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EDITORIAL

Subhojit Roy

So the Year of HOPE begins in our Rotary world and Rotarians are expected to create HOPE for the world. But if you actually give it a deep thought, you will realise that Rotarians are here to fulfil the HOPE, we have been creating HOPE for the past century and more. So our pledge should be to fulfil the HOPE and create an environment free from conflicts and differences. Leadership has to change from "I" to "We", and that only comes from state of mind which is confident, visionary and believes in team work. The RI President has laid great emphasis on mental health and we must prioritize our own mental state to be in perfect state before we start serving the community, The "I" syndrome should be the first casualty in this process.

Another very important change we must inculcate among the relatively newer members is of course aspirations and ambitions (especially visible in these parts of Rotary world); trying to strengthen the district administration they tend to weaken their own clubs. Rotary does change one's life for the better but should never be the ladder for individual ambitions. There is a thin line between passion and ambition and often in the glitz and glamour that thin line is obliterated. As someone said, to keep others happy we must be happy ourselves and the RI President too echoes similar thoughts when he states, "by building peace within, we become more capable of bringing peace to the world."

So after all the brouhaha over Installations end and smaller clubs start calculating the expenses over incomes trying to make both ends meet it is time for some serious Rotary business, but the question remains why does Rotary leaders encourage keeping this tradition of Installations alive? At a rough estimate nearly 60 to 75 lakhs or perhaps much more keeping in mind the grandiose celebrations of bigger clubs, are spent cumulatively with 100 plus Installations. A visionary shall always motivate a major project with much impact at this cost annually; many like me await such a leader.

So it is all about HOPE lets keep that burning within us and unleash the power of GOOD!

Presidential Message July 2023



Even as we face new and serious challenges, Rotary takes care of its members and those we serve, works to build lasting peace, and embeds belonging and inclusion in everything we do. That is why I am asking everyone in Rotary to *Create Hope in the World*.

This year, we're prioritizing projects to support mental health. This effort is deeply personal to me. I know what it's like to see someone suffer in silence. I have also witnessed the power of personal connections, the value of discussing emotional and mental well-being, and the lifesaving impact of preventive care and treatment.

Research shows that performing acts of kindness is an effective step any of us can take to protect our well-being. And by building peace within, we become more capable of bringing peace to the world.

Building peace is the essence of Rotary. Many of our service projects foster the conditions for Positive Peace. We work tirelessly to overcome barriers and create new connections. This year, we'll promote

virtual international exchanges for members to strengthen those vital connections.

Peace isn't a dream, and it's not passive. It's the result of working hard, earning trust, and having open conversations that may be difficult. Peace must be waged persistently – and bravely. Everything we do across our areas of focus has the potential to foster the hope that can make peace possible.

The spirit of connection and purpose should inspire every Rotary member. When club leaders focus on offering an excellent

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club experience, we retain more members and attract more prospective members. We must make our clubs as welcoming and as engaging as we can.

Our goal is to create a sense of belonging, from our club meetings to our service activities. We need to continue creating inclusive, welcoming environments where everyone can be their authentic selves. All people of action need to be able to imagine a place for themselves in Rotary — it's up to us to ensure they can do so.

Over the next year, I will be putting a focus on continuing our journey in diversity, equity, and inclusion — ensuring that Rotary reflects the communities we serve and continues to take significant steps toward accessing the full range of human talents and experiences, so that we can better serve humanity. And we will continue to empower women and girls by helping them unlock the potential already within them.

As we begin this journey together, I take inspiration from Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, who in the 18th century spoke of all the world becoming kin, promoting "sense and worth, over all the earth." This has long been my call to action, and I share it now with you.

Let us build peace within and spread it freely. Let us create belonging and imagine the future of Rotary afresh. Let us work together joyously and *Create Hope in the World*.

R. Gordon R. McInally

President 2023-24

Rotary-USAID Partnership amplifies complementary strengths



Rotary's long and successful strategic partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to improve access to safely managed water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) illustrates how public-private partnerships can improve impact in the communities we serve and expand services and support beyond what Rotary members could do alone.

The ability to leverage the strengths of all partners is what determines whether a partner is the right one, says Erica Gwynn, the area of focus manager for water and sanitation at Rotary.

"If you do partnerships right," Gwynn says, "one plus one shouldn't equal two. The impact of partnerships should be multiplicative, not just additive."

For Rotary, partners provide benefits such as permanent staffing, expertise, and a foundation that allows Rotary members to focus on activities that capitalize on their grass roots presence. Ensuring that people have access to clean water is a huge global issue. About 2.2 billion people around the world lack access to safe drinking water, and more than a billion more don't have safe sanitation. The consequences are deadly: Diseases from contaminated water account for one in nine child deaths, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Rotary members have worked for decades with local communities and governments to improve access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene. Our members have given more than

25,000 volunteer hours, contributing their skills and leadership to building water and sanitation systems, strengthening oversight, and helping communities adopt healthy behaviors.

