and some are military veterans with past issues of substance use. "Every single year, our committee is in tears because of the stories we hear," Geraldi says.

In his essay for the scholarship, Ricks relayed how he lost his stepbrother to gang violence in his hometown of Fresno, a city in the heart of central California's agricultural region. Gang members tried to recruit him too. He was accepted into a middle school in a more affluent neighborhood, but as one of the few Black students he felt like an outsider — for the first time, he was called a racial slur — so he returned to his neighborhood for high school.

The Palo Alto club works with five Bay Area community colleges to identify eligible students pursuing certificates and associate degrees that lead to careers in dental hygiene, veterinary technology, nursing, auto technology, and other professions. Scholarships typically range from $1,000 to $3,000 based on need, but they can go higher if the student's post-graduation plans exemplify Rotary's mission, Geraldi says.

One exemplary student: Yolanda Mercado. The 27-year-old, who is studying respiratory therapy, was awarded $5,000, in part because she wants to work in a lower-income community after she graduates this year. She emigrated from Mexico with her family when she was a child, and growing up, she and her two siblings would translate for their mother, who worked two or three jobs at a time to raise them. "We saw her struggle," Mercado says. "One day, my brother told her, 'You only come home to sleep,' and it broke her heart. When we got to high school, we told her to stop working so much. We would help."

Mercado says there was always a wave of relief when a medical professional could speak Spanish. When she graduates, she wants to be that relief for immigrant families.

The scholarship program is named after the late Robert Smithwick, a longtime club member who founded the Foothill-De Anza Community College District, which became the model for the California Community Colleges system. Smithwick was a community activist devoted to improving health and education, Geraldi says.

Now a father of two, Ricks graduated from his radiologic technology program in 2024 and quickly found a job at a hospital in San Jose. "Going back to school was rough," Ricks says. "But my wife and I, our kids, we pushed through it, and we're better for it." — ERIN GARTNER

*Photograph by Ian Tuttle*

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

# A force for good

Using technology, government can win back people's trust. A former Rotary Scholar shows us how.

Beth Simone Noveck is in awe of the Rotary members who made it possible to attend Oxford. "I am so grateful," she says.

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

**Like so many, Beth Simone Noveck** found her mind swirling with questions during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic: Was it safe to go outside? If she got food delivered, would she need to wipe down the packaging? Was she a bad mother for wearing pajamas all day or repeatedly feeding her son cereal for dinner? "Everyone, of every religion, class, and country, faced this incredible challenge," she remembers. "There was a feeling of helplessness."

In the midst of the uncertainty, Noveck drew on her twin interests in technology and government, cultivated during her time as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar. As the chief innovation officer for the state of New Jersey at the time, she and her team quickly built a website with centralized COVID-19 information, a symptom tracker, an online form that inventoried supplies of medical and personal protective equipment, and another that coordinated donations of that equipment.

"It's a core value of Rotary," she says, "that people come together to serve their community, and that by working in groups you don't have to be a superhero to do extraordinary things. As difficult as COVID was, and as much as I regret feeding my child cereal so often, I felt good that I could be useful and act."

Noveck grew up in Toms River, New Jersey, on a former chicken farm that her mother's parents, refugees from Germany, started in 1937. She recalls a childhood of cats and trees and bare feet in the dirt, the earthy smells of cut grass and damp soil, picking flowers and canning vegetables. The chickens were gone by then, but her family still grew vegetables for themselves and to sell. "At age 4, I was made the VP of a business called the Greener Thumb," she says, "which meant sitting on the front lawn and selling tomatoes."

She learned early on about technology. Her father, a rabbi, was retired, so her mother became the principal earner, not only selling

vegetables but trading stocks pre-internet. Noveck grew up with the mechanical click-clack of a ticker-tape machine. Her mother then started a travel agency and in 1982 brought home a magical new thing called an IBM personal computer. Thus began Noveck's love of technology, which she has melded into her other interests ever since.

