



MESSAGE FROM DISTRICT GOVERNOR KELSEY SOLA

As we approach the final month of this incredible Rotary year, I find myself filled with deep gratitude, joy, and just a little disbelief at how quickly the time has flown.

This weekend, we'll gather for our District Conference, a time to celebrate the impact we've made together, recognize our accomplishments, and look forward to the bright future ahead. I hope to see as many of you there as possible, to laugh, learn, honor each other, and maybe even sing a little along with the dueling pianos (or at least gently sway with Rotary enthusiasm).

As we close out one Rotary chapter, another is ready to begin, and I couldn't be more excited about the incoming leadership team. This district is in strong, capable, and visionary hands. I've had the privilege to work alongside these leaders, and I can tell you: the future of our district is bold, compassionate, and ready to make an even bigger difference. I'm so excited to watch them lead this amazing district.

To my incredible leadership team, assistant governors, committee chairs, trainer, conference event planners, foundation, public image, membership and behind-the-scenes warriors, thank you. You showed up, you worked hard, you rolled with the unexpected, and you led with your hearts. This year would not have happened without your dedication and your belief in our mission. Thank you!

And to every single member across the district, thank you for giving me the honor of serving as your District Governor. It has been one of the most meaningful experiences of my life. Your kindness, your passion for service, and your commitment to Rotary's values have inspired me in more ways than I can count.

We often say Rotary is about "Service Above Self," but I've come to realize it's also about connection above convenience, community above comfort, and love above limits. Thank you for walking this journey with me. It has been a gift, and I will carry it with me always.

With gratitude and Rotary love,
Kelsey Sola
District Governor 2024-2025



THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

by Jim Hinck, District 6960 Foundation Chair

It is hard to believe we are down to just a handful of weeks in this Rotary year. Right now is the time to send in any Rotary Foundation gifts for polio, the Annual fund or other areas of the Foundation to count for this 2024-2025 Rotary year. It may also help your club qualify for a District grant in the upcoming 2025-2026 Rotary year.

Speaking of District grants, now is the time to wrap up any District grants your club was awarded and get reimbursed from District before June 30th. If your club will not be completing an approved grant, this is also the time to contact me or District grant chair Cindy Cedeno.

I've arrived at my final newsletter as your DRFC. It has been a quick 36 months. I recall when I was first asked by District leadership to serve in this position. The sheer magnitude of the responsibilities made me take a moment to pause and reflect. In the end I am so happy I took the job! I learned so much and I met so many amazing Rotarians from all the clubs throughout District 6960. It was especially enjoyable to visit the many clubs in our District. I had the opportunity to see first hand the passion of Rotary and the vast differences in the clubs. I want to thank PDG Andy Lyman, PDG Darryl Keys and PDG Neil Snyder for believing in me and offering me such an important position. I also want to thank PDG Pam Akins, PDG David Lusty, PDG Sandra Hemstead, PDG Rich Kirschner, PDG Steve Schlueter and PDG Rich Kirschner for always being available for a phone call and for the guidance they provided me during my time as DRFC of District 6960. I want to thank the entire Foundation team for all their hard work and dedication for all things Foundation (Julie Pedretti, Cindy Cedeno, PDG Steve Schlueter, PDG Tam Mustapha, PDG Pam Akins, PDG David Lusty, Doug Smoot, Eldon Bohrofen, Nancy Ross, Tom Setchel, PDG Rich Kirschner and Cheryl & Rich Willett. I want to especially thank Julie Pedretti Global grants, Cindy Cedeno District grants and Cheryl & Rich Willett - Polio Co-Chairs for the hours and hours they put in each week to keep all three critical areas of foundation running smoothly.

I want to thank the entire SHARE committee who helped shape and guide our Grant program over the past three years. There are too many members to list by name but they all know how important they are to District 6960. It has been my honor to Chair this important committee the past three years and to work with you all.

A special thank you to PDG David Lusty, PDG Pam Akins, Sherry Penfield and Judy Hammond for your guidance and assistance with the Foundation Gala's we had the past three years. Thank you for making me look good and for the success we had at those events!

District 6960 will be in great hands as PDG Barb Spangler will be taking over as DRFC on July 1st. Barb is an amazing Rotarian and I'm certain she will lead us to new highs and keep the momentum going with all things Foundation.

