

Philippine Rotary

FEBRUARY 2025

MAGAZINE

A disaster response
playbook
page 24

Rotary and USAID go
robotic in Serbia
page 44

David Byrne extols
reasons to be cheerful
page 54

A VOTE FOR PEACE

Tallying the results of
an election monitoring
mission in Nigeria

page 30





Recruit Peace and Development Leaders for a Rotary Peace Fellowship



Selected fellows receive full funding for a master's degree or postgraduate diploma in disciplines related to peace and development. Our fellows lead peacebuilding efforts worldwide. Rotary members play a key role in recruiting candidates from their communities!



Ripples of hope and change

This month, as we come together for the International Assembly and the Presidential Peace Conference, we celebrate *The Magic of Rotary* — a unique blend of global connection, vision, and action that empowers us to create lasting change.

One of the most inspiring examples is our Rotary Peace Fellowship program, a cornerstone of Rotary's mission to build a more peaceful and just world.

For more than 23 years, Rotary Peace Fellowships have been transforming communities. Our Rotary Peace Centers, hosted at leading universities around the globe, have educated over 1,800 fellows who now work in more than 140 countries.

These centers cultivate expertise in fields like conflict resolution, sustainable development, and peacebuilding, preparing fellows to tackle some of the world's most pressing challenges. This program exemplifies how Rotary turns vision into action, creating a ripple effect of hope and change.

This month during the Presidential Peace Conference, we celebrate a significant milestone with the opening of our newest peace center in Istanbul. This center will focus on training leaders to address peacebuilding challenges in the Middle East and North Africa, further extending Rotary's impact.

Peace fellows are dedicated champions of transformation, addressing critical issues such as refugee resettlement, youth and women's empowerment, and reconciliation in conflict zones. Many founded vital organizations or hold leadership roles in governments,

nongovernmental organizations, and international institutions like the United Nations and World Bank.

One inspiring story is that of Ntang Julius Meleng, a 2024 Rotary Peace Fellow at Makerere University in Uganda. Through his Social Change Initiative, Julius has worked to empower young people in Cameroon to take active roles in peacebuilding and leadership.

His project provided training in conflict prevention, civic engagement, and leadership to youths and community officials in areas affected by conflict, equipping people to drive sustainable peace efforts.

Julius harnessed Rotary's global network to overcome obstacles, including limited funding and security risks, and make a meaningful impact.

The Rotary Peace Fellowship gave Julius the tools and support to turn his vision into reality. His work embodies *The Magic of Rotary* — the transformative power of connecting people, sharing resources, and uniting for a common purpose.

As we reflect on the achievements of our peace fellows and celebrate Rotary's enduring commitment to peace, let us also recognize the role that everyone in our network of 1.2 million members plays in creating magic through service.

Together, we can amplify our impact, inspire new generations of leaders, and build a brighter, more peaceful future.

STEPHANIE A. URCHICK

President, Rotary International



▲ ON THE COVER:
Voters viewed Nigerian election observers from Rotary clubs as neutral and trusted, helping calm tensions.



February 2025

- 1** President's message
- 3** Chairman's message
- 5** Editor's note
- 58** Trustee Chair's message

FEATURES

- 30** **The observers**
An election monitoring mission in Nigeria presents a pathway for peacebuilding.
- 40** **Spotlight on the 2025 Philippine elections**
A focus on LENTE and PPCRV
- 44** **The mBot equation**
(Rotary + USAID) x mBots = a tech-savvy future for Serbian students
- 54** **Where all news is good news**
Things aren't as bad as we think they are, David Byrne discovers.

OUR WORLD

- 15** **Specialists in the field**
You learned of a need in a community. Now deploy the experts: a vocational training team.
- 24** **The recovery playbook**
After historic storms, Rotary clubs look to Florida's hard-earned wisdom.
- 27** **Peace passion**
To give back, a peace fellow knew he had to join Rotary.
- 28** **People of action around the globe**
- 59** **2023-24 Service Award for a Polio-Free World**
Honoring members who have made outstanding contributions to Rotary's polio eradication efforts.
- 60** **Rotaractor friends for life**
2025 Calgary Convention

OUR CLUBS

- 6** **Magical journey in service**
D3830 focus
- 12** **Beacon of service and empowerment**
DG Prescita 'Prescy' Yulo
- 16** **'King of Krisotan' honored 45 years after death**
Memorial statue unveiled for Pampango poet Amado Yuzon
- 18** **Rotary aids Bicol folk**
Sheltering Affected Families in Emergency (SAFE Project) in Bicol
- 22** **Healing kids in Bicol**
Rotary clubs from District 3820 join forces in Operation Taghoy, an initiative of Uplift Internationale.



Support Environment awards

February is the month of love. Love for our family and love for every one and love for the environment.

At PRM we give emphasis to the love of the environment. We are again launching the 2nd Environment Projects Awards. To enable more clubs to participate, we are extending the period for this second staging until the next Rotary year. Hence, we will give the awards in June 2026.

The award is open to all a) Rotary Club initiated Projects, and b) community-based projects of non-government and government organizations (NGOs and GOs) with significant Rotary club involvement and engagement. The nominated projects from the 10 districts must have been implemented for at least one year prior to the award ceremony in June 2026.

The top 3 winning projects of the previous award shall not be eligible to join. A Rotary Club may however nominate another project as its entry. All nominated projects shall undergo a three-level judging process:

- a. First-Level Judging — the District Judging Committee shall select the best three projects from among the nominated projects. However, only one project per category is allowed. A maximum of 30 projects will proceed to the second-level judging.
- b. Second-Level Judging — the PRMFI Board of Trustees shall select the best 10 projects from among the projects that pass the First Level Judging irrespective of their category and District membership. The Top 10 projects shall be submitted for the third and final judging. The Top 10 projects shall receive P50,000.00 each from PRMFI.
- c. Third-Level Judging — The PRMFI Organizing Committee shall select the Top 3 from among the Top 10 projects from the Second-Level Judging, and shall be awarded cash prizes as follows:
 - Champion — P500,000.00
 - 1st Runner-Up — P200,000.00
 - 2nd Runner-Up — P100,000.00

There will be a special recognition for the Rotary Club that partnered with private companies' corporate social responsibility projects.

The five categories of the clubs' environmental projects are as follows: 1) Air Quality Improvement; 2) Land Conservation; 3) Water Conservation; 4) Waste Management; and 5) Climate Change Mitigation.

The criteria and weights for judging follow the acronym IMPACT, as follows: Innovative (15 percent); Multiplicable or replicable (15 percent); Problem-Solution Fit (15 percent); Able to be sustained (20 percent); Co-productive and cooperative action with beneficiary community (15 percent); and Transformative Change (20 percent).

Let's join hands in promoting our clubs' environment projects.

EMILIANO D. JOVEN
Chairman, PRMFI



“At PRM we give emphasis to the love of the environment. We are again launching the 2nd Environment Projects Awards. To enable more clubs to participate, we are extending the period for this second staging until the next Rotary year.”

Philippine Rotary

THE MAGAZINE OF CHOICE

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Rotarian mindsets on government policy

As Rotarians committed to ethical service, we are guided by the Four-Way Test, a timeless framework that aids in evaluating our actions and decisions. This test prompts us to consider: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

In light of recent policy announcements by President Trump, it's imperative that we apply this test to assess their potential impact on our communities. For instance, the proposed temporary freeze on domestic federal spending has sparked significant debate. A Reuters/Ipsos poll revealed that 62 percent of Americans oppose this freeze, while 34 percent support it. By examining this policy through the lens of the Four-Way Test, we can better understand its implications and guide our responses accordingly.

To effectively serve our communities amidst such policy changes, adopting certain attitudes and mindsets is crucial:

1. *Open-Mindedness*: Approach new policies without preconceived notions. Seek to understand the underlying intentions and potential outcomes before forming opinions.
2. *Empathy*: Consider how these policies affect various segments of the community, especially the vulnerable. Understanding diverse perspectives ensures that our actions are inclusive and compassionate.
3. *Proactivity*: Stay informed about policy developments and anticipate their potential impact. This enables us to respond swiftly and effectively, ensuring that our service initiatives remain relevant and impactful.
4. *Collaboration*: Engage with other organizations, community leaders, and stakeholders to address challenges collectively. Building alliances can amplify our efforts and lead to more sustainable solutions.
5. *Resilience*: Recognize that policy landscapes are continually evolving. Maintain flexibility and adaptability in our approaches, ensuring that we can navigate changes without compromising our core values.

By embracing these mindsets and diligently applying the Four-Way Test, Rotary Clubs and individual Rotarians can continue to uphold our commitment to ethical service, fostering positive change even amidst shifting political landscapes.

Sonny Coloma
SONNY COLOMA
 Editor-in-chief



“The proposed temporary freeze on domestic federal spending has sparked significant debate... By examining this policy through the lens of the Four-Way Test, we can better understand its implications and guide our responses accordingly.”

RIPE Stephanie
with DG E Prescy
Yulo and
spouse
Ronald.



D3830 FOCUS

Magical journey in service

by Prescita ‘Prescy’ Yulo

PRECIOUS BEGINNINGS

Becoming Governor of RI District 3830 felt less like a climb and more like a whirlwind dance across continents. It began with my attendance to the Zone Institute: a blur of insightful lectures, energizing workshops, and the nervous excitement of meeting new peers and friends. I remember the faces — a mosaic of cultures, languages, and perspectives, each one a testament to Rotary’s global reach.

There was Arvind U Gopi Kumar of District 3300 (Malaysia), his quiet intensity hinting at years of dedicated service, and Michael Rabara of Rotary District 5230 (California), whose infectious laughter could fill a room. We were strangers, yet united by a common purpose: to serve.

The Governors-Elect Training Seminar (GETS) in Taiwan was a more focused experience. The intensity ramped up; the discussions were deeper, the challenges more complex. Amid the rigorous schedule, friendships blossomed. I shared late-night coffee with Sharath Choudary of Rotary District 3150 (India), Her stories of overcoming adversity were both humbling and inspiring. We debated the best approaches to tackling youth engagement with Hidenori Ohashi

of Rotary District 2660 (Osaka Japan), his passion for empowering young people contagious. The Taiwanese hospitality was overwhelming, their warmth and generosity creating a haven of support and camaraderie.

Then came the International Assembly in Orlando, Florida. The sheer scale of it was breathtaking. Thousands of Rotarians from every corner of the globe, all united under the Rotary banner. The energy was electric, a palpable sense of purpose and excitement filling the air. Meeting incoming RI President Stephanie Urchick was a highlight — her vision for the future of Rotary both inspiring and reassuring. To see her dedication firsthand, to witness her passion for service, solidified my own commitment.

Among fellow incoming district governors, we shared our unique challenges, diverse approaches, and common hopes for the year ahead. We were not just colleagues; we were a team, a global network ready to tackle the world’s most pressing issues.

The connections forged, the friendships made, the shared experiences — these are the true treasures I carry with me. To this day, I cherish the quiet intensity of Nigel Lo of Rotary District

“As District Governor, I am committed to leading with an inclusive heart and a relentless spirit, to strengthen District 3830 where every voice is heard, every talent is valued, and every member is empowered to serve our communities. With the unwavering principles of Rotary at the core of all we do, we will embark on ambitious projects, forge lasting partnerships, and leave a legacy of impact that transcends generations.”

— D3830 Governor
Prescy Yulo



3450 (Rotary Club of Hong Kong North) and the friendship of to Joohee Han of District 3620 (RC Onah Korea), as we reaffirmed our sister district relationship, adding a unique color to the vibrant tapestry of my Rotary experience.

THE MAGIC UNFOLDS: CRAFTING OUR LEGACY

First was an informal start to a whirlwind journey ahead, a Meet & Greet in August 2023, my birthday month! With my Presidents-Elect, we laid the foundation for the collaborative spirit that would define our term (Photos 5-6).

Then came October 2023, a burst of inspiration from RI President-elect Stephanie Urchick. Her wisdom and experience ignited a fire in the hearts of our incoming officers, fueling their commitment to the year of service facing us. The journey began not with a single event, but with a vision. I assembled my Executive Committee on November 27, 2023 for a collaborative brainstorming, crafting a legacy roadmap designed to leave an indelible mark on District

3830. This roadmap would serve as our guiding star, shaping the activities and programs that would follow (Photos 2-4).

The joint Multi-District Pre-PETS in January 2024 further amplified this energy, a powerful reminder that the magic of Rotary lies in its global connection.

The District Team Training Seminar (DTTS) followed, a focused crucible forging a cohesive leadership team. Each member honed their individual skills, but more importantly, they learned to work together, understanding their interconnected roles in achieving the district's goals. This was the orchestra tuning its instruments before the grand performance (Photos 7-8).

Pre-PETS 2 to 5 happened successively. In February 2024, we held the Presidents-Elect Training Seminar (PETS) at Agabatan Ti Manila in Alfonso, Cavite. Three days of intense learning culminated in a magnificent commencement ceremony. The sight of the Presidents-Elect as graduates, clad in togas and caps, receiving their



Above: DG Prescy delivers her Inaugural Address.



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diplomas, was a moment of pure magic; the energy was palpable — a vibrant tapestry of hope and commitment woven together (Photos 9-16). The District Training Assembly on April 27, 2024 was held at the elegant Bellevue Hotel in Alabang. This experience was replicated in Puerto Princesa for the benefit of the Palawan clubs (Photos 17-21).

