

FEBRUARY 2026

Rotary

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7 Legacy
Recognised

10 The Game
Changer

23 Changing the
Game

Rotary 

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 **TAIPEI**
2026



ROTARY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

TAIPEI, TAIWAN | 13-17 JUNE 2026



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before prices increase, at convention.rotary.org.

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WELCOME

Sarah van Heerden - Editor in Chief

Peace is not an abstract ideal, a spreadsheet or a lofty ideal to be debated by academics. For many Rotarians across our zone, it is the quiet outcome of clean water access, a fully stocked classroom or a community health day that brings neighbours together.

February reminds us that peacebuilding and conflict prevention begin long before tensions escalate. They begin with relationships. With trust. With consistent and practical service that meets the real needs of real people in real places.

We see this in Malawi, where a campaign is linking sport, safe water and school-based hygiene programmes to build healthier communities.

In Nigeria, we celebrate Foundation Trustee Ijeoma Pearl Okoro who won the Martin Luther King Legacy Award for Global Leadership and Humanitarian Impact. Her recognition reminds us that peacebuilding is both local and global.

In these and so many other examples, the

service is not labelled as peace work. It does not need to be. Its outcomes speak clearly. The act of showing up, of listening, of serving without unconditionally is what creates the foundation for lasting peace.

Peacebuilding is not a separate line item in our project plans. It is already present in how we choose to engage, how we partner and how we lead.

When we create opportunities for inclusion, when we invite diverse voices to the table and when we prioritise the well being of the whole community, we are doing the work of peace.

These efforts may not make global headlines but they matter. They are Rotary at its best.

As we move through 2026, let us continue to see peace not only as an end goal but as the thread running through all our service. Let us ask ourselves, “Does this project bring people together? Does it promote dignity? Does it build the kind of trust that can weather disagreement?”

That is where peace begins.

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President's message Let Action Define Us!

At January's International Assembly, President-elect Olayinka "Yinka" Hakeem Babalola called on members of the Rotary world to live out our presidential message for the 2026-27 Rotary year: Create Lasting Impact.

This February, as we observe Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Month, we have an opportunity to channel Yinka's call to action into real change.

Peace is not simply the absence of war. A life free from conflict but marked by hunger, instability or the inability to care for one's family is not true peace. Peace requires liberty, opportunity and respect for human dignity. Yet fear, fear of change, of cultural loss and of people we don't understand often blocks that path.

Fear isn't defeated through avoidance or aggression. Knowledge is the first step toward peace. Our Rotary Peace Centres and their peace fellows, along with other peace education initiatives, demonstrate how knowledge builds trust and helps communities find solutions to conflict.

In Colombia, decades of conflict have left deep wounds. The 2025 Rotary Foundation

Programmes of Scale awardee, Pathways to Peace and Prosperity, partnered with the United Nations World Food Programme to expand opportunity, improve conflict resolution and connect people with social services. Its goal is to break cycles of violence, poverty and food insecurity so peace can take root.

In Maharashtra, India, People of Action honouree Swati Herkal built peace through prosperity. Her project confronted farmers' declining soil health, rising debt and illness caused by chemical fertilisers. She and her Rotary partners launched a regenerative agriculture programme that revitalised the land, lowered costs and restored stability. More than 1,100 farmers now participate and over 50 villages have adopted the model.

Rotary also advances peace by restoring dignity. In Chad, Rotary Peace Fellow Domino Frank discovered that more than 1,500 women who fought in a rebellion were erased from reintegration programmes. His advocacy led to Chad's first Rotary Foundation global grant and the creation of Corridors of Peace. More than 100 women (triple the goal) completed literacy and vocational training and formed a cooperative to support their families.

From Colombia to India to Chad, the lesson is clear: Peace is not a dream. It is the result of sustained action with a focus on true, lasting impact. To replicate these successes, Rotary clubs can take three steps: Learn from peace fellows and other peace experts in our organisation, apply a peacebuilding lens to community assessments and prioritise impact over ceremony.