In reflection, we have had some incredible generosity by all of you in District 6960. Over these three years, donations from your gifts to The Rotary Foundation have reached nearly \$7 million dollars. Way to go District 6960! Just amazing! I expect this final month of June will push us through and past \$7,000,000 in total gifts over the past 36 months.

I also want to thank Rotarian Ethan Wolfson who has helped me each month by placing Foundation updates in the District Newsletter.

What a great 3 years it has been!
Yours in Rotary Service,
Jim

2024-25 District 6960
Rotary Foundation Team

Jim Hinck

District Foundation Chair

Barb Spangler, PDG

District Foundation Vice-Chair

Julie Pedretti

District Global Grants Chair

Cindy Cedeno

District Grants Chair

Steve Schlueter, PDG

District Legacy Gifts Chair

Dr. Tam Mustapha, PDG

District Major Gifts Chair

Pam Akins, PDG

District Paul Harris Society Chair

Doug Smoot

District Paul Harris Fellow Chair
EREY Chair

David Lusty, PDG

District Major Donors Chair

Eldon Bohrofen

District Endowment Chair

Nancy Ross

District Wealth Transfer Chair

Tom Setchel

Annual Fund Share Chairman

Cheryl Willett

District Polio Co-Chair

Richard Willett

District Polio Co-Chair

Rich Kirschner, PDG

Zone Foundation Advisor

*Click a name to contact a
member of your
District Foundation Team*

2024-25 District 6960
Membership Team

Donald Thomas

District Membership Chair

David Lowden

District Membership New Clubs

Teresa Brennan

District Membership Committee

Brad Corbett

District Membership Committee

Jim Henry, PDG

District Membership Committee

Bob Knight

District Membership Committee

Carol Peterson

District Membership Committee

Darryl Keys

District Membership Committee

Mohit Pohani

District Membership Committee

***Click a name to contact a
member of your
District Foundation Team***

ROTARY MEMBERSHIP

by PDG Don Thomas

Last month the newest club was chartered in our District - The Rotary Club of SWFL District 6960

The Charter President is Mohit Pohani; the Charter Secretary is Priya Ahuwalia.

The Rotary club is starting out with 23 professional business owners and community leaders. Please go on DACdb and congratulate the newest club in our district. When a new club first charters, they will need the support of the entire district. In the past we have always supported new clubs financially. Please help to support the Rotary Club of Southwest Florida District 6960.

Presidents-Elect and Club Secretaries: Now is the time to go on myrotary.org and enter your club's information regarding your membership numbers for Rotary year 2025- 2026. It is imperative that this information gets to Rotary International.

Please do not hold back on any new members this month. You need to get them entered into DACdb and Rotary. This will help balance any member you will remove from your club this Rotary year.

PLEASE FINISH STRONG!!!

Let's all congratulate District Governor Kelsey on her leadership and dedication to our district this past Rotary year.

Another Large Hurricane could hit Florida soon! Will You and Rotary be ready?

Hurricane season is rapidly approaching, and the 2025 forecast is for 17 storms with 4 major hurricanes. Last year our District helped hundreds of families begin their home rebuilding process. We were able to do this because of our investment in resources and our numerous volunteers. Before the next storm impacts south Florida, we need to improve our storm preparations and expand our pool of volunteers.

This past year we experienced district wide damage from Hurricanes Helene and Milton and hurricane preparation is one key to reducing the impact of the next storm. As part of the District 6960 Disaster Response effort, we encourage each club to prepare a disaster response plan. Part of that plan is to ensure that each club can communicate with its members immediately before and after a disaster. Effective communication depends on the contact information that is stored in DACdb, our district wide database. Some of you have moved, or changed phone numbers, or just never looked at your data in DACdb. Please take time to log on to DACdb and verify your contact information. Having accurate information in DACdb is essential to our efforts to reduce damage to our homes, reduce injuries, and save lives caused by the next storm.



As individuals these are the measures you can take to prepare for the coming hurricane season:

The ability to respond to a hurricane in South Florida is based on our extensive Rotarian volunteers. To join our volunteer team before the next storm, fill out the volunteer information form [here](#).

