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### Why The Rotary Foundation Endures : A Global Model of Sustainable Impact

In a world crowded with charities, campaigns, and short-lived development promises, the Rotary Foundation stands apart—not for the noise it makes, but for the quiet consistency of its results. For more than a century, it has demonstrated that lasting change is not driven by impulse or publicity, but by trust, systems, and an unwavering commitment to service above self.

At the heart of the Rotary Foundation's success lies credibility. Built painstakingly over decades, this credibility is not accidental. It is anchored in transparent governance, rigorous financial oversight, and a culture that treats donor money as a sacred responsibility. Independent audits, clear reporting mechanisms, and measurable outcomes have made the Foundation one of the most trusted philanthropic institutions globally — earning it sustained

support from individuals, corporations, and governments alike.

Equally critical is its grassroots architecture. Rotary does not impose solutions from afar. Instead, it works through over 46,000 Rotary clubs across the world, each deeply embedded in its local community. This structure ensures that projects are born out of real needs, not theoretical assumptions. Whether it is providing clean water, supporting education, or strengthening healthcare systems, Rotary's interventions are locally relevant and culturally sensitive—key ingredients for sustainability.

The Rotary Foundation's grant model further reinforces this approach. By blending global vision with local execution, programs such as Global Grants emphasize long-term impact, capacity building, and community ownership. Projects are designed not merely to deliver aid, but to create systems that communities can maintain long after funding cycles end. Training, monitoring, and evaluation are not optional add-ons; they are integral to project design.

Perhaps the most powerful testament to the Foundation's effectiveness is its leadership in the global fight against polio. What began as an ambitious Rotary initiative evolved into one of the largest public-private partnerships in history, bringing together the World Health Organization, UNICEF, national governments, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The near-eradication of polio worldwide is not just a public health achievement—it is proof that sustained commitment, collaboration, and accountability can change the course of history.

Another defining strength is adaptability. Over time, the Rotary Foundation has evolved with global realities—expanding its focus to peace-building, environmental sustainability, disease prevention, economic development, and maternal and child health. Yet, even as priorities shift, the Foundation's core principles remain constant: ethical service, local leadership, and measurable impact.

Finally, the Foundation's greatest asset may well be its people. Rotarians are not passive donors; they are partners, implementers, and advocates. Their professional expertise, volunteerism, and personal accountability transform funding into action. This human capital—spread across nations, cultures, and professions—gives the Rotary Foundation a unique ability to bridge divides and deliver results where others struggle.

In an era when skepticism surrounds large institutions, the Rotary Foundation offers a compelling counter-narrative: that integrity, patience, and partnership still matter. Its sustained success is not the result of a single program or campaign, but of a philosophy that understands a simple truth—real change takes time, and those willing to stay the course are the ones who ultimately make history.

Subhojit Roy

## Presidential Message November 2025



This November, as we celebrate The Rotary Foundation, I invite you to consider not only what we give but why we give. The Foundation is more than a fund for projects. It is the beating heart of our promise that service, rooted in trust and friendship, can create lasting change.

Our Action Plan calls us to increase our impact, and the

Foundation is how we make this vision real. Since 1988, Rotary and our partners have immunized nearly 3 billion children against polio. We have committed more than \$2.6 billion to this cause, and last year alone we directed \$146 million toward the final push for eradication. These numbers are significant, but the true impact is not in statistics — it is in the lives of children who will never again fear polio. It is in the hope restored to families and the peace built in communities once defined by disease.

But polio is only one story among many. Each year, Rotary Peace Centers train new generations of leaders who will transform conflict into dialogue and division into understanding. In 2023-24, nearly 100 new fellows began their studies, continuing a legacy of more than 1,800 peacebuilders from over 140 countries. When we invest in them, we are planting seeds of peace that will bear fruit for decades to come.

