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2023 Interact Awards winners: Rotary's young leaders raise awareness about Interact

Posted on February 29, 2024 by Casey Jones, Programs and Communications Specialist



Each year, over 15,000 Interact clubs across the world are driving positive impacts within their communities. To celebrate their hard work, Rotary International hosts an annual campaign: the Interact Awards. Interact clubs are invited to submit a video, photo(s), and/or essay that showcases their club experience and service initiatives. By participating, Interact clubs have the opportunity for their submission to be named **"Best Video," "Best Photo," or "Best Essay,"** alongside receiving funds to support their next service project. This year, Interact clubs were asked to **"Promote Interact: Create a promotional video, photo, and/or essay that raises awareness about Interact and shares what being an Interactor means to you and your Interact club."** The 2023 Interact Awards encouraged more participation than ever before, with Rotary International receiving 596 submissions! View the Best Video, Best Photo, and Best Essay submissions below to learn what Interact means to Interact clubs across Malaysia, the United States of America, and Egypt!

2023 Best Photo: Interact Club of Portola High School, United States



The Interact Club of Portola High School took the theme "Promote Interact" to a new level: involving the City Mayor! Interactors interviewed their City Mayor on camera to share the impact that their Interact club is having in their community.

2023 Best Essay: Interact Club of Cairo New Town, Egypt

Interact Club of Cairo New Town, Egypt

Ever wondered what happens when awesome people come together to do awesome stuff? That's Interact for you! Not your average club, but a place where cool things happen, and everyone's invited to join the fun!

Think of Interact like a magic loom. But instead of weaving with regular threads, we use dreams, big ideas, and the energy of a bunch of young minds itching to do something special. Our projects aren't just projects; they're like cool adventures. We don't just clean up; we make the environment sparkle with our unique ideas. Fundraisers aren't just about money; they're like putting on a show where we dance towards dreams that seem impossible (but totally aren't!).

Now, picture this: a bunch of friends hanging out, working on projects, and having a blast. That's us: a group where everyone is welcome, and our differences make everything more exciting. Our meetings? They're like awesome parties where friendships are made and everyone's a VIP. But it doesn't stop there. We're not just local; we're global! We connect with other Interact clubs worldwide, sharing ideas and making friends from places you might not even find on a map. It's like having buddies from around the world. And guess what? We've got stories. Stories of how each of us found courage, learned cool stuff, and felt super empowered. Interact isn't just a club; it's a journey where we all bring something special to the table. Big shoutout to our pals at Rotary International. They're like our mentors, helping us do even more amazing things. It's like having a wise older sibling guiding us on this super cool adventure.

So, here's the deal: we want you to join in on the fun. Bring your quirks, your dreams, and your unique style. Let's not just make change; let's make it super cool and fun. Welcome to Interact, where ordinary turns into extraordinary, and every day is a chance to make something awesome happen!

2023 Best Video: Interact Club of Kuen Cheng High School, Malaysia



Rotary History and Anecdotes

**Rotary Historians and their remarkable roles
Jack Selway, Summer of 1900**

We meet calendar months' 2nd & 4th Saturdays at GPT Group, JC 25, Salt Lake, Kolkata 700098 at 6.00 PM

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Jack M. B. Selway

Essays on History

The “Birth of Rotary – Summer of 1900”

Less than a month from now, what we call “Rotary” will be 102 years young. In many parts of the world, an organization of such youth might not be taken seriously. Even in conservative Wallingford, Vermont, USA, where Paul Harris was raised by his grandparents, Rotary is considered one of the upstarts. (RC of Wallingford 1928)

Rotary is young and finding its way in this second century of service. There was a surge of greatness that brought the attention of the whole world in the third and fourth decade of the last century. World leaders often paid their respects to Rotary. It seemed that Rotary’s future was unlimited, that world peace and understanding was achievable by a group with vision.

It was the vision of one man, Chicago attorney Paul P. Harris, which brought this to be.

“Little which is worthwhile comes without effort. It could not be appreciated if it were so to come. Rotary was not the result of a stroke of genius; in fact, there is little if anything, even original about it. There is wisdom in the expression, ‘There is nothing new under the sun.’” (Page 73 “*This Rotarian Age.*”)

The birth of Rotary began much earlier, in 1871 when Paul Harris’ father, George Harris, beset with financial problems, took Paul and older brother Cecil to live with George’s parents Howard and Pamela Harris. There would never have been an organization called “Rotary” without Paul’s grandparents. ***However, some credit must be given to “Dreamer and Inventor” George Harris.*** Though Paul’s father lived mostly off the largess of his grandfather, he attempted many enterprises, and imaginative inventions. Paul’s parents both ended their lives in Denver, Colorado, USA.

It is an interesting side note that Paul’s criticism of his parents, who abandoned him not once, but twice, is scant.

