

RI President: Rtn. Francesco Arrezo
Dist. Governor: Dr. Ramendu Homchaudhury
Club President: Rtn. Sunando Sen
Club Secretary: Rtn. Arindam Ghosh
Club Editor: Rtn. Subhojit Roy

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World Understanding in a Fractured World - February holds a special place in the Rotary calendar. It marks World Understanding Month and the anniversary of the founding of Rotary International on February 23, 1905 — now observed as World Understanding and Peace Day.

In a world defined by polarization, conflict, and digital misinformation, Rotary's century-old model offers a timeless solution: dialogue, service, and ethical leadership. With over 1.2 million members across continents, Rotary builds bridges not through rhetoric but through action — clean water projects, literacy drives, maternal health initiatives, and youth exchanges that create global citizens.

An organization like Rotary can deepen global understanding by expanding international service partnerships, scaling youth exchange and peace fellowships, and leveraging technology for cross-border collaboration. Platforms that connect Rotarians from different cultures around shared humanitarian goals can humanize global issues.

At the individual level, Rotarians can host cultural dialogues, mentor international students, promote ethical business practices, and actively counter misinformation through informed conversations.

World Understanding is not abstract diplomacy. It is grassroots empathy in action. Rotary's strength lies in ordinary professionals choosing to serve beyond borders — proving that peace is built locally, sustained globally.

Subhojit Roy

Presidential Message - February 2026



At last month's International Assembly, President-elect Olayinka "Yinka" Hakeem Babalola called on members of the Rotary world to live out our presidential message for the 2026-27 Rotary year: *Create Lasting Impact*.

This February, as we observe Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Month, we have an opportunity to channel Yinka's call to action into real change.

Peace is not simply the absence of war. A life free from conflict but marked by hunger, instability, or the inability to care for one's family is not true peace. Peace requires liberty, opportunity, and respect for human dignity. Yet fear often blocks that path — fear of change, of cultural loss, of people we don't understand.

Fear isn't defeated through avoidance or aggression. Knowledge is the first step toward peace. Rotary embraces this idea. Our Rotary Peace Centers and their peace fellows, along with other peace education initiatives, demonstrate how knowledge builds trust and helps communities find solutions to conflict.

In Colombia, decades of conflict have left deep wounds. The 2025 Rotary Foundation Programs of Scale awardee, Pathways to Peace and Prosperity, partners with the United Nations World Food Programme to expand opportunity, improve conflict resolution, and connect people with social services. Its goal is to break cycles of violence, poverty, and food insecurity so peace can take root.

In Maharashtra, India, People of Action honoree Swati Herkal built peace through prosperity. Her project confronted farmers' declining soil health, rising debt, and illness caused by chemical fertilizers. She and her Rotary partners launched a regenerative agriculture program that revitalized the land, lowered costs, and restored stability. More than 1,100 farmers now participate and over 50 villages have adopted the model.

Rotary also advances peace by restoring dignity. In Chad, Rotary Peace Fellow Domino Frank discovered that more than 1,500 women who fought in a rebellion had been erased from reintegration programs. His advocacy led to Chad's first Rotary Foundation global grant and the creation of Corridors of Peace. More than 100 women — triple the goal — completed literacy and vocational training and formed a cooperative to support their families.

From Colombia to India to Chad, the lesson is clear: Peace is not a dream. It is the result of sustained action with a focus on true, lasting impact. To replicate these successes, Rotary clubs can take three steps: Learn from peace fellows and other peace experts in our organization, apply a peacebuilding lens to community assessments, and prioritize impact over ceremony.

In a world filled with fear, Rotary cannot be satisfied with half-measures and empty words. If we are truly people of action, then action must define us. Together, we can *Create Lasting Impact* — across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.

Francesco Arezzo
President 2025-26

RI News

E-club Develops Young Leaders through Online Workshops

By **Hannah Wallace**



Image credit : Violeta Encarnación

Khumbo Chilimira Ndovi, a 25-year-old university lecturer in Malawi, has impressive leadership credentials as an accomplished young professional in the southeastern African country. She also knows how to have fun for a cause.

