

ROSEC



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RI President's message - September - 2021

I am sure you are having an enriching experience as you *Serve to Change Lives*. One of the ways you can make the greatest change in a person's life is to help them learn to read. Literacy opens up the world to us. It makes us better informed about life in our own communities and opens vistas to other cultures. Reading and writing connects people and gives us another way to express our love for one another.



September is Basic Education and Literacy Month in Rotary. Enhancing literacy skills is critical in our pursuit of reducing poverty, improving health, and promoting peace. In fact, if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills, it would result in a significant cut in global poverty rates.

Without education, illiterate children become illiterate adults. Today, 14 percent of the world's adult population — 762 million people — lack basic reading and writing skills. Two-thirds of that group are women. Literacy and numeracy skills are essential to obtaining better housing, health care, and jobs over a lifetime.

Especially for girls and women, literacy can be a life-or-death issue. If all girls completed their primary education, there would be far fewer maternal deaths. And a child is more likely to survive past age 5 if he or she is born to a mother who can read. Improving outcomes for more people worldwide is possible only if countries remove barriers to education for girls. The economic argument for doing so is clear: In some countries where schooling is geared toward boys, the cost of missed economic opportunity is more than \$1 billion per year.

Empowering people through education is among the boldest goals we have as Rotarians. We don't have to travel far from our homes to encounter those whose lives are being curtailed because they struggle with reading, rely on others to read for them, or cannot write anything more than their own name.

Starting this month, consider how your club can *Serve to Change Lives* through literacy: Support local organizations that offer free programs to support adult

literacy or local language learning, or that provide teachers with professional development centered around reading and writing. Become literacy mentors, or work with an organization like the Global Partnership for Education to increase learning opportunities for children around the world. Have conversations with local schools and libraries to see how your club can support their existing programs or help create needed ones in your community.

In India, the TEACH program, a successful collaboration between the country's Rotary clubs and its government, has demonstrated how to scale up literacy efforts to reach millions of children. And at a time when schools across India were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program's e-learning component reached more than 100 million children through national television.

Literacy is the first step out of poverty. As Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai has noted, "One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world."

Service has been rewarding for me throughout my life. I know the same is true for many of you. Join me this month in becoming a good tenant of our planet by helping others to better themselves and their communities. Together, we can *Serve to Change Lives*.

Shekhar Mehta
RI President 2021-22

JOY OF GIVING

One of the great Hollywood actresses, Katherine Hepburn was possibly the only person who won the Oscar Award four times, apart from being nominated a dozen times, but was never present in the grand ceremony to receive it.

She had a strong belief that only the affection and love of the people who enjoyed her acting and cinema was the greatest reward for her.

Katherine Hepburn was from a middle class family with a modest upbringing. But, her parents instilled strong values in their growing up days.

One such incident was narrated by herself later, in her own words:

(contd.... next page)

JOY OF GIVING (contd...)

"Once when I was a teenager, my father and I were standing in line to buy tickets for the circus.

Finally, there was only one other family between us and the ticket counter. This family made a big impression on me. There were eight children, all probably under the age of 12. The way they were dressed, you could tell they didn't have a lot of money, but their clothes were neat and clean. The children were well behaved. All of them standing in line, two-by-two behind their parents, holding hands. They were excitedly jabbering about the clowns, animals, and all the acts they would be seeing that night. By their excitement, you could sense they had never been to the circus before. It would be a highlight of their lives. The father and mother were at the head of the pack standing proud as could be. The mother was holding her husband's hand, looking up at him as if to say, "You're my knight in shining armor." He was smiling and enjoying seeing his family happy. The ticket lady asked the man how many tickets he wanted? He proudly responded, "I'd like to buy eight children's tickets and two adult tickets, so I can take my family to the circus." The ticket lady stated the price. The man's wife let go of his hand, her head dropped, the man's lip began to quiver. Then he leaned a little closer and asked, "How much did you say?" The ticket lady again stated the price. The man didn't have enough money. How was he supposed to turn and tell his eight kids that he didn't have enough money to take them to the circus?

Seeing what was going on, my dad reached into his pocket, pulled out a \$20 bill, and then dropped it on the ground. (We were not wealthy in any sense of the word!) My father bent down, picked up the \$20 bill, tapped the man on the shoulder and said, "Excuse me, sir, this fell out of your pocket." The man understood what was going on. He wasn't begging for a handout but certainly appreciated the help in a desperate, heart-breaking and embarrassing situation. He looked straight into my dad's eyes, took my dad's hand in both of his, squeezed tightly onto the \$20 bill, and with his lip quivering and a tear streaming down his cheek, he replied; "Thank you, thank you, sir. This really means a lot to me and my family."

My father and I went back to our car and drove home. The \$20 that my dad gave away is what we were going to buy our own tickets with. Although we didn't get to see the circus that night, we both felt a joy inside us that was far greater than seeing the circus could ever provide.

That day I learnt the value of Giving. If you want to be large... larger than life, learn to Give. Love has nothing to do with what you are expecting to get - it is only concerned with what you are willing to give, which is everything.

Katherine Hepburn

Superb stuff for those who grew up during the 70-90s in middle class India....Here are some things that you can possibly identify with -

Though you may not publicly own to this, at the age of 12-17 years, you were very proud of your first "Bellbottom" or your first "Maxi", then came the Corduroy and Jeans.

Bahadur, Phantom & Mandrake were your only true super-heroes. (The brainy ones, though, read "Competition Success Review").

Your "Camlin" geometry box & Nataraj/Flora pencil were your prized possessions.

The only "Holidays" you took were to go to your 'grandparents' or your 'cousins' houses.

Ice-cream meant only either an orange stick or a strawberry rocket – or at best, a Choco Bar, if you were better off than most.

You gave your neighbour's phone number to others with a 'PP' written against it because you had booked yours only 7 years ago and were still waiting for your number to come.

Your parents were proud owners of HMT watches. You "earned" yours after passing your class 10 exams.

You have been to "Jumbo Circus"; have held your breath while the pretty young thing in the glittery skirt did acrobatics, quite enjoyed the elephants playing with giant footballs, the motorcyclist vrooming in the "Maut - ka - Gola" and it was politically okay to laugh your guts out at dwarfs hitting each other's bottoms!

You have at least once heard "Hawa Mahal" and "Binaca/Cibaca Geetmala" on the radio. For English music buffs, there was the ubiquitous "Musical Bandbox" every Sunday, while the ladies waited eagerly for "Haturi-marka Phenyle-X er Shonibaar-er Baar-bela". The most important program for the grown up men of the house were the hourly news transmissions.

If you had a TV, it was normal to expect the neighbourhood to gather around to come over & watch the Chitrahaar on Fridays, Sunday morning "Ramayan" (later "Mahabharat"), evening serials and weekend movies. If you didn't have a TV, you just went to a house that did. It mattered little if you knew the owners or not.

Cheers to good old friends & (g)olden times.

Birthday Greetings
Rtn. Kanak Kr Jain
on 11th September