The echoes of laughter, the shared stories of service, and the renewed commitment to the Rotary ideal created an unforgettable experience. The «Magic of Rotary» wasn't just a theme — it was the very essence of the entire journey.

PASSING LEADERSHIP BATON

The Manila Hotel air hung heavy with unspoken anticipation. The historic setting, a silent witness to countless moments of both triumph and sorrow, seemed to hold its breath as I stepped onto the stage. The outgoing District Governor, Jay Tambunting, beamed, a mixture of pride and wistful farewell in his eyes. But the focus was on me, the new District Governor — now dubbed as the Precious Irresistible Dis-

trict Governor — and the weight of my words hung heavy in the air (Photos 22-23).

My speech was not a dry recitation of goals; it was a cascade of emotions, a carefully crafted tapestry woven from threads of hope, determination, and unwavering compassion. On membership growth, it wasn't just numbers I presented, but the potential for expanded friendships, the promise of new hands joining the work of service.

When I spoke of the First 1,000 days of life of a child, a collective sigh seemed to escape the assembled Rotarians. The vulnerability of new life, the crucial need for support, the fight against adolescent and teenage pregnancies — these weren't abstract concepts; they were human stories, stories that resonated with the shared humanity of the room. Tears welled in some eyes, a silent testament to the power of compassion and a mother's heart.

My commitment to The Rotary Foundation isn't just a financial pledge. It was an act of faith, a belief in the collective power to effect positive change on a larger scale. The audience felt the surge of that faith,



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a shared belief in the potential for good.

Public image is not about self-promotion, but about sharing the stories of service, the joy of giving, the transformative power of Rotary.

The emotional climax wasn't a dramatic crescendo, but a quiet swell of shared purpose. The night concluded with a shared sense of purpose, a collective understanding of the profound emotional journey: hand in hand, heart to heart. The handover was complete, but the true work, the work of the heart, was just beginning.

THE MAGIC BEGINS

From June 2024 to February 2025, the Rotary clubs of District 3830 buzzed with activity, a whirlwind of inductions, Governor's visits (GVs), and impactful projects that painted a vibrant tapestry of service and camaraderie.

The year began with a flurry of inductions, each a beacon of hope and renewal. The RC Makati North-east handover and induction ceremony on June 25 was followed by a cascade of ceremonies across

diverse clubs — Paranaque North, Healing Hands, Muntinlupa Business District, and many more. In each induction, the hearts of Rotarians swelled with pride as they witnessed these transitions.

July and August saw a relentless rhythm of inductions, a testament to the District's dynamism. The Rotary Clubs of Makati, Muntinlupa, Paranaque — the names echoed through the halls of Rotary, each club adding its unique contribution to the District's vibrant mosaic.

The month of September was a whirlwind of activity, with a remarkable number of inductions and charter presentations. The hearts of Rotarians were filled with joy and pride as they welcomed new members and celebrated the establishment of new clubs.

October brought the prestigious TRF Night, a momentous occasion hosted by District 3830 (Photo 24). Held in October 2024, the TRF Night was far more than just a social gathering; it served as a pivotal moment, highlighting the crucial role of The Rotary Foundation (TRF) in amplifying the impact of Rotary International's global initiatives. The presence of TRF



Trustee Chair Mark Maloney elevated the event's significance, providing insights into the Foundation's strategic direction and learning about the most effective ways to contribute.

TRF donors were aptly recognized in fitting ceremonies. This served to inspire further contributions and demonstrate the tangible results achieved through the Foundation's funding. TRF Night fostered a stronger sense of community, providing a platform to celebrate the collective achievements made possible through TRF support.

At the end of his visit, TRF Trustee Chair Maloney visited the Rizal Monument for a wreath-laying ceremony honoring the Philippines' national hero, Dr. Jose P. Rizal (Photo 25). It served as a poignant reminder of the values of service and patriotism that underpin the Rotary ideal.

This was followed by the Joint Rolling Recognition of Membership and Community Service on November 21, 2024, a well-deserved tribute to the clubs' outstanding achievements in the first five months of the Rotary year. This memorable event

was organized by District Coordinating Chair (DCC) Rennie Aquino-Andrews and DCC Lina Sullivan, giving proper recognition to clubs for their outstanding work and initiatives.

The announcement of DISCON (or the District Conference), scheduled for April 4th and 5th at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City, targeting 2025 attendees, fueled further excitement and anticipation.

The momentum continued into November and December, with a series of Governor's Visits.

The New Year 2025 started with a continuation of the momentum, completing the cycle begun in the previous year. The final inductions and Governor's visits will be wrapped up in February.

Beyond the inductions and Governor's Visits, District 3830 undertook a range of impactful projects. (Photos 26-31) The First 1000 Days of Life Project, funded by our District Designated Fund (DDF) for the District Grants of clubs, stood as a testament to the District's commitment to improving maternal and child health.

The construction of 30 houses in the Korean-Fili-



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pino Village in Binan, a collaborative effort involving 250 Koreans from over 30 clubs, will happen on February 5, 2025, showcasing the power of international collaboration (Photo 32-33). The donation of P1.3 million to build a multi-purpose hall in this village was funded by the DDF of District 3830, further highlighting the District's commitment to community development.

Other significant projects included knee replacement surgeries, a Global Grant project of RC Las Pinas South (Photos 34-35); the ceremonial turnover of Audiological Diagnostic Equipment for Infants under Global Grant 2567436 amounting to USD44,000 for RY 2024-2025; a dental bus donation (Photos 36-37); the campaign against Adolescent or Teenage Pregnancy, my advocacy, gained momentum with funding in four Global Grants provided by our sister District 3620 by way of donations of ultra-sound machines at four different hospitals catering to adolescent mothers for free. These hospitals are (1) Quirino Memorial Medical Center (delivered); (2) Philippine General Hospital (waiting for RI approval); (3) Mandaluyong

General Hospital (waiting for RI approval) and (4) Ospital ng Paranaque (waiting for implementation). The initiatives to address adolescent pregnancy were also undertaken by Rotaractors, who are an active force in District 3830 (Photos 38-40).

Other projects and initiatives for implementation in the second half of the Rotary year are the Rotary Responds program that will provide crucial support in the aftermath of Typhoon Kristine. (Photos 41-42) Transformative Medical Missions will also be undertaken in critical locations.

The End Polio campaign, held during National Children's Day, vaccinated 500 children in various areas in Pateros, underscoring the District's dedication to global health initiatives. (Photos 43-44)

The momentum generated by this period of intense activity and impactful projects sets the stage for a future brimming with opportunities to serve. The spirit of collaboration, innovation, and dedication forward, continues through the Magic of Rotary! ■

The author is the Governor of D3830 in 2024-2025.



D3830 FOCUS

Beacon of service and empowerment

by Butch Solomon

In the vibrant tapestry of Rotary, few threads shine as brilliantly as that of Prescita ‘Prescy’ Yulo, Governor of District 3830 for 2024-2025. Driven by a lifelong commitment to service, District Governor (DG) Prescy has fully immersed herself in the Rotary community, consistently striving to empower others and create lasting, positive impact both locally and beyond. Her journey is not merely a personal story; it is a narrative woven with hope, resilience, and an unwavering dedication to the principles of service that Rotary embodies.

From her early days in Rotary, DG Prescy has exhibited an unwavering passion for making a difference. She actively seeks partnerships that address critical needs, whether through organizing healthcare initiatives, educational programs, or community development projects. Her efforts have been instrumental in fostering a spirit of collaboration, significantly enhancing the lives of those she serves.

DG Prescy’s extensive leadership experience is a testament to her dedication and capability. She has served as club president thrice: World Class President (2015-2016), All-Star Team Charter President (2016-2017), and Life Changing President (2021-2022). These roles have empowered her to inspire and motivate others toward common goals and a shared vision for impactful service. Her leadership style is

characterized by empathy and inclusivity, traits that cultivate an environment where every member feels valued and empowered to contribute their unique talents.

Her commitment to the broader Rotary community is reflected in her various leadership roles within District 3830. She New Club Adviser for the chartering of a new club — the Rotary Club of Makati Ayala Amity — in 2020-2021. She has also served as Senior Assistant Governor, Deputy District Secretary for Membership focusing on New Club Extension, and PETS Chair in 2022-2023.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING, GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

A firm believer in continuous learning, DG Prescy has attended numerous Rotary International Conventions and Institutes, in Singapore (2024), Melbourne, Kaohsiung and Taiwan (2023), Abu Dhabi (2022), Manila (2019), Hamburg, Germany (2019), Toronto, Canada (2018), Seoul, Korea (2016), and Taipei (2013; 2020). These experiences have enriched her understanding of Rotary’s global impact and the innovative approaches to community service embraced by members worldwide.

DG Prescy’s commitment to personal growth and education is evident in her impressive academic credentials. She has completed the academic requirements for a Master’s degree in Management,

Above, from left: DG Prescy Yulo all set to lead; Rotarians from D3830 clubs conduct a medical mission.

Opposite page, from top: DG Prescy Yulo and Spouse Ronald at the International Assembly in Orlando, Florida; DG Prescy plays Santa Claus; Always a hands-on leader, DG Prescy uses defogging machine in a community clean-up sortie.



majoring in Public Administration, at the Philippine Christian University. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Medical Technology from Southwestern University in Cebu City and a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from Negros Occidental Colleges in Bacolod City. She has pursued advanced training in medical aesthetics in South Korea, Minnesota, and Los Angeles, ensuring that she remains at the forefront of her field.

In addition to her Rotary commitments, DG Prescy has pursued a vocation in medical aesthetics through her company, Skin Rejuve. For over three decades, she has focused on providing medical aesthetic solutions, helping patients overcome skin conditions and traumas; regain self-esteem; and empowering them to pursue their life missions with renewed vigor.

ROTARY FAMILY IN ACTION

DG Prescy is a devoted mother to four children: Arlina Jasmin, a registered nurse; Christian Oliver, an aeronautics student; Ronald Stanley, an Ateneo student; and Sasha Victoria, a student at



Rotary
Club of Paranaque Central
District 3830



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OF ROTARY**

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RCPC's Christmas Party 2024, PIP Junie & PE Bea attended the Children's First 1000 Days Coalition, PRE-PELS attended by PE Bea, RCPC at the wake of AnnLouella Jurilla+.






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FEBRUARY 2025 PHILIPPINE ROTARY 13



Top row, from left: DG Prescy Yulo (fifth from left) with her classmates, the District Governors of PH Rotary for 2024-2025; In her modern terno, ready to lead D3830.

Second row, from left: DG Prescy Yulo and Spouse Ronald always at their finest in gracing District and Club events; Yulo family portrait: Parents Ronald and Prescy with their children Arlina Jasmin, Christian Oliver, Ronald Stanley and Sasha Victoria.

Miriam College. Their family exemplifies a Rotary Family in Action, weaving acts of kindness and altruism into the fabric of their daily lives, and building a legacy of compassion.

PREPARING FOR DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

In preparation for her governorship, DG Prescy participated in the International Assembly (IA) held in Orlando, Florida (2024), and the Governor's Elect Training Seminar (GETS) in Kaohsiung, Taiwan (2023).

RECOGNITIONS AND AWARDS

DG Prescy's exemplary service and leadership have not gone unnoticed. She has received several prestigious awards and citations, including the Rotary Citation for 2021-2022, the Meritorious Service Award for 2018-2019, the Leadership Award for 2016-2017, the Magis District Award for 2015-2016, and the Presidential Citation for 2015-2016. These accolades indicate recognition for consistent service excellence.

BROADER SOCIO-CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In addition to her Rotary involvement, DG Prescy has served as Past President of Soroptimist International Congressional, Past LCIF Zone Chair for the Ayala Amity Centennial Lions Club, Past President of the Ayala Amity Centennial Lions Club, and is the President Elect of the All Nations Women's Group of the YWCA. She is also a member of the Zonta Club of Makati Ayala, Club Bulakeño, and the Inner Wheel Club of Central Ortigas.

PASSIONATE ADVOCACIES

DG Prescy has focused on membership growth, chartering new clubs, enhancing contributions to The Rotary Foundation, promoting the public image of Rotary in communities, saving lives, and fostering healthy pregnancies and child development.

One of her most passionate advocacies centers on maternal health and childcare, and particularly the fight against teenage pregnancies. She aims to empower teens with knowledge about reproductive health and the importance of making informed choices. DG Prescy envisions a future where young individuals can build prosperous lives, breaking the cycle of disadvantage that perpetuates poverty.

DG Prescy stands as a beacon of service and empowerment, embodying the transformative power of commitment. Her story is a testament to the ethos of service, reminding us that together, we can weave a brighter future for all. ■

GOODWILL

Specialists in the field

You learned of a need in a community. Now deploy the experts: a vocational training team.

Ramona Delmas shares a photo of a tiny infant on its back, bathed in the blue light of a therapy cradle used to treat jaundice. The device was donated through a long-term initiative that has revolutionized maternal and pediatric care at a hospital in Ángel Albino Corzo in the Mexican state of Chiapas.

The Rotary Club of Bishop Sunrise in California provided the machine to the facility. “Within three days, we had our first baby,” beams Delmas, a club member. “That machine turned this into a regional pediatric hospital in addition to an OB-GYN hospital.”

