

Light
WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

February 27th, 2025 - Vol. 47 No. 31

2302nd Regular Weekly Meeting
Attendance: 20

Birthday Greetings
Feb 26th : Debanjali, Daughter of Rtn. Anupam Pal

Anniversary Greetings
Feb 27th : Spouse Neelima & Rtn. Santosh Singh

How was Kolkata's famous Loreto House born?

Loreto House - a school that has catered to thousands of women from elite Bengali families over generations. A school that still stands in all glory and was founded in an era when women's education was almost unheard of in India. **Mary Ward** (1585-1645) founded the institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary and introduced a new way of life for religious women. By 1840, a Catholic School for girls was thought of. Dr. Bakhaus, the military chaplain of Hazaribagh was going to Rome. He was entrusted with the task of finding nuns of the Holy Order to start a school in Calcutta. He first approached the Ursulines. But they declined as they had used up their funds to establish a new convent in South Carolina. Next, he went to Loreto Abbey near Dublin, where he wanted to meet Mother Mary Teresa Ball. The Mother agreed. The Catholic Archbishop Carew procured the house in Middleton Row, describing it as a noble and spacious building. It was a splendid three-storeyed mansion, well adapted for the residence of the future nuns and a seminary or boarding school. Standing on 7 bighas of land, it had the choicest of trees and shrubberies.



Mary Ward

The purchase money was Rs. 40,000. Twelve young nuns sailed for Calcutta in the vessel Scotia under the charge of Mother Mary Delphinehart who was only 23 years of age. After 4 months they arrived at Calcutta. The Hon'ble missus Eden, sisters of Governor General Lord Auckland were among the large number of people assembled at the landing ghat to welcome them. They were taken to the cathedral where Archbishop Carew led the formal reception. The cathedral was the Portuguese Church at Murgihatta. The young ladies finally arrived at Middleton Row and swept up the stairs of the grand old historic house.

The house had a great hall with massive pillars and garlanded arches. It was too large for a community room and much too grandly furnished in the lavish early Victorian style. Between the tall, grooved pillars curtain recesses were arranged as the nun cells. To the nuns, they looked more like boudoirs with their cushioned armchairs, embroidered counter pins, and strangest of all in each cell a demour little ladies' maid, an ayah serving their mistresses. Preparations for the establishment of the school went ahead quickly. The syllabus was writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, chronology, history, French, and plain and fancy needlework. The fee for borders was Rs. 25 per month and for day scholars Rs. 12 including tiffin. On 10th January 1842, Loreto House opened its doors to the first 60 young girls as pupils. The same morning classes began for the orphans at the cathedral. The college section began in 1912. From the very beginning, Loreto House became popular for all communities of aristocratic backgrounds. The young ladies of the Tagore family were also students including Rabindranath Tagore's niece Indira Devi Choudhurani. Later his young wife was also admitted here for studies. Begum Shaista Ikramullah, daughter of Shri Hasan Suhrawardy claims in a book to be the first Muslim student of Loreto House. Her father decided to send her to Loreto House as it was one of the best English schools in Calcutta despite the protest of womenfolk of the house. This was way back in 1927. Born in an aristocratic Muslim family, she had to observe purdah in school with Mother Superior's permission, and her car was allowed up to the entrance hall. She studied there for five years and expressed high praise for the teachers, particularly Mother Joseph Agatha.



When the school needed more space, **No. 8 Middleton Row** was purchased for an extension. Other schools of the Loreto order were opened in Calcutta, and the first Loreto Convent was in Darjeeling in 1847. A generation of sisters devoted to God and education have served the institution. Little girls joined the nursery section and under the loving care of the teachers left school as accomplished young ladies. The old school building was often described as one of the oldest houses of Calcutta where a Governor had once resided. But it had to be demolished in 1958 to make way for the new school building, modern, spacious, and with every facility in a large compound. Adjacent to the school is St. Thomas Church. This Roman Catholic Church was erected after filling up a round tank in front of Sir Elijah Impey's house. Construction started in 1841. The Church is very popular and its specialty is its Sunday service. Millions visited the church in 1997 when Mother Teresa's mortal remains were kept there to enable people to pay their last respects.



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“The Magic of Rotary”

President: Stephanie Urchick

Meaning: This slogan refers to Rotary’s ability to unite people from different cultures, languages and countries in a common mission of service and solidarity. “Magic” refers to the way Rotary can transform lives and communities through unity and collaboration.

“Unite for Good”

President: Mario Cesar Martins de Camargo

Meaning: This slogan emphasizes the importance of unity and collaboration among Rotary members to do good in the world. It refers to Rotary's core mission to serve others and make the world a better place through unity and action. The two slogans "The Magic of Rotary" and "Unite for Good" are intertwined.