That computer, Noveck says, "enabled my mother to raise two kids, cook three meals a day, earn a living, and also engage with the wider world far beyond where we lived. So in my experience it was a significant tool of empowerment."

Noveck's grandfather was a Rotarian. In college at Harvard, she heard about and applied for an "extraordinarily generous" Rotary Foundation scholarship to study abroad for a year, which she says was "so formative for my career and the work I do."

The scholarship sent her to the University of Oxford in England in 1992, and she studied political science and democratic theory. She remembers great discussions and making friends from around the world with whom she remains close.

Noveck is still in awe of the many Rotary members whose contributions made her experience possible. "I went to college on a scholarship and could never have afforded Oxford, so this kind of experience for a whole year allowed me to really go in-depth into the work I started there," she says. "My historical study of Germany and Austria in the 1920s and '30s allowed me to investigate why some countries are able to maintain democracy, and why others crumble into fascism."

After Oxford, Noveck earned a PhD at the University of Innsbruck in Austria and a law degree at Yale. She clerked for a year in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, while also managing the team that built a software program called Unchat, which promoted "democratic deliberation and distance learning."

For two years she served in the White House under President Barack Obama, leading the White House Open Government Initiative to make the government more transparent and participatory. She has published three books and numerous articles, and she's had professorial stints at Yale, Stanford, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, New York University, and the University of Pennsylvania. She is now a professor at Northeastern University in Boston, where she directs the Burnes Center for Social Change as well as the Governance Lab.

Noveck points out that trust in government has dropped precipitously over the decades since President Ronald Reagan's famous quote, "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the government, and I'm here to help." She says that government can use new technologies, including artificial intelligence, to improve its responsiveness to people's needs. She ticks off successful examples: programs and apps that have streamlined food-assistance applications, eased job searches, and reduced cardiac deaths by alerting people trained in CPR to a cardiac emergency nearby.

Much of her current work involves teaching young people skills to use technology to improve the world. Her former students have created apps that helped people experiencing domestic abuse and taught information technology job skills to refugees. As Noveck said in a TED Talk, "When we start by teaching young people that ... we have the power to change our communities, to change our institutions, that's when we begin to really put ourselves on the pathway towards ... this open government revolution."

"I am so grateful to Rotary for their support," she says. "It provided me with opportunities, new vistas, a sense of purpose, and an ethos of service. It was extraordinary."

— NATHANIEL READE

"It's a core value of Rotary that people come together to serve their community, and that by working in groups you don't have to be a superhero to do extraordinary things."

**Beth Simone Noveck**

- **Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar,** University of Oxford, 1992-93; PhD, University of Innsbruck, 1994; law degree, Yale University, 1997
- **Deputy chief technology officer and White House Open Government Initiative director,** U.S. Office of Science and Technology Policy, 2009-11
- **Professor, director of the Burnes Center for Social Change, and director of the Governance Lab,** Northeastern University, 2021-present

DISPATCHES FROM OUR SISTER MAGAZINES
*ROTARY KOREA*

# Food Truck of Love

After a plane crash in Korea, Rotary members serve 2,000 meals a day to first responders

**Hyun Ok Baek was spending the morning** with her grandchild when she saw the news on TV: There had been a plane crash at Korea's Muan International Airport.

The 29 December accident during the landing of Jeju Air flight 7C2216, arriving from Bangkok, killed 179 passengers, including a Rotary member, sending shockwaves throughout the country.

"I couldn't eat lunch that day," says Baek, governor of Rotary District 3710, which includes Muan County. Her immediate question: How could Rotary members help? "My mind kept turning to what role we could play in the aftermath," she says.

Emergency responders lacked basic necessities like water, hot food, and a warm place to rest, she learned from Geun-Heong Yang, a Rotary member and a volunteer firefighter. She also contacted District 3710 Secretary Heng Shim, whose experience in disaster response helped her make a quick and informed decision.

They wasted no time. Within hours, messages were sent to the district's volunteer group chat, summoning members who could help. Supplies like bottled water, coffee, ramen, and kimchi were quickly gathered, while team leaders coordinated shifts and transportation. "In any disaster, the first 24 to 48 hours are vital," says Shim. "Before government or municipal resources can fully mobilize, there's a golden window where immediate assistance can make the most impact."