The global grant project, sponsored by the Bishop Sunrise club and the Rotary Club of Oriente de Tuxtla Gutiérrez, included multiple vocational training team visits to Chiapas over several years beginning in 2019. During the initial visit, medical professionals from California taught local doctors, midwives, nurses, and medical students emergency obstetrics skills and supplied equipment to support maternal care.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced a pause in the project, yet many doctors learned of the new equipment at the hospital and began traveling from all over to perform their surgeries there. As a result, the

California team scrapped a plan to perform elective surgeries during a return visit because the abundance of local doctors made it unnecessary. The project shifted instead to creating a pediatric unit after a new community assessment.

Delmas praises this ability to pivot and notes the lasting relationships that have resulted from the team visits. “The doctors, nurses, and midwives there can talk to our doctors in Bishop any day of the week,” she says.

By organizing vocational training teams, Rotary clubs can arrange for a group of professionals to visit another country to teach local professionals in a particular field or learn more about their own. Teams should have at least three members, including a team leader who is a Rotary member. Everyone on the team should have at least two years of related work experience.

The team’s activities must align with the goals of an area of focus and adhere to The Rotary Foundation’s conditions to qualify for a global grant. In addition, the team should address a need identified by the local community.

That was a priority for Gary Morgan, a member of the Rotary Club of Ballarat South, Australia. A decorated member of Forestry Australia, Morgan is well connected in the international fraternity of forest

fire management. At the request of district officers, he explored setting up a vocational training team to help prevent wildfires overseas. He decided to focus on Portugal, where a devastating fire season in 2017 had caused widespread damage and loss of life. Politicians were demanding a change in fire management practices.

“I’ve known the people in charge there [Portugal] for quite some time, and that made it easy,” Morgan says. “We had many online conversations before I even approached people for a team to make sure we really understood the situation, what they wanted, and why they wanted it.”

The team, supported by a global grant co-sponsored by the Rotary Club of Ponta Delgada S. Miguel (Açores), focused on methods of prescribed burns to mitigate wildfires, particularly in areas with eucalyptus, highly flammable trees native to Australia that also grow in rural Portugal.

Morgan recommends that teams be a manageable size and include people with the variety of skills needed to deliver on the objectives. His team included individuals with practical experience in fire suppression, an ability to manage people, a background in research, and an understanding of the policy side of fire management. He kept the team to four so all members could fit into one vehicle during trips into the field.

Delmas and Morgan both have found value in including professionals who are not members of Rotary. As the only Rotarian on her team, Delmas says nonmembers opened the project to greater funding and publicity.

“They learned so much, they became ambassadors for Rotary,” she says. “The next thing I knew, they were talking about Rotary to everyone. As a result, we received funding from organizations that we might not have.”

Delmas says vocational training teams enhance any grant project. “It’s hard for me to visualize a Rotary project without one.”

— ARNOLD R. GRAHL

Could a vocational training team increase your project’s impact? Learn about the grant options at rotary.org/grants.

Memorial statue unveiled for celebrated
Pampango poet Amado Yuzon

‘King of Krisotan’ honored 45 years after death

by Gil Yuzon

Last Jan. 17, an impressive memorial statue honoring the life and legacy of Amado Magcalas Yuzon was unveiled in his birthplace of Maquiapo in Guagua, Pampanga, in a fitting ceremony organized by officials of his hometown and province, in celebration of his 45th death anniversary.

Who was Amado Yuzon?

He was the son of a small farmer, born in 1906 in the then “barrio” of Maquiapo, today one of the barangays of the town of Guagua.

At a very young age, while still in school, he demonstrated a sharp intellect which found primary expression in both his love for the written word and his gift of eloquence.

Later, building a reputation in his home province as an exceptional orator and debater in his native Kapampangan, he earned the title

“Ari ning Krisotan” (“King of Krisotan,” the Pampango art form of extemporaneous rhymed debate, equivalent to the “Bal-agtasan” of the Tagalogs).

As a young man in his 20s and 30s,

Yuzon gained prominence as a sought-after orator and reciter of poetry throughout his province during cultural events and town fiestas. It was also around this time that he began expressing his love for literature by writing in Pampango, Spanish, and English in various literary genres, but mainly in verse, because his heart was in poetry.

The overriding themes of his copious poetic works were love of country; identification with the common man, particularly farmers and laborers; and the adulation of Filipino heroes. These themes are reflected in his major works, notably “The Citizen’s Poems” and “The Passion of Rizal, Poet and Martyr,” in which he translated, among other works, our national hero’s “Last Farewell” (“Postrer Adios”).

He was no less prolific in his translations (either into Pampango, English, or Spanish) of selected works of a slew of foreign classical authors such as William Shakespeare, Omar Khayyam, Rabindranath Tagore, Euripides, Sophocles, Sappho, Victor Hugo, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and more (en.wikipedia.org).

Inspiring fellow poets

But probably one of Yuzon’s most significant life contributions was his founding of United Poets Laureate International (UPLI) in 1963. UPLI was an international organization of prominent poets whose avowed mission and vision was “World Brotherhood and Peace through Poetry.” Yuzon was the moving spirit and tireless proponent of this advocacy, visiting many countries and inspiring his fellow poets to write about and champion UPLI’s mission, until his death in 1979- and even beyond, into the first two decades of the 21st century.

At its peak, UPLI counted members in more than 30 countries in almost every continent- from nations as diverse (and often politically and ideologically opposed) as the United States and China, India and Pakistan, Israel and Iran, and as distant from each other as Panama and South Africa, Greece and Australia, England and Taiwan, the Philippines and Italy, and many others.

For his lifelong advocacy for international peace, and for his multifaceted literary works in several languages, Yuzon is probably the only Filipino who has





From top: Municipal and provincial officials pose in front of the unveiled statue of Amado Yuzon, together with members of his family at the school site near his birthplace in Guagua, Pampanga; Headline and cover photo of *Laurel Leaves*, the official literary magazine of UPLI (Autumn 1966 issue): Filipino poet Amado Yuzon in a rare meeting with iconic British poet laureate John Masefield at the latter's home. Masefield wrote a personal poem for Yuzon to mark the occasion.

been nominated for both the Nobel Prize for Literature (two times) and the Nobel Peace Prize (in the name of his organization, UPLI).

Besides being a lifelong man of letters and avid global peace advocate, Yuzon also rendered public service to his country. He served as congressman of the first district of Pampanga (1946-49) and was a constitutional delegate of

his province to the 1973 Constitutional Convention. He was also appointed special cultural envoy by then President Diosdado Macapagal. It was during this time that he was hosted and honored by cultural and political leaders, literary societies, and famous literary figures of the many countries he visited. His memorabilia are a veritable treasure trove of awards and titles conferred upon him by his international hosts.

Monument

An unforgettable highlight of his foreign travels was his visit with the renowned poet, John Masefield, the lifelong poet laureate of England, whose poems were a staple of our English literature textbooks in high school and college. Although already a recluse at the time, Masefield received his fellow poet graciously in his home and wrote a rare personal poem for him, which read:

*The English say "The really wise
Come westward from the eastern skies
The western wisdoms are increased
Only by pilgrims from the East.
I write to say I think it's true
And add, they make us happy too.*

*With my thanks and greetings,
(Sgd.) John Masefield*

So, on his 45th death anniversary last Jan. 17, with members of the Yuzon family in attendance, the public officials of his hometown and province, led by Mayor Anthony Torres of Guagua, paid tribute to Yuzon with a monument at the grounds of the public school in his birthplace. As Torres said in his address, the statue was more than a structure to be appreciated; it should serve as an abiding inspiration, for emulation by today's and tomorrow's youth, of the person being honored by the memorial.

Thus, Yuzon—a son of barrio Maquiapo, a son of Guagua, and a son of Pampanga—served his country by leaving his mark on the world stage in the pursuit of that elusive ideal of global brotherhood and peace, through his own poetry and that of his fellow poets whom he continues to inspire up to this day.

I am proud to be his son. ■

Reprinted with the author's permission from the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Feb. 9, 2025. The author is Past President of the Rotary Club of Pasay, D3810.

Peace advocate

Amado Magcalas Yuzon was a member of the House of Representatives from 1946 to 1949 from the Democratic Alliance, representing the first district of Pampanga. He was born on August 30, 1906 in Guagua, Pampanga to Felipe Yuzon and Isabel Magcalas.

His high school education was obtained from the Pampanga High School. He went on to obtain degrees in Master of Arts, Master of Science in Business Administration, Master of Laws and Doctor of Literature. He was a member of the Philippine Bar and professor at the Far Eastern University and Quezon College in Manila.

During the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, Yuzon served as a government employee.

He is cited by the United Poets Laureate International as its founder in 1963. Yuzon established "an international group for passionate poets from countries all over the world aiming to promote global peace, brotherhood, and understanding through poetry." He was nominated for the 1967 Nobel Peace Prize by Filipino legislator Angel Macapagal.

Amado Yuzon was first married to Oliva Almeria Reyes; they had three sons. His second marriage was to Fortunata Quiambao Aquino, daughter of Servillano Aquino and sister of Benigno Aquino, Sr. They had four children: Virgilio, Maria Teresa, Maria Remedios, and Maria Lourdes. Maria Teresa died at the age of two.

His poetry collections include: *Poems for Screen Heroines* (1949) and *The Citizen's Poems* (1956). His essays include *The Passion of Rizal*, *Poet and Martyr*, and his "Postscript Adios" with *Some Foreign Versions* (1977). As a translator, he has done work on Shakespeare, Omar Khayyam, Rabindranath Tagore, Victor Hugo, Sappho, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, among others. Among the honors he has garnered are:

- Inclusion in the 1956 "Who's Who in America", the "International Who's Who in Poetry", and "The Authors and Writers Who's Who"
- "Most Outstanding Poet in 1957" by Central Luzon Affairs
- Poet Laureate of the Philippines in 1959
- Most Outstanding Man of Letters of the Philippines in 1962 by the Filipino Press, Radio and Television Society

He was also nominated for the 1970 Nobel Prize in Literature by Emeterio Barcelon y Barcelo-Soriano of Academia Filipina and Chung Tin-wen of The Chinese Poet Society, Taipei, Taiwan. He was nominated anew in 1973 by Emeterio Barcelon y Barcelo-Soriano only.

Source: Wikipedia

ROTARY AIDS BICOL FOLK

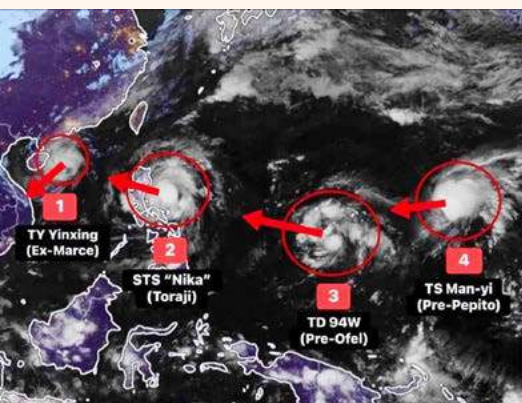
Sheltering Affected Families in Emergency (SAFE Project) in Bicol

Severe Tropical Storm (STS) Trami (Kristine) is the 11th tropical cyclone to enter the country in 2024. It made landfall on the 24th October and was quickly followed by Super Typhoon Kong-rey (Leon), Typhoon Yinxing (Marce), TY Toraji (Nika), STY Usagi (Ofel, and STY Man-yi (Pepito). The combined effect of the six tropical cyclones have affected over 10 million people (2.56 million families) across 17 of 18 regions. The cyclones brought heavy rainfall in the country triggering widespread flooding, landslides and damaged critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and power lines, leaving many communities isolated. Due to overlapping nature of consecutive trop-

ical cyclones in the span of four weeks, the number of people being displaced multiple times was significant. Bicol was among the heavily affected regions, particularly the province of Albay, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte, parts of Sorsogon and Catanduanes. A total of 86,828 reported damage to housing, be that total or partial destruction.

Shelter Box Philippines (SBOP) finds itself in a unique position compared to emergency response projects within ShelterBox more widely due to the pre-existing coordination channels that it has access to as a result of having a permanent country office. These channels include the Shelter Cluster system; Municipality, in particular Municipal Social Welfare Office (MSWDO), Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (MDRRMO), and engaging Rotary especially the nearest local clubs and the Disaster Management Inc. (DMI), a disaster coordinating arm of Rotary exclusive for District 3860; as well as both national and international NGOs.

SBOP traditionally engages with Rotary at both District and Club level to support its responses, this project was no different. Even during the hazard monitoring and initiation phase, SBOP is already in contact with DMI of D3860 and provided initial track forecast and possible areas needing Rotary contacts.



Clockwise from top: ShelterBox team members assess the level of damage and needs of the community; The ShelterBox Operations Philippines team, SBOP, FACE Inc and the Rotary Club of Naga plan the response together; As many lost roofs to their homes during the different cyclones, shelter kits were used to make houses watertight and safe to live in again.

Left: Satellite image of the Pacific Ocean showing the consecutive typhoons that entered the Philippine archipelago in 2024.



SBOP then initiated the coordination meetings and planning.

