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In an age of instant messaging, shrinking attention spans and hurried meetings, one silent crisis within Rotary is rarely discussed — the gradual disappearance of reading. A Rotarian who does not read Rotary literature slowly disconnects from the very soul of Rotary.

The magazines, bulletins, newsletters and official publications of Rotary International and Rotary clubs are not mere ceremonial documents. They are repositories of ideas, ethics, service models, leadership lessons and institutional memory. Within their pages live stories of sacrifice, innovation, fellowship and humanity from across the world. They teach a Rotarian not only “what Rotary does”, but “why Rotary exists”.

An ill-informed membership inevitably becomes a disengaged membership. When Rotarians stop reading, meetings become routine, projects lose vision, fellowship weakens and the larger purpose of service fades into tokenism. Attrition often begins not with absence from meetings, but with absence from Rotary thought.

A good Rotarian is shaped as much by reading as by service. Rotary literature expands perspective, strengthens commitment and builds informed leadership. Every bulletin read is a lesson in continuity; every Rotary magazine is a classroom without walls.

If Rotary must remain relevant to future generations, the culture of reading Rotary literature must return — not as an obligation, but as a habit of enlightened membership.

Subhojit Roy

Passport Clubs Offer Ticket to Flexibility

By Arnold R. Grah



Image credit : Getty Images

Marco Cecala and Rebecca Wilks had been Rotary members for years when the couple moved to Yarnell, Arizona, in 2019. Suddenly, they were more than 25 miles from the nearest Rotary club. “We were wondering what to do,” Cecala recalls.

Eventually, they stumbled upon the Rotary Club of Valley of the Sun Passport, a reinvention of a traditional club based in a Phoenix suburb. The club meets online only once per month, and its board meets monthly as well. Intrigued, Cecala and Wilks tried it out and found their new Rotary home.

Rotary’s Guide to Passport Clubs explains that this type of club gives members a more flexible experience by encouraging them to regularly visit other clubs, which is where the “passport” part of the name comes from. Passport clubs can relax the attendance policy or offer a variety of meeting formats.

As Cecala and Wilks set out recruiting members, they discovered the passport format was ideal for people who were on the verge of leaving Rotary. “We talked to friends of ours who were former district governors and current presidents and said, ‘Look, if you’ve got somebody who’s teetering, send them to us,’” Cecala recalls. “We’ll talk to them and show them this is an alternative.”

Members of passport clubs often engage with people from other clubs whose interests match their own. “Many of us go to places and see projects we have supported for years,” Cecala says. “As a passport club, we are ambassadors for passion projects and creative ways to fund them.”

The Rotary Club of Taupiri Passport in New Zealand began intentionally as a passport club at a time when COVID-19 restrictions were in place, and the group held its first meetings virtually. Like the Valley of the Sun passport club, the group grew as members found other individuals who had either recently left Rotary or were unhappy in their clubs.

“Our model is very flexible. If something isn’t working, with club members’ input, we change it,” says Deb Gimblett, charter president of the New Zealand club. “Our meetings are less time-consuming. Members are encouraged to do what they can.”

Benefits of a passport club

- Flexibility : Varied options for getting involved accommodate members’ busy schedules, allowing them more choices for fitting Rotary into their lives.
- Engaging meetings : Gatherings can focus on service and socializing rather than speakers and meals. By visiting other clubs’ meetings, members can learn what other groups are doing and bring new ideas to their club.
- Broad appeal : Passport clubs often appeal to people who wouldn’t join a more traditional club and help keep people who might otherwise leave Rotary.
- More connections : Members quickly build relationships across the district and beyond.
- Affordability : Costs are kept to a minimum because meetings don’t include meals.

The club meets every other week at varied locations throughout the Canterbury region. There are no meals to pay for, although when the club meets at a local McDonalds, members can grab a burger or fries if they want. “We don’t expect people to come to every meeting,” notes Club President Martin MacLean. “Sometimes we’ll have a meeting as part of an event, like a project. We might take half an hour at the beginning for a formal meeting and then go into our service.”

The Frederiksberg-Falconer Passport club near Copenhagen, Denmark, began as a traditional club but transitioned to the passport form in 2023, as the club and others in its district were experiencing a decline in membership. Club member Maiken Hallingskov, the district’s membership chair, says a workshop with members of clubs in the Copenhagen area determined most wanted to stay in Rotary but weekly meetings had become too much.

The passport club has grown from 14 to 22 members, largely from active promotion on the LinkedIn networking site. Hallingskov says the limited time commitment is the major selling point.

“People want to keep it easy, and they want to do a special thing for the local community or someone else,” says Hallingskov. “We are all very active, have our own companies, and don’t have much time. Two hours a month is enough for us to get it done.”

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

Nobel Peace Laureate Malala Yousafzai to Speak at the Rotary Convention in Taipei



Malala Yousafzai, the youngest-ever Nobel Peace Prize laureate and an advocate for girls' education, will be a keynote speaker at this year's Rotary International Convention in Taipei, Taiwan.

Malala Yousafzai began her activism at age 11 when she anonymously blogged about life under the Taliban in Pakistan's Swat Valley, particularly the ban on girls' education. Over the next few years, she advocated publicly, giving speeches and interviews and attracting media attention and awards.

At age 15, she was shot in the head by the Taliban for speaking out. After months of surgery and rehabilitation in the United Kingdom, she founded Malala Fund to continue her campaign to see all girls in school. A year later, she received the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her work for education and equality. Yousafzai graduated from Oxford University with a degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics in 2020.