Our team needs more Rotarian volunteers who have trucks that can move trailers to relocate our resources immediately before a storm to avoid a direct hit and immediately following a storm to provide aid to storm victims. If you have a truck and can pull a trailer, please contact Joe Pokorney at joe@lancastermcginty.com to join our disaster team.

Hurricane Preparedness weather.gov/hurricane

Prepare Before Hurricane Season

- Develop an evacuation plan
- Assemble disaster supplies: food, water, batteries, charger, radio, cash
- Get an insurance checkup and document your possessions
- Create a communication plan with a hand-written list of contacts
- Strengthen your home



Forty-two student-athletes honored at Rotary South Club Scholar Athlete Banquet

Story by Dustin B Levy, Fort Myers News-Press

The nominees at the 39th annual Rotary South Scholar Athlete Banquet made quite an impression on the selection committee. So much so that instead of only two scholarship winners, there were four co-winners of the male and female Scholar Athlete of the Year awards at Bell Tower DoubleTree on Monday night, May 12th.

The event honored 42 Lee County high school male and female student-athletes for achievements in the classroom and athletics.

Bishop Verot’s Mackenzie De Lisle, North Fort Myers’ Seth Tshiams, and Fort Myers nominees Nick Bloomston and Julia Lemmon received top honors and were awarded \$4,000 scholarships. The other 38 nominees were awarded \$600.



“It felt great to bring it home for Fort Myers and go up there with Julia,” Bloomston said. Bloomston is coming off his second consecutive weightlifting state championship. He also serves on the Lee County Student Athlete Advisory Council as well as co-founder of Exercise Science Club and vice president of Greenshore Initiative.

CLICK HERE Reach and watch more



Rotary 
Zones 33/34

 **LIVE**
VIRTUAL EVENT
TUESDAY, JULY 22
6:00PM EDT

Meet the Zones 33/34 Public Image Team

»» REGISTER AT RIZONES33-34.ORG

Important Message for Club Officers from RI

To: All current and incoming Rotary club officers

Cc: Governors, governors-elect, assistant governors, current and incoming district executive secretaries

Dear current and incoming Rotary club officers:

This is a friendly reminder to update your club membership and officer information in your local country or district database by **1 July 2025**. We will use this information to generate your July 2025 club invoice.

It is important that your club's member information is up to date, because Rotary cannot change the club invoice after it has been generated or accept membership updates with your payment.

As a current club officer, you can ensure that your club invoice will be correct by updating the information in your local database.

1. Your club has indicated that it is using a partner system connected to RI to manage membership information in My Rotary, the details of which are linked here. Please make all updates to membership in your local database.
2. Report all new or terminated members and 2025-26 club officers no later than 1 July 2025.
 - o Members with admission dates of 1 July 2025 or before will be counted for the July 2025 club invoice.
 - o Members with termination dates of 1 July 2025 or before will not be counted for the July 2025 club invoice.

The Rotary International invoice is generated from the data in Rotary's database, and you can see your membership changes reflected in Rotary International's database by signing into [My Rotary](#). Club officers can download a member list under **Members** to compare the data in RI's database to the information in My Rotary to make sure that it is accurate as the invoice will be generated based on the information on this list. If you see any discrepancy between My Rotary and the partner system used by your club please contact data@rotary.org.

Besides updating membership, any changes to subscriptions to Rotary International's official magazine, Rotary [in English] should be reported to data@rotary.org prior to 1 July 2025.

For more information about the club invoice, including how-to guides and answers to frequently asked questions, go to My Rotary's [Club & District Administration page](#). For help with membership questions, contact: data@rotary.org.

Sincerely,

Thomas Woods

Data Relations Manager | Data Services

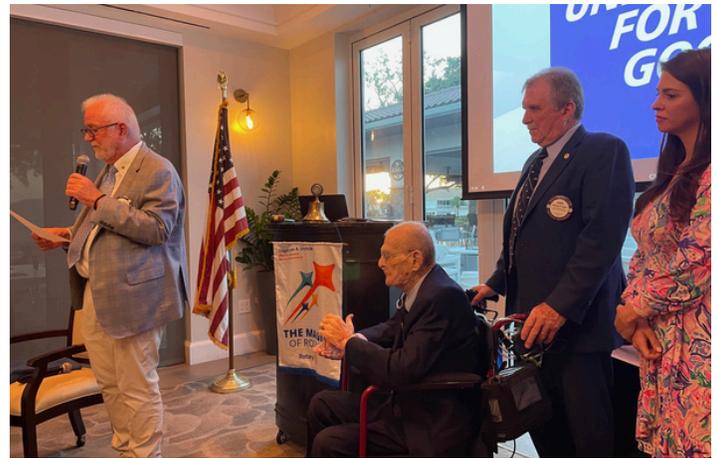
Rotarian for 65 years, Rex Sims Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Rotarian James "Rex" Sims, a man whose life and service left an indelible mark on Rotary and beyond, received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Rotary Club of Bonita Springs at its Rotary Celebration and Installation Dinner at Spring Run Golf Club on Monday, April 28, 2025.

