This year we’ve increased the value of Rotary membership by returning to our roots and encouraging Rotarians to do business with other Rotarians. Now, we will look to our roots to guide us through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rotary was founded by Paul Harris for fellowship, to develop friendships with like-minded individuals. Our history and our [guiding principles](https://my.rotary.org/en/guiding-principles) highlight our priorities as Rotarians:

* The ***first object of Rotary*** is the development of **acquaintance** as an opportunity for service
* The ***first Avenue of Service*** is **Club Service**, which focuses on developing strong relationships among members

With these principles in mind, I encourage clubs to focus *first* on the health and welfare of club members during this crisis. Find innovative ways to stay in touch and support each other. Engaging our members will strengthen the bonds of friendship and the value of Rotary in our lives.

The second and third Avenues of Service are Vocational and Community Service. I encourage clubs to step back and evaluate how to best use the vocational skills of their members to serve the community.

While this is a rapidly changing situation, indeed a global disaster, Rotary’s strengths are not in disaster relief. If we focus on Rotary’s core strengths, we will have a greater, more sustainable impact. Let’s start by considering our values, our vision, and our [strategic plan](https://my.rotary.org/en/document/action-plan-flyer).

More than likely, the best use of our time, talents and financial resources will not be the first project that comes to mind. Therefore, I encourage clubs to [create or update a strategic plan](https://my.rotary.org/document/strategic-planning-guide) and [conduct community assessments](https://my.rotary.org/document/community-assessment-tools) to identify club focus, significant community needs and potential partner organizations.

The impact of this pandemic will continue for years; therefore, I urge clubs to address both immediate needs, and identify on-going opportunities to make a difference.

* To address immediate needs, clubs now have flexibility in the way they use 2019-2020 District Designated Funds (DDF). See the article titled: *District Grants – Now More Flexibility!*
* Evaluate how you will use 2020-21 District Grants to address needs in your community.
* The District is working to identify additional funds for clubs to conduct short term projects. We expect to have more information in a week or so.