



# Member Tips

## Growing Rotary Membership



Membership  
Newsletter of  
Zones 27/28

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### Service Above Self Leads to Membership Growth

By Jim Ives, PDG Regional Rotary International Membership Coordinator, Zone 28

A feeling of self worth is a valuable feeling at that. Why do people join service organizations? Depending on the organization, there could be any number of reasons, but the most common reason I have heard for joining Rotary is to give back to their community. That in itself can take on a number of different definitions with each person (how they define giving back). Most will agree that there is no better feeling than the feeling that comes from providing service to someone in need. In membership we talk about value being necessary to keep people in our clubs. The reason is that as long as people value something, they are less inclined to let it go. We want our members to find value in Rotary, so that they don't want to leave.

As Rotary clubs, we need to have opportunities for members to volunteer for service. What are your opportunities to serve in your club? I had a Rotary Youth Exchange student whose father was a Rotarian in Brazil. He mentioned to me that he was thinking of leaving Rotary because his club refused to do any of the 12 projects he brought to the club as service opportunities. Volunteering for a fundraiser, community project, mentoring children in need, or anything else that can provide the feeling of accomplishment, builds value. A recent example was a fundraiser called "Honor and Comfort". The intent was to raise funds for families of military personnel as a way to support them when their spouse is away serving, or helping wounded soldiers upon return home. The fundraiser was a dinner and auction, but the feeling of accomplishment came from the stories of need and heroism. Stories need to define the benefit of the volunteering; what is going to be addressed by the fundraiser.

Most of the good feelings come from actually doing work to directly affect the recipient. Building a handicapped ramp for someone in the community, Habitat for Humanity, Rotoplast, Polio NID's. These are all examples where one is allowed to see and feel the benefit to the recipient. One benefit Rotary can provide that other organizations can't is that we have international service opportunities that provide experiences that one would never get in any other way. These are experiences that build passion in Rotarians. Passion that makes for the most informed and valuable Rotarian.

So, what can you do to provide this opportunity to build value in your members? Survey the club to find what their interests are. Perform a community needs assessment to find what the real needs are in your community. Make sure your International service chair is staying informed in the District and Zone about opportunities for members to travel on a Rotary project. Go to the Rotary International website to see projects that are available to partner on. Do projects under the Rotary name so that our members feel it is Rotary that is bringing this opportunity to them, and not some other organization we end up "working" for. And most importantly, do what Nike has told us for years; "Just Do It"! Talk is cheap, and action is rich. Let's do this for our members, and get back to our motto of "Service Above Self". If we do this well, membership will no longer be a problem.

### People who give, live longer: U-M study shows

Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan

*Editor's Note: The previous article encourages Rotarians to get involved in service projects which will result in improved membership. This University of Michigan study suggests that "Service Above Self" has some health benefits for the giver as well.*

ANN ARBOR---For older adults, it really is better to give than to receive, a University of Michigan study suggests. The study, to be published in a forthcoming issue of "Psychological Science," finds that older people who are helpful to others reduce their risk of dying by nearly 60 percent compared to peers who provide neither practical help nor emotional support to relatives, neighbors or friends.

"Making a contribution to the lives of other people may help to extend our own lives," said the paper's lead author, Stephanie Brown, a psychologist at the U-M Institute for Social Research (ISR), the world's largest academic and survey research organization.

For the study, funded in part by the National Institutes of Health, Brown analyzed data on 423 older couples, part of the ISR Changing Lives of Older Couples Study. That study was a random community-based sample of people who were first interviewed in 1987 then followed for five years to see how they coped with the inevitable changes of later life.

During the first set of interviews, the husbands and wives were asked a series of questions about whether they provided any practical support to friends, neighbors or relatives, including help with housework, childcare, errands or transportation. They were also asked how much they could count on help from friends or family members if they needed it. Finally, they were asked about giving and receiving emotional support to or from their spouse, including being willing to listen if their spouse needed to talk.

Over the five-year period of the study, 134 people died. In her analysis of the link between giving and receiving help and mortality, Brown controlled for a variety of factors, including age, gender and physical and emotional health. "I wanted to rule out the possibilities that older people give less and are more likely to die, that females give more and are less likely to die, and that people who are depressed or in poor health are both less likely to be able to help others and more likely to die," said Brown.

She found that people who reported providing no help to others were more than twice as likely to die as people who did give some help to others. Overall, Brown found that 75 percent of men and 72 percent of women reported providing some help without pay to friends, relatives or neighbors in the year before they were surveyed.

### Feedback

It was nice to hear that last month's article on recruiting older members was appreciated. We received the following email from Dean Dickenson, DGN, District 6250:

It was nice to see the article on the recruitment of older folks for members. While I fully appreciate the emphasis on the recruitment of the "new generations" crowd the fact of the matter is that a new retiree soon becomes bored with golfing, tending to the lawn, fishing....in fact many are, to paraphrase Thoreau, living lives of "quiet desperation". This is a generation that has altruism built into their mindset and time on their hands. A doctor friend, his son and mine played on the same soccer team, heads up a large medical clinic in La Crosse and shared with me that he is amazed when he does an exit interview with retiring staff, doctors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners...at how few have any sort of a plan for the rest of their lives...we are going to develop a cadre and hope to establish a medical services project that we could man on a monthly basis...well, this became more than I had intended...just liked the article on recruiting older members...Thanks.

Thanks, Dean. If anyone has comments or contributions for this newsletter, please contact any of the membership support team members listed below.

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