The district's Service Above Self team, a rapid-response unit formed in 2010 to provide aid in times of crisis, set plans in motion. The team's Food Truck of Love was ready to deploy, its industrial kitchen capable of preparing up to 200 meals at a time.


↑ District 3710 Governor Hyun Ok Baek, third from left, and other Rotary members in Korea provide food and other necessities to emergency responders working at the crash site of Jeju Air flight 7C2216 near Korea's Muan International Airport.

Financial help also came swiftly. District 3710, with the support of 13 other Rotary districts across Korea, allotted about US$30,000-$40,000 right away. Funding came from a combination of district grants and contributions from individual Rotary members.

Eight hours after the accident, Rotary vehicles reached the heavily restricted crash site. Rotary was the first volunteer organization to arrive at the scene. While access was denied to many others in the early stages, the Rotary members' clear purpose and careful preparation ultimately won them entry.

"I assured them that our food truck was fully equipped to provide hot meals and beverages immediately, which would help sustain those doing the hard and heartbreaking work of recovery," says Baek. The Food Truck of Love, a supply truck carrying water and food, and a six-passenger SUV packed with 12 volunteers entered, and the Rotarians got to work.

## Serendipitous kimchi

The sight that greeted the team was harrowing. Twisted remnants of the aircraft's tail loomed over the crash site, and the acrid smell of jet fuel and burning debris hung in the air. Hundreds of firefighters, police officers, military personnel, forensic investigators, and medical staff members were engaged in a grim and emotionally taxing operation to recover victims and assess the damage.

Rotary members set up the Food Truck of Love and a tent steps from the wreck site. "We started boiling water immediately," says Kyoung Hee Bae, the Service Above Self team leader. "The first priority was to provide hot drinks and quick meals to keep the responders warm and energized."

Six large containers of water were continuously heated in the bitter cold, for a steady supply of coffee, tea, and instant noodles. The team members provided more than 2,000 meals daily. They started by offering simple but comforting sta-

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF ROTARY DISTRICT 3710

ples: kimbap rice rolls, cup noodles, and rice cake soup. In the following days, they expanded their menu to include pork kimchi stew, seaweed soup, bread, roasted sweet potatoes, and snacks. Hot packs, blankets, and toiletries like toothpaste and towels were also provided, says Shim.

Over six days, the team distributed a staggering 700 kilograms (about 1,500 pounds) of kimchi, a staple of Korean meals. Coincidentally, the district had held its annual kimchi-making event a week before, a tradition that provides kimchi to community members, and it had 400 kilograms left over. But it soon became clear the relief team needed more. To ensure a steady supply, volunteers quickly pooled their funds to purchase 300 kilograms of pickled cabbage.

Another bit of good timing: Days earlier, the team had decided to replace the gas tanks for the food cookers, even though they weren't empty. "There were discussions about whether we should wait to replace the gas, but we agreed it was better to be ready," says Bae. "I can't imagine what would have happened if we had run out of gas during those crucial first hours of service."

Rotary members worked in shifts, with teams arriving at 5 a.m. each day to relieve their colleagues. Most members put in 24-hour shifts, while others remained on-site for days without going home, catching brief moments of rest on makeshift cardboard beds in the tent. One volunteer sustained a burn while cooking seaweed soup, while others faced exhaustion and illness from the harsh conditions.

The responders' gratitude fueled the team's determination. "One young firefighter came up to me, his uniform covered in soot, and said, 'This cup of coffee saved my night,'" says Shim. "Moments like that made every effort worthwhile."

## Look for the people in the blue Rotary vests

While Shim has participated in many volunteer efforts, this was the most heartbreaking, he says. "Among the deceased was a fellow Rotarian who had traveled with his two sons. His wife and daughter couldn't join the trip due to other commitments. It was supposed to be a special moment for him to spend time with his sons, especially his youngest, who was in his final year of high school," says Shim. "Losing all three in this tragedy was unbearably painful."