As president of the Rotaract Club of Blantyre, Chilimira Ndovi organizes lively fundraisers like karaoke parties and trivia nights to raise money for blankets for babies born to mothers in need. Now, she's thinking about how to make an even bigger impact. "I want to move on to a bigger project where we're maybe building a hospital wing or where we're building a library for a school," she says.

To help her get there, Chilimira Ndovi found a mentor in a seemingly unlikely place: 5,000 miles away in Scotland. Specifically, the Rotary E-Club of Southern Scotland, which recently started a virtual leadership development program that pairs Rotarians who are industry leaders with younger professionals for online workshops and one-on-one mentorship.

The four-month program included lectures on everything from ethical leadership to managing conflicts. The club, whose members are from Europe, Africa, the U.S., and Australia, introduced the leadership program last year in a pilot

phase with hopes it will spread districtwide. Besides giving the club a meaningful focus, members hope the program will also familiarize young professionals with the kinds of career and leadership development opportunities that are available to Rotary members.

Early signs are positive. Chilimira Ndovi found a new respect for Rotary and is planning to transition to Rotary membership after her Rotaract presidency. She was paired with mentor Denis Robson, a Rotarian based in Innerleithen, Scotland, for conversations that often focused on navigating change in the workplace.

Robson, a former director of African affairs for Johnson & Johnson and an honorary fellow of the College of Surgeons of East, Central, and Southern Africa, has navigated plenty of change. He quickly established a good rapport with Chilimira Ndovi.

In his role with Johnson & Johnson, Robson traveled to Malawi frequently. His familiarity with Chilimira Ndovi's country, known as the Warm Heart of Africa for its reputation for kindness, put her at ease. "Her openness to sharing her thoughts in a trusting and open environment was a delight," he says. He hopes to stay in contact with Chilimira Ndovi and work on projects together in Malawi.

Chilimira Ndovi, for her part, built a network through the experience with participants from Europe, where she's hoping to travel to one day. "We need to find ways to meet!" she says.

How to start a leadership development program

Tips from the Rotary E-Club of Southern Scotland

- **Go virtual.** An online program via videoconferencing will allow you to cast a wider net for participants and facilitators while enabling flexibility in scheduling.
- **Start small.** A relatively small cohort of six to 10 participants should be manageable yet large enough for good discussions, teamwork, and innovative outcomes.
- **Invite expert facilitators.** Root the curriculum in Rotary themes and values and invite expert "faculty" from around the world.
- **Focus on mentorship.** Anchor the program around facilitator-led sessions but put mentorship at the heart of the program. Mentoring creates trust, connection, and friendship.
- **Challenge participants.** Group them in teams and ask them to propose an actionable Rotary project.
- **Stay organized.** Use digital tools like Google Drive and WhatsApp for communication and collaboration spaces.
- **Celebrate graduates.** Offer recognition with real enthusiasm and provide digital certificates they can attach to their LinkedIn pages.

The leadership program is part of a rebirth for the club, which was originally chartered in 2010 as the Rotary Club of Edinburgh Park. Member Lynne Nelson remembers that in those early days the club was based in a business park in Edinburgh and had about 25 members. But many of the club's members moved abroad for work. When the club got down to 14 members, they realized that they had to do something. They switched to an e-club in 2014 in hopes of growing their membership internationally.

The leadership program was the brainchild of two Rotary members in Switzerland, Tetiana Moroziuk and Juliet Beckwith. The two women were working together at the cancer prevention and screening company Exact Sciences when Beckwith suggested Moroziuk join the e-club.

The two came up with the idea for the leadership program as the group was casting about for projects to do as a club. Originally from Ukraine, Moroziuk is a senior human resources director and has a passion for helping people grow in their careers. "I love doing this. It's something I know how to do," she says.

She also wanted to do something to help her country amid the war with Russia.

The club recruited eight young leaders from all over the world. Moroziuk used her connections to promote the program to the Rotary Club of Kharkiv-International in Ukraine. Four young Ukrainians participated, including Pylyp Moskalenko.