In a world filled with fear, Rotary cannot be satisfied with half-measures and empty words. If we are truly people of action, then action must define us. Together, we can Create Lasting Impact across the globe, in our communities and in ourselves.

FRANCESCO AREZZO
President, Rotary International



Foundation Trustee Chair's Message

Building Peace at scale

February is Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Month, a perfect time to reflect on The Rotary Foundation's mission to advance world understanding, goodwill and peace. Whether improving health, supporting education or alleviating poverty, peace is at the heart of everything Rotary does.

Rotary Peace Centres bring our ideals into the world by training the next generation of peacebuilders. Since 2002, more than 1,800 Rotary Peace Fellows have become catalysts for peace in over 140 countries.

I am often asked whether our peace fellows continue working for peace after their studies. The answer is a resounding yes. Many serve in United Nations agencies, governments, NGOs and groups they've founded themselves.

Recently, I met with the recipients of our latest Programmes of Scale award, Pathways to Peace and Prosperity in Colombia. This \$3 million partnership with the World Food Programme is establishing four peace hubs that will train 1,000 people in conflict resolution and support 700 entrepreneurs in communities touched by conflict.

During the meeting, I thought I recognised one participant as Brigitta von Messling, a German peace fellow I worked closely with in Berlin 13 years ago. But so much time had passed I wasn't sure. When I asked Gladys Maldonado, a leader of the Colombia initiative, she confirmed it was Brigitta:

Brigitta is based in my city, Cúcuta and is an active member of my Rotary club. She does wonderful work with the United Nations as an observer of the 2016 peace agreement Colombia signed with rebels. She even travels to remote locations in the Catatumbo region, an area of northern Colombia that has experienced violence by armed groups.

She has my utmost admiration. I had the good fortune of meeting her three years ago. She's incredibly intelligent, with a gift for recognising the strengths of others.

Brigitta is invaluable to my country, my city and my Rotary club. She connected me with the World Food Programme so we could build the Programmes of Scale project, which has filled my city and country with hope.

What Gladys said about Brigitta echoes so many stories we hear about Rotary Peace Fellows worldwide: They are invaluable. They remind us that peace is built one person at a time.

Your support of The Rotary Foundation opens up countless opportunities for transformation.

HOLGER KNAACK
Foundation Trustee Chair



Trustee Ijeoma Pearl Okoro (right), with Madeline Y Lawson, CEO of MLK Jr International Salute.

LEGACY RECOGNISED

Rotary Foundation Trustee Ijeoma Pearl Okoro has been named the recipient of the 2026 King Legacy Award for Global Leadership and Humanitarian Impact. The honour was presented during the 34th annual International Salute to the Life and Legacy of Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, held at The Willard InterContinental Hotel in Washington, DC.

Okoro, who serves as a Rotary Foundation Trustee for the 2024 to 2028 term, is a member of the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt (D9141) in Nigeria. Her leadership, grounded in service and global cooperation, was highlighted as an example of the humanitarian vision that the award seeks to celebrate.

Each year, the MLK Jr International Salute Committee recognises individuals whose work strengthens communities, advances justice and builds bridges across cultures and nations. Okoro joins a distinguished cohort of global leaders whose impact reflects the values and

vision of Dr King.

“This year’s honourees lead across government, humanitarian service, advocacy, education and global diplomacy and they model the impact Dr King called all of us to pursue,” said Madeline Y Lawson, Founder and CEO of the MLK Jr International Salute. It formed part of the official commemorative celebrations marking Dr King’s birthday.

Okoro was recognised for her contributions through The Rotary Foundation and her role in advancing humanitarian projects worldwide.

Past recipients of the award include General Colin Powell, former US Secretary of State, Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, US Congressmen John Lewis and John Conyers Jr, Senator Bob Dole and ambassadors from around the world.