Rex's Rotary journey began 65 years ago, in the fall of 1960, when he joined the newly-formed Rotary Club in Rochester, Indiana. As a young entrepreneur establishing his manufacturing business, Rex quickly embraced Rotary's mission, serving as an officer, a board member, and eventually elected President in 1964. That same year, Rex and his wife, Peggy, attended the Rotary International convention in Denver, Colorado.

In 1983, Rex and Peggy made Bonita Springs their home, and Rex immediately joined the Rotary Club of Bonita Springs. From that moment, Rex's contributions were felt profoundly. Among his many endeavors, Rex played a significant role in the establishment of the Club's annual Christmas Tree Sales and sold countless trees over the years.

Rex and Peggy also found deep purpose in supporting the Wheelchair Foundation, making it one of their cherished causes. One of the defining moments of their lives was traveling to Bimini to deliver a container of wheelchairs. They were deeply moved by the life-changing joy of one young man who had no legs was finally able to support his family after receiving his wheelchair. That simple \$200 wheelchair not only transformed his life but also etched a memory in the heart of the Sims family that will last forever.



Rex's remarkable talents extend beyond service to the written word. A published author of four books, with a fifth on the horizon, Rex decided to turn the proceeds from his fourth book into donations for the Rotary Wheelchair Foundation, raising over \$7,000. Even in loss, Rex's dedication to service shines through; after Peggy's passing in October 2024, the family asked that memorials be made in her name to the Wheelchair Fund.

Rex's unwavering commitment to Rotary is demonstrated through his six Paul Harris Awards, along with the prestigious Rotary Inspiration Award. His life is a testament to the transformative power of Rotary. Reflecting on his own childhood, Rex vividly remembers the polio scare of 1935, a period that shut down his hometown. For Rex, Rotary's role in eradicating polio on a global scale is nothing short of extraordinary—a mission he has supported with pride and purpose throughout his life.

continues on next page

We encourage everyone in Rotary District 6960 to celebrate with us the exceptional legacy of service, compassion, and dedication that defines Rex Sims—an inspiration to us all and a true Rotarian.

Note: Rex Sims passed away in his sleep on May 21, 2025. He was 96 years old and, while he had health issues, he was determined to attend the Club's installation dinner – and we were blessed to have him join us. He will be missed!



Sarasota Southside Interact Club receives Zone 34 Interact award, and more during a busy year

Some of their activities included:

- Had a 100th Birthday Party for a resident at Pines of Sarasota.
- Had a Water Lantern Festival.
- Had a Dog-a-Ween Costume Contest.
- Presented at World Kindness Day on 11/13/2024.
- Regular visits to Sarasota Memorial Hospital Nursing & Rehabilitation Center.
- Prepared over 50 boxes for Operation Christian Child.
- Prepared and delivered Blessing Bags of essential items at Resurrection House for the homeless in Sarasota.
- And many more projects too numerous to enumerate.



Rotary Club of Anna Maria Island Celebrates Successful First Annual Reel for Rotary Fishing Tournament

The Rotary Club of Anna Maria Island is thrilled to report the tremendous success of our first annual Reel for Rotary fishing tournament, held on April 26, 2025 just off the coast of our island. Thanks to the enthusiastic support of our members, volunteers, sponsors, and community friends, the event was more than just a great day on the water—it was a celebration of community, camaraderie, and giving back.

With 37 adult anglers and 9 youth anglers casting their lines, the tournament created a vibrant and festive atmosphere that was enjoyed by all. The friendly competition brought together fishing enthusiasts from across the area, all united in the spirit of Rotary and service above self. The day concluded with a lively social dinner where participants, friends, and club members gathered to share stories, participate in the silent auction, celebrate the day's achievements, and deepen connections.

