



**"YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD..."**

RID 3291, Zone-16  
**Rotary**  
Garden Reach



**2341st RWM**

# Guided by Purpose



**SERVICE ABOVE SELF**





**"YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD..."**



PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

## Greetings on Birthday

Jan 14th ; Rtn. Tamal Guha Ray

Jan 15th : Spouse Kiran, Wife of PP Dr. JK Singh

Jan 16th : Spouse Kanika, Wife of Rtn. Dr. Subrata Lahiri

## Anniversary Greetings

Jan 15th : Spouse Puloma & PP Timir Roy

Jan 16th : Spouse Sunil & Rtn. Dr. Mahamaya Sharma

Jan 19th : Spouse Archana & PP Naresh K Jain



DISEASE PREVENTION & TREATMENT

### Guided by Purpose: Principles of Swami Vivekananda Illuminate the Path for Rotarians

Leadership, at its finest, is not about authority—it is about awakening purpose. In this spirit, the timeless teachings of Swami Vivekananda offer profound guidance for Rotarians striving to serve humanity with clarity, courage, and compassion. Though separated by time and context, the ethos of Vivekananda and the mission of Rotary International converge seamlessly on one central ideal: **Service before Self.**

#### Character before Action

Swami Vivekananda believed that true reform begins within. He urged individuals to build strong character, for **"we are what our thoughts have made us."** For Rotarians, this principle is foundational. Projects, programs, and partnerships gain meaning only when anchored in integrity, ethics, and self-discipline. When character leads, credibility follows—and trust becomes our most powerful currency in service.

#### Leadership as Service

Vivekananda redefined leadership not as dominance, but as responsibility. He reminded leaders that their true worth lies in uplifting others. This mirrors Rotary's belief that leadership is exercised best through service—whether mentoring youth, supporting livelihoods, or addressing community needs. **A Rotarian leader does not stand above; they stand with the community.**

#### Faith in Human Potential

One of Vivekananda's most stirring messages was his unwavering faith in human potential. He called upon people to **"arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached."** For Rotarians, this is a call to believe—in our members, our youth, and the communities we serve. It encourages us to empower rather than patronise, to enable rather than instruct, and to see not problems alone, but possibilities.

#### Universalism and Inclusion

Vivekananda championed universal brotherhood, transcending barriers of religion, race, and geography. Rotary lives this principle every day through its global fellowship and inclusive service. In a world often divided, Rotarians are uniquely positioned to model unity in diversity—working across cultures with respect, humility, and shared purpose.

#### Courage to Act, Strength to Persevere

Vivekananda spoke often of fearlessness—of daring to act for the greater good. Rotary's journey, too, demands courage: to innovate, to challenge the status quo, and to persist when results are slow. Leadership rooted in courage inspires action; leadership sustained by conviction ensures continuity.

#### A Call to Conscious Leadership

As Rotarians, we are custodians of trust and catalysts of change. The principles of Swami Vivekananda remind us that effective service flows from inner strength, ethical clarity, and an unshakable belief in humanity. When we lead with these values, Rotary becomes more than an organisation—it **becomes a movement of awakened leaders.**

Let us, therefore, **not merely do good, but be good**—leading with purpose, serving with humility, and guided always by ideals that endure beyond time.



WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE



MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH



BASIC EDUCATION & LITERACY



COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



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## Olayinka H. Babalola urges members of Rotary to Create Lasting Impact

Rotary International President-elect emphasises effective action and ‘embracing the world with open arms’

Rotary International President-elect Olayinka H Babalola called on members to Create Lasting Impact by making their clubs more welcoming, carrying out impactful projects, and allowing their Rotary experiences to transform them personally.



“Rotary has changed us. It has shaped who we are and made us better people,” Babalola said at Rotary’s International Assembly in Orlando, Florida, USA, on January 12th, 2026. “We often talk about changing the world. We talk about ending polio, about building peace. We do not think enough about how Rotary transforms us.”

Babalola, a member of the Rotary Club of Trans Amadi, Nigeria, described how joining a Rotaract club as a teenager enlarged his perspective beyond the limited, privileged outlook he’d once had. That change in awareness came from observing the lasting impact his club had in the community, particularly from teaching people to read and write.

