

Rotary and Peace

Founded in 1905 in Chicago, Illinois, USA, Rotary quickly grew from a small gathering of local businessmen into an international association of clubs dedicated to serving their local and world communities. In 1921, Rotary International (RI) adopted “the advancement of international understanding, goodwill and peace” as a part of its official object. Today, the 1.2 million business and professional leaders who comprise the membership of the more than 29,000 Rotary clubs in 163 countries work through a number of Rotary programs for a more peaceful world.

Rotary Peace Centers for International Studies

In 1999 Rotary International announced the establishment of seven international studies centers where scholars can learn diplomacy and skills to resolve conflict and promote international understanding.

The Rotary Centers for International Studies are located at prestigious universities around the world. The first seventy scholars, 10 students at each center, will be selected to participate in two-year graduate programs related to peace and conflict resolution beginning in the 2002 academic year.

The universities selected to host the Rotary Centers for International Studies were: Duke University and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA (jointly-hosted center); University of California-Berkeley, California, USA; Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris, Paris, France; University of Bradford, West Yorkshire, England; University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia; International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan; and, Universidad del Salvador, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Rotary programs for peace

Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International sponsor a number of programs which encourage international understanding and peaceful relations among the world’s peoples:

- The Rotary Foundation partially subsidizes international conferences to examine the role civil society can play in the achievement of peace. A 1997 Rotary peace forum in Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina encouraged the continued status of Antarctica as a continent for all people, stressing the importance of peaceful, non-political international collaboration in Antarctica.

Locally, Rotary clubs have initiated and sponsored a number of projects to foster more peaceful communities:

- Local Rotary programs such as *Friends Forever* and *Toward a Better Understanding* encourage trust and understanding between Protestant and Catholic youth in Northern Ireland.
- Rotarians in Ontario, Canada have supported the School for Peace in the joint Jewish-Arab settlement of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam in Israel.

- In the Philippines, Manila Rotarians conduct violence prevention efforts such as crime watch groups, police support and an anti-drug abuse campaign. The Rotary Club of Butuan North established the Lingap Livelihood Center to provide for youth vocational training in a stable environment.
- Through the Rotary Conflict Resolution Vocational Fellowship, Rotarians promote peace in their communities by serving as mediators in local disputes and sponsoring local peace-related projects.
- The Rotary Club of Los Angeles adopted a gang-infested area of East Los Angeles. In partnership with the Sheriff's Department, an activity center was built and is the base for neighborhood community services offering educational programs and after school tutoring

The Rotary Award for World Understanding (RAWU)

Since it was established in 1980, The Rotary Award for World Understanding (RAWU) honors a person or organization whose actions promote international peace and understanding through selfless service to others. The highest honor of RI, the annual award includes a \$100,000 grant for a charitable cause of the recipient's choosing which parallels Rotary's mission of peace and understanding through humanitarian and educational projects.

Past recipients include Pope John Paul II, Dr. Albert Sabin, the International Committee of the Red Cross, The Salvation Army, former United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, Czech President Václav Havel, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, the late former executive director of UNICEF James P. Grant, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata and Nelson Mandela

Rotary and the international community

Rotary International has participated in a number of global forums with governments and other organizations similarly concerned about peace. Through the efforts of its official representatives and local membership, Rotary monitors major international meetings to learn and share best practices for addressing root causes of conflict such as hunger, homelessness, illiteracy and poverty.

RI maintains a formal relationship with the United Nations which dates back to the founding of the UN in 1945. Nearly 50 Rotarians attended the 1945 UN Charter Conference in San Francisco and, with other non-governmental organizations, influenced the text and focus of the charter, particularly on economic, social and humanitarian issues. Many objectives of the two organizations are parallel, and today RI enjoys consultative status with several UN agencies.

Throughout its history, Rotary has made other important contributions to international peace and understanding:

- During the 1933-35 Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay, Chilean Rotarians worked through Rotarians in the two rival countries to form a commission to work out the basis of a peace agreement. Meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the commission was able to negotiate an end to hostilities.
- At Rotary's 1940 convention in Havana, Cuba, delegates adopted the "Respect for Human Rights Resolution," a precursor to the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- In 1986, The Rotary Foundation sponsored three of the first person-to-person exchanges between Argentina and Great Britain following the South Atlantic war fought by the two nations that year.

