

WHY ROTARY? OUR MISSION AND OBJECTIVES IN 2018-19

In its second century, the Terre Haute Rotary Club remains a respected and successful service club in an era when formal affiliations and organizations have suffered diminution and loss. While times change—and the needs of its human actors change as well—we are committed to making Rotary vital and relevant as an organization and as an effective resource for community service.

In those pursuits we are—

- * intentional about diversity in all respects
- * committed to be the premier service club because of its networking opportunities and its evident engagement in community service
- * welcoming to new members and fully attentive to their ideas and interests
- * supportive of our young and effective colleagues in service, the Interact Club at Terre Haute North
- * patient when longtime members seem to lose interest but also desire to restore them to engagement in the club
- * innovative and bold in examining how we meet, where we meet, what we do, and how we interact with each other, and
- * respectful of our club's long and distinguished history while growing and giving a 21st century gloss to what we say and do.

Our objectives are divided into the Four Avenues of Service:

Club Service

--Membership

- Increase membership in raw numbers by between 5 and 10 per cent
- Intentional program of retaining new members by tasking proposers to be directly and continuously engaged with new member
- Intentional outreach to lapsed members initiated by club president
- Conscious recruitment to increase diversity of club membership in all respects

--Explore structure and frequency of meetings

- Study potential to reduce number of meetings to two formal meetings and one social gathering per month as initiative to increase participation and membership (study July 1 to December 31; no implementation, if at all, until 2019)
- Create a less formal (and less expensive) atmosphere for social gathering

one time per month as an official meeting (no program, but announcements and focus on service projects)

--Continue tradition of outstanding programs—invite leaders of interest who address topics on a broad range of interests¹

--Affirm and strengthen relationship with Interact Club

Concentrate on hospitality and inclusion for Interact members visiting our club
Initiate lead cash gifts at the beginning and end of school year to support programming and service projects

Fund a Paul Harris Fellow selected by the Interact Club from among the Terre Haute North faculty to be awarded at annual joint meeting

--Do all that we can to make Rotary fun

Community Service

--Increase public profile

“To be known by what we do”—focus energy on Rotary as a conduit for service and not merely as a networking or luncheon social experience

Continue excellent progress on social media, especially Facebook

--Initiate conversation about focusing resources on fewer charitable entities but making larger impact

Should Rotary adopt a three-year commitment to be a resource to local public schools in vocational and human support aimed at increasing retention and community engagement with students?

Should Rotary identify and concentrate on key needs rather than supporting one-off purchases and projects/

--Identify at least one joint project with Interact that would require substantial member participation

--Engage with Terre Haute Young Leaders with a proposed joint service project and perhaps a joint meeting

Make a conscious effort to reach out to and meet a new generation who are interested in community service if not necessarily (yet) looking for a service club as an avenue for that service.

Vocational Service

--Encourage Rotarians to host social gatherings at businesses or place of employment

If a more social-oriented meeting is adopted in 2019, could move these gatherings from place to place and encourage Rotarians to share more about their vocations and businesses on site

--Building programs around vocations—make conscious choices in program selection to include diverse vocations and backgrounds

¹ Example: U.S. Attorney Josh Minkler, the chief federal prosecutor in the Southern District of Indiana headquartered in Indianapolis, will be the speaker on August 21 to address current federal criminal prosecution priorities.

--Explore partnerships with Ivy Tech Community College, the Vigo County School Corporation or other educational institutions to offer Rotarians as resources for career days or job fairs

International Service

--Continue emphasis on RI Foundation giving

--Five new Paul Harris Fellows

--Use accumulated points creatively to tell Rotary story, honor non-Rotarians, raise public profile

--Regular program to encourage members to make at least a minimum gift to participate in RI's work (the heart of Rotary)—significantly increase percentage of Rotarians who donate

--Explore significant fund-raising event along the lines of “Hoosiers” event

Builds *esprit de corps* and engagement among members

Raises community profile

Raises funds to be divided between RI Foundation and local club foundation to support initiatives for community service

Work hard; have fun; enjoy the satisfaction of putting together a successful event

Conclusion

Rotary here (and in most places) does not enjoy the membership numbers we saw 20 years ago and a new generation does not necessarily seek out networking opportunities of this kind. All of us, including Rotary International, need to ponder the reasons why younger people aren't necessarily buying what Rotary sells. An old Broadway producer observation is worthy of remembering: “There is no limit to the number of people who will stay away from a bad show.” Rotary is not a bad show, but it needs to reform and adapt in ways that attract an audience. We can be part of that.

An old sermon illustration first offered by the great 20th century preacher Harry Emerson Fosdick that comes to mind:

It seems that the residents of a small town were awakened one night by sirens and fire alarms only to learn that one of the local churches had caught fire. As was the custom in small towns in those days, everyone put on clothes and headed to the scene in concern and curiosity as the firefighters fulfilled their urgent tasks. A long time church member, whose devotion was well known and attendance quite faithful, was watching heartbroken when he encountered another resident and church member on the scene among the onlookers. The longtime member couldn't help himself and sniffed at his fellow churchman, “Well, first time you've been at church in awhile.” The lapsed member never missed a beat: “First time the church has been on fire.”

The objective in the new year is to get Rotary “on fire” with some concentration on mission, membership, and innovation—and somehow convince the bystanders and those who have not yet engaged that it's worth the trip to come to the scene of the fire. Every Club member has a stake in making that happen.