However, Rotary members also recognize that smart partnerships leverage the resources and expertise of others to reach more people and increase the likelihood that those effects will stand the test of time. Partners like USAID work at the national level, building and strengthening monitoring systems and policy. Together, they assist national and local governments to deliver stronger and more sustainable WASH services.

Ron Denham, a founding member of the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Rotary Action Group, understood this. At the 2006 World Water Forum in Mexico, he approached USAID, which is the world's largest government development agency. USAID could bring more technical expertise such as data collection, monitoring, and engaging with governments to the Rotary members' expansive community connections that are invaluable in gaining people's trust and implementing change.

"I told them, a partnership between Rotary and USAID is a natural fit," recalls Denham. "We could do wonders together." The idea began to take shape. Rotary had a long commitment to community health and USAID had more technical expertise, funding, and the infrastructure. Two years later, Rotary and USAID made the partnership official.

Since then, the organizations have committed millions of dollars — an estimated US\$18 million by 2025 — to help more than 450,000 people gain access to more sustainable clean water, sanitation, and hygiene services. When funding for a program ends, Rotary members continue to work with all involved to ensure that the water and sanitation services are sustained.

They also keep building alliances that center the needs of communities and their residents.

That spirit and initiative is precisely why Rotary is an ideal partner, says Ryan Mahoney, a water, sanitation, and hygiene adviser at USAID. "The biggest upside has been the [Rotarian] volunteer energy to go out and see projects and engage with local communities on an ongoing basis, while advocating toward the countries' authorities," Mahoney says. "Few organizations can bring the same level of scale and breadth."

It's the influence of Rotary members, their ability to mobilize all kinds of public and private resources, their local presence and commitment to their communities, and their ability to build creative partnerships that makes it possible to create and expand that kind of relationship.

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John Hewko, Rotary's general secretary and CEO, has spent more than a decade watching the Rotary-USAID Partnership grow, and understands why it continues to succeed. "USAID has missions in most countries," says Hewko, "but they don't have deep roots in communities like Rotary has. That's why this kind of collaborative partnership is so valuable. Each partner brings unique skills and talents to the table."

Members have skills and talents – including the ability to advocate for communities and their needs and to mobilize community members to accept ownership of, participate in, and monitor the function of acquired services.

"Rotarians may not have resources at the scale and scope of USAID," says Theophilus Mensah, a Rotary program manager in Ghana. "But our voice is equally valuable. In all partnerships, make sure you know what you bring and what you'll gain."

One of the biggest lessons in the Rotary-USAID Partnership stems from Denham's initiative to begin the conversation early and in earnest. It's easy to talk, but it's not as easy to listen and really evaluate how a prospective partner can fit into and amplify the work you're already engaged in. As Denham says, "Be sure you're having a genuine dialogue from the beginning. And that means listening to one another."

Called by a cause: Rotary Club of Mental Health & Wellness

By *Dinah Eng*



The Rotary Club of Mental Health & Wellness is one of a growing number of cause-based clubs around the world. Its members include (top row, from left): Judith Verduzco and Maribel Khoury-Shaar; and (bottom row, from left): Guity Javid and Marisol Chianello.- Frank Ishman

Over the years, whenever Maribel Khoury-Shaar's Rotarian husband suggested she join Rotary, the busy doctor declined. But when she learned that a Rotary club dedicated to mental health and wellness was forming, she jumped on board.

It came at just the right time for the primary care physician. After the pandemic started, most of her patients were anxious and depressed, and she was getting burnt out as a health care provider. "This club reinvigorated my life because I was around like-minded people who wanted to do the right thing," says Khoury-Shaar, president of the Rotary Club of Mental Health & Wellness in District 5280, which covers parts of Los Angeles County in California. The club meets online and welcomes members to join from anywhere in the world. Its current members include professionals in the mental health field and others who hold the issue close to their hearts.

The club, chartered last May during Mental Health Awareness Month in the U.S., is one of the first cause-based Rotary clubs to focus on mental health and wellness and was the idea of Guity Javid, the 2021-22 governor of District 5280. It's one of a growing number of cause-

based clubs around the world.

The Rotary Club of Mental Health & Wellness is one of a growing number of cause-based clubs around the world. Its members include (top row, from left): Judith Verduzco and Maribel Khoury-Shaar; and (bottom row, from left): Guity Javid and Marisol Chianello.

