

The History of Rotary

Rotary, which started on February 23, 1905 in Chicago, Illinois, is the world's first and most international service club. The founder of Rotary was attorney Paul P. Harris (1868-1947), who proposed that businessmen from different professions get together periodically to acquaint each other with their vocations and to promote business and professional integrity. They decided to rotate the meeting site among each member's place of business, which was the source of the name "Rotary."

Club membership grew rapidly. The second Rotary Club was founded in San Francisco in 1908. When clubs were formed in Canada and Great Britain, in 1912, Rotary became an international organization.

Since 1905, the ideas of Paul Harris and his friends have become ideals which have been accepted by people of practically all nationalities, and of many political and religious beliefs. Today there are Rotary Clubs in over 200 countries throughout the world. The universal acceptance of Rotary principles has been so great that there are now more than 34,000 Rotary clubs, with a membership of over 1.2 million men and women.

Rotary Motto and Themes

Rotary International has adopted as its motto ***Service Above Self***, with the goal of ***Doing Good in the World***. Additionally, each year's Rotary International President announces a theme for that year.

Rotarians throughout the world quote 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 **good will** and **better friendships**?
4. Will it be **beneficial** to all concerned?

Rotary in the Hudson Valley

Every Rotary Club in the world is a member of Rotary International. Rotary is divided into 530 Districts, each headed by a District Governor. We are District 7210 which consists of 62 clubs in New York's Hudson Valley. The first club in our area, the Rotary Club of Kingston, was organized in 1916, just 11 years after Rotary began in Chicago.

Our District encompasses the Mid-Hudson Valley, from the Pennsylvania border to the Connecticut border, and from the lower Hudson Valley to just south of the state capital of Albany. It includes the counties of Rockland, Orange, Sullivan, Ulster, Greene, Columbia, Dutchess and Putnam.

The District Governor and all officers of Rotary on the international, district or club level serve for a fiscal year from July 1 to June 30.

A number of district-level committees are organized to provide sponsorship or support for Rotary functions and initiatives that involve Rotarians from across our District. The Youth Exchange Committee, or YEC, is an example of a District Committee. Committee members perform many functions to promote and manage the Youth Exchange Program and support our Inbound and Outbound Exchange Students. They also interface with representatives of Youth Exchange Committees in the districts and countries that exchange students with us.

The Rotary Foundation

The Rotary Foundation was established in 1917 as a philanthropic trust promoting further understanding and friendly relations between peoples of different nations. Its mission is to enable Rotarians to advance world understanding, goodwill and peace through the improvement of health, the support of education, and the alleviation of poverty. The Foundation sponsors the largest scholarship program in the world and is supported solely by voluntary contributions from Rotarians and friends of the Foundation who share its vision for a better world.

Since 1947, Rotarians have contributed almost \$2.7 billion to The Rotary Foundation to help Rotary do good in the world. The Rotary Foundation contributes over \$200 million (US) annually in program awards. These programs include Ambassadorial Scholarships, Rotary Volunteers, The 3H program (for Health, Hunger and Humanity), Rotary Peace Conferences, World Community Service, Special Grants, and Polio-Plus. Polio-Plus is Rotary's effort to eliminate polio from the world.

At the Local Level -- The Rotary Club

The "personality" of each Rotary club is a reflection of the community it serves and the membership of that club. Even within our own district, club sizes differ, and while all Rotary clubs meet regularly, some meet for breakfast, some meet during lunch, while others meet for dinner. Some Rotary club meetings are quiet and "serious", keeping to a tight schedule so the members can return to work on time, while other club meetings are less formal and structured. Some Rotary clubs conduct much of their service project business during their weekly meetings, while others carry out most of this planning outside their regular meeting time.

You will likely find that the Rotary club hosting you will be very different from the Rotary club sponsoring you, and both will be different from other Rotary clubs you may have the opportunity to visit during your exchange year.

But Rotarians around the world all share the common philosophy of service to others, and you'll find that they are there to help you be a successful exchange student.

As with most organizations, Rotary clubs are led by officers who are elected by the membership for one year terms, beginning on July 1, the beginning of the Rotary Year. The officers include the club president, secretary, treasurer, vice president and/or president-elect, and directors. Rotary clubs participating in the Youth Exchange Program appoint a Youth Exchange Officer, or YEO, to oversee that program, and that Rotarian, or another member of the host Rotary club, will be designated as your Club Counselor.

Attend your Rotary Club meetings and events whenever you can. Get to know the members of the club that is hosting you this year. Volunteer to work with them on their service projects to show that you appreciate what Rotary is doing for you and to prove that you understand Rotary's commitment to **Service Above Self**. The more active you are, the more involved you will feel, the more you will accomplish during your exchange year, and the more fun you will have!

Rotary = Service Above Self