



## JANUARY IS VOCATIONAL SERVICE MONTH



**FRANCESCO AREZZO**  
President 2025-26

### Presidential Message January 2026

In a garage outside Salinas, California, young people who are learning to restore classic cars are doing more than developing a skill — they are reclaiming their futures. This training program provides mentorship and, for some, a path away from gang involvement toward meaningful employment. Graduates leave with certifications, practical experience, and hope.

This is what Rotary's Vocational Service Month celebrates each January — the power of bringing together people with unique skills to do good in the world.

It reminds us that integrity isn't just about our actions matching our words. Integrity is in everything we do.

The California automotive program has been such a success because it was built on integrity. Members of the Rotary Club of Carmel-by-the-Sea didn't assume they knew what the community needed. They listened. They learned there was a shortage of skilled mechanics as well as a large number of young people lacking job training. They recognized that technical skills alone wouldn't be enough, so they partnered with Rancho Cielo, a nonprofit offering counseling and support services alongside vocational training.

That is The Four-Way Test in action. Those four simple questions help us not judge others but guide us toward genuine, effective service.

Consider our commitment to ending polio. For nearly 40 years, we have promised the world's children we will eliminate this disease. Despite obstacles, we persist, and today we are closer to defeating the virus. Keeping this promise is the very definition of integrity.

The same integrity must drive our vocational service. With 1.2 billion young people in emerging economies reaching working age in the next decade and only 420 million jobs projected, we face a critical gap. Communities long excluded from economic opportunities need our support.

But support doesn't mean imposing our will. It means listening to local needs, building partnerships, and designing projects that communities can sustain themselves.

You have knowledge that can transform lives. Whatever your profession, your expertise combined with Rotary's values creates lasting change. The question isn't whether you have something to offer, it's how you'll use your skills to serve.

This January, I encourage you to ask how your club can address vocational needs in your community. What skills do your members have that could change someone's life? How can your networks open doors for young people? What partnerships can create sustainable jobs?

Let integrity guide you. Let The Four-Way Test light your path. And let the young people in California and the multitudes worldwide who need job skills remind you why vocational service matters.

Let us celebrate putting our professional skills to work for humanity with integrity at the heart of everything we do.

# Rotary



## JANUARY IS VOCATIONAL SERVICES MONTH

"TEAMWORK IS THE ABILITY TO WORK TOGETHER TOWARD A COMMON VISION. THE ABILITY TO DIRECT INDIVIDUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS TOWARD ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVES. IT IS THE FUEL THAT ALLOWS COMMON PEOPLE TO ATTAIN UNCOMMON RESULTS."

- ANDREW CARNEGIE

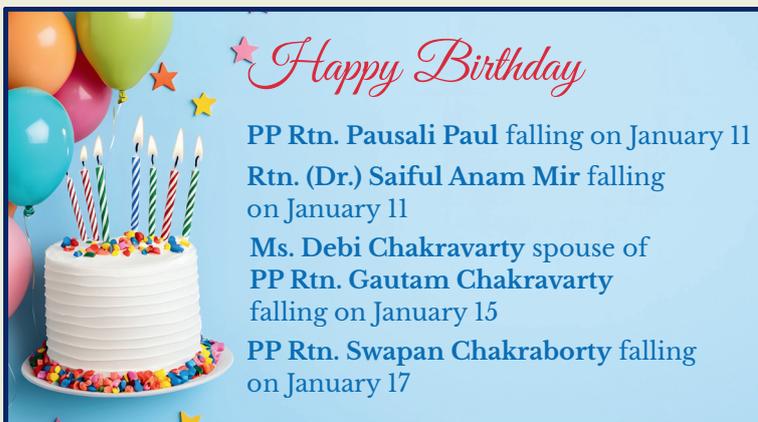


## Key Focus Areas for January:

- **Ethical Standards:** Promoting honor, integrity, and trustworthiness in business and professions.
- **Professional Development:** Encouraging career growth and recognizing valuable skills.
- **Community Service:** Applying vocational skills to solve community needs, such as providing career guidance or mentoring.
- **Education & Training:** Supporting vocational education and lifelong learning.

## Activities & Ideas for Rotarians:

- **Club Meetings:** Dedicate meetings to Vocational Service, featuring classification talks or guest speakers on career paths.
- **Vocational Awards:** Recognize community members for outstanding ethical professional achievements.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Offer guidance to youth or small businesses.
- **Skill-Based Projects:** Organize workshops or projects where members use their professional skills (e.g., finance, marketing, IT) to help others.



# From fellowship to impact: how project fairs can transform your Rotary journey

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By Jon Gresley, Rotary District 5190 International Service Chair and member of the Rotary Club of Truckee, USA



Jon Gresley (left) at the 2025 Colombia Project Fair.

## What if one trip could change the way you see service—and the world?

Since 2000, I've attended 30 project fairs in Central America and Colombia. These events are more than international travel—they're opportunities for fellowship, cultural exchange, and partnerships that turn ideas into impactful service. In this blog post, I'll share why attending a project fair can help you live Rotary's vision, creating lasting change in communities—and in yourself.