Most importantly, the event raised over \$22,000 to benefit vital local programs supported by the Rotary Club of Anna Maria Island. These funds will go directly toward initiatives such as:



- AMI and Cortez Hurricane disaster relief fund
- Anna Maria Elementary School
 - Character education program
 - "Rotary Reader Dolphin" literacy program
 - Peace Day
 - "4-Way Test" essay contest
 - "Service Above Self" award
- Youth leadership training for local high school students
- Manatee County title one youth "Learn to Swim" program

The positive feedback from participants has been overwhelming, and the excitement for next year's tournament is already building. We are deeply grateful for the generosity and spirit of everyone who made this event possible. Reel for Rotary was more than a fishing tournament—it was a day of fun, connection, and meaningful impact.

We can't wait to see everyone again in 2026 for an even bigger and better event!



SWFL Rotary: A New Club Making Local & Global Impact in Less Than 45 Days!

The newly chartered **SWFL Rotary Club**, less than 45 days old, is already making a meaningful impact in Southwest Florida—and beyond. With a heart for service and a vision for local and global goodwill, this dynamic club has accomplished more in weeks than many in years. It all began with a **community-centered service project over Easter**, where members of SWFL Rotary collected over **15 bags of clothes, children's products, and essentials** for **Eva's Closet**. This local nonprofit provides aid to underserved families in the region. On **May 3, 2025**, SWFL Rotary teamed up with the **Rotary Club of Fort Myers East** to support their **annual Golf Scramble**, which benefitted a **pet food pantry**—an early example of powerful local collaboration.

Just one day later, on **May 4, 2025**, a group of SWFL Rotarians flew to **New York City**, where they honored world-renowned humanitarian and Michelin-starred chef **Vikas Khanna** with a **Paul Harris Fellow Award**, a prestigious recognition for his commitment to service above self. As the club gained momentum, it donated **\$600 to Babcock Middle School**. It proudly sponsored a **HAM Radio and Emergency Communication System**, which will be installed on campus in **June 2025**, bolstering community preparedness and safety.



On **Tuesday, May 20, 2025**, the club hosted a vibrant art unveiling event at Rotarian **Diana Patula's** residence in Babcock Ranch. The powerful community artwork, **"Unite For Good,"** will now travel across Florida—and hopefully the world—serving as a beacon of unity and service. The very next day, **Wednesday, May 21, 2025**, SWFL Rotary hosted its **first successful fundraiser**, the **French Wine Social**. This event combined fellowship and philanthropy. Proceeds were split between SWFL Rotary and **The Drop Project**, an initiative focused on clean water access.

Then, on **Thursday, May 22, 2025**, the club held its **first official meeting** at Swamp Cat Brewing in Downtown Fort Myers. From the beginning, the club's goal has been to reflect the diversity of its communities. That vision came to life at the meeting, where attendees ranged from **15-year-olds to over 65**—a vibrant gathering embodying Rotary's inclusive spirit and multigenerational strength.



Looking ahead, the club **will donate \$425 to Charlotte County Habitat for Humanity on May 30, 2025**, helping support affordable housing initiatives in the area. Additionally, SWFL Rotary has committed to **sponsoring the annual Kids Fishing Tournament at Babcock Ranch** for a whole year, beginning **June 2025 through June 2026**, reinforcing their dedication to youth programs and outdoor engagement.

continues on next page

As part of the **Rotary Friendship Exchange**, the club proudly announces that in **September 2025**, it will **host Samuel English**, a **scholar from St. Catharine's College, University of Cambridge (UK)**. Samuel will stay with **Rotarians Priya Ahluwalia and Mohit Pohani** while researching how communities respond to hurricanes, focusing on sustainability, preparedness, and lived experiences.

From humble beginnings to local and global outreach, **SWFL Rotary is just getting started but already making waves worldwide**. With bold energy and a commitment to meaningful service, this young club is poised to become a lasting force for good.



The Sunrise Rotary Club of Fort Myers' Drive for Education is a Swinging Success

The Sunrise Rotary Club of Fort Myers signature fundraising event was a swinging success! Pros and amateur teamed up to compete while raising money to support education.