Despite the profound sadness, Baek says there were moments of pride and connection.

"We stood shoulder to shoulder with responders, offering not just food and warmth but the assurance that they weren't alone," she says.

When someone on-site posted a social media message noting the Rotary members' efforts, it was an affirmation to Bae that they were genuinely making a difference. "They wrote that anyone needing food or warmth should look for the people in blue Rotary vests, because we'd be there offering hot meals and a place to rest," says Bae.

## Continued support

Rotary members' help didn't end with the recovery operation. For Bae, who runs a funeral home in nearby Gwangju city, his work continued with the funerals of 22 of the victims.

"It felt profoundly ironic, going from the crash site to arranging the final goodbyes for those who had passed," Bae says. "I thought the hardest part was being at the site, but in truth, the weeks that followed were even more emotionally draining."

Recognizing the ongoing trauma for the victims' families, Rotary members have begun initiatives to provide long-term support. Baek, a professor of counseling, has started organizing sessions for families to address their grief. There are also plans to adapt existing programs to help children cope with losing a loved one, Shim adds.

Meanwhile, Baek says many community members, inspired by the response to the tragedy, have inquired about joining Rotary. "We're now helping them form a new club," she says. "It's a reminder that even in the darkest times, there is room for hope and growth." — SEOHA LEE

Explore the work Rotary members are doing by visiting the Service Project Center at **spc.rotary.org.**


Rotary District 3710's food truck arrived and members offered assistance just eight hours after the accident. Rotary was the first volunteer organization to reach the heavily restricted crash site.

HANDBOOK

# Some things fishy

**In Alberta, the Bow River descends** from the Rocky Mountains and flows to and through Calgary — which means that the host city for the 2025 Rotary International Convention sits alongside a waterway teeming with rainbow trout, brown trout, and whitefish. “A stretch of the Bow southeast from Calgary is recognized as a blue-ribbon river because of the quality and the number of fish there,” says Quinn Soonias, a fishing guide on the Bow and a member of the Cree Nation. “One of the beliefs of my culture is that water is very sacred” — a belief that can make an outing on the Bow an adventure and a shared communal experience.

## FLIES

Choose lures to mimic the insects that fish are feeding on. A good guide will provide the gear you'll need, including the appropriate flies. Some suggested flies for late June:

**Dry fly:** Yellow stimulator

**Streamer:** Sparkle minnow

**Nymph:** Tungsten prince

## APPAREL

- A good rain jacket
- Your favorite fishing hat
- Polarized sunglasses
- Footwear that can get muddy and wet

## GUIDES, GEAR, AND MORE

Newcomers to the Bow are encouraged to hire a seasoned outfitter. "We want you to catch fish," says Soonias, "and we use all our tricks to make that happen."

- **Drift Out West:** Get more tips from Quinn Soonias, buy his hand-tied flies, and arrange an eight-hour float at **driftoutwest.com.**
- **Fish Tales Fly Shop:** Buy gear at the store (12100 Macleod Trail SE), or book your guide and get helpful updates at **fishtalesflyshop.com.**
- **Out Fly Fishing:** Visit a newer shop (9919 Fairmount Drive SE) that's good for gear and guides at **calgarysflyshop.com.**
- Buy your **fishing license:** CA$31-$33 for a one-day license, depending on where you live, at **albertarelm.com.**
- There's still time to reel in your reservation to attend the **convention in Calgary** 21-25 June. Sign up at **convention.rotary.org.**

*Illustration by Zoë van Dijk*

TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

# Meet the moment

**There are moments in our journey** to end polio when doubt and uncertainty may take hold, yet we must remain steadfast and, above all, hopeful as we keep our eyes on the goal. As Winston Churchill once said in a moment of crisis: "We cannot afford — we have no right — to look back. We must look forward."