A translator, Moskalenko is his district's Rotaract representative. He was paired with mentor Chad Campbell, a certified financial planner and longtime Rotary member from Salem, Oregon, who is now president of the e-club. The two met regularly on video calls over the summer. Many of their conversations revolved around how to succeed in Rotary leadership roles.

Campbell benefited too, taking inspiration from his mentee's resilience in the face of war. During some of their meetings, Campbell could hear drone attacks in the background. Yet Moskalenko just carried on. Campbell was astonished.

He's not the only club member drawing inspiration and motivation from the program. It has infused "tremendous energy and optimism" into the club, he says. "Along the way," he adds, "we've built new friendships, new connections, and a level of fellowship that surprised even us."

This story originally appeared in the February 2026 issue of Rotary magazine.

Rotary Projects around the Globe - February 2026

By **Brad Webber**



United States

For more than a decade, Iowa Rotarians have conjured up a frightful tradition for people seeking a Halloween scare. The undertaking started in 2012, when the Rotary Club of Eldora leased an abandoned city-owned hospital and turned it into a haunted fundraiser attracting visitors from across the state and new interest in the club. When the hospital was sold in 2023, the Rotarians created a new spooky attraction, an outdoor haunted trail. Costumed actors, including high school thespians, line the half-mile wooded path. "Honestly, the area is creepy enough without any props or decorations," says Marc Anderson, club president. Proceeds are donated back into the community, primarily to the high school boosters. The club's dozen members all pitch in to handle crowd control and ticket sales. "Most importantly," Anderson says, "one Rotarian has to pick up pizzas to feed our actors at the end of each evening."



Mauritius

On the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius, Rotarians are helping the country shift from an agricultural economy dominated by sugar to one centered on technology, banking, and tourism. The Rotary Club of Haute Rive joined the Ministry of Education to coordinate a job and education fair to connect job seekers with employers in hospitality, financial services, information technology, manufacturing, education, retail, and other industries. "For many, it was a first-time experience of being seen, heard, and valued in a professional setting," says Deeksha Bundhoo, a member of the club, which has since established a mentorship program. Government officials lauded the outreach. "The fair represents a bridge between the aspirations of our youth and the evolving needs of our industries," says Mahend Gungapersad, the country's minister of education and human resource, who attended the fair with other senior officials and members of Parliament.



Jamaica

Called Jamaica's storm of the century, Hurricane Melissa swept across the island in October, devastating southwestern coastal communities. "Trees and power lines had fallen, roofs had been blown away, and some buildings had collapsed," says Dominica Pradère, a past president of the Rotary Club of Montego Bay, one of the worst-hit areas. Two members' homes were severely damaged, and all were left without electricity or running water for weeks. "Once we were able to communicate, we began to explore ways to assist people whose situations were far worse than our own," Pradère says. Club members provided relief packages to several communities, working in partnership with the Rotary clubs of Kingston and Ocho Rios, and ShelterBox and Food For The Poor. "Fortunately," Pradère says, "we have a network of Rotary friends and other organizations around the world who want to assist as we help communities and institutions to get back to normal."

- **1571 - Earliest written reference to Hungary's Tokaji Aszú dessert wine**
- **\$12,000 - Average annual earnings of Mauritian businesses with 10+ employees**

- **500-Visitors spooked nightly by Eldora Rotarians**
- **185mph- Hurricane Melissa's wind speed in Jamaica**



Vietnam

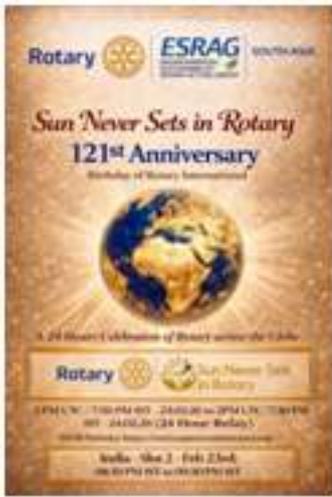
The Rotary Club of Saigon International participated in two global grant projects with District 3740 in Korea that have corrected congenital heart disease for 100 Vietnamese children since 2023. The \$125,000 Heart-to-Heart project helps low-income families bridge the gap between what the government covers and what they're able to pay out of pocket. "We chose pediatric heart surgery because, with a relatively small contribution of \$1,500 from us, we can quite literally save a child's life," says Hoa Nguyen, president-elect of the club. Rotary contributions are matched by the **VinaCapital Foundation** and the Vietnamese government. The impact on livelihoods is significant, Nguyen notes, as caregivers are able to return to the workforce after their child's recovery.