“As members of Rotary, we share a vision of a better future,” he said. “To make this vision a reality, we must acknowledge and unleash the change within ourselves. We must focus not only on outcomes, but on impact.”

Change and impact are not the same, he added: “Change is only the beginning. Impact is what endures.”

### Understanding impact

Rotary members have made an impact by expanding early childhood education in Knysna, South Africa, and increasing access to prenatal care in Nigeria, Babalola said. The Rotary Club of Knysna empowered local women to open and manage early childhood education centres.

“The project has reached thousands of children and families, and it will continue to provide education in those communities for generations,” Babalola said. “We can recreate this kind of impact in other parts of the world, and in doing so we can earn the trust and recognition of our neighbours in the communities we serve. And when more communities trust Rotary, more people want to join.”

Babalola also described the wide-ranging impact of Together for Healthy Families in Nigeria. The initiative to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality rates received a US\$2 million Rotary Programs of Scale grant in 2022.

“Before Rotary’s intervention, many women avoided prenatal care, which is essential to ensuring a safe birth for both mother and child,” he said. “After working with Rotary, systems were put in place to help expecting mothers receive prenatal care. The community was involved. Attendance went up. Mortality went down. That project [will] transform lives across Nigeria for decades.”

### Extending a welcome

Babalola urged members to take a more open, welcoming attitude toward newcomers to their clubs. He described how, when he was a Rotaract club member eager to join a Rotary club, the president of the Rotary club treated him with scorn.

“He said, ‘What audacity! You cannot just join. You need an invitation,’” Babalola recalled. “I could have walked away. Instead, I said, ‘I didn’t know a child needed an invitation to enter his parents’ home.’”

While things have changed since that time, Babalola said, they haven’t changed enough. Some clubs close themselves off instead of “embracing the world with open arms,” he said. Young people aren’t necessarily treated with respect, he added, and people with different ideas and backgrounds aren’t always made to feel welcome. He urged members to think about how they could better welcome others.

“You never know whose Rotary story might begin — or end — based on the way you make them feel at a meeting or service project,” he said.

Another way members can focus on personal change, he said, is to aim to do better than their best. He urged district leaders to examine their past successes in raising funds, planning projects, and recruiting members. Then, he said, they should challenge themselves to surpass their past triumphs.

“When we change ourselves, we change our clubs and districts,” he concluded. “When we change our districts, we change the communities we serve. And when we change our communities, we create lasting impact across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.”





# “YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD...”

## Military veterans find joy and healing through clowning

It's 2015, and Bruce Reges is standing in an orphanage in Guatemala, dressed like a clown.

At a towering 6 feet, 5 inches tall, he's a sight to behold, but he's not feeling especially funny. Despite the red nose and the puppet in his hand, his mind is perpetually filled with memories of Iraq, where he saw an endless stream of death and destruction while serving as a first sergeant in the U.S. Army in 2006-08.

“Can I play with that, too?”

His attention snaps back to the present, where an adorable girl with a shy, toothy grin is pointing at his puppet, a clown marionette. Reges, who had been trained as a soldier to act hard, softens. As he hands the puppet to the child, named Wendy, he feels seen. The act of clowning, he will learn, has therapeutic powers.

For Reges and for other military veterans in the Rotary Club of Big Rapids in Michigan, clowning is healing some of the invisible wounds of war.

“What happens when you clown is you add good memories to the really hard ones,” Reges says, reflecting on all he's learned through clowning since that day in 2015. “It gives you a weapon to fight against the hard things.”

Since ancient times, clowns have used physical humour to make us laugh, or think, or connect. They're the mimes of ancient Rome, the court jesters of medieval England, the sacred shaman clowns of the Sioux Nation.

As a form of therapy, clowning is nothing new, but it is niche. “Clowning is not for everyone,” says John Bair, a Rotary member in suburban Chicago and a clinical psychologist who worked with veterans at the **Captain James A Lovell Federal Health Care Centre** for 30 years. “Some people are afraid of clowns.”