In Rotary, we always rise to meet the moment. No challenge is too great. In 1988, when we partnered with the World Health Organization to form the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, an estimated 350,000 polio cases occurred annually across 125 countries. Since then, the GPEI — which also includes UNICEF, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Gates Foundation, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance — has worked tirelessly with governments worldwide. Together, we have reduced wild poliovirus cases by 99.9 percent.

The journey has not been without challenges. Today in Afghanistan, vaccinators are prohibited from conducting house-to-house immunization campaigns, while in Pakistan, conflict, terrorism, and migration hinder access to children in certain regions.

Earlier this year, the United States announced its intention to withdraw from the WHO, froze USAID funding, and restricted interactions with the CDC. These developments present obstacles for our polio eradication efforts and other Rotary global partnerships and programs.

Yet we rise to meet the moment, just as we have done before. We did so in India when we faced spikes in cases before the country was declared free of wild poliovirus in 2014. In Nigeria, we also encountered obstacles, but in 2020, WHO certified the country — and by extension, all 47 countries in the WHO Africa region — wild polio-free.

We are meeting the moment once again in 2025. Know that Rotary is working behind the scenes, collaborating with governments, international agencies, and partners to address challenges, manage disruptions, and explore alternative funding. As a nonpolitical organization, we remain focused on operational solutions while serving communities and protecting public health.

My wife, Gay, and I have witnessed firsthand the urgent need of the moment in India, Nigeria, and Pakistan, where we administered vaccines to children. Looking into their eyes, I saw the future we are fighting for — and the responsibility we carry to finish the job.

The winds of change may shift, but with your help, Rotary's commitment to eradicating polio will stand strong until our mission is complete.

**MARK DANIEL MALONEY**
*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.

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF MARK MALONEY

CALENDAR

# May events

## DUCKS IN A ROW

**Event:** Reedy River Duck Derby
**Host:** Rotary Club of the Reedy River Greenville, South Carolina
**What it benefits:** Local nonprofits and international projects
**Date:** 3 May

Every year, people gather to watch some 14,000 rubber ducks race down the Reedy River and over the waterfall in Falls Park. Each duck can be "adopted" for a price, and the first 50 to cross the finish line earn prizes for those who have adopted them. The grand prize is a year's worth of groceries and a chance to win $1 million. The family-friendly event includes live music, face painting, yard games, and food trucks.

## A DISTRICTWIDE RIDE

**Event:** Ride to End Polio
**Host:** Rotary District 5650 (parts of Iowa and Nebraska)
**What it benefits:** End Polio Now
**Date:** 10 May

This bike race outside Omaha, Nebraska, is inspired by El Tour de Tucson, an annual ride popular among Rotary members fundraising for polio eradication. The District 5650 event offers routes of 10, 25, 42, and 62 miles. It includes a health fair, bike safety and maintenance clinics, and food trucks. Last year's inaugural event attracted 60 riders and raised $20,000.

## FISH FOR A CAUSE

**Event:** Shrimp & Catfish Festival
**Host:** Rotary Club of Baytown, Texas
**What it benefits:** Local and international projects and nonprofits
**Date:** 10 May

Seafood lovers can chow down at this annual festival at the Baytown Community Center, where a $15 ticket buys a meal that includes boiled shrimp, fried catfish, and french fries. The event features entertainment, live and silent auctions, and a raffle drawing that gives entrants the chance to win a 2025 Honda SUV or pickup truck.

## PEDAL PAST THE PETALS

**Event:** Siskiyou Scenic Bicycle Tour and Greenhorn Gravel Grinder
**Host:** Rotary Club of Yreka, California
**What it benefits:** Local projects and scholarships
**Dates:** 17-18 May

First held in the 1980s, this two-day event is a favorite of cyclists in far northern California. It features five all-pavement routes of between 21 and 104 miles, as well as three partially or mostly gravel routes of between 39 and 63 miles. Riders will enjoy views of Mount Shasta and wildflower-filled valleys along the way and a meal and refreshments at the finish line. Camping is available nearby.