She is the best-selling author of three books and an investor in women's sports.

Don't miss Malala Yousafzai at the Rotary International Convention, which will take place 13-17 June in Taipei, Taiwan.

Progress Report : Partners for a Malaria-Free Zambia



In the remote villages of Zambia, where access to healthcare once meant walking miles to a clinic, a quiet revolution has been unfolding — led not by large hospitals, but by trained community health workers carrying rapid malaria test kits, medicines, and hope.

Five years ago, when the Partners for a Malaria-Free Zambia initiative was launched, Rotarian Bill Feldt envisioned a future where local health workers would become the backbone of a self-sustaining healthcare system. In 2021, Rotary members set out with an ambitious mission: to bring malaria prevention, testing, and treatment closer to communities often left behind.

Backed by The Rotary Foundation's first-ever US\$2 million Programs of Scale grant — matched by the Gates Foundation and World Vision — the US\$6 million initiative aimed to reach more than 1.2 million people across Zambia.

Implemented between 2021 and 2024, the program focused on training community health workers to diagnose and treat malaria directly within villages. The results have been transformational. More than 2,500 health workers were trained, helping improve access to malaria testing and treatment for 1.25 million people. Remarkably, the retention rate of these workers stands at 94 percent, proving the strength of locally rooted healthcare systems.

The numbers tell a compelling story. In 2024 alone, the program conducted 747,000 malaria tests. Nearly 60 percent of malaria cases in the ten target districts were detected by community health workers — cases that might otherwise have gone unnoticed until they became severe.

These frontline workers also expanded their role beyond malaria, learning to manage pneumonia and diarrhea, thereby easing pressure on overcrowded health facilities. Only one percent of detected malaria cases required referral to hospitals, mainly involving infants, pregnant women, or severe complications.

Most importantly, deaths from malaria in the target districts fell significantly, with 75 deaths recorded in 2024 and reductions seen across most districts.

What's next : Rotary Healthy Communities Challenge



The success of the Zambian model has now inspired a larger African movement — the Rotary Healthy Communities Challenge. From 2024 to 2027, Rotary members, alongside the Gates Foundation and World Vision, are scaling the initiative across the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Zambia.

Despite Ebola outbreaks in Congo, postelection unrest in Mozambique, and logistical challenges across regions, thousands more health workers are being trained. As of February 2026, Zambia alone has trained another 1,462 workers, Nigeria 706, Mozambique over 2,800 volunteers alongside 122 health workers, and Congo 1,097 workers in previously unreached communities.

What began as a malaria project has evolved into a powerful lesson in sustainable healthcare: when communities are empowered locally, even the world's deadliest diseases can be confronted village by village, life by life.

**all figures as of February 2026*

Excerpts from a story which originally appeared in the April 2026 issue of Rotary magazine.

So You Want to End Polio?



For nearly four decades, Rotary International has led one of humanity's greatest public health missions — the eradication of polio. What once paralysed hundreds of thousands of children every year has now been reduced by an astonishing 99.9 percent, with only Afghanistan and Pakistan still reporting wild poliovirus cases.

Yet the final stretch remains the hardest.

The remarkable story reveals that the fight against polio no longer belongs only to doctors, scientists, or vaccination workers. It now thrives in breweries, railway stations, concert halls, university campuses, tulip gardens, and even doughnut shops — powered by ordinary citizens with extraordinary imagination.

In Evanston, Illinois, a craft beer named *Purple Pinkie* became a conversation starter. Named after the indelible ink mark placed on vaccinated children's fingers, the beer transformed awareness into action. "We like to think of it as an educational opportunity," said Rotary member Julie Aubry, reminding people that polio "is still a fight." ([Rotary International][1]) The initiative not only raised funds but also sparked meaningful discussions among young people who had never witnessed the devastating effects of the disease.

Across the United States, purple-frosted doughnuts sold through Dunkin' franchises helped raise millions for the cause. In Rwanda, thousands marched during Kigali's car-free day carrying banners against polio. In Switzerland, a philharmonic orchestra performed to packed halls in support of eradication efforts. In the Netherlands, specially cultivated End Polio Now tulips bloomed as symbols of hope. And in Australia, Rotarians spent over 18 hours riding Sydney's rail network station by station to generate awareness and donations.

What unites these diverse efforts is not merely fundraising, but the power of community storytelling.

Polio eradication is not just about vaccines. It is about reminding the world why vaccines matter. It is about preserving humanity's collective memory so that future generations never again witness children losing the ability to walk, breathe, or live independently because of a preventable disease.

Rotary's partnership with the Global Polio Eradication Initiative and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation continues to mobilize millions of dollars annually toward surveillance, immunization, awareness, and frontline healthcare systems. But perhaps the greatest contribution comes from volunteers who transform local ideas into global impact. As the article powerfully suggests, ending polio is not only a medical mission — it is a social movement fuelled by creativity, compassion, and persistence.

Because sometimes, history is changed not only in laboratories or parliaments, but also over a shared cup of coffee, a concert melody, a railway journey, or even a glass of purple beer.

Excerpts from the story which appeared in Rotary magazine

District News



Club News

8th May



23rd May : 7:30 pm - COLS - Club Officers Learning Seminar by PDG Shyamashree Sen

Greetings

Wedding anniversary to Ratnaboli & Rajnish Kapoor for 5th May!

Birthday greetings to Arindam Ghosh for 13th May!

