



RID 3291  
**Rotary**  
Garden Reach



Light

WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

May 8th, 2025 - Vol. 47 No. 39

2310th Regular Weekly Meeting  
Attendance: 21

Greetings on Birthday  
May 8th : Akanksha, Daughter of PP NK Jain  
Anushna, Daughter of Rtn. Gautam Purakayastha  
May 9th : Abhishek, Son of PP Dr. Arabinda Ray

Anniversary Greetings  
May 2nd : Spouse Dr. Sarada & PP Dr. Arabinda Ray  
May 9th : Spouse Shikhadyuti & PP Kumud C Kar  
Spouse Rajshree & PP Sanjay Bhatt  
May10th : Spouse Kiran & PP Dr. JK Singh

Breaking barriers with Badminton

By Gauranshi



Hey there! I’m Gauranshi Sharma, a 17-year-old fun-loving girl from the heart of India - Bhopal. When I’m not playing badminton or volunteering, you'll find me indulging in my favourite hobbies: riding bicycle and playing with pets. The badminton academy in Gwalior is like my second home, where I train to better my badminton skills. Every time I pick up a racket, I think of my parents. Both specially-abled, they’ve taught me that challenges can be turned into opportunities. Their unyielding support has made me believe that I can conquer any challenge, on or off the court. Their encouragement is constant, driving me to win gold at the **Deaflympics** in Brazil and making it to the quarterfinals of the World Youth **Badminton Deaf Championship** last year.

With the same passion that I play badminton, I advocate for a simple yet profound cause: inclusion and the right to play for every child. And I do so, also, through sports.

As a deaf child in a hearing world, I did not feel like other children. I was not able to enjoy the things other children did. It was very hard for me to make friends. There were no other deaf children around me, and the hearing children would not talk to me because they thought I was different.

In school I did not feel included - the teachers did not know sign language and would not teach me in the ways that I needed. In my badminton training, I would have to ask for help from fellow students to be able to understand what the coach was saying.

No one tried to learn sign language. No one, except my parents, understood what I was going through.

My passion for advocating for inclusion stems from a deep desire to ensure other children with disabilities don’t face the same barriers I did. I advocate for inclusion to ensure that all children, with or without disabilities, have equal opportunities to enjoy their childhood and reach their full potential.

There have been numerous barriers to accessing my rights, including education and communication. Growing up, I faced challenges due to lack of access of resources in sign language, a shortage of teachers who are proficient in sign language, and communication challenges in sports and recreational activities. These obstacles hindered my ability to fully participate and engage in various aspects of life.

In my journey, I've realized that every child deserves to feel valued and included. It’s not just about the right to play, but also the right to expression, the right to education, and the opportunity to feel loved and to dream big. Sports provide an excellent platform for children to learn, grow, and understand the world around them. Sports have this amazing power to bring people together, irrespective of their backgrounds. It's not just about the game, but about breaking barriers, feeling included, and igniting the passion within. It's about making everyone feel they belong.

When children play, they learn the importance of teamwork, resilience, and hard work. All these are essential for their overall wellbeing.

I want people to see that when we talk about inclusion, it’s not just a word. It's a world where every child, no matter their background or the challenges they may face, gets an equal chance to shine. Every child should have the opportunity to chase their dreams without any limitations.

To all the young souls reading this, remember, your voice matters! It can bring about change, inspire others, and make a difference. Don’t be afraid to speak up, stand up, and play for what you believe in. We’re the future, and together, we can make this world a better place.



PEACE AND CONFLICT  
PREVENTION / RESOLUTION



DISEASE PREVENTION  
AND TREATMENT



WATER AND  
SANITATION



MATERNAL AND  
CHILD HEALTH



BASIC EDUCATION AND  
LITERACY



ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT



SUPPORTING THE  
ENVIRONMENT

## RI President Stephanie A Urchick – May's Message

*No matter how long we've been with Rotary, we all benefit from the energy and fresh perspectives of our young leaders. It is my privilege to place this month's Presidential message in the capable hands of one young leader, Vitor Joventino. In his column, Vitor reminds us how teamwork and inclusivity can spark transformative change. As you read his message, I encourage you to reflect on its insights, share in his excitement, and embrace new opportunities to learn. — Stephanie Urchick*

I remember the exact moment when I realized the power of Rotary's youth programs. It was a Saturday morning in



Australia during my year as a Rotary Youth Exchange student. I stood among a group of young leaders at a Rotary Youth Leadership Awards event. The organizers challenged us to stand on a large tarp spread across the floor and, without stepping off, find a way to fold it in half.

At first, the task seemed simple. But as we moved, strategized, and adjusted, the reality set in — it required teamwork, agility, and constant communication.

