

COGS

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Rotary 
Club of Kingsport

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**THE MAGIC
OF ROTARY**



June 18 Meeting Preview Kingsport Public Library Update

Earlier this year, the City of Kingsport approved \$7 million towards the renovation and upgrading of the Kingsport Public Library. The project will include many key improvements, such as

- Doubling the size of the children's area.
- Creating dedicated space for children's programming.
- Creating dedicated space and makerspace for teens.
- Installing a new elevator to ensure better accessibility.
- Adding four study rooms to provide dedicated spaces for focused learning.
- Establishing dedicated space for local history and genealogy.

At the same time, the Friends of the Kingsport Public Library, in partnership with the City of Kingsport, launched a "Library of the Future" fundraising campaign. This campaign aims to help fund the first major renovation of the library in more than 30 years.

The Library Closed on May 10 in order to temporarily relocate the library to the Fort Henry Mall where it will reside until the completion of the renovation project. The mall location opened officially in early June.

Stephanie Griffin, Interim Library Manager, will update the club on the Library project as well as the City Archive.

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June 11, 2025 Meeting Summary

Attendance was 48.8%

Paul Gray opened the meeting and led the invocation and Pledge of Allegiance. Sharon Moore provided the week's Sunshine.

Please note that there will be no meeting on July 2 due to the holiday. The Passing of the gavel will be held on July 9.

Kaylee Feathers announced that there will be a brief service project on Friday, June 27, from 8:00am to 12:00 noon. Club members will be working in Kennedy Elementary's Pollinator Garden. We hope everyone can make it.



Kitty Frazier introduced the week's speaker, Melissa Woods, president of the Kingsport City Schools board. Ms. Woods spoke about how education changed the trajectory of her life from her childhood on a rural Carter County farm to a path toward higher education and a variety of meaningful positions in the community. She believes that the superior educations that her own children received in the Kingsport City Schools led to incredible opportunities for them, and she has become dedicated to ensuring that those same opportunities continue to be available to all students.

Ms. Woods discussed some of the recent accomplishments of the Kingsport schools, and that the overriding goal is to prepare students to be successful in the next steps in their lives, whether it is college, skilled workforce training, internships, or other opportunities. She also discussed upcoming capital projects, including building a new elementary school and renovating the old North High School into an additional elementary school.

Paul closed the meeting with a recitation of the Four-Way Test.

Kennedy School Pollinator Garden Maintenance

Mark your calendars for Friday June 27. We will be assisting the Kennedy School with the Summer Maintenance of their Pollinator Garden from 8:00AM to Noon.

- We will be weeding and replanting parts of the garden.
- Bring gloves and gardening tools.
- Additional Details will be coming soon.

By Brianna Sherman, Rotary Club of Denver Metro South, Colorado, USA

I still remember the book that changed everything. It was a quiet afternoon in Shibuya, sometime in the early 1970s. I was a restless university student, unsure of my path, wandering the aisles of Tokyo's largest bookstore. A slim volume caught my eye – a personal account written by a psychiatrist. As soon as I opened it, the idea of medicine, the calling of a doctor, and the dignity it held hit me all at once. That night, I made up my mind. I would become a doctor.

Years later, after a decade of practice in rural clinics, hospitals, and sleepless shifts, I found myself searching for something more – work that was not only rewarding, but broadly impactful. I applied for a position at the World Health Organization (WHO). At the time, two posts were available: one, a high-ranking assistant to the regional director; the other, a lower-paid technical officer for polio eradication. I chose the latter. That's how I began my journey to help lead the charge against polio across the vast and complex Western Pacific region.

The Polio Frontline of 1990

When I started in 1990, most people thought the goal was impossible. The virus was still endemic in large parts of Asia. There was no money. No roadmap. Just a ticking clock and a resolution passed by WHO: to eradicate polio by the year 2000. It was, in a word, chaos.

The first thing I noticed was the absence of basic surveillance systems. Cases of acute flaccid paralysis – a category of disease polio belongs to – went undetected, unreported, and not tested to be diagnosed. Official records showed only 6,000 cases per year. But we all knew that number was wrong. The virus wasn't hiding. We were simply blind to it.