### What are project fairs?

The first project fair took place in 1993 in Guatemala. Rotarians from seven Central American countries got together to exhibit and seek support for their service projects from Rotarians in the United States and Canada.

Today, project fairs are held each year around the world. While there are variations between them, they share three core elements:

**Fellowship.** Meet fellow members from across the globe.

**Culture.** Enjoy local food, music, and traditions.

**Impact.** Form partnerships to support projects in the host country(s).

Most fairs last two to three days and often include visits to existing or potential service project sites in the local area. They could also include cultural travel to visit nearby points of interest, such as archaeological sites, national parks, and other areas of natural wonder.

### Building lasting friendships

My first project fair was in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, in 2000. My wife, Rotarian Gudrun Dybdal, and I were among a small group from the Rotary Club of Oakland. On that trip, we not only met Rotarians from various parts of Central America, but we also found ourselves among a group of members from our home district. The friendships we made with them have lasted for more than twenty years.

We have formed strong bonds with Rotarians from throughout Central America and Colombia, which led to trips to projects and club partnerships. We stayed in the homes of our friends in Central America on many occasions.

Over these same years, we have also formed strong friendships and partnerships with Rotarians from Canada and many regions of the United States—proof that project fairs create bonds that endure.

## A collaboration formed at project fairs

As a result of our participation in Uniendo America, the project fair in Central America, we have been partnering on international service projects nearly every year. One of the most successful initiatives was a global grant to bring clean water to La Vega, a community of 300 families in Guatemala, which was displaced during the civil war. I first learned about this initiative while attending that project fair — there was a booth at the event promoting it. That introduction led us to get involved.

The project required significant funding, which was made possible through collaboration among dozens of Rotary clubs across North America. As I survey the list of clubs and districts contributing to this global grant, I find names of many Rotarians I have come to know from my participation in project fairs in Central America and Colombia.

Had many of us not participated over the years, we wouldn't have had the relationships and connections to help build the pool of funding that made this project possible. Without the relationships built at project fairs, this project—and many others—would never have happened.

## Ready to transform your Rotary journey?

There may not be a better example of how project fairs have provided the opportunity for members and Rotary clubs to form friendships and collaborations to support international projects.

I encourage all Rotary and Rotaract members to **participate in an upcoming project fair** in a part of the world where you have an interest and would like to make a difference. It will give you the opportunity to take action and create lasting change — both globally and in your local communities, as well as within yourself.

Your next project fair could be the start of a lifelong journey of service and friendship. Will you take the first step?



# Calcutta photographer bags big cat prize; winning shot captures lioness pride at Kenyan waterhole

The photograph, taken at 2.30am on the eighth night of his vigil, was selected for the first prize at the Global Big Cats Photography Competition 2025, held in Delhi on Wednesday

By: Sanjay Mandal | [www.telegraphindia.com](http://www.telegraphindia.com) :: October 12, 2025



The prize-winning photograph of the lioness pride drinking from the waterhole by Rajarshi Banerji

After eight long, sleepless nights inside a sunken hideout in a forest in Kenya, 60-year-old Calcutta-based wildlife photographer and businessman Rajarshi Banerji finally got the shot he had been waiting for: a pride of lionesses and their cubs drinking from a waterhole, barely 5 metres from his den.

The photograph, taken at 2.30am on the eighth night of his vigil, was selected for the first prize at the Global Big Cats Photography Competition 2025, held in Delhi on Wednesday. Banerji received the award from Bhupender Yadav, Union minister for environment, forest and climate change.

The dramatic image — one of 1,000 frames shot that night — was taken in September 2023 during Banerji's stay at Lentorre Lodge, a boutique safari resort in the Olkiramatian Conservancy in Kenya's Nguruman escarpment region, Kajiado County.

"For five nights, I could hear the lions roaring nearby but never saw them. Every morning, I would return to my room empty-handed," said Banerji, a resident of Hindusthan Park, on Friday. "But I had booked the photography hide for as long as it took to get the shot I wanted."

The underground photography hide, launched in September 2020, is a sunken, air-conditioned space at the edge of a waterhole, offering photographers an eye-level view of wildlife through one-way glass. The animals cannot see in, but photographers have a clear view out. The hide is soundproofed, professionally lit, and equipped with bunk beds for overnight stays.

"Most guests book it for one to three nights. I stayed until I got the shots I wanted," said Banerji, who was sometimes alone and at times joined by other photographers. During the wait, he captured porcupines, a cheetah, and even a rare caracal. But his focus was the elusive lioness pride.

"On the eighth night, I was dozing off after being up for several nights. Around 2.30am, I saw movement in the dark and became alert. A large lioness appeared, followed by several cubs. Soon, more lionesses emerged from the jungle," he recalled.

The adult lionesses first circled the area cautiously, checking for threats. Once they felt safe, they gathered around the waterhole and began drinking. “They were absolutely silent. The cubs played and splashed water,” said Banerji.

At one point, nine adult lionesses and several cubs were in view. He kept shooting, trying to capture the perfect moment. “The challenge is timing. When they drink, their eyes go down and their tongues flick in and out. I waited for a frame where all their eyes were looking up and their tongues were out — I got one with all the eyes looking up and five tongues out,” he said.