Rotaractors and Rotarians guided us, but no one dictated how to succeed. The decisions were ours to make. And then something remarkable happened. Without being instructed, we collectively decided that no one would be left behind as our space on the tarp shrank.

One of our teammates was a person who uses a wheelchair, giving us an opportunity to adapt, ensuring that he was fully part of the experience. We

shifted, lifted the tarp, and reconfigured our positions, using our time to think, plan, and act as a team. In the end, we successfully completed the challenge together.

As we celebrated our success, one participant said, "Society works the same way — challenges will come, but instead of leaving people behind, we must find ways to include everyone." It was such a profound thought for someone so young, yet it perfectly captured the essence of our experience.

Interact empowers young people to create service projects with real and lasting impact. Youth Exchange builds global citizens who return home with broader perspectives and stronger leadership skills. RYLA develops young leaders equipped to inspire and mobilize others. All of this is The Magic of Rotary, emerging through the actions of youth. These programs are the heart of Rotary's ability to grow and adapt in a changing world.

But the success of these programs depends on more than young leaders — it requires Rotary members who believe in their potential. I encourage you to sponsor an Interact club, host an exchange student, and support a RYLA participant. Your involvement does more than sustain these programs; it multiplies their impact and ensures that young leaders are not just beneficiaries of Rotary but active contributors.

To those already supporting youth programs, thank you. Your mentorship and commitment make all the difference. And to those considering getting involved, now is the time! Because youth leadership isn't just Rotary's future, it's Rotary's present.

**VITOR JOVENTINO**

**Rotaract Club of Penápolis, Brazil**





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## Charter Presentation of Interact Club of Julien Day School, Howrah

On April 29th, 2025 Interact Club of Julien Day School, Howrah received their Charter certificate. The Interact Club added more members on this day. Rotary Garden Reach sponsored 10 saplings (5 fruit bearing plants & 5 shade trees) to the Interact Club; and the members got along planted the saplings in the school garden, which was baptised as the "Interacts' Garden".



The Charter was handed by DIC Rtn. Arpita Chatterjee to the Charter Club President, Debjani Dutta and the Secretary Aikanteeka Roy in the presence of the school Principal, Mrs. Mary Ann Thorpe Smith, Education Director Mr. Terence John, Vice-Principal Ms. Cheryl Ann Sampayo and our Club President Rtn. Biswajit Saha. Members from Rotary Garden Reach present were PP Timir Roy, Rtn. Tamal Ray & PP Tanu Roy.

The Interact Club Editor then handed over the **Club Bulletin "JOSH"** to the dignitaries on dais for the launching of the same. Very well-articulated bulletin!

CONGRATULATIONS INTERACT JULIEN DAY SCHOOL, HOWRAH.



## Rotary's belief in the Power of Young leaders

Anirudha Roychowdhury, RI Director, 2023-25

There's something powerful about believing in young people — not just in their potential, but in their ability to lead today, not tomorrow. Rotary's youth service is rooted in that belief. It isn't just a set of programmes or clubs — it's a philosophy. A commitment to nurture courage, compassion and character in young individuals, and to give them the space to dream, act and lead.



Across towns and cities, villages and campuses, young people touched by Rotary are not waiting for the world to change; they are becoming the change. Whether they are organising a blood donation drive, leading climate action campaigns, initiating dialogues across borders or simply standing up for what is right, they are living the values of service and leadership every single day.

**Youth Service in Rotary doesn't just teach leadership; it trusts youth with it.** It opens doors, but more importantly, it removes ceilings. It tells a 16-year-old that her voice matters in shaping her community. It tells a 24-year-old that he can lead not just projects, but movements. And in doing so, it creates generations of citizens who are not indifferent to the world around them.

Many of these young leaders may not remember every club meeting or training session. But they will remember what Rotary taught them — that service is more powerful than self-interest, that real leadership is about lifting others, and that even one person, with the right intent, can start a ripple of change.

In a world growing more complex, divided and uncertain, Rotary Youth Service is a quiet revolution, a force that prepares young hearts and minds to be bold, empathetic and resilient. And that may just be the kind of revolution the world needs most.



## An immigrant finds belonging in Rotary

By Andrés Briceño, Founding Member & President, Rotaract Club of The Woodlands, Texas

“¿Dónde estoy?” I thought, returning to the world, all white light, blurs of colour, and muffled sound. “Where am I?” My lips were so dry. “¡Agua! ¡Agua!” I cried, asking for water. I struggled to get up, but my mother told me to lie still. I was in the hospital. Those blurs of colour turned out to be balloons. There had been an accident, my Jeep versus a tree. The tree won. I’d been in a coma for two weeks.

I tried to think back. I remember driving my car after a long shift at the restaurant where I worked. Then nothing: no crash, no tree, no ambulance. No three major surgeries to drill a hole in my skull to reduce pressure on my brain and to repair my broken left hip and right clavicle. The doctors said that I was lucky to be in a coma for only two weeks. It could have been months. I might never have woken up.