Page 8 “The Founder of Rotary” “Of all charges which might have been made against George and Cornelia, parsimony would have stood the least chance. They were both royal spenders. The idea of a family budget would have met with prompt and emphatic disfavor. The most approved plan was to spend the money and earn it if possible, thereafter. The system was enjoyable while it lasted and it was made to endure far longer than it otherwise would have done, through the simple expedient of a long series of checks which were endorsed by George, but signed by his thrifty and indulgent father, Howard Harris, of Wallingford, Vermont. The officers of The Manufacturers’ National Bank of Racine, early learned to admire the signature of the silent partner.”

So, perhaps young Paul had some inherited some of his father’s less than productive dreaming? After graduation from college, with a degree in law, young Paul, at 23, set off almost on foot to see the world, work in lowly positions and gain extraordinary experience for five years. Did he set out to prove himself? By now both of his grand parents were gone. Did he want to know that he was his own man? To understand this, and the eventual success of Paul’s “child • Rotary, I cannot do better than recommend in the strongest terms that you, as a Rotarian, read the words of Paul Harris for yourself.

It may take a month of your life to read all of Harris’ work, but I assure you it will be worth it and will give you a lasting gift of understanding Rotary.

While Paul Harris was the child of dreamer George Harris and his spend thrift mother Cornelia, Paul was the grand child of George and Pamela Harris. His grandparents were too old to prevent him from living a normal, often disruptive childhood. They were too wise to allow him to grow up without empathy for his fellows. Mostly self-taught, Howard Harris, by example and teaching forged a humanitarian of his young grandson.

In 1896 Harris moved to Chicago to build a life, as opposed to “making money for him. He hung out a shingle and soon became fast friends with an early client Silvester Schiele and then printer Harry Ruggles. Much has been made of Harris’ loneliness, particularly in articles during Rotary’s centennial. The facts speak volumes against this position. First consider spending 5 years literally had to mouth traveling around the US and overseas. This is not something a “lonely man would be able to endure. Did he miss the closeness of his Vermont home? Was he lonely in Chicago? Did, as the Chicago obituary reported, that Rotary was born of loneliness? Again, I would suggest that you read Paul’s books. The writers of the obituary and many other Rotary articles may or may not have read Harris. If they had, ***it is my firm opinion that they would not have found a lonely man, but one who desired friendships.***

Paul Harris needed friendships and the help of others. Show me a person who needs no one and can “do it all and I’ll show you a life wasted with nothing but their own foot prints remaining.

Engaging others is the true mark of leadership.

My insights on this subject come from my life experiences and from the writing of Harris and also those writers whom he read www.historyphilosophy.org is a website dedicated to the writers Harris and others read. We can gain much knowledge through study and examination.

So Harris began to build a successful practice of the law, then one night, in 1900 he had dinner with a colleague. ***After dinner, walking through this man’s neighborhood he was struck by the number of people who recognized his friend and shouted out greetings. At that moment, Rotary was born!***

While I earnest desire that you find your own “Road to Rotary through the writings of Rotary’s founder, I will include his own words here from “The Founder of Rotary

The Conception of Rotary

On an occasion during the summer of 1900, Paul was invited to dine with a lawyer friend, who lived in Rogers Park, and after dinner he and his friend took a walk, during the course of which they called on several neighborhood stores and shops of various kinds and at each visit his friend introduced him to the proprietor. Paul was deeply impressed with the events of the evening walk. His host had evidently found a good many friends among the business men in his neighborhood.

Paul’s clients were business friends but they were not social friends, and he wondered if there were any reason why he could not make social friends of his business friends, at least of some of them. He conceived of a group of business men banded together socially; then he thought that there would be an especial advantage in each member having exclusive representation of his particular trade or profession. The members would be mutually helpful.

He resolved to organize such a club. Who should be asked to join? Of one thing he was certain they must be friendly men.

We meet 2nd and 4th Saturdays at GPT Group, JC 25, Salt Lake, Kolkata 700098 at 6.00 PM

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He thought of his client, *Silvester Schiele*, the coal man, and *Gustavus Loehr*, mining engineer, and then he thought of *Harry Ruggles*, a printer who had been supplying the needs of his office. All these were approachable, friendly men. Then he thought of others who did not seem to pass the test. He talked matters over with Schiele and also with Gus. In 1938, 9 years before Paul Harris died; Schiele wrote an article in *The Rotarian* about his early conversations regarding Paul's ideas. He liked them both and thought they would like each other, and on the first convenient occasion he introduced them. They did like each other. There was much in the past lives of the two men to justify the belief that they would understand each other and enjoy each other's companionship. Both had come to Chicago from small communities, Silvester from Clay City, Indiana, and Gus from Carlinville, Illinois. Both were of German parentage and each had worked his way unaided to the establishment of a profitable business in a great city.