Coordination as well as logistics support was provided by Districts 3820 and 3860 and within those, from Rotary clubs of Cebu, Virac and Naga in Bicol. Since many of these activities require presence of individuals within vulnerable populations, SBOP has

developed an eLearning platform that seeks to provide a background to ShelterBox, as well as basic guidance on ways of working, and our responsibility to be accountable to the affected population. Through this mechanism as well direct orientations, SBOP aims to help build

capacity within Rotary clubs across the Philippines to improve outcomes in both this project, and in case of future events.

PROJECT DELIVERY

Further to a series of coordination meetings early on, Rotary colleagues were able to assess where their resources would be available to make up shortfalls in capacity. The Rotary Club of Cebu and D3860 Disaster Management Inc. (DMI) supported SBOP's request of the navy ship to haul aid for 2,780 families in Catanduanes. The shipment included shelter-grade tarpaulins, ShelterKits, tools and solar lights.



Due to the significant levels of stock being shipped, a mobilization of equipment and people was required during the off-load. A member from Rotary club of Virac with connections in the haulage business was able to secure two cranes plus trucks and 10 wheeler vehicles for free (including overtime payments).

Rotary were present at the outset of the offload from the navy vessel on 13th of December. They returned the morning of the 14th to take over the management of stock that was left quayside prior to it being transported up to Panganiban and Viga Municipalities. Distributions began that same day and through the supportive efforts of Rotary, families were immediately able to benefit from the shelter assistance.

In terms of additional resource mobilization, individuals from Rotary club of Naga City supported distributions of corrugated iron sheeting, toolkits, tarpaulins, blankets and mosquito nets to 2099 families in Camarines Sur. FACE Inc. was the implementing partner for Cam Sur and by connecting Rotary and FACE to achieve project aims it is hoped that future collaboration will be enabled.

SUMMARY

Rotary were present at the outset of the offload from the Navy Vessel on 13th of December. They returned the morning of the 14th to take over the management of stock that was left quayside prior to it being transported up to Panganiban and Viga Municipalities. Distributions



began that same day and through the supportive efforts of Rotary, families were immediately able to benefit from the shelter assistance.

At time of writing a full project evaluation is still pending however, early monitoring gives us an indication of project outcomes. Exit interviews at the point of distribution describe high levels of satisfaction with the materials provided, and additionally spoke of the quality of recipient targeting that took place during registration / verification activities. One respondent stated "Thank you very much. It was the 1st time to receive this kind of help".

The project delivered basic training to ensure that families were well placed to turn aid into shelter. When questioned

during Exit Surveys all respondents stated that they thought they could confidently repair or reconstruct their homes now. Further to this, the project team were able to return to the areas where distributions had taken place 2 to 3 days after people had received their items. They were able to observe numerous homes that had been repaired (or in the process of repair).

Generally speaking, repairs looked to be strong, and there was evidence that the techniques provided to ensure proper fixing, were being utilised by families.

It can be concluded from the above that the satisfaction with materials, the beginnings of repair activities some 2 days after distribution, and the use of fixing techniques, that Needs Assess-

Top row: Patrick Sampang provided cranes and ten-wheeled vehicles at port to facilitate the offloading of aid items.

Second row: Members of the Rotary Club of Naga assisted in distributing aid items to families affected by the storms.

Right: A Rotarian assisting the elderly during distribution.

ment analysis was robust and that the project was relevant to the recovery journey of families at the point of delivery. ■

With thanks to Ms. Carrie Golden, Partnerships Manager for Programs and Grants; Service and Engagement for sharing this ShelterBox story.



After six major storms made landfall in less than a month at the end of 2024, ShelterBox supported people across the Philippines with emergency shelter. ShelterBox Operations Philippines (SBOP) led the response, which was completed in partnership Federation of Associations for Communities and Children's Empowerment Inc (FACE Inc), and Rotary clubs in the Philippines. SBOP is a locally registered non-governmental organization in Cebu that provides emergency shelter and essential aid to help communities recover after disaster.



Acknowledgements

The multiple partnerships that were formed to enable these outcomes should be celebrated, and we give special recognition to the following individuals and their clubs for supporting this work. The following is a list of Rotarians who were involved in the Bicol emergency shelter response:

Bernard Von Sia (Rotary Club of Cebu and the D3860 Disaster Management Inc. (DMI) Executive Director) Main SBOP's contact for disaster monitoring to alert the nearest clubs regarding possible shelter response and how the local clubs can be of support; supported SBOP's Navy ship request at the Visayas Command to facilitate faster decision/approval.

Stephen "Bobong" Castillo (Rotary Club of Cebu) The "big brother" for both SBOP and Bernard Sia, being the new Executive Director of DMI of D3860. He was the first Rotarian who supported ShelterBox's emergency responses as early as super typhoon Haiyan days and is on standby to provide the support that SBOP needs.

Archie Gamboa (Past D3860 DMI Executive Director) The immediate past ED of D3860 DMI who assisted the new ED, Bernard Sia, to connect directly to the Visayas Commander who approves all humanitarian assistance requests.

Patrick Sampang (Rotary Club of Virac) A previous Rotaractor (Past President) he has been a full Rotary member

for 1 year. Owns a haulage business in Catanduanes and beyond offering the use of 10 wheeler vehicles has helped coordinate the acquisition of trucks and 2 cranes which were provided for free (including overtime payments); Main SBOP focal for remaining stock management at the port.

Peter Cua (Rotary Member) Provided two cranes and five people to support during hauling of items for free thru Ando Cua Foundation.

Franklin Bonales (AG Area4 D7 District 3820) Connected at HQ on the onset and first contact of SBOP in Catanduanes and organize the meeting with the rest of the members; Supported the remaining stock management at the port.

Evan Tabuzo (Rotary Club of Virac) Remaining stock management at the port.

Aurora E. Araojo (President - Rotary Club of Virac) Main contact in Virac

Atty. Susan Ordinario (Rotary Club of Virac) Assisted the team in hotel accommodations/bookings.

Ana Marie P. Delloro (Rotary Club of Naga and Deputy District Governor of Bicol) Assisted the distribution in CamSur and the main contact of SBOP/FACE in CamSur

Belle Ashley Macalintal (Rotaract) Assisted the distribution in CamSur

John Roland Villanueva (Rotaract) Assisted the distribution in CamSur

HEALING KIDS IN BICOL

by Megs Lunn

Rotary clubs from District 3820 joined forces in Operation Taghoy, an initiative of Uplift Internationale based in Denver, Colorado, USA, to provide medical assistance to Filipino impoverished children. 'Taghoy' is the Cebuano word for 'whistle'. The founder of Uplift is Phil-Am Dr. Jaime Yrastorza from Ormoc City.)

US-based doctors and nurses arrived in Legazpi City on Feb. 7, 2025 and set up their facilities at Ago General Hospital. The effort involved a wide network of Rotary clubs, including those from Metro Kalibo (D3850), Forbes Park (D3830), and Pasay (3810).

They were joined by the Rotary clubs of Naga, Legazpi, Legazpi North, Legazpi West, Naga East, Greater Legaspi, Legazpi Central, Metro Legazpi, and Metro Sorso-gon. Also joining the effort were the Bicol University Student Council and the YMCA Albay.

Clubs involved in this project documented their solidarity by signing a Memorandum of Understanding. Signatories included the Rotary Club of Metro Kalibo led by President Jess Fernandez, and represented by Past President Megs Lunn, and the Rotary Club of Legazpi North led by President Merle Oarde. The latter club renewed its sisterhood with Rotary Club of Legazpi led by President Harold Bembenuto.

Operation Taghoy focused on healing children with cleft lip and palate and other facial deformities. The latest project marked their sixth year of presence in the Bicol region and 35 years of service to the Philippines. ■

This page, from top: Some members of Uplift Internationale arrive at Daraga International Airport; Uplift VP Edith Pasion seeing through the screening process; Rotarian Maya of RC Legazpi assisting mother and child prior to treatment; Spouse Dwight Llagas helped with patients' interview at the hospital ward; Pres. Neil Andar of RC Legazpi Central entertains the children awaiting their turn.





Above, clockwise from top left: Father and son waiting for medical assistance to unfold; First day at the Operating Room; PP Megs Lunn being interviewed by a local media reporter.

Left: Uplift volunteer Wilbert Pasion taking charge of the admission process; Doctors Karen and Mariam of the mission team.

Below: Uplift volunteers Megs, Jude and Mario during the discharge of patients, giving the before-and-after photos plus to-go-bags; Rotary Club of Legazpi Central (D3820) after the signing of their sisterhood pact with Rotary Club of Metro Kalibo (D3850).



DISASTER RESPONSE

The recovery playbook

After historic storms, Rotary clubs look to Florida's hard-earned wisdom

Pam Akins and her husband, Barry Levinson, were on the final days of a trip visiting Rotary friends in Sicily when Hurricane Helene sent 14 inches of water through their home near Sarasota, Florida, destroying major appliances, furniture, and their cars. But before they even got home, their Rotary network had leaped in to help.

"Rotarians from Barry's club were already packing valuables from the house," Akins recalls. "Rotary friends did several loads of laundry for us, and another Rotary friend took serving dishes, pots, and pans, and ran them through her dishwasher."

The rapid response is part of a well-rehearsed script for Rotary clubs in Florida's hurricane hot spots. Rotary members there have spent several years refining a recovery template that includes an online volunteer hub, logistical support, and more — all of it ready to go when disaster strikes.

That system was especially put to the test when a second powerful hurricane, Milton, wreaked havoc less than two weeks later, forcing Akins and Levinson to abandon their recovery work and join thousands evacuating.

As bad as it was in Florida, hundreds of miles to the north Helene punched far inland and stalled over the Appalachian Mountain hamlets of western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee — areas with little of Florida's hurricane wisdom and response networks.

There, the storm dumped nearly 2 feet of rain in areas, causing mudslides and flooding that sent homes floating downriver and killing more than 120 people (across all states, more than 250 people were killed in the two storms). The devastation left thousands homeless and isolated or wiped out entire towns.

Patrick Eakes, an RI director from North Carolina whose zones cover much of the eastern U.S. and parts of the Caribbean, knew just where to turn for expert advice. "My first call was to Kelsey Mitchell," he says. "I was like, 'Look, I'm the director, but you're the expert; tell me where we need to focus.'" Mitchell was a district governor-nominee in Florida when Hurricane Ian hit the state in 2022. In the aftermath of that storm, Mitchell helped bring Florida's eight districts together to create detailed statewide recovery plans.

Their playbook includes how to set up bank accounts and websites to accept donations, mobilize volunteers, coordinate with partner organizations, and track essential equipment like debris trailers and water purification rigs. "They know how many chain saws they have in each district and where they are. It's to that level," Eakes says.

Now this recovery playbook is becoming a model for clubs and districts throughout the Southeastern United States. "What they have developed has really become a template for the rest of the zone," says Eakes. "They have a lot of know-how and knowledge of what's important and what to tackle first."

Statewide planning in Florida

To learn more and get involved, visit rotary.org/disaster-response.



Hurricane Helene washed out roads like this one in Asheville, North Carolina, and caused mudslides and flooding that sent homes floating downriver.

began with monthly meetings between Mitchell's class of governor-nominees, who were motivated by the support that poured in after Hurricane Ian. They talked about lessons learned and how they could better support each other in the future. They pooled information and emergency contact lists into a single online file sharing site and agreed to meet daily when new storms approached.

The biggest leap forward came when a Rotarian from the district turned what had been a membership website into an online disaster relief hub. Visitors to the website, rotaryfl.org, can donate, request help, or volunteer all in one place. Volunteers can submit detailed information about what skills and resources they can offer, from physical labor and building materials to food delivery and organizing sup-

port. The data feeds into a master spreadsheet monitored by volunteers. Mitchell says the website will soon be able to automatically match volunteers with those requesting help and send the information to the appropriate district.

The Florida districts have also been working with Disaster Aid USA, an organization launched in 2010 by Rotarians to provide early disaster relief. Disaster Aid trains teams to "muck and gut," tarp roofs, operate chain saws, remove debris, and prep meals. In advance of each hurricane season, the organization works with Florida districts to prepare the team leads.

Mitchell and Eakes began texting right after Helene hit. They discussed specifics of the Florida plan, including how to set up a bank account and direct donations through their zones' website, a task

they completed in a matter of hours. "They had grant applications and a policy page that we've been able to borrow," Eakes says.

District governors from other hard-hit states joined Florida's daily video calls. Eakes was struck by how willing the Florida members were to help even as they grappled with the disaster in their own districts. "To me, it's the best of what Rotary's about," he says.

Alex "Alpo" Portelli, a district governor-elect from North Carolina, also began pumping Mitchell for details such as how to set up food kitchens to feed volunteers and which organizations could provide showers for emergency workers. A retired U.S. Army colonel with more than 30 years of experience in emergency operations, he managed the boots-on-the-ground response in western North Carolina.



BY THE NUMBERS

\$100 billion+

Likely cost of hurricanes Helene and Milton

95%

Share of uninsured losses from Helene

500 miles

Helene's path of destruction

Portelli put in 20-hour days connecting with responding agencies, putting together supply lists, and managing the deluge of donations. He directed Rotary volunteer teams dropping off supplies and stayed in contact with pilots airlifting materials by National Guard Black Hawk and civilian helicopters to mountaintop homes. And he coordinated with teams that hauled supplies up mountainsides by mule when there was no other way. "As a Rotarian, I couldn't be in a better position to do what we need to do to help others," Portelli says.