Here's why:

1. Unity and Collaboration: Both slogans emphasize the importance of unity and collaboration among Rotary members. “The Magic of Rotary” refers to Rotary’s ability to bring people from different cultures and countries together, while “Unite for Good” emphasizes the need to work together to do good in the world.

2. Transformation and Service: Both slogans refer to Rotary’s ability to transform lives and communities through service and solidarity. “The Magic of Rotary” refers to how Rotary can transform lives, while “Unite for Good” emphasizes the importance of working together to do good in the world.

3. Spirit of Service: Both slogans reflect the spirit of service that is fundamental to Rotary's mission... “The Magic of Rotary” refers to Rotary’s ability to inspire its members to serve others, while “Unite for Good” emphasizes the importance of working together to serve others.

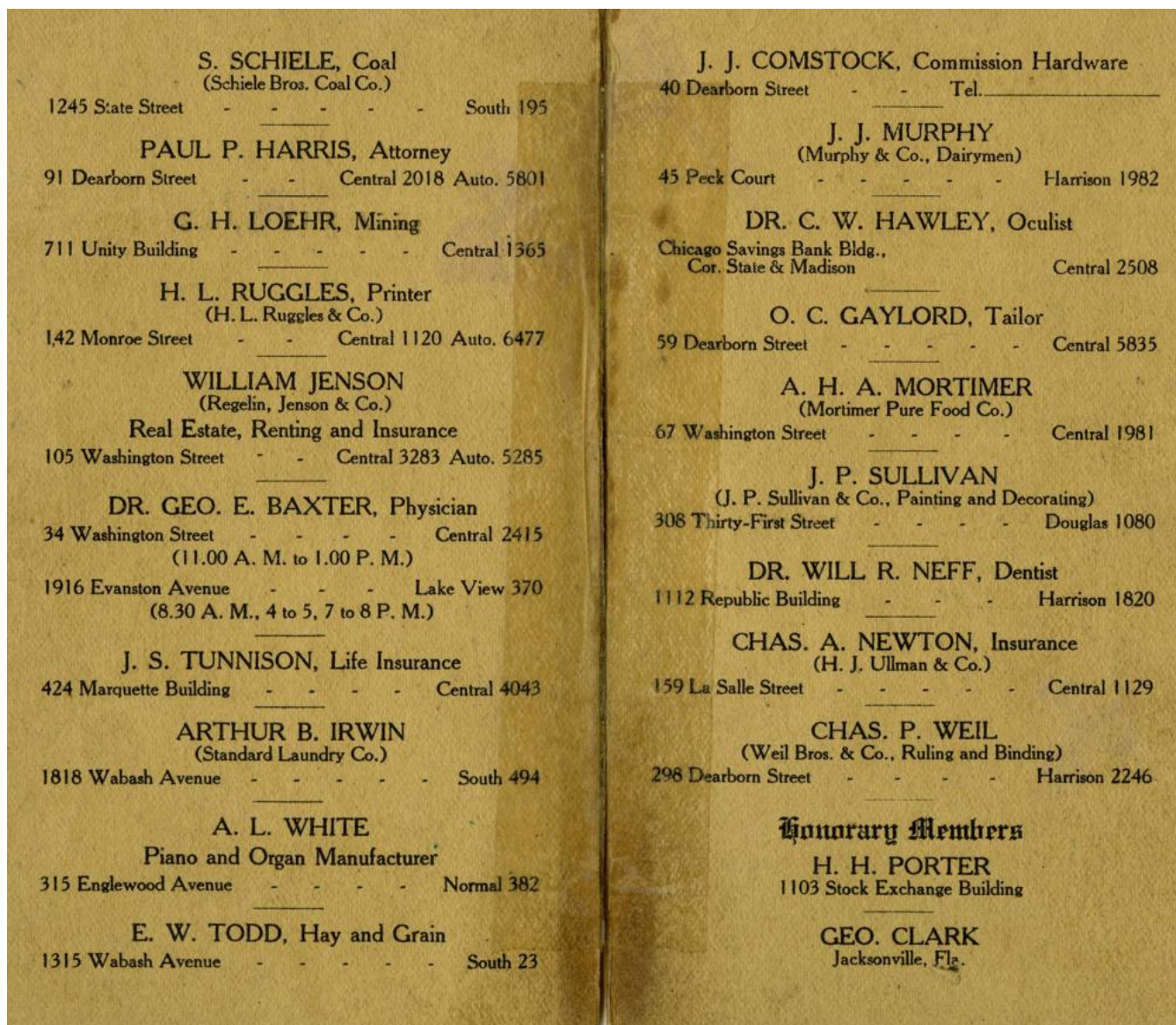


The two slogans are intertwined because they share a common approach to unity, collaboration, transformation, service and the spirit of service. Both slogans reflect Rotary's core mission to serve others and make the world a better place.