Frank Ishman

The year before Javid's term, the district had already chartered one cause-based club, District 5280 Rotarians Fighting Human Trafficking. Javid identified three other causes that were personal priorities and helped launch these clubs: Mental Health & Wellness, Rotarians for Environmental Action, and Rotarians in Service for Equality (R.I.S.E.), which focuses on LGBTQ+ concerns.

"I was pleasantly surprised at the number of Rotary spouses who might never have joined Rotary, but for these causes," Javid says. "We also attracted younger members. Mental health has been a huge crisis during the pandemic. People were isolated, and many turned to alcohol and drugs to cope." Eliminating the stigma associated with mental health is a priority, she adds.

Mental health and especially the issues of depression, anxiety, and suicide have caught the attention of Rotarians worldwide. In addition to the new club, there is a **Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives** as well as a partnership between **Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland** and the nonprofit **Bipolar UK**.

While the Mental Health & Wellness club is relatively new, members have launched notable initiatives, including an effort to award \$5,000 in scholarships annually to students pursuing graduate-level work on mental health. Members assembled and distributed coping kits containing stuffed animals, supportive cards, and other items to children with burn injuries. And they promoted mental health and wellness among school-age children through the Inspiring Kindness initiative, a collaboration with other clubs, schools, and the **Alex Montoya Foundation**.

Another priority is serving military veterans, including by helping refurbish an **American Legion post** in Glendale, California.

Club member Marisol Chianello, an attorney in Glendale, became the point person for that project. She joined the club because she's dealt with mental health issues herself and wanted to create resources for others, she says. Her husband is a Gulf War veteran, and when one of his friends told her about the American Legion post's challenges, she immediately wanted to help.

"Half of the space had to be rented out for income to survive," Chianello says. "The other half was used for storage and was filled with uniforms, medals, and military memorabilia. With support from other district clubs, we cleaned it up and reopened the space." The location now has a space where veterans can seek calm and, eventually, referrals to resources to improve their mental health. Chianello says the American Legion is working with the club to determine how Rotary can help maintain the site.

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Club President-elect Judith Verduzco, a therapist in Glendale, was also drawn to join because of the club's focus. Like Khoury-Shaar, Verduzco has a Rotarian husband who encouraged her to become a member.

In addition to building on projects underway, Verduzco says her focus will be on suicide prevention and partnering with organizations that provide mental health services and promote awareness of the issue. "As a clinician, I encourage my clients to call 988 in the event of a crisis," she says, referring to the national **Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** modeled on the 911 system and launched last year.

According to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, the number of suicides in the United States increased 4 percent from 2020 to 2021, after declines in 2019 and 2020. "My vision is to call attention to the magnitude of the problem," Verduzco says.

She is interested in research on community gardening's mental health benefits. She plans to collaborate with other cause-based clubs and cities in Los Angeles County to create what are known as tranquility gardens, to try to provide peace and hope to underserved communities.

"We've done a lot in a short period of time," Verduzco says. "We meet virtually twice a month, but outside of that, I want to create opportunities for fellowship and service. Mental health affects everyone, and this club is a great way to get friends involved so that we can stay connected while doing good."

This story originally appeared in the April 2023 issue of **Rotary** magazine.

CLUB NEWS

Doctor's Day observed with an Online Health Talk

The club observed Doctor's Day on 1st July and beginning of the New Rotary year with an Online Health Talk by Dr Debkripa Banerjee speaking on General Health and Diabetes.

Donation of Mobile Phones for the Underprivileged



The Club in association with Reliance Jio launched Jio Bharat at the Park Street JC. The Regional Head, Mr Bhowal and the State Head Mr Bhattacharya along with Club President Amrita Basu handed over brand new Jio Bharat 4G phone to Shaheb from Motijheel and Dip from Dankuni as part of the CSR scheme to digitise India. Rtn Dipanwita Banerjee helped connect with one of the beneficiaries.

Project Thalassaemia



The Club continued its active support towards the treatment of economically challenged thalassaemic patients by facilitating a donation of Rs. 50, 000.00. The donation has been made on our behalf by M/s RAMAWATAR MAHESHRAJKA CHARITABLE TRUST. The total donation over the past 7 months now stands at Rs.1, 50,000 exclusively for procuring medicines and pathology reagents.

Club President Amrita Basu, green badger Rtn Dipanwita Banerjee and PP Rtn Subhojit Roy were present on the occasion, on behalf of RC CMC, while President Ashok Mishra, other office bearers and Treatment centre physician Dr Mukherjee

were present on behalf of TSI.

Rotary Club Of Calcutta Metro City has also been spearheading a massive outreach campaign with Members of Parliament of both houses with a special emphasis with the Ministry of Health and a few other ministries. The entire campaign is being coordinated by PP Rtn Subhojit Roy.

Media Coverage