Several Rotarians donated warehouse space or secured space from business associates. In addition, district leaders worked with organizations like ShelterBox USA, an affiliate of ShelterBox Trust that allocated grant funding to support the Rotary districts' efforts.

Meanwhile in Florida, Rotary members had launched their statewide plan only to be interrupted by the approach of Milton. "I talked to one volunteer who had

helped muck and gut somebody's house in the Englewood area," says Mitchell. When he returned after Milton, the homeowners told him, "Hurricane Helene took all of our belongings, but Hurricane Milton took our home."

Recognizing the trauma of such losses, the Florida districts have spread word of the need for mental health supports. In Florida, a compassion team of professional therapists pays follow-up visits to homes where volunteers have helped. In North Carolina, Portelli and other Rotary members also made mental health a focus.

"PTSD is real, especially for those totally unaccustomed to calamity and disaster," says Portelli. "People suddenly find themselves without communications, washers, dryers, water. They mentally start to break down. We're doing everything we can to bring normalcy back to families, and especially children."

Mitchell is proud of the example her district has set. "We started with just a couple people respond-



Top: Hurricane Helene left scenes of destruction in Pinellas Park, outside St. Petersburg, Florida. Left: Members of District 6950 assisted residents there who suffered property damage.

ing in one neighborhood," she says. "It moved up to an entire city, then to our whole district, then to the state of Florida. Now we are looking at all the Southeastern states."

Mitchell believes every district, no matter where in the world, should have a disaster plan. "Disaster relief has not always been a top priority for people until it hits home," she says. "But everybody needs to have a plan. It's not just hurricanes; there's all kinds of disasters."

— ARNOLD R. GRAHL

Short takes

The 2023-24 Rotary Annual Report is now available to read at rotary.org/annualreport.

The new Rotary Impact Handbook gives members ideas on how to measure service projects' results. Download it at my.rotary.org/document/rotary-impact-handbook.





PROFILE

Peace passion

To give back, a peace fellow knew he had to join Rotary

Dan Noel Odaba
Rotary Club of
Nyeri, Kenya

Some people go to great lengths as Rotarians. Dan Noel Odaba went to great lengths just to become one.

Odaba joined in 2020, during the pandemic. His induction ceremony was held online. To be heard, Odaba took off his mask. And then his oxygen. “I was in the hospital with COVID,” he recalls, including five days in intensive care. But delaying his induction was out of the question. “I said, ‘If I have to die, let me die a Rotarian.’”

That passion was born during Odaba’s time as a Rotary Peace Fellow at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand in 2017. “I made a promise to give back 100 percent,” he says. “There was no way I could do that without becoming a Rotarian.”

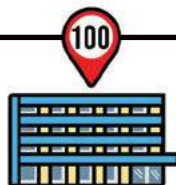
Odaba taught peace studies for more than 18 years before taking a break to complete the Rotary Peace Fellowship. For the program, he did a field study in Sri Lanka, learning about the conflict between the government and Tamil Tiger militants. He later earned a PhD in peace studies, using that case study for his dissertation.

Once a Rotarian, Odaba turned his attention to peacemaking through Rotary. He trained as a Positive Peace Activator through a partnership between Rotary and the Institute for Economics and Peace. He went on to share ideas from the Positive Peace framework with others, including the most recent cohort of Rotary Peace Fellows at Makerere University in Uganda.

In addition to mentoring the next generation of peacebuilders, he’s president of his Rotary club and speaks throughout his district about peace. “Rotary helped me gain insights into peacebuilding, and I wanted to give back,” he says. “That’s why I get so involved in Rotary.” ■

The 2024 Council on Resolutions concluded in October with the adoption of 18 resolutions for the RI Board to consider. Read them at my.rotary.org/cor/vote.

The RI Secretariat’s first international office, now known as the Europe/Africa office, opened in Zurich 100 years ago this month.



Rotary Peace Fellowship applications will be accepted through 15 May. Learn more at rotary.org/peace-fellowships.

People of action around the globe

By Brad Webber



United States

The Rotary Club of Bradley-Bourbonnais in Illinois has found jigsaw puzzles featuring scenes from the community to be a fitting fundraiser. In September, the club unveiled its third annual installment, featuring a bucolic scene of an 1850s barn. The club runs a photo contest each June to find images for the puzzles, offering a \$100 prize. It credits the photographer by name and promotes a link to the winner's website. "We're celebrating what our community has to offer," says Julia Mullikin. "People are looking forward to getting each year's puzzle." Club members staff tables at markets and enlist merchants and museums to offer the puzzles, which sell for \$30. "We use just about every portion of the box to promote our Rotary club," says Frank Koehler. Proceeds support scholarships, student recognition, and ShelterBox.



Mexico

District 5300 has provided homes for dozens of families in northern Mexico since 2008 through a tradition it calls "super builds," a yearly day of construction by Rotary members from California and Nevada. The 16-by-20-foot homes are built through a partnership with the California-based nonprofit Corazón. The \$18,500 cost per family pays for materials as well as school uniforms, books, and scholarships, says Robin Smith, of the Rotary Club of Las Vegas Summerlin, who has coordinated the initiative for nearly a decade. "There are clubs that give monetarily," she says. "There are also clubs that physically build the homes. Then we have clubs that are able to do both." The 2025 build is scheduled for 3 May.

67%

Share of Mexican tenants who spend more than 30% of their income on rent



Jamaica

Seven Rotary clubs and the Rotaract Club of Kingston came together to commission an interactive mural in the Jamaican capital. Scanning the painting with an app unlocks layers of additional information about topics including Rotary's areas of focus, how to join, and how to contribute to The Rotary Foundation. "This mural is more than just an artistic expression," says Steven Hudson, a past president of the Rotary Club of Kingston. "Each brushstroke symbolizes our dedication to these areas." The clubs teamed up with the painter Anthony "Taoszen" Smith and digital artist Kianne Patrice Hutchinson to produce the augmented reality project in collaboration with Kingston Creative, a nonprofit art hub that promotes unity and economic development. "We are able to showcase who we are as Rotarians" through the mural, says Melissa Anderson, of the Rotary Club of Kingston East and Port Royal. "We change lives, one community at a time, and we want others with a heart of service to join us."



Netherlands

A passion for peace prompted five Dutch Rotaract clubs to hold a symposium on conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. On 21 September, the International Day of Peace, club members welcomed Pappy Orion, founder of a nonprofit called Focus Congo, who discussed his journey from child soldier to peacebuilder. The event included panel discussions on the humanitarian crisis and celebrated Congolese food, visual arts, music, and dance. "Our club adopted the project because we want to raise hands, raise awareness, and raise funds to raise hope in the region," says Nicholas Egunjobi, of the Rotaract Club of The Hague International. The event raised about \$7,400 for Orion's nonprofit. "The projects we are aiming to support include building and maintaining camps for internally displaced people," says Ana Zlatevski, a member of The Hague international club.



1899

Year the first peace conference at The Hague was held

Rotaract
Clubs of the Netherlands



Nigeria

A year after installing a borehole well and toilet at a primary school, members of the Rotary Club of Kaduna returned to satisfy another infrastructure need. "The school was without desks at the time of a needs assessment, and the children were sitting on the floor," Club President Portia Stephanie Aji says. A solution was at hand: School leaders had saved pieces of old furniture, and club members refashioned salvageable materials into desks and chairs. The club partnered with businesses and groups to provide the students with backpacks, dictionaries, notebooks, pens, and chalk at a hand-over ceremony in September during Rotary's Basic Education and Literacy Month.

74%

Literacy rate of Nigerian young people ages 15 to 24



1974

Year the National Gallery of Jamaica was established

Rotary
Club of Kaduna



Pietro Uzochukwu Macleo, Adama Mohammed, and Goddy Nhadi joined more than 100 Rotary observers during the presidential election.



THE OBSERVERS

An election
monitoring mission
in Nigeria presents
a pathway for
peacebuilding

By Kúnlé Adébàjò

Photography by
Andrew Esiebo



Pietro Uzochukwu Macleo had reasons to be worried. Nigeria was holding a tightly contested presidential election and he was coordinating scores of people who would be observing the process across the country. It could get rowdy, or worse, bloody. But what Macleo felt most of all when he woke up that Saturday morning in February 2023 wasn't fear. It was excitement.

Rotary districts in Nigeria, led by Macleo, obtained accreditation for more than 100 Rotary members to serve as official election observers. Rotarians headed to their assigned polling units in the country's 36 states and Federal Capital Territory on the mornings of the two general election days, three weeks apart: one, the

presidential and national assembly elections, and the other contests for governors and state assembly seats.

Macleo, now 37, knew how important this exercise was. Nigeria has a worrisome history of election violence, and further political instability in the country — Africa's largest democracy and one of its biggest economies — could have a ripple effect across West Africa and beyond. "I had some concerns about safety and security. But it was more excitement," he says. "We were making history."

For most of its first four decades of independence, Nigeria was under military rule and beset by widespread corruption and communal and ethnic violence. After a historic presidential election in 1999, Ni-

geria introduced democratic reforms. But efforts to share power between large populations of Muslims and Christians and other groups have had halting success, leading to continued tension. Instances and allegations of gross electoral malpractice have not helped. Between the end of military dictatorship and 2019, more than 1,400 people died in election violence.

The 2023 general elections seemed ripe for more unrest. The presidential election, on 25 February, was considered the tightest race since the country restored democratic rule. After Muhammadu Buhari, from the predominantly Muslim north, had served eight years as president, it was widely felt that power should return to the mostly Christian



south, but one of the biggest contenders was a candidate from the northeast. Another tinderbox: The ruling party was fielding a presidential candidate and vice presidential candidate who were both Muslims, a first since 1993 for running mates from a major party at the federal level. This fed conspiracy theories suggesting there was a plan to Islamize the country, with some even making false claims that the group's vice presidential candidate founded Boko Haram, the Muslim militant group in northern Nigeria.

Still, Nigeria had just amended its electoral laws and introduced advanced technology to accredit voters and transmit results, providing hope that these elections would be credible — and peaceful.

Between the end of military dictatorship in 1999 and 2019, more than 1,400 people died in election violence.

Opposite: Macleo led the election observation project. “I had some concerns about safety and security. But it was more excitement,” he says. “We were making history.” **Above:** Officials count ballots in front of party agents and observers at a polling station in Lagos during Nigeria's gubernatorial and state assembly election.

Early that morning, Macleo sent out a stream of reminders to the 131 election observers via WhatsApp: *Wake up, it's time. Remember your training. You only have business with election officials and the police. Don't engage with the media. Don't engage with voters. Don't forget to take your own water and snacks.*

At 6 a.m., Macleo left home wearing his navy Rotary election observer jacket

and green lanyard carrying his election observer ID that he would need to get around restrictions on movement across the country. He picked up a fellow Rotarian — the observers traveled in pairs — and headed to a spacious public primary school in the Garki neighborhood of the capital, Abuja.

Macleo joined Rotary when he was 28, a college student obsessed with bodybuilding. When he attended his first meeting of the Rotary Club of Abuja Wuse II in 2015 wearing a sleeveless, tight-fitting outfit, he felt like the odd one out among the gathering of middle-aged career folk. But he didn't let that discourage him. "I was instead inspired," he recalls. "I loved the way they conducted themselves."

He was studying political science at the University of Abuja and later focused his dissertation on elections, which spurred his interest in leadership and governance. He went on to earn doctorates in peace studies and international relations, and today, Macleo is as passionate about peacebuilding as he once was about bodybuilding.

His research led him to an understanding that the best pathways to peace are holistic, progressive, and inclusive. Rotary could help advance such an approach, he realized, because it already has a large network of individuals who are as driven as he is. "I saw an opportunity where you could mobilize people to address real issues on peace," he says.

When he became his Rotary club's president — its youngest — in 2019, he put the focus on projects centered around peacebuilding. That same year, he enrolled in the Institute for Economics and Peace's Ambassador Program, which helped him see how the eight Pillars of Positive Peace

could lead to tangible results in Nigeria.

In 2020, Macleo formed a foundation, which is establishing a network of Positive Peace advocates in Rotary clubs around Nigeria to implement projects. And in 2023, he participated in Rotary's Positive Peace Activator Program, an intensive learning opportunity for dedicated peacebuilders.

Voter education and election monitoring are not as tangible as drilling a borehole well, equipping a health facility, or building a block of classrooms. Still, Macleo believes they are just as crucial, if not more so. If you can get strong leadership, if people believe their votes are protected and will count, then a government might emerge that will serve effectively and remove the need for a borehole, a hospital bed, and a new block of classrooms in a lot of communities.

Goddy Nnadi, governor of District 9125 during the 2023 elections, agrees. In decades as a member, he has seen Rotary's work help people in meaningful ways. With the election observation program, he believes Rotary is doing more. "Some see Rotarians as those who impact people," Nnadi says. "This project impacts the system. The systemic improvement is what the nation needs. The reason is this: If we have a good election, you elect good people, and good people will make the state better."

All over the world, observers, both domestic and international, help improve the quality of elections. Observers hold authorities accountable, ensure fairness and transparency, build public confidence in the process, deter fraud, and document irregularities — especially crucial in fragile democracies. Their recommendations can lead to improvements in the political



process, and their presence builds trust.