The very first member roster of the Rotary Club of Chicago, published in October 1905, holds significant historical value. This inaugural document not only lists the pioneering members of the world's first Rotary club but also highlights an essential principle that has shaped Rotary's growth and philosophy over the years—the importance of member classifications and supporting each other in enhancing their reach.



From the very beginning, each member's classification, representing their specific vocation or professional field, was regarded with great importance. The deliberate emphasis on allowing only one representative from each classification within a club underscores a key foundation of Rotary: fostering a diverse yet complementary network of professionals. This approach ensured that no single profession would dominate the club's activities and that members could benefit from a wide range of perspectives and expertise.

Throughout Rotary's history, this principle has remained central, proving that Rotarians are expected not only to excel in their own vocations but also to support and collaborate with fellow members. Such mutual support extends beyond professional endeavors to encompass social initiatives and charitable activities. In essence, the evolution of Rotary's service-oriented mission can be traced back to this foundational idea—bringing together leaders from diverse professions to create lasting change in their communities and around the world.





Chicago Tribune: Curing the Loneliness Epidemic, Rotary-style

John Hewko, CEO, Rotary International

In February 1905, a Chicago lawyer named Paul Harris resolved to fill a hole in his life. He had arrived in the city a few years earlier, and though he'd built a successful law practice, something was missing. The young man was lonely. The sense of camaraderie and community he had known growing up in a small Vermont town was glaringly absent in the hustle and bustle of urban life. "Everywhere there were people but nowhere a familiar face," he lamented.

To overcome his feeling of alienation, Harris asked three acquaintances if they wanted to meet regularly to share friendship. Their first meeting took place that February in downtown Chicago. There, they decided to form a club, where people could come together – not just to do business, but to form lasting, genuine connections. Because they would rotate their meetings at each other's offices, they chose "Rotary" as a fitting name for the group.

That one club soon became dozens and then hundreds, until finally there were thousands of clubs in small towns and big cities across America and the world. They meet for fellowship, networking and community services.

Nor was Rotary alone: In 1917, Melvin Jones, another Chicagoan, founded the Association of Lions Clubs, and it too grew over time. Thus, Chicago has become the birthplace of two of the world's oldest and largest community organizations.



More than a century later, Harris would likely not be surprised that the clubs he founded to combat isolation and loneliness have become a powerful global force for human connection. In recent years, however, the idea of belonging to traditional civic organizations is perceived to be obsolete. Many who flock to online communities see them as something for their grandparents' generation.

Are they really?

While technology can be a tool to bridge gaps, it is no substitute for real-world engagement. Despite being more digitally connected than ever, many people are struggling to forge the kind of deep, meaningful relationships that give life purpose. We have thousands of online "friends" but fewer real confidants. We work longer hours, move more frequently, and engage in fewer communal activities. The decline of religious and civic participation, coupled with the rise of remote work and social media, has left many of us feeling isolated – even in crowded cities. In a recent Harvard study, every fifth American reported feeling lonely, and that number was even higher among young adults and seniors. The late John Cacioppo, a University of Chicago professor who spent years studying the





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biological impact of social isolation, concluded that chronic loneliness increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, dementia, and premature death. Moreover, loneliness contributes to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

The dire situation prompted Dr. Vivek Murthy, who was then the U.S. Surgeon General, to declare last year that loneliness and social isolation is a pressing health epidemic, on par with smoking or obesity in terms of its detrimental effects. A 2015 meta-analysis published in *Perspectives on Psychological Science* found that prolonged social isolation carries the same health risks as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Given the prevalence of loneliness, the vision of Harris—that people, no matter their profession or cultural background, could come together to form meaningful relationships and create lasting change—is more relevant today than ever. With its historical reputation of being a city of joiners, Chicago is the perfect place to look for an antidote to the loneliness epidemic. Reviving people’s interest in joining civic organizations is an effective solution. About 14 years ago, my wife and I left our circle of friends in Washington DC and relocated to the Chicago area. By then, our daughter had left for college, and we were empty nesters in a new city with cold winters. While my day job and business travels kept me connected, I made a conscious effort to foster new friendships. My passion in cycling led me to the discovery of a weekend riding crew, a group of like-minded lawyers and executives. Since 2012, through my friends in Rotary, I have participated in the El Tour de Tucson, a rigorous 102-mile ride staged against a backdrop of mountains, desert, and cacti. Over the years, my Rotary cycling mates and I have raised more than \$72 million to support polio eradication.

My wife, Marga, originally from Argentina, joined the Rotary Club of Chicago—the organization’s first club—which enabled her to quickly integrate into the local community. She later became club president and found meaning in community services, such as organizing relief efforts for refugees in Ukraine or working on cervical cancer prevention in Bolivia.

At their core, community membership organizations are about more than service projects. They are about creating spaces where people of all backgrounds come together to find support, and a sense of purpose. In recent years, many traditional membership organizations have modernized their rules and reinvented themselves, creating programs and causes that appeal to the young generation.

