

## Rotary: A Gateway to Living Long and Well



**Rotary Voices**

Stories of service from around the world

**Haresh Ramchandani in front of a rice field during a trip to Bali.**

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**B**lue Zones are thriving communities with a high concentration of people between the ages of 90 and 100. The concept of Blue Zones has been popularized recently in Dan Buettner's series of books and a Netflix special based on his research into the secrets of living longer.

When I became aware of Buettner's research and began studying it, I was struck by how several of the commonalities of these Blue Zones overlapped with Rotary's core values. It got me thinking that perhaps Rotary membership is a gateway to living a long and fulfilling life. Let me share a few of the similarities I see.

### **Strong Social Network: The foundation of living long**

One of the main characteristics of Blue Zones is the emphasis on strong social connections. These people have a strong feeling of community, with friends and extended family playing an important role in their daily lives. Rotary clubs cultivate a similar environment. Rotary members gather frequently, forming close bonds of fellowship and friendship and a robust support system. This sense of belonging goes beyond mere fellowship and camaraderie; it provides a feeling of purpose and security, lowering stress and nurturing emotional well-being—strongly correlated to long life.



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## **Beyond Friends: Finding meaning by serving others**

Having a purpose in life is another fundamental idea of Blue Zones. Many people in these zones have a compelling “why” that motivates them daily. Individuals in these societies frequently play an impactful role in their families, friends, and communities, making a significant difference. Rotary’s commitment to service represents this idea. Rotary members collaborate on many projects and needs, addressing local and global issues like poverty, literacy, health, and environmental sustainability. We get a sense of purpose, satisfaction, and genuine fulfillment when we partake in this impact and engagement, leading to a long and happy life. So many studies confirm volunteering improves perceptions of self-worth, fosters social connection, and lowers stress – all of which are linked to improved health outcomes.

## **Keep Moving: A key to living longer**

The inhabitants of Blue Zones are renowned for leading active lives – walking, gardening, or just going about their daily lives in walkable places. Though they don’t solely focus on physical activity, Rotary clubs frequently plan activities that encourage movement. Through events like park clean-ups, charity walks, and runs, Rotary promotes a lifestyle that incorporates being active.

## **Less Stress: Another ingredient of long life**

Prolonged stress is a significant cause of health issues. Blue Zones residents have developed various strategies to manage stress. Some communities prioritize daily naps, while others rely on strong social bonds and religious practices for stress relief. Rotary clubs provide a stress-relieving environment because they emphasize service and their supportive environment. Rotary’s sense of purpose and companionship can buffer against everyday stresses.

## **Living in the Present: The power of mindfulness**

The people in the Blue Zones often show a strong sense of mindfulness and awareness. Some of the communities practice regular meditation, while others focus on activities that promote being present in the moment. Rotary meetings and service projects are great opportunities to practice mindfulness. Many of the activities lend themselves to being present, in the moment, and focused.

## **Being a part of something greater**

Many Blue Zones have a solid spiritual, religious, or community connection. While Rotary clubs are non-sectarian, they promote a sense of belonging to a greater cause, fostering social connections, purpose, and meaning in life.

Rotary membership offers an impactful, unique blend of social connection, purpose-driven service, and a naturally active lifestyle. These core values create an atmosphere of longevity and provide a powerful recipe for living a fulfilling life. Rotary creates a transformative experience, not just for the community but also for members’ health and well-being.