Of course, there were more. In Cambodia and Vietnam, families lived on boats, drifting along rivers – unreachable, undocumented, and highly vulnerable to disease. In places like Mindanao in the Philippines, conflict made access nearly impossible. In China, children born outside the “one child” policy were often not registered at all. No documents meant no health services – and no vaccines. These unregistered children were the ones polio found first.

And one of the greatest challenges was funding. Even purchasing enough vaccine required millions of dollars – not to mention the operational cost, resources needed to build infrastructure, train health workers, and reach remote communities. I organized a major technical meeting in Tokyo in 1991, bringing together every expert in the region working on polio, hoping that some organizations, or some countries would decide to give us money. We followed up with another meeting in the Philippines. But no one offered money. Not a single pledge.

The wise men from Rotary

It was October 1992. I had organized yet another technical meeting – this time in Beijing. And this time, something different happened.

Just hours before the meeting, three men visited me – Rotarians from Japan, India, and the United States. They weren't strangers. They had attended previous meetings and understood the technical details. They came with an offer: “If you agree to lower the target age for vaccination from under five to under four,” they said, “we will donate US\$1.5 million immediately.”

Their reasoning was practical. WHO's global policy was to vaccinate all children under five. But only in China, nearly all polio cases occurred in children under four. Reducing the target age would make the campaign more focused and efficient. They wanted their contribution to have the greatest possible impact.

I was thrilled. Electrified. The logic was clear, and the funds could kick-start what had felt like a stalled campaign.



Dr. Shigeru Omi speaks at a Rotary district conference



Dr. Omi vaccinates children against polio in China

But WHO headquarters in Geneva pushed back. They didn't want to change policy to match a donor's condition. I understood the concern, and yet, I also knew what US\$1.5 million could do. It was a catalyst.

So, I took a risk. I asked a senior Geneva colleague – the most vocal opponent – to quietly step out of the room. During his absence, the rest of us came to a consensus: we would accept Rotary's condition and proceed.

That single decision changed everything. The US\$1.5 million was our first real pool of funding. Rotary didn't just write a check. They showed up. And they stayed. They became true partners; a global network of committed individuals who would go on to advocate, fundraise, vaccinate, and build trust in places where even

governments struggled to reach.

The breakthrough

Momentum came slowly and then all at once. Rotary's initial funding unlocked attention and credibility. Other donors followed. Working with governments and visiting local communities, we built surveillance systems where none existed. We mobilized lab networks to test all cases of paralysis and accurately diagnose polio.

In Vietnam and Cambodia, we launched "vaccine boats" – floating checkpoints on the Mekong River, ensuring every child was vaccinated before passing through. In conflict-affected Mindanao, we secured a temporary ceasefire to carry out immunization campaigns.

China posed a different challenge: undocumented children born outside the one-child policy. I met directly with the Minister of Health. I didn't debate policy. I simply shared the data. Weeks later, at a national meeting, the Minister publicly announced that "all children" would be vaccinated. That's when I knew we had a real shot. And after three years, China reached polio-free status.

The last mile is the hardest

In 2000, we celebrated the certification of the whole WHO Western Pacific Region as polio-free. It was a moment we've earned in collaboration through tireless work. It was proof that eradication wasn't just a dream. It could be done.

But polio still exists in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and in places where health systems are fragile and conflict is constant. And as we saw recently in Gaza, the disruption can reopen the door. And it only takes one spark to undo decades of progress.

Rotary knows this. You've seen how far we've come. But I must say this: the last mile is always the hardest, as hard as the first million. It always has been, for every communicable disease we've fought. That is the nature of eradication. It demands that we renew and reconfirm our commitment, again and again.

Rotary's role has never been more vital. You are not just funders. You are advocates, partners, and frontline agents of change. You've helped make history once. Now, we must finish the story together.