Hungary

A charity wine auction by the Rotary Club of Budapest-Margitsziget in November sold off over 100 bottles. Local wineries and three other clubs — Berlin-Gendarmenmarkt, Milano Sud-Ovest, and Paris-Quai d'Orsay — donated signature wines from their countries. The fundraiser's attendance nearly doubled from 2024 and helped raise about \$17,000 for the Fellegajtó Nyitogatók Foundation, which is constructing a residential home for children with disabilities. "We are delighted by the outcome, which far surpassed our expectations," says Ferenc Szénási, the club president. "It is a great joy to see how the strength of community can bring real change."

This story originally appeared in the February 2026 issue of Rotary magazine.



Celebrate alongside Rotarians and Non-Rotarians from every corner of the world, across other Time Slots. Start time 7 Pm IST on 23rd February 2026.

District News

Rotary District 3291 Public Image Committee Honours Pandit Tarun Bhattacharya for his Padmashri award at the Kolkata Press Club

In an inspiring confluence of musical brilliance and Rotary’s humanitarian spirit, the Rotary District Public Image Committee of Rotary District 3291 proudly felicitated Santoor Maestro Pandit Tarun Bhattacharya on the conferment of the Padma Shri 2026, India’s fourth-highest civilian honour. The event was part of the District Committees Mission Outreach program.

The grand ceremony was hosted at the iconic Kolkata Press Club, which also independently honoured the maestro in recognition of his extraordinary contribution to Indian classical music and social service. The event brought together members of Rotary, distinguished guests, and members of the press in a



celebration of excellence that transcends art and touches humanity.

A distinguished disciple of Ravi Shankar, Pandit Bhattacharya is a celebrated exponent of the Santoor from the revered Maihar Gharana. Over a luminous career

spanning more than four decades, he has carried the rich heritage of Hindustani classical music to global audiences. His pioneering innovation of the “Menkas” for the Santoor has further refined the tonal architecture of the instrument, expanding its expressive and melodic possibilities.

His illustrious journey has been adorned with prestigious honours, including the Tansen Award and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award — milestones that affirm his artistic genius, discipline, and dedication.

Beyond the concert stage, Pandit Bhattacharya’s life reflects Rotary’s core values of service above self. As Rotary’s global ambassador for the Polio Eradication Programme, he has championed public health initiatives across continents. His music has become a vehicle for awareness and compassion —

from polio eradication to Thalassaemia awareness — raising substantial funds for eye and heart surgeries, treatment for Thalassaemia patients, and educational support for the underprivileged. Present on the occasion were PDG Rajendra Khandelwal, PDG Shyamashree Sen, DPIC Rtn Subhojit Roy, Co-Chair PP Rtn Partha Sengupta, GML Chair, PP Rtn Ashif Shah, PP Rtn Arindam Ghosh, Presidents Rtn Goutam Mondal and Arup Das among others.

Addressing the gathering, the maestro shared his heartfelt sentiments : *“I am elated and excited as Rotary stimulates me to positively impact society with humanitarian initiatives like Polio Eradication and Thalassaemia Awareness.”*

District Public Image Chairman Subhojit Roy, on behalf of Rotary, recounted the maestro’s immense contribution toward humanitarian causes. He emphasized that apart from his unparalleled musical excellence, Pandit Bhattacharya has consistently stood out as a celebrity who uses his stature to espouse charity and social responsibility.

The evening was marked by warmth, reverence, and collective admiration — a befitting tribute to a legend whose music not only resonates across auditoriums but also heals, inspires, and uplifts communities.

Club News



Regular Meeting of the club in progress

Greetings

PP Rtn Rajnish Kapur for 17th February !

PP Rtn Md Firoze for 20th February !