Therapeutic clowning grew out of the practice of psychodrama, which was developed in the early- to mid-20th century by psychiatrist Jacob Levy Moreno, who encouraged patients to act out their problems. As a type of expressive therapy — which also includes art, music, and movement therapies — clowning encourages people to explore their emotions. “For people who are kind of stuck, it puts them in the present,” says Bair. “You can't clown without taking on a new persona.”

For some veterans, returning home from war can bring feelings of alienation and numbness. They may be diagnosed with mental health conditions such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or suicidal ideation. Clowning isn't a cure, but Bair says that it can provide a sense of safety along with a much-needed jump-start.

Reges returned from Iraq in 2008 with a traumatic brain injury that changed his personality. He was haunted by the deaths of 143 soldiers stationed at his base over the course of his 15-month deployment. He had no job. In time, his wife wanted a divorce. He stopped paying his mortgage and lost his home. “I didn't want to do anything anymore,” he says. “All I wanted to do was be away from people.”

Theatrics had long been a part of Reges' life. His mom was a puppeteer, and when he was in high school, Reges had a part-time job playing a clown on a local Bozo's Big Top television show.

Decades later in Iraq, the Army reservist was assigned to civil affairs with duties that included helping rebuild schools. He quickly recognized that Iraqi children were terrified of U.S. soldiers in their full body armour. So he asked his mom to send over some puppets. The kids loved them, and so did Reges and his fellow troops. He even started a non-profit called **Peace Through Puppets**.

But back at home, he was suffering. He desperately needed some levity, and that's when clowning found him again.

Around 2015, Hunter “Patch” Adams, the clown-doctor famously portrayed by Robin Williams in the 1998 movie about his life using humour to heal, wanted to send a group of veterans with PTSD and other conditions to Guatemala for a week and teach them to clown.

Clinical psychologist Mark Kane, who had been counselling veterans for nearly 20 years at the **Grand Rapids Vet Centre** in Michigan, was intrigued. He'd often used out-of-the-box approaches in his practice, including drum circles and equine therapy. Kane's mother had been a clown and used humour and clowning to build bridges, including to address racial tension over school integration in the 1960s.



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DISEASE PREVENTION & TREATMENT



WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE



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Kane enlisted a group of veterans who had struggled with their mental health to fly to Guatemala with Adams. Reges was among them. During visits to orphanages and hospitals, Kane watched a group of embattled individuals dress up in wigs and act like children again. They’re going to these developing countries not with their M16s but with their red noses, he says. Science supports the idea that clowning benefits not just audiences but performers: Their brains generate feel-good hormones such as oxytocin and dopamine, says Bair. For some of the veterans, clowning in Guatemala was the first time they’d had fun in years. “When they put on the hair, the mask, the nose, and they started clowning, they told me, ‘I could come out of myself,’” says Bair.



DISEASE PREVENTION & TREATMENT

Kane eventually retired from counselling but continued clowning with the group. He returned to Guatemala for a second time. As Marcos the Clown, he teamed up with veterans and launched a group called Michigan Warrior Clowns, which performs at veterans’ homes, parades, marches, street fairs, and car shows. They’ve also done clown weddings and even a clown funeral.



WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE

Not all of the Warrior Clown members are veterans. Kate McGlynn, whose clown name is Katy Bee, launched a clowning business when she was struggling with PTSD from domestic abuse. “Clowning saved my life,” she says. When she’s performing, McGlynn says, her focus on bringing joy to others pushes her own struggles to the background. She’s seen the same effect on others, including the other Warrior Clowns, whom she calls “the silly platoon.”



MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH

“These guys, all they have to do is stand there and smile and be. They’re in character, and they don’t have to prove anything,” she says. “They’re just sweethearts, and I know they were not sweethearts before.”

It’s clowning that connected Reges and Kane to Rotary. The trips to Guatemala became the subject of a documentary called Clownvets in 2019. That year, the Rotary Club of Big Rapids raised money to send local veterans to the Cinequest film festival in California for a screening of the documentary.

Their support meant a lot to Kane, who joined Rotary, and he encouraged Reges and the other veterans to do the same. Today, the Big Rapids club continues to support the Michigan Warrior Clowns.