## IN HONOR OF THE FALLEN

**Event:** Yorktown Freedom Run
**Host:** Rotary Club of Yorktown, Virginia
**What it benefits:** Local projects, nonprofits, and scholarships
**Date:** 26 May

A Memorial Day tradition in its 34th year, this 8K race takes runners along scenic roads in Yorktown Battlefield, a part of Colonial National Historical Park where the last major battle of the American Revolutionary War was fought. Medals are given to the top three male and female runners overall and in various age groups. There is also a 5K fun run/walk.

## HERE'S TO MANY MORE!

**Event:** 100th Anniversary Celebration
**Host:** Rotary Club of Seward, Nebraska
**What it benefits:** A project to improve the Seward Bandshell
**Date:** 31 May

Chartered 28 March 1925, the club will celebrate its centennial on the site of the Junto vineyards outside Seward. The event includes dinner, a silent auction, and the presentation of annual awards recognizing local individuals. The proceeds will support the club's signature centennial service project, the installation of a shade canopy at a historic outdoor bandshell to make the audiences more comfortable and expand the venue's use.

**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: COURTESY OF ROTARY CLUB OF YREKA

IN BRIEF

# Rotary honors a teacher and mentor with Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award

**Ayda Özeren,** an author, mediator, and professional speaker whose work has touched the lives of thousands of women and girls, is the 2024-25 recipient of Rotary's Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award. A member of the Rotary Club of İzmir-Gündogdu in Turkey, Özeren combines a long-standing commitment to empowering women with a talent for teaching and mentorship.

"We have to change the leadership process. We should make more women leaders," she says.

For years, Özeren has conducted financial literacy workshops for women and organized mentorship opportunities and tutoring programs for girls. She funded girls' scholarships using the proceeds from a book she wrote. As 2023-24 governor of District 2440, she was deeply involved in relief efforts for victims of the devastating earthquakes that struck Turkey and Syria in February 2023.

"I find her remarkable and inspiring because whatever she does, she does it with her heart," says Yeşim Yöney, a member of the Rotary E-Club of District 2440, who co-nominated Özeren for the award. "She's a hard worker, a good planner, and she is somebody who is positive, who embraces people. I think that's a very important thing in a leader."

Özeren studied political science, international relations, and marketing before pursuing a career in the banking industry. When her bank developed a program to provide startup funding to female entrepreneurs, she began conducting financial literacy seminars for the program's participants. She visited more than 100 factories and small manufacturing companies,

educating around 8,000 women about finances and economic empowerment. Through Rotary, she led similar classes for women in rural areas and in schools.

It was by teaching others, Özeren says, that she learned how to lead. "As a result of doing so many coaching programs, I became a facilitator. I became a trainer," she says. "At the same time, I started tutoring in a university, giving lessons in strategic management. It was a little tough, it was very challenging for me, because I had to study each subject first before I could give a lecture to the students."

Özeren found her next avocation almost by accident. Reflecting on her experiences in banking, she started a blog and soon discovered her talents as a communicator. In 2021 she published a book of essays, *Azız Çoğuz Biziz.* (The title, she explains, translates roughly to *We Are More When We Are Together.*) She was able to fund around 1,000 scholarships for girls with the royalties.

"Nobody pushed her to write a book," Yöney says. "She just said, 'I'm going to donate all the proceeds to empowering girls with scholarships.' She's a strong personality. As a woman leader myself, I really admire her."

Özeren pursued many economic relief projects in the wake of the 2023 earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. She led efforts to provide mobile health care and dental facilities. Through a project called the Golden Needle, she helped women find work making traditional textiles. She also collaborated with city governments to distribute olive and sumac saplings to women in the farming sector, enabling them to continue farming after their crops were destroyed.

"I was the district governor-elect at the time, so I just worked a lot to raise funds and get funding to the right places," she says. "In those times you don't think, you just help."

A Rotarian for more than two decades, Özeren has also served as district public image chair and executive secretary and as club president. She is a member of The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers. Before joining her Rotary club, she was a Rotaractor in İzmir and remains close with her Rotaract friends.