"To observers, it's about the process, not the outcome," explains Mboho Eno, who leads the Media in National Elections project at the Abuja-based Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development. Nigeria's civil society organizations deserve credit for progress, Eno says.

Months before the 2023 elections, Rotary districts in Nigeria organized voter education events, including workshops in every state and trainings shared through social and traditional media. They reached over 100,000 people. One of them was Zigwai Tagwai, who attended one of the workshops in September 2022 at the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution in Abuja.

Rotary election observers often received a warm reception and were seen as a neutral and trusted voice. "I was amazed at the passion and commitment of our members," Adama Mohammed says.

Observers hold authorities accountable, ensure fairness and transparency, build public confidence in the process, deter fraud, and document irregularities.







Tagwai, a young civic engagement advocate, heard about the program through a network she belongs to on WhatsApp. At the session, Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission demonstrated a device being introduced at the general elections that uses biometric data such as facial recognition and fingerprints to verify and accredit voters. Tagwai learned the basics of the reformed electoral process, how best to go about voting, and the responsibilities of citizen observers. She passed this information on to scores of other young people in her network.

The workshop also led Tagwai, who had already completed the IEP curriculum for peace ambassadors, to further engage with the Rotary network. She was accepted into the Positive Peace Activator Program and has since collaborated with Rotary members on peacebuilding activities. "There are shared values," she says.

Left: Nigeria's four district governors in 2023, including Goddy Nnadi, supported the project. **Above:** Pedestrians in Abuja walk past a banner from the police force carrying a message calling for peace during the elections.

That preelection work by Rotary districts, supported by Nnadi and the country's three other district governors at the time — Omotunde Lawson, Mightyman Aye Dikuro, and Grace Okaro — is what enabled them to meet the criteria to serve as official observers in the 2023 general elections. When they discovered in January 2023 that they had been selected, they put out a call for Rotarians to volunteer. The response was so overwhelming they had to narrow the pool to club presidents and past and present district officers. The Rotary observers went through robust training, collected their identification cards, and eagerly awaited the big day.

As Macleo and his partner made their way to their first polling place, they hit an immediate snag: aggressive security that restricted their movement, observer tags or not. By the time they got to the site at a school, they met a large crowd of voters already waiting. When officials finally opened the gate, voters swarmed chaotically inside.

As officials set up materials, Macleo observed someone suspiciously taking pictures of voting items. "I knew from the

training with INEC [the election commission] that was not allowed," he says. Since interacting with voters was prohibited too, he reported the person to security agents.

More than 3,000 voters cast ballots at a dozen polling stations located around the school as roughly 20 security agents stood by to prevent any outbursts of violence. As in many other places, the voting was peaceful, especially during the early hours. There was an atmosphere of merriment. "People brought food and drinks because the queue was long," Macleo says.

"We don't care about who won or who lost. We were looking out for inclusivity."

From the school, Macleo moved on to another area of the Garki neighborhood. The crowd there wasn't as big, and the voting process was better managed. Afterward, he visited a voting site at a post office. By the end of the day, he had observed more than 20 polling stations.

Adama Mohammed had a similar experience. She left home at 7:30 a.m. and didn't return until after observing the evening Muslim prayer, past 6 p.m. Driving around in her red SUV, she visited at least 23 polling stations in the upscale Maitama area of Abuja, home to foreign embassies, restaurants, and shops. She was constantly on the move, drinking from her water flask and munching on finger foods to replenish her energy. She was excited to soak in as much information as possible. "I didn't sit down anywhere," she says.

An Abuja-based lawyer and a member of the Rotary Club of Abuja Maitama, Mohammed says she is driven to advocate for people who need help, especially women and children. She joined Rotary because she saw an opportunity to do this on a bigger scale. She was particularly keen on the election observation project because she was "conscious of the importance of the democratic process and electing good leaders," she says. She enjoyed connecting with other Rotary election observers across the country through WhatsApp. "I was amazed at the passion and commitment of our members," she says.

Throughout the day, Rotary members exchanged photos: polling places in Nigeria's modern urban metropolises and those in rural communities of dirt roads and mud and thatch houses; people waiting in plastic chairs for poll workers to set up, and others tracing a list of voters on a wall. A picture uploaded to WhatsApp by an observer in northeastern Nigeria shows a traditional leader dressed in a white boubou, a flowing garment, and flanked by aides — one stands behind him, holding a ceremonial umbrella so big he has to use both hands.

Macleo noticed several problems as the day progressed. The distribution of voters was lopsided. One polling place could have over a thousand voters and another steps away would have only 50. After waiting in line for several hours, some voters found out they'd been re-assigned to vote someplace else. There wasn't adequate support for people with



"You don't just start addressing these issues overnight. It has to be systemic."

physical and visual disabilities, and there were hiccups with uploading the counted results.

While moving from one polling unit to another, Macleo frequently checked the WhatsApp group of observers to see how others were faring. "The BVAS [biometrics] machine has failed to work and the PO [presiding officer] has sent for the technician. Voters waiting," one observer in Cross River state wrote. Another observer in the city of Yenagoa noted that national election officials had yet to arrive. "Security forces are around. Voters are getting agitated."

There were updates, too, about the warm reception that Rotarians received.



Opposite: Rotary members in Nigeria are working with young people such as these Rotary Youth Leadership Awards attendees to help them avoid being drawn into political violence. **Left:** Macleo now heads the Nigeria chapter of the Rotary Action Group for Peace.

a week. In the end, Bola Tinubu, the ruling party candidate, was named president.

After a campaign period marred by a level of political violence comparable to previous years, the election day voting proceeded largely peacefully despite some pockets of violence. Reducing election violence opens the door to peacebuilding, Macleo says, especially among young people, who have sometimes been vulnerable to recruitment by political groups to carry out attacks on candidates, voters, and election commission offices.

Rotary districts in Nigeria are now designing a project to create peace education clubs at schools and in communities across the country that could be integrated, Macleo envisions, into Rotaract and Interact clubs. It teaches young people about issues such as cultism, gang violence, peace, tolerance, human rights, civic responsibilities, drug use, cyber-crime, and so on.

One of the hopes is that they'll avoid being drawn into political violence. "The election period opened our eyes to the fact that some actors fan the embers of hate, of disinformation, ethnicity, bias," Macleo says. "You don't just start addressing these issues overnight. It has to be systemic. You address the issue to make sure there are no available hands for them to use, and that's from building capacity for the youth."

To support the work, Nigerian Rotarians chartered a national chapter of the Rotary Action Group for Peace, with 200 members and more than 2,000 affiliates, including Rotary members, Rotaractors, Rotary Peace Fellows, and others — and with Macleo at the helm.

While funding has been a challenge, Macleo sees great potential, not just in Nigeria, but for peace-loving Rotary members around the world. "By joining Rotary, I saw an opportunity where you could actually mobilize people to address real issues on peace. That was the catch for me," he says. "We are at the vanguard for the eradication of polio. That's the same kind of imagination I have for peace." ■

"Voters who knew about Rotary or who have been Rotarians or are currently Rotarians were happy to see Rotary actively involved in supporting a peaceful election," a member in Abuja wrote. "Exactly," someone replied. Another Rotarian in Akwa Ibom state observed that he even met people who expressed interest in joining the organization. And voters drew the attention of at least one of the Rotary observers, a member in Niger state, to suspicious activities. "They saw us as neutral and trusted us," he said.

Among other problems, some voters had to wait until the following day to complete their ballots. And advanced voting technologies, key reasons for hope in the

reliability of the results, did not function dependably, observers noted. These observations were shared with the electoral commission and other key stakeholders in an 83-page report, which called it "a 'successful' election — however imperfect."

"You won't find any partisan information in our report," Macleo says. "We don't care about who won or who lost. We were looking out for inclusivity. Was the process inclusive for people living with a disability? Was it inclusive of the aged? Was it inclusive of women? Were the rules and regulations followed? What transpired? Could it trigger conflict?"

Litigation over the presidential election delayed the gubernatorial voting by



SPOTLIGHT ON THE 2025 PHILIPPINE ELECTIONS

Elections generate excitement and expectations among Filipinos. As they exercise their right to vote, they choose the men and women that will steer local governments and the country's legislature. Although the midterm elections do not involve the election of a President and Vice President, its significance should not be depreciated.

Imperatives for voters include knowing the candidates' credentials and assessing their worthiness for the positions they are seeking. We shed light in this on the civic initiatives to insure credible and peaceful elections. Rotary clubs and Rotarians would do well to create heightened awareness and take action.





2025 PHILIPPINE ELECTIONS

‘Wag kang kukurap’ —LENTE

LENTE was launched on March 23, 2007 at Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) National Office with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement among the LENTE Co-Convenors.

It is “the first and only non-partisan, nationwide network of lawyers, law students, paralegals, and grassroots volunteers engaged to do election work. LENTE is also working with various CSOs in promoting human rights and a rights-based approach to elections and governance. LENTE mobilizes up to 3 000 volunteers to help other

non-partisan groups ensure transparent and truthful elections.”

Through its Accountability Lab, LENTE, with the aid of different groups and organizations, has established guidelines and standards to police instances involving abuse of state resources in elections. The desired outcome is clear: “a Safe, Accountable, Transparent, and Inclusive elections which inspire National Public Confidence.” For any incidents of abuse of state resources in elections in your area, report the same using this LINK or you may call LENTE hotline at mobile telephone 0920-266-0944. ■

LENTE OBJECTIVES

- 1** To conduct public education activities on the Philippines electoral system.
- 2** To lobby and advocate for electoral reforms that would ensure the electoral process’s credibility and restore the citizens’ trust in Philippine democracy.
- 3** To pursue criminal and administrative cases against violators of election laws.
- 4** To strengthen institutional ties among various citizen’s arms and other organizations.
- 5** To monitor the conduct of elections.

Above: LENTE envisions a genuinely and participatory democratic Philippine society with an informed, empowered, and engaged citizenry, where LENTE serves as a steadfast guardian of a credible and accessible electoral system.



2025 PHILIPPINE ELECTIONS

PPCRV launches 'Tibok Pinoy'



The Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) has launched Tibok Pinoy, a voter's education program "that matters the most, that kind that teaches you how to vote according to your conscience and how to choose worthy candidates."

Thus says Ana De Villa-Singson, PPCRV's National Education Head. She continues:

"(W)hile we make much of the machines, what matters most is the people. It is people who create and configure a machine's protocols. It is people who cast the votes that

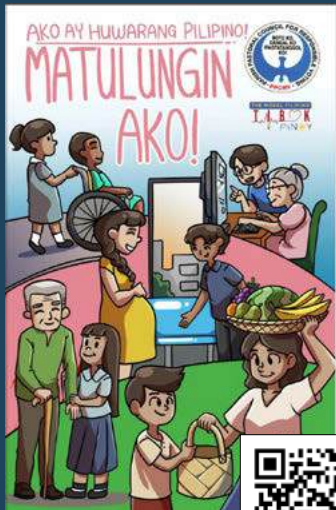
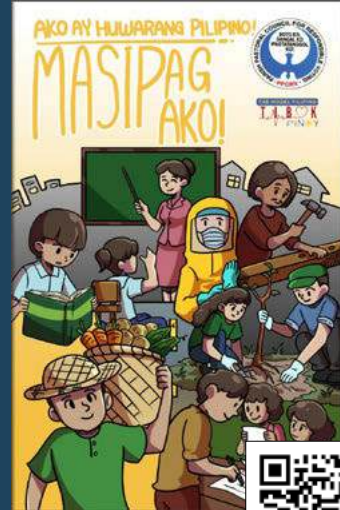
are fed into the machines. It is the people who decide the leadership and destiny of our country."

She said that after 33 years of voters education, "we in PPCRV took time to pause and re-examine." PPCRV reflected on "why are vote buying and vote selling now raging at a wholesale level where even whole families and whole barangays can be bought?" She narrated how "in one night alone, while waiting for his Bishop, one of our coordinators was plied with P11,000 in a matter of three hours peddled by various vote buyers."

She noted that "while PPCRV's 10 Commandments for Voting, has been adapted many times over, even imported to Indonesia, but can we really say we have been successful when many Filipinos choose candidates on the basis of name familiarity alone, without due diligence on a candidate's character, capabilities and experience?"

Such realization underlines the importance of raising the level of voter consciousness such that it is able to lead into a truly responsible exercise of the right to vote. ■

From top: Cardinal Virgilio 'Ambo' David (fourth from left) with PPCRV officials at the launch of Tibok Pinoy. Volunteers during the Unofficial Parallel Count at the PPCRV Command Center during the 2022 Philippine elections.



PPCRV's six Tibok Pinoy Books and Podcasts and even a tutorial on how to use them are available on their website (ppcrv.org). According to Ms. Ana de Villa-Singson, "Like everything we do in PPCRV, we offer them up without expectation of anything. We offer them to you as a gift. We offer Tibok Pinoy as a prayer that our country divided by conflict, ridden by corruption will pivot back to what counts the most...the values of a model Filipino. Maka-Diyos, Matapat. Magalang. Masipag. Matulungin. Makabayan. Mapanuri. We offer you the tools and offer them to you our partners, our friends, because we know that it takes a village...a very large village to make our dream of a country peopled by Model Filipinos happen. We need all of you our partners in the Church. We need our friends in the corporate world, our venerable teachers in the academe, our passionate youth leaders, our co-election advocates, our longtime friends in media to disseminate this far and wide."