Dr. Shigeru Omi is a global health expert and former Regional Director of the World Health Organization Western Pacific Region (1999–2009). He joined WHO in 1990 and played a leading role in launching and completing the region's polio eradication effort, which led to its certification as polio-free in 2000. He also led the response to the 2003 SARS outbreak and later served as chair of the Japanese government's COVID-19 advisory panel. Dr. Omi currently serves as chair of the Japan Anti-Tuberculosis Association and Rotary Polio Eradication Ambassador.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|-----|-----|---|-----|--|-----|
| 01 | 02 | 03 | 04 Lynn Tully— Regional Economic and Community Development | 05 | 06 | 07 |
| 08 | 09 | 10 | 11 Melissa Woods— Kingsport City Schools | 12 | 13 Kingsport Axemen Game | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 Kingsport Public Library Update | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 Bud Hulsey— Tennessee State Representative | 26 | 27 Kennedy School Garden Work Day | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | 01 | 02 No Meeting, July 4th Holiday Week | 03 | 04 | 05 |

MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

16-Jun—Al Crymble
17-Jun—Aundrea Salyer
28-Jun—Clay Rolston

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

01-Jun Todd Jones—6 Years
03-Jun Bruce Sites—58 Years
05-Jun Kaylee Feathers—4 Years
16-Jun Jennifer Salyer—24 Years
18-Jun Lynn Tully—31 Years
20-Jun Steve Wilson—33 Years
25-Jun John Porter—59 Years

MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

01-Jun Paul Montgomery—29 Years
12-Jun Kathleen McLaughlin—12 Years
20-Jun Edna Potts—20 Years
23-Jun Kenneth Calvert—21 Years
28-Jun Bruce Sites—25 Years

Upcoming Events

June 21-25—Rotary International Convention—Calgary, Canada
June 27—Club Project Work Day—Assist with Kennedy School Pollinator Garden Maintenance (8:00-12:00)
July 9—Rotary Club of Kingsport—Officer Installation

HOW TO FIND US

Rotary Club of Kingsport

District 7570 | Area 13 | Club 5739

Meets every Wednesday at Noon
at

The Crown Center inside Food City
1205 N Eastman Road | Kingsport, TN



facebook.com/RotaryClubofKingsport/



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KingsportRotaryClub.com

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RI PRESIDENT:

Stephanie Urchick

DISTRICT 7570 GOVERNOR:

Bret Hrbek

AREA 13 GOVERNOR:

Joseph (Joe) Ley

DISTRICT SECRETARY:

Nancy Whitlock

DISTRICT TREASURER:

Jacob Higginbotham

DISTRICT FOUNDATION CHAIR:

Tim Carter



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 & BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
- 4 | Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?

Local Clubs for Make-ups

MONDAY

Noon | Tri-Cities—Northeast State Community College, Pierce Admin Bldg., Room P309, Blountville, TN

6:00 PM | Johnson City Evening—Howard Hunt's Edward Jones Office, 4018 Roan St. Johnson City, TN

TUESDAY

7:15 AM | Scott County—Scott Co. Park & Golf Course Clubhouse, 247 Fore Drive, Gate City, VA

7:30 AM | Bristol Morning VA-TN—The Summit Co-Work Space (Expedition Meeting Room) 1227 Volunteer Pkwy, Bristol, TN

Noon | Bristol VA-TN—Bristol Train Station, 101 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd Bristol, VA

Noon | Johnson City—Johnson City Country Club 1901 E Unaka Ave, Johnson City, TN

Noon | Greeneville—Tusculum University, Niswonger Commons Pioneer Café, 60 Shiloh Road Greeneville, TN

WEDNESDAY

7:00 AM | Greeneville-Morning—Laughlin Memorial Hospital Cafeteria Conference Room, Greeneville, TN

7:30 AM | Kingsport-Sunrise—Food City Press Room, Suite 300, 200 Clinchfield St., Kingsport, TN

Noon | Unicoi County—Town Hall, 211 N.Main St., Erwin, TN

Noon | Elizabethton—First Christian Church of Elizabethton, Fellowship Hall, 513 Hattie Ave, Elizabethton, TN

THURSDAY

7:15 AM | Johnson City Morning—Food City Community Room, 920 N. State of Franklin Rd., Johnson City, TN

Noon | Kingsport-Downtown—Food City Crown Center, 1205 N Eastman Road, Kingsport, TN

AVAILABLE 24/7—

www.RotaryeClubOne.org