"I'm still proud of being a Rotaractor. I still have that Rotaract spirit," she says. "I always keep in touch with Rotaractors and try to get them involved in the international world of Rotary."

— ETELKA LEHOCZKY

The Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award annually honors one member who is actively working to advance women in Rotary. Learn more and view a gallery of past recipients at **rotary.org/sylvia-whitlock-leadership-award-gallery.**

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF AYDA ÖZEREN


# Raise for Rotary

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Raise for Rotary is The Rotary Foundation's online peer-to-peer fundraising tool that allows you to raise money for your favorite Rotary cause. Create a fundraiser to mark your birthday, a special event, or an athletic challenge, and then share with your social networks how people can help you do good in the world!

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The Rotary Foundation

2025 CONVENTION

# Your convention faves

**The votes are in:** Members planning to attend the Rotary International Convention in Calgary say they're most excited to find project partners and learn about RI's work.

They also give high marks to seeing friends from past conventions and meeting new people from around the world, in a just-for-fun poll on Rotary's new channel on the messaging platform WhatsApp. And a good number of people say they're eager to put on a cowboy hat in Calgary, a modern city with Western frontier roots.

President Stephanie Urchick asks you to join her in Canada 21-25 June because the convention is your place to form lifelong connections and discover new perspectives. "This motivating event will inspire and transform you," Urchick says.

Calgary is a travel destination that's easy to love. The bustling city center is simple to get around and close to hotels and the convention grounds, where you can watch a heart-pounding Wild West entertainment extravaganza. Your fellow members who are helping to organize the convention and special experiences can't wait to share with you Calgary's diversity in food, arts, and cultures and its sustainable features, like a light rail line powered by wind energy. The dining scene is a favorite of Mark Starratt, co-chair of the Host Organization Committee, who recommends the many downtown restaurants that feature ingredients from nearby farms or global fare from international chefs.

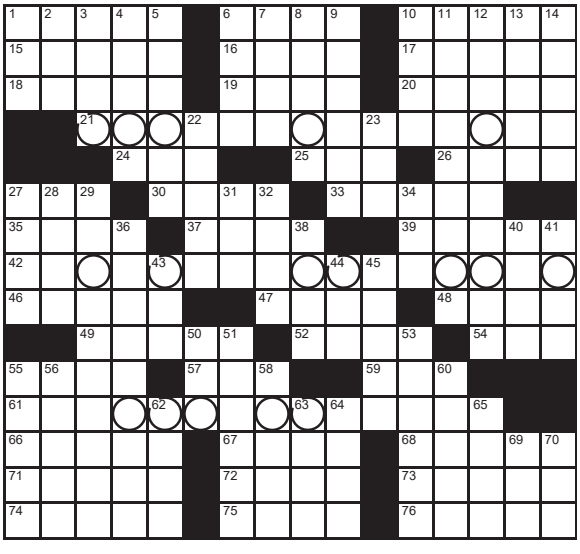
With so much to do close to the main event, Starratt says all members will find unforgettable experiences, "regardless of your age, regardless of whether you're bringing your family, you're bringing your spouse, you're traveling as a single, you're 70, you're 40, you're a Rotaractor." ■