The Foundation also touches lives through district and global grants, supporting projects large and small. A clean water well for a rural community, scholarships for young professionals, medical care in the wake of disaster — these are not temporary gestures, but steps toward dignity, resilience, and opportunity. This is how Rotary service becomes lasting impact. And when natural disasters strike, our Foundation allows Rotary to act quickly with disaster response grants.

Our Foundation is not about what we can do alone but what we can do together. Each contribution, no matter its size, joins with others to create a collective act of faith in humanity and in the future.

The last mile of any great journey is always the hardest. We see this in our final steps toward ending polio, in our work for peace, and in every project that seeks to lift people out of despair. Yet every time we give, we declare that our work will continue regardless of the challenge.

This November, let us give with gratitude, with joy, and with hope. Through our Foundation, we Unite for Good, and in doing so, we leave behind not only projects but a legacy of peace, trust, and Service Above Self.

Francesco Arezzo  
President 2025-26

## A Short Timeline of The Rotary Foundation (TRF) & Its Global Impact



1917

### *Birth of The Rotary Foundation*

Rotary founder Paul Harris proposes an endowment fund “to do good in the world,” planting the seed for what becomes TRF.

1947

### *First Major Grants & Scholarships*

Following Paul Harris’s death, Rotarians contribute generously, enabling the Foundation to fund international scholarships and humanitarian projects.

1965–1978

### *Expansion of Humanitarian Programs*

TRF launches programs supporting education, health, and community development, strengthening Rotary’s role in international service.

1979

### *Polio Eradication Begins*

Rotary immunizes six million children against polio in the Philippines—marking the beginning of its historic fight against the disease.

1985

### *PolioPlus Program Launched*

Rotary commits to the global eradication of polio, later forming partnerships with WHO, UNICEF, governments, and the Gates Foundation.

1987

### *Matching Grants Introduced*

A landmark initiative that multiplies the impact of Rotary club contributions and encourages cross-border collaboration.

2000

### *Peace and Conflict Resolution Focus*

Rotary Peace Centers are established to train future leaders in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

2013

### *Future Vision Plan Implemented*

TRF restructures its grant model into Global Grants and District Grants, emphasizing sustainability, scalability, and measurable outcomes.

2015–Present

### *Six Areas of Focus Strengthened*

Peacebuilding, disease prevention, water and sanitation, maternal & child health, education, and economic development guide all major projects.

2020–Present

### *Environmental Sustainability Added*

TRF formally includes the environment as a key focus, supporting climate resilience and conservation initiatives worldwide.

Today

### *A Global Force for Good*

With over US\$4 billion invested in humanitarian and educational programs, and polio cases reduced by over 99.9%, The Rotary Foundation remains one of the world’s most trusted and impactful philanthropic institutions.

*From a simple idea in 1917 to a global movement of sustainable change, TRF’s journey reflects the power of long-term vision, accountability, and collective action.*

## Rotary Projects around the Globe - November 2025

By Brad Webber



United States

A talent showcase held by the Rotary Club of Carpinteria in California has raised more than \$325,000 since 2009. The club has used the funds for service projects, including purchasing about 300 musical instruments for children and awarding around 100 college scholarships. A sell-out for the 16th straight year, April's showcase presented a range of entertainers, including dancers, musicians, storytellers, comedians, and jugglers. "All of our members play a role in one way or another" in organizing the show, says Club President David Powdrell. "Find what brings you joy and get involved' is our motto." Several participants over the years have gone on to become professional entertainers, including Will Breman, who found success on the television series *The Voice*, and magician Mark Collier.



Scotland

International in Great Britain and Ireland to build citizenship and leadership skills in children under 12. At the Greenwards school, Rota-Kids clubs are a go-to activity, reports teacher Kirstin Mustard, one of four club leaders. In February, the Rota-Kids held a rummage sale, collecting about \$100 for The Rotary Foundation. In June, they sponsored a walk that raised about \$3,200 for Harry's Hat, a charity for the condition hydrocephalus, a buildup of water in the brain. That organization assisted the family of one of the youths. Stephanie Urchick, 2024-25 RI president, visited that month and was treated to a performance based on a history project. "It was truly inspiring to see the passion, creativity, and compassion shown by the pupils," she says. "Their community spirit shines through."