Above: To read any of PPCRV's Tibok Pinoy books, scan the QR codes on your mobile device.

Управљање и програмирање

Едукативно средство: mBot2

Визуелно програмирање: Make Blocks



Никола М

$$1 + \sqrt{2} = 1 + \sqrt{2}$$



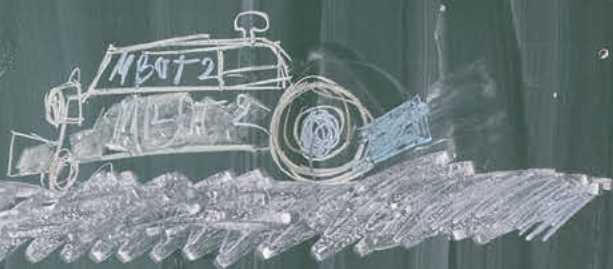
$$1 + \sqrt{2}$$

(ROTARY + USAID) x MBOTS

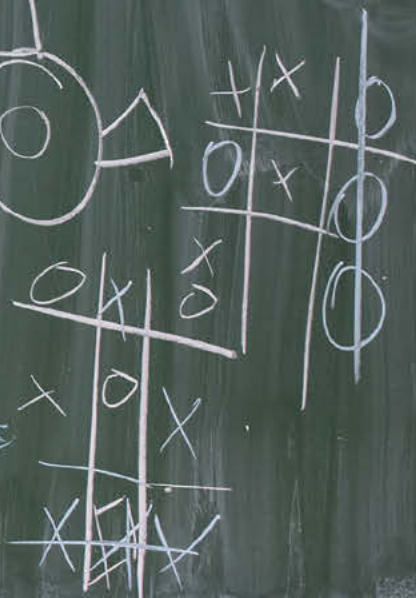
= A TECH-SAVVY FUTURE FOR SERBIAN STUDENTS

The equation mBot

ROBOT



DRS. KO



Photography by
MONIKA LOZINSKA

In May
2020,

during the earliest months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Rotary International and USAID announced an exciting new endeavor. Called Hearts of Europe, the initiative aimed to foster collaboration, networking, and friendship among Rotary clubs in the United States and select central and Eastern European countries.

“At this challenging time, we believe Hearts of Europe is a fantastic opportunity to rebuild the bonds of cooperation between communities and nations,” said John Hewko, the general secretary and CEO of Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation. “If we can seize this opportunity, we will pave the way for a healthier and more prosperous future.”

USAID called the collaboration an example of what it and Rotary do best: They both empower communities to help themselves and lay the foundations for a better future.

Administered through The Rotary Foundation’s global grants program, Hearts of Europe has to date approved 21 projects in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Ukraine. The partnership has provided nearly \$2 million in funding, with 57 percent of that money coming from Rotary — and, says Sam Kendall, a strategic relations officer for Rotary, there are more projects in the pipeline. Originally scheduled to conclude in 2023, the partnership was extended another two years and will wrap up this summer.

Last April, Monika Lozinska and Aleks Iricanin, two members of Rotary’s visual media team, traveled to Serbia to take a close look at one Hearts of Europe global grant project. Anticipating an increased demand in Serbia for IT professionals skilled at robotics and programming, the Rotary Club of Beograd-Čukarica in Belgrade and the Rotary Club of St. Simons Island in the U.S. state of Georgia collaborated on a project that distributed 500 programmable mBots to primary schools in Serbia. They also provided training programs to about 150 teachers in 100 schools to better prepare them to teach students the fundamentals of robotics, electronics, and programming.

Lozinska and Iricanin visited with teachers and pupils from four schools. They also attended the Knowledge for the Future Festival, where about 300 students from 63 schools — narrowed down from 1,112 schools in earlier tournaments — competed in a demonstration of their skills with mBots and drones. One team emerged triumphant, but, thanks to Rotary and USAID, all the kids went home winners.

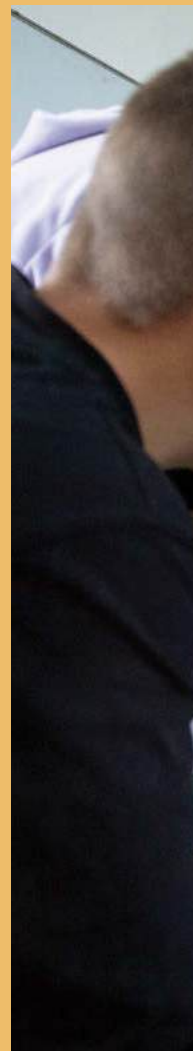


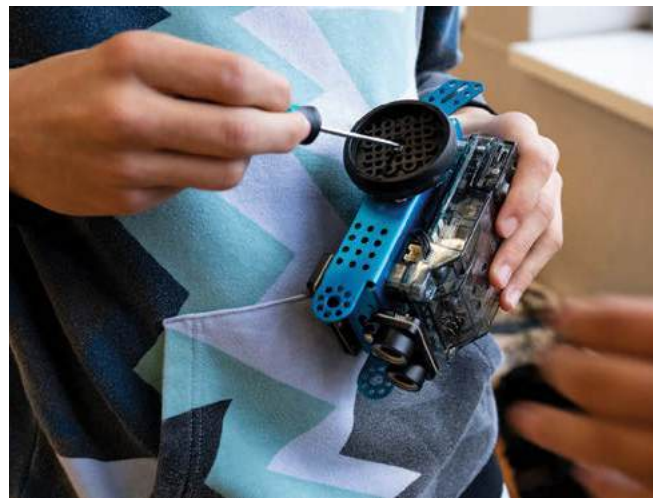
↑ “The children are fascinated” by mBots, says Nadica Gavrilović (above), who teaches engineering and technology at Filip Kljajić Fića primary school in Belgrade. “They’re really interested in programming robots — seeing how they move and what they can do.”

↗ A student (top right) makes an mBot adjustment at Svetozar Marković primary school in Belgrade.

↗ Students at Ivo Lola Ribar primary school in Ruma (right) watch raptly as a schoolmate demonstrates what a well-programmed mBot can do.

(Previous pages) Renderings of mBots share a crowded blackboard with scientific scribbles and games of tic-tac-toe at Filip Kljajić Fića school.





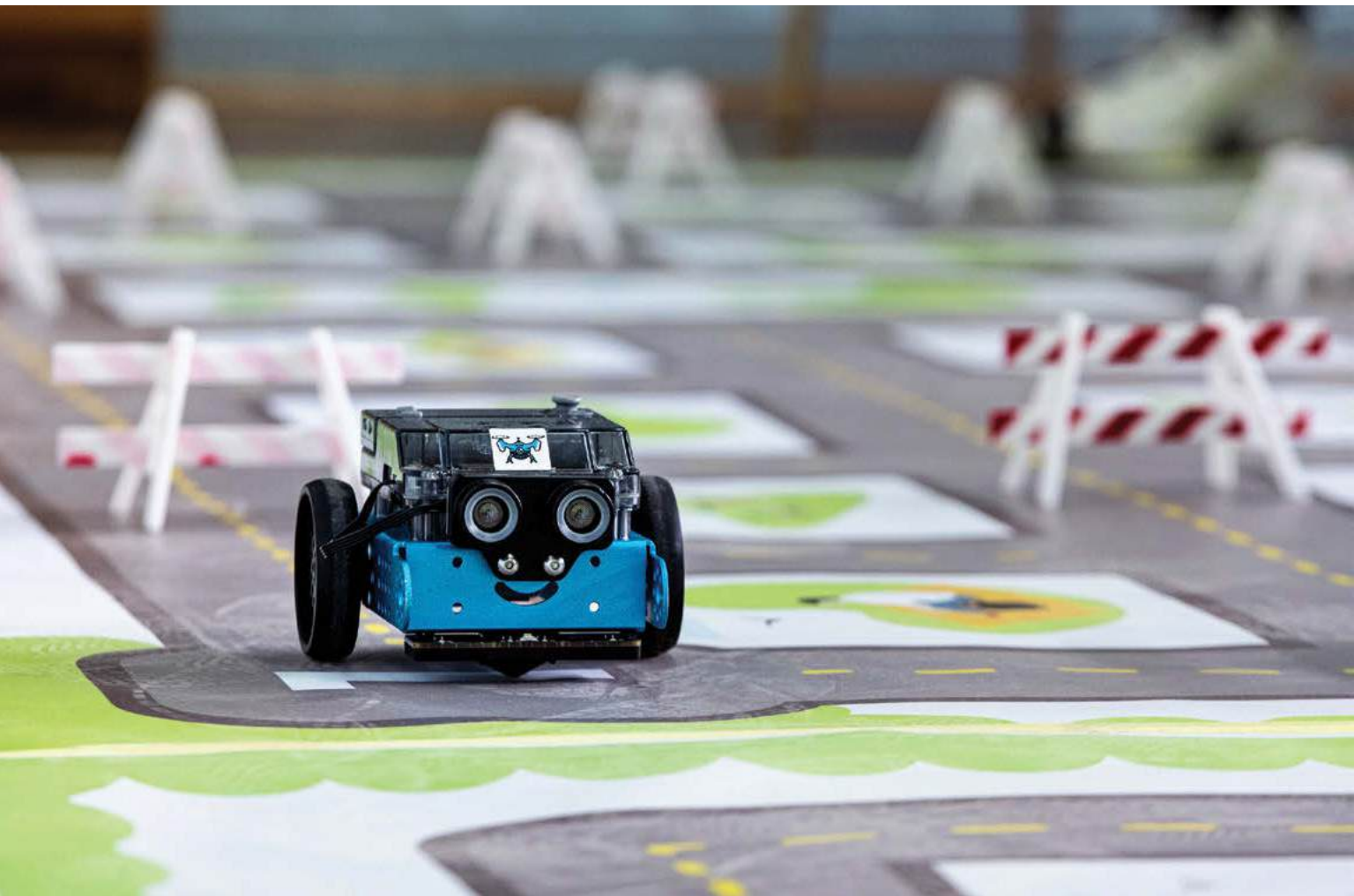


↑ At Filip Kljajić Fića school (above), a delighted Milica Rakonjac shows off her mBot, which seems equally enchanted with her.

↗ On 20 April, at Belgrade's Ranko Žeravica Sports Hall (top right), students prepare for the Knowledge for the Future Festival.

↘ Three of the 300-plus students participating in the festival competition (right) make sure everything is good to go with their mBot.







↪ Vladimir Lalošević (top left), a member of the Rotary Club of Ruma and assistant governor of District 2483, where the mBots were distributed, sits with his daughter, Teodora, an mBot aficionado. “I want to learn how to program,” she says, “so in the future I can make new robots that can help us.”

⤴ When it comes to mBots, these boys (top right) just want to have fun, which is not only allowed but encouraged and one of the secrets to the project’s success.

⇒ Vladimir Matić (right), a member of the Rotary Club of Beograd-Čukarica and a leader of the Hearts of Europe global grant mBot project, reviews the results of the mBot competition at the Knowledge for the Future Festival.







⇌ And the winner of the Knowledge for the Future Festival competition is ... Nadica Gavrilović and her jubilant students from Filip Kljajić Fića school.

“Through organizing competitions, we get information about what the children have learned,” says Vladimir Lalošević. “And we definitely think we are on the right path.”

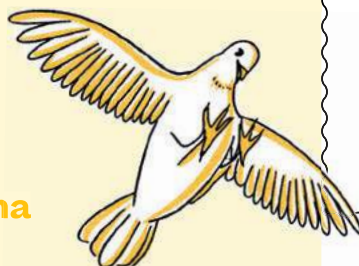


Where all news is good news

Things aren't as bad as we think they are, David Byrne discovers



Illustration by
Cristian Barba Camarena



In October, people found their seats at the Town Hall theater in New York City, not just for a concert or a comedy show, but both — and more. This variety show celebrated the fifth anniversary of *Reasons to be Cheerful*, a nonprofit online magazine offering good news in a market often dominated by doom and gloom headlines.

But these aren't your average feel-good stories about a firefighter helping a cat down from a tree. *Reasons to be Cheerful* reports on evidence-based solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems, from poverty to climate change. In fact, you may have read some of the publication's articles in this magazine. *Rotary* republishes the outlet's stories from time to time, and the two publications collaborate on other pieces.

Musician and writer David Byrne, a Rock & Roll Hall of Famer with Talking Heads and Grammy winner for a music film, got into the good news business in 2019. What started as a personal project has evolved into a full editorial and administrative team publishing an optimistic story most weekdays. Over the past five years, *Reasons to be Cheerful* has published about a thousand such stories, and Byrne sees no end in sight.

In September, NPR journalist Scott Simon talked with Byrne for the *Rotary Voices* podcast ahead of *Reasons to be Cheerful*'s fifth anniversary celebration. Byrne discussed the origins of *Reasons to be Cheerful*, the stories that have stuck with him, and his personal reflections on cheer in the modern world. What follows is adapted from their conversation. Listen to the full interview at on.rotary.org/podcast.



From top: David Byrne takes to the stage to celebrate *Reasons to be Cheerful*'s fifth anniversary. Joining him are comedian Fred Armisen, circus artist Ellie Steingraeber, and drum line Fogo Azul.



Why did you start *Reasons to be Cheerful*?