On the night of February 23, 1905, the first meeting took place at Gus' office in the Unity Building. Silvester and Paul had dined together at an Italian restaurant on Chicago's near north side. Gus, by prearrangement, had invited a personal friend, Hiram Shorey, a merchant tailor, a native of the village of Litchfield, in the State of Maine, to whom he had previously introduced Paul. The meeting was enlivened by the relation of personal experiences, after which Paul unfolded the general purposes of his plan. The significant occurrence of the second meeting was the introduction of Harry Ruggles, the printer. Harry was destined to play an important part in the life of the Chicago club, for through his suggestion of club singing his influence has been made felt by the entire movement.

And that, fellow Rotarians, is how "Rotary was born.

Regards,

Jack M. B. Selway
RGHF Founder

Disclosure

The Rotary Global History Fellowship (RGHF) is a group of Rotarians dedicated to building a global community of Rotarians, Rotaractors, other Rotary International approved groups, and others interested in the history of Rotary to exchange ideas, provide learning opportunities and build friendship online through its website www.rghf.org. This fellowship operates in accordance with Rotary International policy, but is not an agency of, or controlled by, Rotary International. (Statement per November 2021 RI Board of Directors Meeting

Rotary History and Anecdotes to be continued...

Upcoming Matri Raksha Camps

- On March 3, 2024 with Kolkata Municipal Corporation at Garden Reach.
- On March 3, 2024 with Rotary Laban Hrad at Baduria.
- On March 17, 2023 with Rotary Amelia near Ramkrishna Mission, Narendrapur.

A future where cervical cancer is not a threat

Posted on February 28, 2024 by Dr. Rita Kalra, Rotary Club of Chandigarh Midtown, Haryana, India, and a member of the Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisors



Part of Project Aastha's education campaign to reach young girls with information about the HPV vaccine.



Dr. Rita Kalra

I have had the good fortune of leading an incredible initiative of my Rotary club, Project Aastha, which is aiming to create a future where cervical cancer isn't a threat.

The heart of our strategy? Vaccinating adolescent girls against the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), a sneaky little thing that causes a lot of trouble, particularly cervical cancer.

I recently had a moment of pure joy seeing 130 girls at Arya Samaj Model Town, Panipat, receive their first doses of the HPV vaccine during our camp. It was a big step toward our goal, and seeing those girls take charge of their health was incredibly rewarding.

But it's not just about the vaccinations; it's about knowledge and understanding. That's where our comprehensive awareness campaigns come in. We hit the ground running, making sure everyone understands the importance of the HPV vaccine. We're busting myths left, right, and center!

Addressing HPV vaccination stigma in conservative regions like the Indian state of Haryana involves education, community engagement, and culturally sensitive communication. Our Rotary club has employed these strategies to address stigma:

- **Educational Campaigns:** Organize workshops, seminars, and informational sessions to provide accurate information about HPV, its risks, and the benefits of vaccination by tailoring the content to address local beliefs and concerns.
- **Local Leaders and Influencers:** Collaborate with respected community leaders and influencers to endorse and support HPV vaccination. Their endorsement can carry significant weight and help overcome resistance.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Customize communication materials and messages to align with local cultural norms and values. This ensures that information is presented in a way that resonates with the community.
- **Interactive Forums:** Create platforms for open dialogue where community members can ask questions and express concerns. Addressing these directly fosters trust and dispels myths.
- **Partnerships with Healthcare Providers:** Work closely with healthcare professionals to ensure they are well-informed and able to address concerns effectively. Their endorsement can be crucial in building confidence.
- **Peer Advocacy Programs:** Encourage peer-to-peer communication by establishing advocacy programs where individuals who have received the vaccine share their experiences and knowledge within the community.

- **Collaboration with Schools:** Engage with schools to incorporate HPV education into the curriculum. This helps reach young girls and their parents, fostering a proactive approach to vaccination.
- **Media Engagement:** Leverage local media outlets to disseminate accurate information and success stories related to HPV vaccination. Positive narratives can counteract negative perceptions.
- **Culturally Appropriate Materials:** Develop and distribute informational materials in local languages and formats that are easily understandable and relatable.
- **Respectful Engagement:** Approach the community with respect for their values and traditions. Demonstrate understanding and empathy to build trust, which is crucial in breaking down barriers.

Seeing the numbers is fantastic – over 500 girls from government schools in Panipat have received the vaccine this year. But it's more than numbers; it's a shield we're building around these girls, protecting them from something serious. That's what keeps me going every day – the thought that we're safeguarding the future generation from a health threat.

Project Aastha isn't just a project; it's a commitment, a commitment from Rotary to health and prevention. We're not stopping here. Our aim is to keep expanding, bringing more girls into this circle of protection through vaccination. Imagine a world where cervical cancer isn't something girls worry about. That's what we're striving for.