My life started coming back in patches. My name is Andrés Briceño. I was born in Venezuela, though today I live in Texas. I came to this country in November 2021 when I was 23 years old. I moved to The Woodlands, north of Houston, because an aunt and some of my cousins live here. But I also belonged to a larger, international family — Rotary — which I first joined when I was living in Venezuela as a member of both the Rotary Club of Las Delicias and the Rotaract Club of Las

Delicias Leone Rossi.

When something is wrong, I want to change it. My dream was to see my country free. But freeing a country is not easy. When you defend freedom in a dictatorship, you become a target. Ultimately, I had to leave.

### A new club

After I arrived in Texas, I reached out to the Rotary Club of The Woodlands. It changed my experience as an immigrant. One month after my arrival in the United States, I attended the club’s Christmas party. I was far from Venezuela, yet the club’s members made me feel like I was home, that I belonged in their community. That was so valuable: being accepted, feeling like I belonged.

My accident was on 25 June 2023. The day before was a Saturday. It had been only three days since the Rotaract Club of The Woodlands, which I was instrumental in establishing, was officially chartered. I woke up very early. It was a hot summer day. Our club was helping the Woodlands Rotary club with an event for youth. It was like a scavenger hunt, with clues hidden here and there. The kids had fun, running around looking for them. That took most of the morning, and I went straight from there to

work. Saturday is the busiest day of the week at the restaurant, and it was several hours after midnight when I was driving home. Five minutes from my aunt’s house, the accident occurred.

I spent 33 days in the hospital. For the first week, they didn’t know if I was going to survive. My mother never gave up hope — and the members of Rotary were there all the time for my mom, keeping her company and supporting her. Kay Boehm-Fannin, the 2023-24 president of the Rotary Club of The Woodlands, visited me in the hospital every day. Every single day, even though I wasn’t awake and didn’t know she was there. Other Rotary members would line up in the lobby, waiting for their turn to see me.

When I woke up, one of the nurses asked me, “Are you famous?” I said no, not yet. Why? She said, “You have so many visitors, all the people coming every day. That’s not normal.” I felt so loved.

As did my mother. My dear friend Dr. Lucian Rivela, a member of the Woodlands Rotary club, frequently checked in with my doctors and shared any updates about my status with my anxious mother, who doesn’t speak English. The day I awoke from my coma was my mother’s birthday, and my Rotary family held a party for her in the ICU waiting room.

Four days after being discharged from the hospital, I attended a Rotary After Hours event and, two days after that, a meeting of the Woodlands Rotary club. I couldn’t wait any longer to be back among my Rotary family. I felt an urgent need to thank them. Which I did, tearfully.

### The road to recovery



Right away I had to face the changes in the little things we take for granted. Things like using the bathroom or climbing the stairs — sitting on the steps and using my arms rather than my legs — to get to my room in my aunt's two-story house.

I rushed too quickly into trying to get my life back. I didn't realize the magnitude of what had happened to me. I learned that sometimes you can't rush things. You have to take it one step at a time.

And every step I took, Rotary was there for me — even before I could actually take steps. I was in a wheelchair for months. My Rotary family provided the wheelchair, and the walker and the cane that followed. They even hosted a fundraiser to help me cover my physical therapy costs as I learned to walk again.

During my recovery, I had two wonderful therapists, Stephanie and David, who worked with me at a Houston-area clinic. Stephanie was an Interactor in high school and later spent a year studying in England as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar. What she experienced over that year inspired her to come back to the United States and earn a doctorate in physical therapy.

Stephanie and I became friends thanks to that Rotary connection, and I invited her to accompany me to the elegant gala thrown in February 2024 by the Rotary Club of The Woodlands. The day of the gala, I decided I no longer needed my cane and left it at home. For the first time in months, I was walking freely. And that night at the gala, surrounded by my Rotary family, Stephanie and I danced.

Feeling as if I'd received a second chance at life, I returned to college this year. I'm studying political science and eventually hope to get a master's in economics. I'm preparing myself to return to Venezuela and help rebuild my home country. Until then, I'm looking for work with a non-profit here in the United States. My dream job would be helping others — just as I've tried to do ever since I have belonged to Rotary.

### **No shortcuts in life; view crisis, challenge as Opportunity**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his interview with podcaster and research scientist Lex Fridman, advised youth to avoid shortcuts in life stating that they though challenges are real they do not define an individual and each and every crisis and challenge should be viewed as an opportunity to grow.





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Responding to a question by Fridman regarding youth who were struggling, lost in the world, and trying to find their way, PM Modi said that patience and self-confidence were key to success.