For Reges, clowning and Rotary have given him pathways to connect with others. “Otherwise, we isolate. We don’t want to be around people,” he says. “And Rotary helps me get involved with the community.”

Today, the memories from Iraq haven’t gone away. He says he carries the weight of the lives lost. “They’re whispering in my ear, ‘What are you going to do with this time that you have?’”

As long as he can hand a puppet to a child, or bring joy to someone struggling, or serve his community through Rotary, he knows the answer.

## Engaging young minds with robotics and STEM

**Kadam Bhambari is a STEM Educator & spouse of PP Jeeten Bhambari, Rotary Chandigarh Midtown**



BASIC EDUCATION & LITERACY

As a professional educator, I have always felt at home in classrooms. I’ve spent years designing lessons, nurturing curiosity, and witnessing that spark in a child’s eye when a concept finally clicks.

But in 2022, I felt a deeper calling — to take my experience beyond textbooks, beyond schools, and into the community. I initiated something I called “Hour of Code with Rotary,” carrying laptops, lesson plans, and a heart full of enthusiasm into multiple government and private schools. We reached 10–12 schools, introducing students to computing in the most joyful way — by letting them create.



COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There’s one memory from working with the students that sticks out. A student wrote his first little block of code, hit run, and the computer obeyed. His face lit up, and he said with pure wonder, “Ma’am, the computer is listening to me now!”



That sentence affected me deeply. It was proof that when children experience learning, not just hear about it, something shifts. They feel empowered.

### Learning through laughter

Gradually, the initiative grew. I introduced coding, AI, and robotics workshops, using my experience as an educator to keep sessions simple, engaging, and friendly even for first timers. Not every workshop was perfect — and that’s the beauty of growth. We had days when computers wouldn’t boot, robots lost wheels, and students had to share devices. Yet rather than give up, the students collaborated, problem-solved, and celebrated every



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tiny win. Chaos often turned into creativity, and laughter became part of learning.

To scale up our efforts, I started seeking support from different companies, organizations, and technology partners. Over time, several companies believed in the cause and extended resources, tools, expertise, and kits. Their support helped us deliver Robotics boot camps, AI starter sessions, 3D printing demonstrations, and hands-on STEM activities at a much larger scale. With partnerships, our workshops didn't just grow — they became more interactive, more accessible, and more memorable for students.

This year was special. Rotary Club Chandigarh Midtown received the District Monthly Award (August 2025) for the Most Innovative Project for our Robotics Workshop. When I heard the news, I had to smile; not so much because the award defines success, but because it honours all the behind-the-scenes efforts including preparing kits late at night, transporting robots across the city, training volunteers, and the many joyful **“Ma'am, it ran!”** moments.

### **Multiplying impact**

Recognition like this reminds me why I began this effort and encourages me to continue. It pushes me to think bigger — to take STEM learning to more schools, more children, more communities. I am actively working to develop new associations and collaborations, because when industries and educators come together, the impact multiplies.

As we move forward, I'm excited to introduce Digital Literacy, Creative Computing, Internet Safety, and Future Skills programs; ensuring learning is not just an activity — but a lifelong empowerment.

Rotary has taught me that when we contribute even a piece of our professional skill, we create meaningful changes. My skill is education. Yours might be music, business, finance, healthcare, or art. Whatever it is, someone out there can benefit from it. The small steps we take today help build a future shaped by innovation, empathy, and curiosity.

Have you used your professional skills to give back to the community? Leave a comment in the section below.

### **How Surat Police is helping Bikers stay safe during Sankranti**

**This Makar Sankranti, Surat streets buzz with colour and excitement, but a simple act of care by the police is turning heads. Here's how a unique safety initiative is making the festival safer for bikers while spreading warmth across the city.**

The late winter sun is already climbing over Surat when the festival begins to unfold in earnest. Makar Sankranti is drawing near, and with it comes the sight that marks this city each January. Rooftops bloom with colourful kites, and the sky fills with drifting tails of cotton and nylon. Children run across terraces, their laughter merging with the whoosh of strings slicing through the crisp air. The city feels alive, vibrant, and full of promise.