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

CROSSWORD

# A time for young leaders

By Victor Fleming
Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas

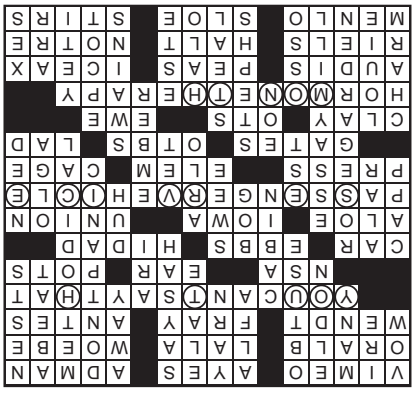


Solution on **opposite page**

**ACROSS**
**1** YouTube alternative
**6** "The ___ have it!"
**10** Guy selling TV spots
**15** Brush-Ups brand
**16** In ___ land
**17** "___ unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep ...": Jer. 23:1
**18** George of *Cheers*
**19** Become ragged
**20** Gets the pot started
**21** "Those words are not allowed!"
**24** Cryptologic grp.
**25** Oft-pierced body part
**26** Cooking utensils
**27** ___ *54, Where Are You?*
**30** Abates
**33** Kid's greeting to a parent
**35** Skin-cream element
**37** See 4-Down
**39** Alliance
**42** It's designed to move people
**46** Garlic crusher
**47** Grade sch. designation
**48** Canary's home
**49** Airport units
**52** Some wagering sites, for short
**54** "When I was a ___ ..."
**55** Adobe material
**57** 4th-qtr. followers, sometimes
**59** Bleating female
**61** Treatment for symptoms of menopause
**66** Cars with four-ring logos
**67** Green veggies
**68** Alpine tool
**71** Cambodian cash
**72** "Freeze!"
**73** ___ Dame
**74** Edison's ___ Park
**75** ___ gin fizz
**76** Agitates

**DOWN**
**1** "I do," at the altar
**2** Fury
**3** Numerous
**4** With 37-Across, Midwestern site of the house in Grant Wood's *American Gothic*
**5** Like some angles
**6** ___ Romeo
**7** Adventurer's tale
**8** Bring joy to
**9** Complies with a doctor's request
**10** Distant
**11** "Stay calm"
**12** Done as per a system
**13** "My Heart Skips ___"
**14** Homes among branches
**22** Cruise accommodations
**23** *Exodus* hero
**27** *Li'l Abner* creator Al
**28** Banned chemical
**29** White House area
**31** Swampy ground
**32** ___'Pea
**34** "How obvious!"
**36** Business known for selling term papers
**38** "Alice's Restaurant" chronicler Guthrie
**40** Masha and Irina's sibling in *Three Sisters*
**41** Essential
**43** Not an exact fig.
**44** War returnee
**45** Fleck from a fire
**50** Long geological stretch
**51** Curry and others
**53** Young male suitors
**55** Allure
**56** Danny's *Taxi* role
**58** Misappropriate
**60** Center in central Florida
**62** ___ buco
**63** Angel feature
**64** *Dirección del sol naciente*
**65** Brand of tumblers
**69** Airport info (abbr.)
**70** Crosses (out)

PHOTOGRAPH: MONIKA LOZINSKA



# A dish for every table

In Nigeria, abula is found at food stalls and five-star restaurants

**The Yoruba people of West Africa** have a proverb that says "Ọ̀nà ofun ní ọ̀nà ọ̀rùn," which means "The path to the stomach is the path to heaven." If that's the case, the quintessential Nigerian trinity of gbegiri, ewedu, and amala will take you straight there. "I eat it like three to four times a week, and even people that are not Yorubas do the same," says Toyosi Adebambo, who ran a restaurant until 2008 when he began working in the humanitarian field. "It is actually my favorite."

So what comprises this feast, a favorite from street stalls to five-star restaurants? Gbegiri is a velvety soup made of black-eyed peas or brown beans that are mashed and cooked with spices and palm oil. Ewedu (jute) leaves, iru (fermented locust beans), and spices are boiled together to make an herbal soup to complement it. Served together, they are called abula.

**AS FOR AMALA:** Amala is what's known in English as a "swallow," a category of cooked starchy vegetables and grains kneaded into a doughlike ball to accompany soups. Amala is typically made of yam, plantain, or cassava flour, which is stirred into boiling water until a smooth dough forms. To eat the abula, you pinch off a bit of the amala, roll it between your fingers, and use it to scoop up a bite of soup, much as you would use a crust of bread.

**MORE LORE:** "Most people in Nigeria believe amala, gbegiri, and ewedu were part of the food used to calm people down during previous wars, and also one food that was easier to eat when they were sick," Adebambo explains. And, he adds, it's a food that unites the nation. — DIANA SCHOBERG

**Toyosi Adebambo**
Rotary E-Club of Nigeria New Dawn

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



*Illustration by Kingsley Nebechi*

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