As we face this loneliness epidemic, the solution is within our grasp. It begins with each of us choosing to connect—to reach out to a neighbour and to join a local group. In doing so, we not only enrich our own lives but help build a society where no one has to feel alone.

Grandma’s rich homemade chicken soup might seem outdated for some, but it’s still the best cure for the cold and flu, even as it provides spoonfuls of comfort. The same can be said about the community membership organizations that our grandparents and parents were and are passionate about. They can work miracles at a time when loneliness threatens our collective well-being.





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4 strategies for sponsoring new members

Hashim Taqvi, IPP (2024-25), Rotary Mississauga, Canada

When I first joined Rotary in 2014, I immersed myself in the Rotary experience. I actively participated in our district's events and training sessions and met amazing people. These opportunities and connections offered me invaluable insights into the world of service and leadership. I quickly and fully embraced Rotary's mission, and inspired by my mentors, became a committed and impactful Rotarian.

During district training and interactions with senior Rotarians, I learned the importance of always wearing your Rotary pin. It's not just a symbol of pride but also a conversation starter.

One day, my friend Tariq Shah noticed my Rotary pin and asked me about it. I took the opportunity to share the inspiring history of Rotary, how it came into existence, and the story of its first-ever project – a public washroom in downtown Chicago to address sanitation issues.


I also shared an impactful story about a combined project undertaken by nine Rotary clubs in Mississauga. We partnered with the Rotary Club of Myanmar to rescue 400 women from slavery, provide them with vocational training, and empower them with sewing machines to build a sustainable livelihood. It was a challenging yet rewarding project that was successfully completed, leaving a profound impact on the lives of those women.

Hearing these stories left a strong impression on Tariq Shah. Within a few days, he decided to join our Rotary club, inspired by the meaningful work we do.


This strategy of sharing Rotary's history and impact has helped me sponsor many members, both friends and acquaintances. The stories of service and transformation resonate deeply and inspire others to join our mission of making a difference in the world.

Since then, I've sponsored 30 additional members and brought even more members into Rotary by chartering new clubs.

Here are some tactics that have worked for me over the years:

 **Building relationships:** I focus on nurturing genuine relationships and understanding individual passions for service. This has helped me connect prospective members with Rotary's mission in a meaningful way.

 **Highlighting the Rotary impact:** I make sure that prospective members see the broader impact Rotary is having – from community initiatives to global programs – while making them feel that they too can contribute meaningfully.

 **Engagement and mentorship:** I encourage new members to participate in events and training sessions to build their confidence and engagement. Guiding them step-by-step helps them envision themselves as active Rotarians.

 **Leveraging stories:** Sharing personal anecdotes of how Rotary has transformed lives – both for those we serve and for Rotarians themselves – is a powerful motivator.

If you take the time to sponsor new members, your efforts will not go unnoticed. When I was approaching my 25th member, I received a letter from then RI President Jennifer Jones. When I continued bringing in new members and was recognized as a Membership Society member, I received a letter from past RI President R Gordon R McNally. I recently reached the silver level of the Membership Society for New Member Sponsors, a virtual gallery featuring members who have sponsored 25 or more members. This is an honour not only for me, but for my club, and district.





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Minutes of the 2301st RWM held on February 18th, 2025 at BNR Officers' Club, Garden Reach

1. President Biswajit Saha called the RWM to order and requested the members to rise for the National Anthem.
2. Initiation of Interact Club – Julien Day School, Howrah. PP Tanu shared details of the Interact Club induction ceremony held at Julien Day School, Howrah, where 30 new Interact members joined.
3. A medical camp will be held on February 23rd, 2025 to commemorate “World Rotary Day” at Parnasree Greens. The team from Balananda Hospital will be assisting with the camp.
4. President announced about the ‘Aastha’ RYLA by Rotary Budge Budge at Dhyana Ashram from February 21st-23rd, 2025. Also, a seminar on Peace, ‘Shantihi’ hosted by Rotary Ballygunge on February 22nd, 2025 at Asutosh Centenary Hall.
5. A visit to Bharatgarh Rotary School was scheduled for February 16th, 2025 to inspect the records and assess the utilization of new tables and benches provided by the club. The Bharatgarh Rotary School visit has been postponed and will now be scheduled in March.
6. Club Secretary conducted the club business.
7. On confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting, President Biswajit terminated the meeting.

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In a world often divided, Rotary stands as a beacon of unity and hope, Our projects bring together people of all races, religions, genders, ideologies, and economic backgrounds, uniting us in a shared purpose: to do good in the world. ... Let's build a Rotary that **unites for good** and ensures a brighter future for all.



Mario Cesar Martins de Camargo
President Elect 2025-26
Rotary International

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