Like a lot of people, I get up in the morning and read the newspapers over coffee and grapefruit. I end up getting my stomach in a knot, anxious and angry, and that lasts into my day. I realized this is not good for me, not good for my health, and it's not solving any of the problems I'm reading about.

So, when I saw a story about something that seemed hopeful, especially about someone who had actually solved one of the problems out in the world somewhere, I saved it in a folder. And then I started writing about these things myself, basically saying, "Things are maybe not as bad as we think they are."

The social media algorithms and our own evolutionary bias make us pay more attention to bad news or things that might threaten us or scare us than we would to things that are hopeful. It's a kind of survival instinct. I thought maybe we can redress that balance a little bit, because there are things that people have found solutions for and things that are hopeful out there, and they just don't get the clicks that the bad news does.

I realized, maybe we can be a counterweight to that and maybe we can do this in a more formal way. So, I started working with editors, writers, a web designer. We started doing two stories a week and now we're up to five. I'm surprised there's that many stories.

What recent story has stayed with you?

One of the most popular in recent months was about the removal of dams [on the Penobscot River] in Maine. These dams weren't generating much electricity or power. They were built when logging was a huge industry in Maine, and they provided some mechanical power to run the mills. But those are long gone and now dams like these just stop the fish and back up the water, so the water becomes stagnant. Little by little, they have been removed.

The good news is the fish and the wildlife have all started to come back. The predators that feed on the fish — the eagles, raccoons, and bears — they have all started to come back. This life along the river has become more vibrant. From the human point of view, the river has become a better place and the real estate values, which suffered when the river

was stagnant, have gone up. It's a more desirable place to live.

So this is a story that tells people it's possible to make a difference?

It is possible to make a difference. And then we go into the details of how this was done, all these efforts, which might not be everyone's cup of tea — the mechanics of how change like this happens. But it's important to know how it happens. It's not a magical snap of the fingers.

What have you learned through five years of putting out *Reasons to be Cheerful*? For one thing, does that figure surprise you?

I'm surprised that financially we've managed to hang in there and we're doing all right. I'm surprised that we keep finding stories. I genuinely thought that at some point we'd scrape the bottom of the barrel and be like, "OK, that's it for the good news." The other things are more administrative. I learned that there are always changes and shifts in the team, and eventually it settles into something, and you go, "Ah, now people are doing what they like, and they're doing it well." And I can step back a bit because we're working with really good people. It's very nice when that happens.

You don't have ads or paywalls, right?

No, though we did try ads for a little while. We run on membership. We ask people to pay what they wish. There's no set fee, but that helps us, as well as occasional philanthropic donations. We do talks — I went to Maine and did a talk with some of the people involved in the dam removal. So we can bring in a little bit of money here and there.

Do you still fill yourself up with news?

Yes, I still read the papers when I get up in the morning, but now at least I have an alternative. If I need some therapy, let's say, after getting myself all worked up reading what's happened overnight, I can turn to some things like, "Oh, here's some people who've done something hopeful."

Now, if I'm having a dinner conversation with friends and they start talking about a subject and how terrible and hopeless it seems, I go, "Ah, but did you know, these people in Vienna, here's how they solved their housing problem?" or

something like that. And I'll say it shortly and not make a pompous speech, but it means I can counter the negative stories.

Have you ever had to scrounge or are the stories somehow always there?

Surprisingly, the stories are there. But as the founder of this thing, I push for evidence that a solution is a real solution, and not just a wish or a good idea or somebody trying something out. The reader needs to see that this has actually been successful and gives some measure of success. Sometimes it's a bit of a struggle getting that kind of data. You don't always get handed data and numbers and evidence that are exactly what you want. Sometimes you have to look for it.

Tell us about the relationship that you have with Rotary. *Reasons to be Cheerful* articles appear in Rotary magazine, for example.

I'll be honest, it surprised me. My impression was that Rotary's an institution that you're aware of in every town that you pass through when you're driving around the country. I didn't know that much about what Rotary does. I think Rotary has shifted a little bit, and some of our interests have aligned. We've done stories together and we'll probably do more in the future.

You've written about technology and isolation. Are you concerned about loneliness?

Not so much for myself. I see people socially all the time, and I'm also a person who doesn't mind being alone at times. A lot of my work entails me being alone. But I also feel that technological developments have been isolating us.

You see people walking down the street looking at their phones and that's how they connect with other people. Now, it's nice to connect with other people, but to my way of thinking, that's not really a connection. You miss a lot of what a human interaction is when you just do it over social media or phone.

Increasingly, we can relate to other people, do our shopping and this and that without ever coming in contact with another person. Granted, having a little interaction with a salesperson is not maybe the biggest thing in the world, but they are a human being. And there's a

certain thing that happens when you're dealing with a human being. I do worry about those things being gradually taken away from us.

How do we avoid being overwhelmed by all the discouraging circumstances in this world?

I would say getting together with friends, colleagues, and small groups. I joined a book club recently. I think I knew just one of the people in it before I joined. I don't always like the books we read, but it's always great to get together and talk about them. Little projects, gardens, book clubs, or sports. I think that getting together is really a healthy thing that makes people feel better.

Can I ask you about riding your bike through New York City during the COVID-19 pandemic? This wasn't just to get from point A to point B, right? This was a journey of discovery.

I'm someone who uses a bicycle as a means of commuting and getting around. New York is pretty flat, so it's pretty easy. And during COVID, I quickly discovered that here's a way where you can remain socially distanced but still get together with some friends and explore.

A lot of cities have sprawl, but New York is just really big. We decided little by little to ride through all these different neighborhoods that we weren't familiar with. We went to the Bronx, to Jackson Heights and Flushing in Queens, and ended up at the airport on one ride. And of course, since it was early in the pandemic, not a single plane was flying. We'd come back from a ride and go through Times Square, which was almost empty except for a few what seemed like befuddled tourists who had somehow ended up there. And it seemed to me they were asking themselves, "Well, what do we do now?" You could hear birds. It was an eerie moment, but you could hear birds everywhere.

I hope this isn't a stretch, but is that also kind of what you're doing with *Reasons to be Cheerful*: helping us hear the birds?

Yeah, I'll take that! They're there. They're doing their best to shout above the traffic and the ambulances and everything else. We often can't hear them, but if you can clear a little space, they're there. ■



TRUSTEE CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Ambassadors of peace

By some measures, great progress has been made in building more peaceful societies around the world. Yet the reality of ongoing regional wars, skirmishes, and violence globally reminds us how far we still have to go. These conflicts affect the humanity of us all, whether they occur far from us or in our own communities.

So, what can Rotary do to build peace?

As a global force for peace and conflict prevention, Rotary addresses the root causes of conflict. Our role at the 1945 United Nations charter is a testament to this enduring commitment.

Another cornerstone of this work is the Rotary Peace Centers program. Through The Rotary Foundation, these seven centers provide fully funded fellowships, empowering individuals to address the complex challenges of conflict and development.

More than 1,800 alumni now work in over 140 countries as champions of peace, creating lasting change in their communities. Consider alumni like Pablo Cuevas, a 2015 peace fellow who leads the Paraguay office of the International Organization for Migration, aiding those displaced by crises. Leni Kinzli, a 2023 graduate, advocates for Sudan's humanitarian needs with the United Nations World Food Programme. Yuki Daizumoto, a 2007 peace fellow, supports life-changing agricultural and livelihood projects in Afghanistan with the Japan International Coopera-

tion Agency. These individuals embody Rotary's investment in peace.

This month, the Foundation Trustees will consider a plan to establish our eighth Rotary Peace Center, in Asia, as part of our vision to have peace centers on every inhabited continent by 2030.

But our commitment extends beyond the peace centers. Through Rotary's partnership with the Institute for Economics and Peace, we have trained over 300 Positive Peace Activators from 60 countries. Our forgiveness and social cohesion curricula help members heal communities. Through our Foundation grants and service, Rotary members are fostering peace by engaging with youths, strengthening civil society, and resolving core issues that can lead to conflict.

At President Stephanie Urchick's Peace Conference in Istanbul this month, we will celebrate this work and the first class of the Otto and Fran Walter Rotary Peace Center at Bahçeşehir University.

Remember that you are also ambassadors of peace through service projects, exchange programs, and as supporters of The Rotary Foundation.

My wish for 2025 is for peace to take root and flourish ever more widely, with Rotary playing an increasingly meaningful role in that noble pursuit.

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.



THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

2023-24 Service Award for a Polio-Free World

The Rotary Foundation Trustees established the Service Award for a Polio-Free World to honor members who have made outstanding contributions to Rotary's polio eradication efforts. Members can nominate individuals for regional or international service. The 71 members listed received the 2023-24 award.

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE

Numbers correspond to the photos above.

Enrique Guillermo Andres (3), Philippines
Dilip G. Bhavsar (6), India
Lindsey J. Cancino (9), Bahamas
Sridhar Jagannathan (2), India
Eon-Ji Kim (5), Korea
Mukesh Malhotra (8), England
Lay Heng (Josephine) Ng (4), Malaysia
Peter Teahen (1), United States
Michel Zaffran (7), France

REGIONAL SERVICE

Regions are as defined by the World Health Organization.

AFRICA

Illo Adam, Niger
Oluwatoyin Debby Coulthard, Nigeria
Nebeyu Aseferachew Dilnesahu, Ethiopia
Yvonne Kumoji-Darko, Ghana
Abeselom Samson, Ethiopia

AMERICAS

Jorge Aufranc, Guatemala (posthumously)
Thomas Gump, United States
Katherine Hahn, Canada
Jack Haugen, United States
André Luis Hentz, Brazil
Jayne Hulbert, United States
Antônio Otacílio Lajús, Brazil

Lucimar Lacerda Melo, Brazil
Nelson Soares de Melo, Brazil
Pedro José Prá, Brazil
Fernando Antonio Quintella Ribeiro, Brazil
Sergio Romero Barradas, Mexico
Mark Scolnick, United States
Owen P. Standley, United States
Sonia Beatriz Uribe Lopez, Colombia
Zoraida Vela, Uruguay

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Bashir Ahmad, Pakistan
Shaikh Ashiq Ali, Pakistan
Rabil Butt, Pakistan
Imran Ghaznavi, Pakistan
Mian Shaukat Masud, Pakistan
Muhammad Fayyaz Qureshi, Pakistan
Jahangir Khan Sherpao, Pakistan
Raees Zaidi, Pakistan

EUROPE

Montse Bosch Pasola, Spain
Roger Byrom, England
Herbert Ederer, Austria
Theodoros Panagos, Greece
Keith Paver, England
Axel Ruetz, Germany
Jean-Jacques Titon, France
Lothar Weber, Germany

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Suresh Chandra Agarwal, India
Jitendra Dhingra, India
Mutasim Billah Faruqui, Bangladesh
Subrata Ghosh, India
Girish Govind Gune, India
K. K. Johri, India
Krishnaraj A. Kunja, India
V R Muthu, India
Vinay Kumar Sripad Pai Raikar, India
Subhojit Roy, India
Jayant Sastry, India
Sajjan S. Seth, India
Krishnaswami Soundararaja, India

WESTERN PACIFIC

Robert Aitken, Australia
Ma. Lourdes Enriquez (Lou) Capili, Philippines
Huey Jiuon (Joanne) Kam, Singapore
Sixto Kwan, Philippines
Ana Maria Lorenzana, Philippines
Roger Hung Koon Ng, Singapore
Takashi Nikkawa, Japan
Joyce Ogden, Australia
Philip Ogden, Australia
Sik Ling Or, Hong Kong
Estela Maribel Tan Vilela, Philippines
Benedicto Jose P. Verzosa, Philippines

Nominations for the Service Award for a Polio-Free World are accepted each year between 15 July and 1 October. To learn more, visit rotary.org/awards.

2025 CONVENTION

Rotaractor friends for life



Rotaractors bring the party! The proof is in their photos and videos documenting the Rotaractor experience at the Rotary International Convention. Group shots of members flashing peace signs or blowing kisses are captioned “Rotaract friendship for life” or “my family from around the world.”

These friends pose at host city landmarks, sometimes holding shopping bags and crave-worthy drinks like tall cups of milky boba tea. “If you are able to go to one convention, at least try it,” says Daniel Zavala, a member of the Rotaract Club of San Joaquín based out of Venezuela. “Try it because it will change your life. You are going to plan your vacations all around the convention.” We can’t wait to see Rotaractors’ cowboy hat selfies in Canada at the rodeo or on the iconic Peace Bridge in Calgary.

Whether they’re at their first conven-

tion or their fifth, Rotaractors say they are wowed by the flag ceremony at the opening session and the inspiring speakers. One scheduled for Calgary is David LaMotte, who gave a TEDx talk and wrote a book exploring how heroes don’t change the world on their own. He took a break from a folk music career to become a Rotary Peace Fellow.

Rotaractors’ convention snapshots show that the serious work of Rotary is full of joy. They don’t simply attend the convention — they help lead it, staffing House of Friendship booths and speaking at breakout sessions. In Singapore last year, Rotaractors leading a session about transitioning to a Rotary club suggested mutual empathy to strengthen bonds among members of different ages. Rotaractors will lead again in Calgary 21-25 June. After all, Rotary + action = Rotaract. ■

Learn more and register at convention.rotary.org.



J. Alfonso L. Katigbak
Chairman of the Board



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Learn more and register at
convention.rotary.org



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PROJECT IDEAS**



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