After about 30 minutes, the lionesses began to leave. “But the cubs stayed back and continued playing. Two even came close to the hide to explore,” Banerji said.

It was his first time seeing a pride of lionesses at night. “I’ve been photographing dangerous mammals for 40 years. I’ve taken pictures of lions during the day, but this was the first time I saw a pride at night,” he said. Banerji has earlier photographed tigers, polar bears, grizzly bears, elephants, whales, and penguins — including in Antarctica.

According to Raaji Singh Bharij, owner of Lentorre Lodge and a veteran of high-end Kenyan tourism for 20 years, sightings of lioness prides at night are rare. “Around 300 clients use the photography hide each year. This year, there have been only five such sightings,” said Bharij. He designed the hide so that it does not disturb the wildlife. The driest periods in Kenya — February to March and September to October — are considered the best times for such encounters, he added.

The award ceremony in Delhi was organised by the Union ministry of environment, forests and climate change, in collaboration with the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), Aarts Maestro, and the Uttar Pradesh EcoTourism Development Board. It served as a pre-summit event for the Global Summit on Big Cat Conservation, slated for 2026.

According to a government official release, 456 entries were shortlisted after multiple rounds of evaluation, before the final jury picked the winning images.



## Minutes of the 2163 rd RCM of RC Calcutta Jadavpur held on December 17, 2025, Wednesday at Casa Broadway, Kolkata at 6.30 PM.

- President Rtn. Sudipta Kundu called the meeting to order and welcomed all the members present online.
- National Anthem was led by PP Rtn. Paromita Das Dutta and joined by all.
- Next, President Rtn. Sudipta deliberated about the service projects rendered by RC Calcutta Jadavpur during the last fortnight.
- The second batch of Beautician and Tailoring training has commenced at Sarenga, where each course has 10 participants.
- A new sewing machine has been provided to the trainees for training purposes.

- Distribution of old clothes, donated by PP Rtn. Gautam Chakravarty was organised for Sarenga.
- A Graphic Design course has been initiated at Santoshpur Rishi Aurobindo Balika Vidyapith was, conducted by Rtn. Subrata Kundlu.
- That on December 13, 2025, Rtn. (Dr.) Dipankar Chakrabarti conducted a Science Club session at Udbhash. It was noted that the next session will be held on January 10, 2026.
- On December 06, 2025, RC Calcutta Jadavpur participated in an awareness campaign on physical disability at New Market in collaboration with a few other NGOs. A cultural activity was also organised as part of the program.
- That on December 11, 2025, an online awareness campaign on Thalassemia prevention was launched by RC Calcutta Jadavpur where Rtn. (Dr.) Emili Banerjee delivered a talk on the subject. Here, Rtn. (Dr.) Asim Sil highlighted the high prevalence of Thalassemia in certain areas of Midnapore, particularly Contai. Further, he mentioned that, given his outreach in the region, the club could potentially initiate awareness activities there.
- That on December 27, 2025 PP Rtn. Sanjay Ray, PP Rtn. Swapan Chakraborty and himself visited RCC Chowbaga and enquired about their needs. A lot of proposals came up and they would be looked into in proper perspective, as a step towards revival of the RCC at Chowbaga.
- Next, President Rtn. Sudipta talked about the upcoming projects:
  - RC Calcutta Jadavpur has decided to take part in the upcoming Sonarpur Book Fair commencing from December 18, 2025. The club will take part in the “Shobdojobdo” event at the fair and also organise a science exhibition by the students.
  - Members would be delighted to know that Rtn. Subrata Kundu has created an AI-based song on Thalassemia awareness, which is a Thalassemia Awareness Initiative by the club.
  - On December 24, 2025, the club will conduct a magic show as part of a LBC program at Calcutta Poloce Hospital. Members are requested to participate in numbers.
  - A proposal for donating a sewing machine to Kumirmari Island is on the anvil for which, IPP Rtn. (Dr.) Mainak Sengupta will assess their need and revert soon.
  - Members should take note that the annual event of Life Beyond Cancer will be held on February 15, 2026. Further details would be circulated soon.
  - The modalities of the club picnic scheduled on February 01, 2026 are being worked upon. He will be visiting some picnic spots nearby soon and members will be updated accordingly.
- In absence of Secretary Rtn. (Dr.) Saiful Anam Mir, President Rtn. Sudipta conducted the club business and extended birthday greetings to Rtn. Subrata Kundu falling on December 21, Honorary Member Rtn. Debasish Kumar falling on December 22, Dr. Ratna Chattopadhyay spouse of Honorary Member Rtn. (Dr.) Dhruvajyoti Chattopadhyay falling on December 27, Dr. Suvra Sil spouse of Rtn. (Dr.) Asim Sil falling on December 28, Mr. Debasis Pal spouse of PP Rtn. Pausali Paul falling on December 29, Ms. Ranju Pal spouse of Rtn. Sitaram Pal falling on January 01
- Minutes of the 2162nd meeting was confirmed by the members present and the meeting was concluded with thanks to everyone present online.