I'd love to hear your thoughts! Have you come across misconceptions about vaccines before? Or maybe you have a story about how vaccines have made a difference in your life or someone you know? Share your thoughts in the comments below. And share this with your friends and family. Let's spread the word and make a difference together!

Happy birthday

Amrota Chatterjee on March 25, 2024

March is Water and Sanitation Month.

TAILPIECE

'Education is possible in any situation' - what I've learnt from teaching in Kyiv amid a war



By *Inna Makhovych*, senior lecturer at the Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design and a PhD student at the National Academy of Educational Sciences in Kyiv, Ukraine in *Nature* on February 27, 2024

Ukraine's universities have adapted by blending innovative forms of remote learning. Lessons from this experiment are relevant to the rest of the world.

In September 2022, seven months after Russia invaded Ukraine, I enrolled in a doctoral degree program at the National Academy of Educational Sciences in Kyiv. Like most Ukrainians, I assumed that the war would end in a few more months. But this week marked the second anniversary of the invasion. For two years now, Ukrainians have lived through power cuts and air-raid alerts. The academic year has had to stretch into the summer, when heating costs are lower. Despite these challenges, education and research have managed to keep going. And we've learnt a great deal about how to adapt our universities to constantly changing circumstances.

As well as being a student, I am a senior lecturer at the Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design. Using a combination of online and offline methods, I teach English to more than 100 undergraduate

students. Our interactions feed into my doctoral dissertation, which is on the use of gamification — incorporating game-like elements to increase participation — to motivate students and individualize the learning process.

Ukraine is a live laboratory for testing innovations in education. Each student faces a different set of challenges. Some are not always able to attend in-person classes; many cannot fit a regular academic schedule into their lives. My classroom has become hyper-individualized as I try to cater to the differing needs of each student. Oleh, for instance (students' names have been changed for privacy), arrived in Kyiv from his home town only at the tail end of the autumn semester, so he had to catch up on all the class material he'd missed. His parents were anxious about letting him move to the city after an intense spell of missile strikes on Kyiv during the summer. Another student, Ivan, has moved to Finland — he is among the estimated 650,000 men who have left Ukraine to escape the war. Owing to language barriers in their host countries, many exiled students continue to take classes at Ukrainian universities. Ivan sends me videos of his diction and pronunciation using messaging apps such as Telegram and Viber.

Self-learning is another skill each student must develop. I regularly use gamified platforms such as Quizlet and Kahoot, which allow students to work on assignments at different times and at their own pace. I've created pods of students on these platforms and assigned them specific tasks. Working in a group environment online gives students a sense of a cohesive classroom, because they can compare their performance with that of their peers on the leader board. We also engage in real-time collaborative play on Quizlet Live, which lets students showcase their language skills. Students collaborate in teams to achieve shared goals and compete against other teams.

Ukraine's academic adaptations are relevant to the world because learning apps and educational technology platforms have made big inroads globally in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Serious research is needed into what works and what doesn't. Ukrainian academics, including me, are trying to systematically study the effects of online education and a stressful environment on the quality of learning. We deserve support and offers of collaboration from institutions abroad. Research spending in Ukraine was in decline before the war, dropping from 0.7% of gross domestic product in 2011 to 0.3% in 2021, according to the World Bank. The war has stretched public finances even further. But it is important to sustain research and academic work even during conflict.

Education can switch one's attention away from anxiety and stress. Educational institutions offer a semblance of normalcy. They are spaces where young Ukrainians can engage with their peers in a safe environment. And students are very happy to be in a classroom.

Take Katia, a fourth-year undergraduate in my class, originally from Avdiivka — a city that fell to the Russians this month. Katia lost her home and had to move to Kyiv with her mother. To help pay the rent, she has been juggling her university classes with a part-time job for a delivery company. Although she misses classes occasionally, she is unwilling to give up on education. Other students in my class have had to deal with the death of a close family member or extended periods of separation from their parents.

Compared to their struggles, the difficulties I encounter as a doctoral student are modest. Because of the threat of power cuts, my house has a car battery rigged up as an emergency power source for the Internet router and the phones. In Kyiv, we have invented shorthand vocabulary to discuss the severity of air strikes. Prylit, which means arrival, is a way to say that a missile has evaded the air-defence system and reached its target. When this happens, we evacuate to a shelter. Otherwise, I stay at home and focus on my dissertation.

Ukraine's experience over the past two years provides a template for how to organize teaching and learning in the middle of a war. We have shown that education is possible in any situation. Although there seems to be no end in sight for the war, I have faith in the future. Many young people who have chosen to stay in Ukraine during this difficult period are so incredibly smart. Their brilliance is hard to miss in classroom discussions. I hope the world will invest in them and their future.