

Fact Sheet

Rotary International

The world's first service club was the Rotary Club of Chicago, Illinois, USA. The club was formed 23 February 1905, by lawyer Paul P. Harris and three friends, a merchant, a coal dealer, and a mining engineer. Harris wished to recapture the friendly spirit he had felt among business people in the small town where he had grown up. The name "**Rotary**" was derived from the early practice of rotating meetings among member's offices.

Mission

The main objective of Rotary is service – in the community, in the workplace, and throughout the world. Rotarians build goodwill and peace, provide humanitarian service, and encourage high ethical standards in all vocations. The Rotary motto is "Service Above Self."

Membership

Rotarians are professional men and women who work as volunteers to improve the quality of life in their home and world community. Club membership represents a cross-section of local business and professional leaders. The world's Rotary clubs meet weekly and are non-political, non-religious and open to all cultures, races, and creeds.

- There are approximately 1.2 million Rotarians working in some 29,600 Rotary clubs in 163 countries and 35 geographical regions worldwide.
- First admitted in 1987, women are the fastest-growing segment of Rotary's membership. There are nearly 2,000 women club presidents and women are rapidly assuming regional leadership roles.

Service Today

- Rotarians initiate **community projects** that address many of today's most critical issues, such as violence, drug abuse, youth, AIDS, hunger, the environment, and illiteracy. Rotary clubs are autonomous and determine service projects based on local needs.
- Rotarians work with and for **youth** to address challenges facing young people today. Through participation in Rotary-sponsored Interact clubs (for secondary school students), Rotaract clubs (for young adults), and Rotary Youth Leadership awards, young people worldwide learn leadership skills and the importance of community service.
- Rotary **Youth Exchange** gives high school students the opportunity to broaden their worldview and build international friendships.
- Rotarians have a history of building safe communities and working for peace. In the world's cities, where **urban violence** has become rampant, Rotary has the community-based network to help prevent unrest. Rotary-sponsored violence prevention projects and conferences address the root causes of violence such as drug abuse, poverty, lack of role models, and gangs.
- **The Rotary Foundation** of Rotary International provides an opportunity for Rotarians to work for international understanding and peace. Through their Foundation, Rotarians sponsor international educational and humanitarian programs.
- **PolioPlus** is Rotary's commitment to eradicating polio by the year 2005. Through the efforts of Rotary and its partners in the fight against polio, more than two billion children worldwide have been immunized since 1985. In 1996, 154 nations reported no cases of polio, up from 85 when PolioPlus began. By the year 2005 Rotarian contributions will reach a half billion US dollars to eradicate the crippling disease. Of equal significance is

- the huge volunteer army mobilized by Rotary International for social mobilization, vaccine transport and immunization activities.
- Rotary's international network helps link people in need with Rotarians in other countries that can provide resources. The Foundation's **humanitarian programs** provide health care and supplies, clean water, food, job training, and education -- particularly in the developing world.

The Rotary Foundation's **educational programs** include Ambassadorial Scholarships, the world's largest privately-funded source of international scholarships. Nearly 1,300 scholarships are awarded annually for study in another land. Grants are also awarded for university teachers to serve in developing countries and for exchanges of professionals.