Canada

When leaders at the Rotary Club of St. Thomas in Ontario noticed a lack of engagement, the club adapted by adjusting its schedule to allow more time for service. The result has been astonishing, with an energized mission and growing interest by prospective members, says Barbara Warnock, immediate past president of the club. "Meeting every week was a deterrent to new members, and we felt that we needed to have more active participation in local projects," says Warnock. The club now meets the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, with the other Wednesdays designated for volunteering at two local organizations: Grace Café, a street mission and soup kitchen, and Harvest Hands, which collects and distributes edible foodstuffs that would ordinarily have been discarded. "Our Rotarians have embraced this work to contribute to feeding those in need," Warnock says.

- 28-Seasons of the television series *The Voice*
- US\$18 million+- Value of food products rescued by Harvest Hands



India

The Rotary Club of Coimbatore Cotton City designed a project to raise awareness about the illicit practice of caging and trading wild parakeets. Volunteers meticulously placed nearly a ton of millet grains in a 1,200-square-foot artwork depicting the clipping of a parakeet's wings. "Each grain represents hope," says Niketu Shah, a club leader who directed the project, part of a larger effort by an animal rescue organization and supported by the state forest department. The artwork was completed in May at a shopping center. Last year, the club helped provide the forest department with an X-ray machine for birds. In captivity, many birds suffer from disease and stress that reduces their lifespan.

- 1,978 - Publicly funded primary schools in Scotland
- 11-Native wild parakeet species in India



United States

Many people in the Philippines lack access to affordable dental care. To address the problem, members of the Rotary Club of Bacolod Central launched Project Smile, which provides dental care to teachers at public schools. Rotarians screen recipients and schedule extractions, fillings, and fittings. The club pays the costs not covered through the volunteer care of the Negros Occidental chapter of the Philippine Dental Association and supplemental funding from the local congressional office. Thus far, the project has delivered 55 dental makeovers. "These dedicated heroes often choose to spend their own money to supplement their teaching needs rather than on their personal health and well-being," says club member Maria "Toks" Lopez.

This story originally appeared in the November 2025 issue of *Rotary* magazine.

## Rotary Donors Surpass Ambitious Fundraising Goals : Contributions will support Projects around the Globe including a Robust Recommitment to the Fight to End Polio

By Etelka Lehoczky



Donors to The Rotary Foundation celebrated some big achievements in fundraising in the past year, showing their support for the wide array of programs the organization sponsors all over the world.

A multiyear campaign to increase the Endowment to US\$2.025 billion by 2025 exceeded its goal by US\$25 million. In 2024-25 alone, members and others contributed more than half a billion dollars to the Foundation.

"The goal was an inspiration, but the objective was to do good in the world," says Mark Daniel Maloney, the 2024-25 Rotary Foundation trustee chair. "We are making sure that Rotary will always be able to carry out that mission."

The Foundation raised more than US\$569 million in 2024-25 alone, exceeding its annual goal by almost US\$70 million. More than 478,000 individuals donated, along with over 31,000 Rotary clubs and nearly 1,900 Rotaract clubs.

Thanks to its donors, the Foundation was able to award 1,424 global grants, 468 district grants, and 74 disaster response grants in the past year. A US\$2 million Programs of Scale grant will help build peace and economic independence in Colombia. Rotary International also extended its long-standing partnership with the Gates Foundation, announcing a joint commitment of up to US\$450 million over three years to support global polio eradication efforts.

"Rotary members demonstrated their commitment to these efforts with their support of the 2.025 by 2025 campaign," Maloney says. In particular, he notes the large number of fundraising events around the world that Rotary's district governors organized.

"I am just amazed at the generosity of Rotary members," he says. "They came together to make it happen."

## Club News