However, beneath this celebration, a hidden danger weaves its way through the streets. Thin kite strings called 'manjha' shimmer in the sunlight, and many carry glass or synthetic coatings sharp enough to cut skin. Bikers navigate the roads with care, but one stray string can turn the joy of the festival into an accident in an instant.

#### **A street-level response to a real problem**

Surat Traffic Police step into this scene, moving among the riders, not with whistles or fines, but with protective neck collars in hand. They approach with calm authority, offering the collars and a friendly word. A young delivery rider slows his scooter, expecting a reprimand, and instead receives a collar and a gentle warning. An elderly man pauses, curious, then accepts the collar with a nod.

Each interaction carries warmth, turning what could be a brief stop into a moment of connection.

#### **Safety that fits into daily life**

The initiative spreads through the city streets like a wave. Riders wear the collars as they weave past traffic, the kites above them dancing against the winter sky. The collars are not just shields against danger; they are symbols of care, reminders that joy and safety can coexist.

Every year, kite strings pose a threat, cutting across roads and occasionally injuring those below. The police campaign addresses this risk directly, showing that easy measures can prevent harm while preserving the spirit of the festival.

As Makar Sankranti pulses through Surat, the city moves with a mix of celebration and caution. Kites glide above, laughter fills the air, and riders feel a sense of reassurance. In a festival built on tradition and colour, community threads itself through every gesture. Each collar and each smile reminds the city that looking out for one another is part of the celebration itself.





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## **Minutes of the 2340th RWM held on January 6th, 2026 at Port View**

### **Restaurant, Hide Road**

1. The President Bandaru called the meeting to order & requested all members to rise for the National Anthem.
2. In the absence of the Secretary, PN Shubhayan Sengupta, Rtn. Dr. Subrata Lahiri was requested to officiate as Secretary for the meeting.
3. The President informed the house that the District Conference will be held from January 9th-11th, 2026 at East Side Pavilion. He further informed that 12 members from the club had already registered and encouraged other members to participate in the conference. Club Exhibits will be prepared and submitted at the District Conference as per practice and within the stipulated timeline.
4. The President requested Rtn. Debasis Das to update members regarding the Annual Picnic on January 18th, 2026 at 'Rohini Gardens', North Kestopur. The club has arranged a Bus/Traveller for convenience. Departure: from BNR / Taratala at 8:00 am.
5. As January is Vocational Service Month, it was decided that the Club will celebrate the "Vocational Excellence Award" ceremony on January 27th, 2026 at BNR Officers' Club. Members are requested to recommend suitable names.
6. The 6th Board Meeting is proposed to be held on January 21st, 2026.
7. Rotary Calcutta Park Point approached our club to act as Lead Host for the upcoming Annual Sports Meet for Children with Diverse Abilities. Members unanimously agreed to participate as Lead Host.
8. PP Sanjay Bhatt briefed the members on the Annual Sports Day held on January 4th, 2026 at Bharatgarh Rotary School. Various sports events were conducted and children enjoyed the activities and camaraderie. Prizes for winners and participants were sponsored by friends of PP Prosenjit Barua.
9. PP Dr. JK Singh reminded members about payment of 2,500 as the 2nd installment of seed money towards the Rotary Trust and requested members to contribute for building the corpus fund.
10. Members were informed that the 2nd installment of SAD has become due and were requested to clear the same at the earliest.
11. Acting Secretary, Rtn. Dr. Subrata conducted the club business.
12. President Bandaru confirmed the minutes of the last meeting and terminated the meeting.



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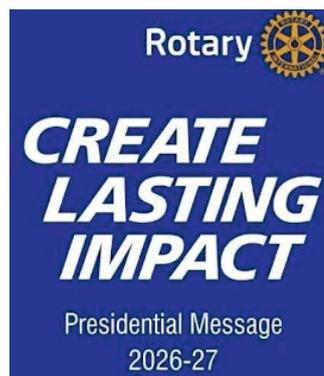
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WE MEET EVERY TUESDAY AT 7.30 P.M. AT B.N.R. OFFICERS' CLUB, GARDEN REACH, KOLKATA - 700 043

CONTACT : PP TANU ROY • Mobile : +91 98317 28880 / roytanu@hotmail.com

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