PM Modi said, *"I want to tell all the young people no matter how dark the night may seem, it is still just night, and morning is bound to come. That's why we need patience and self-confidence. The challenges are real, but I am not defined by my circumstances. I am here for a purpose, sent by a higher power, and I am not alone. The one who sent me is always with me. This unwavering faith should always remain within us."*

"Difficulties are a test of endurance. They are not meant to defeat me. Hardships exist to make me stronger, help me grow and improve, and not leave me feeling hopeless or discouraged. Personally, I see every crisis and challenge as an opportunity," PM Modi said

He suggested the youth to have patience.

**"There are no shortcuts in life. At our railway stations, there hangs a sign for those who habitually cross the tracks instead of using the bridge, it reads, "Shortcut will cut you short."** I would tell young people the same, shortcut will cut you short. Patience and perseverance are essential. Whatever responsibility we are given, we must pour our hearts into it. We should live it with passion. Enjoy the journey and find fulfilment in it. I truly believe that if this mindset is cultivated, it transforms life. Similarly, abundance alone is not enough. There is no guarantee of success. Even a wealthy person who indulges in comfort and idleness will eventually wither away," PM Modi said.

He further said that a wealthy person should decide that he may have resources around him, but he must use his abilities to grow them further.

"I must contribute more to society with my own strength. Even if I am in a good position, there is still so much more to do. Even if I am not in a good position, there is still so much work to do. I have also noticed that some people tend to think, "I've learned enough. That's it." But one should never let the student within them die. Learning should never stop. I believe that as long as I am alive, I must have a purpose. Perhaps I exist to keep learning, to keep growing. Now, my mother tongue is Gujarati, and we were not very familiar with the Hindi language, nor did we know how to speak it eloquently or communicate effectively. But as a child, I used to sit at my father's tea shop, and at that young age, I got the chance to meet so many people. And every time, I learned something from them, I observed their ways of speaking, their expressions. These things taught me a lot, even though I wasn't in a position to apply it then, I thought, "If I ever get the chance, why not? Why shouldn't I present myself well?" So, I believe the desire to learn should always remain alive," PM Modi further said.

He further said that he has observed that most people dream about achieving something or becoming someone, they set big targets and when they fall short, they feel disappointed.

"Whenever I get a chance to talk to my friends, I tell them, instead of dreaming about getting and becoming, dream of doing something. If you focus on doing something, and let's say your goal is to reach 10, but you make it to eight, you won't feel discouraged. You'll still work toward 10 with determination. But if your dream is only to become something and it doesn't happen, even your achievements may feel like a burden. That's why we must adjust our mindset in life. Instead of thinking about what I got or didn't get, the mindset should be what can I give? Because true contentment doesn't bloom on its own. It grows from the depth of what you give," PM Modi said.





## Minutes of the 2309th RWM held on April 23rd, 2025 at BNR officers' Club, Garden Reach

1. President Biswajit welcomed the members and requested them to rise for the National Anthem.
2. President invited PP Sanjay Bhatt & PN Dr. BN Jha to appraise the members about the Tata Swachh Clean Drinking Water Project implemented at BNR Colony Kali Temple. The project was inaugurated in the presence of PDG Prabir Chatterjee, International Representatives Rtn. Kitshiri and Gowri Athulathmudali, Rtn. Arindam Roy Chowdhury, and Spouse. To affirm the water quality, all guests consumed a glass of water on site—an appreciated gesture. Rotary Garden Reach donated 4 dustbins (2 big and 2 small) worth Rs. 5,589 to help maintain temple cleanliness. The water machine comes with a 2-year warranty (2025–2026), post which an AMC costing approx. Rs. 10,000/- annually will apply. The club will bear this expense, as stated by PN Dr. Jha. Final decisions will be made in due course.
3. President briefed members about the Cancer Awareness Program organised in collaboration with Netaji Subhas Cancer Centre at Batanagar factory. Around 75 personnel attended, with 31 women and 4 men opting for screening tests.
4. On April 12th, 2025, President along with four club members visited Bharatgarh School. Distributed notebooks, pencils, and other educational materials. Reviewed student attendance and records—each student has a register entry with photo, joining date, and parent signatures. School uniforms were not provided this year; efforts are being made to find a sponsor.
5. A Medical Camp with Eye Screening, along with Thalassemia Awareness initiative and Tree Plantation, is scheduled for April 27th, 2025 at Sunday Club, Shyamnagar. President will collect details regarding the availability of doctors and beneficiary attendance and will update members in the next meeting.
6. The Club Secretary conducted the Club Business.
7. Minutes of the last RWM was confirmed. President Biswajit terminated the meeting.

Interact JDSH, present "Zero Thalassaemia : Mission Possible" in association with Rotary Garden Reach on May 8th, 2025.



JULIEN DAY SCHOOL  
HOWRAH



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