Director Daniel Tanase congratulated Trustee Okoro, calling it a proud moment for Africa and for Rotary.



Leadership Institute

PDG Patrick Coleman
RLI Coordinator – Southern Africa Division

The Rotary Leadership Institute (RLI) is a global, grassroots programme for Rotarians organised by districts. It develops leadership skills and deepens understanding of Rotary beyond the club level.

It aims to increase engagement, retention and service effectiveness through practical training in Rotary knowledge and leadership, delivered in a series of one-day sessions.

Although not an official Rotary International programme, it is supported by many Rotary leaders. RLI is designed for potential leaders, new members and those wishing to expand their Rotary journey. We need RLI to develop knowledgeable, enthusiastic and effective club leaders by providing the general Rotary and leadership education that strengthens clubs. While the institute addresses the ongoing need for informed leaders, many Rotarians are unaware of Rotary's scope beyond their local club and RLI helps bridge that gap.

Key benefits of the Rotary Leadership Institute:

- Develops future leaders: Identifies and

prepares Rotarians with leadership potential, giving them tools to help clubs thrive.

- Increases club strength and enthusiasm: Members gain a broader view of Rotary's service potential, increasing motivation and reducing drop-off.
- Provides general education: Offers foundational training that complements job-specific learning.
- Fills knowledge gaps: Gives both new and seasoned members a clear overview of Rotary's structure, ethics and service programmes.
- Promotes collaboration and idea exchange: Creates space for Rotarians to share insights, collaborate and learn through discussion, problem-solving and role-play.

The Rotary Learning Centre contains many valuable modules and is a vital resource for information sharing. However, it lacks one of the most critical aspects of learning: interaction with real people.

If all learning required was written material,

there would be no need for schools, colleges or universities. Real-time engagement and the exchange of ideas with others deepens our understanding.

especially among younger members navigating life transitions.

How RLI Improves Retention:

- Deeper understanding: Enhances appreciation and commitment through increased awareness of Rotary's programmes and impact.
- Enhanced skills: Builds practical leadership and communication skills useful in Rotary and everyday life.
- Increased engagement: Graduates are equipped to contribute meaningfully and confidently.
- Stronger connections: Encourages fellowship and networking across clubs and districts.
- Addresses why people leave: Tackles common reasons for member attrition,

What RLI Offers:

- Practical and fun: Focuses on hands-on learning, idea sharing and building community in a positive environment.
- For potential leaders: While ideal for those with leadership potential, it welcomes any Rotarian seeking personal growth.
- Structured curriculum: Usually delivered in three parts (Parts I, II and III), with additional graduate options available.

In essence, RLI helps members become more knowledgeable, skilled and connected Rotarians. It makes their Rotary experience more meaningful and significantly increases the chances they will stay involved for life.

We need each other. We need the Rotary Leadership Institute.

Coming up...

MARCH 2026

27 March - **ROTARY CLUB OF STELLENBOSCH D9350 Charity Golf Day:** At Stellenbosch Golf Club. Betterball Stableford. R6,000 per fourball, includes halfway house and dinner (excludes beverages). To enter, sponsor or get involved please contact Rotarian John Whitehead on Cell: 083 303 2982 or on Email: John@pinpointpromo.co.za

JUNE 2026

13-17 June - **ROTARY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, Taipei, Taiwan:** Join fellow changemakers from around the world to share innovative projects, exchange best practices and form enduring friendships. The convention is packed with exciting breakout sessions, speakers and more. All RI events take place at Farglory Dome (Taipei Dome) and Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center (TaiNEX) unless otherwise indicated.

20 June - **ROTARY CLUB OF HOEDSPRUIT, K2C Cycle Tour:** Ride 100km through Timbavati, Thornybush and Kapama. One day, 120 riders. R8000 entry. No under 16s. E-bikes permitted. Includes collectors edition apparel. Hosted by the Hoedspruit club for conservation and social upliftment. Visit www.k2c-cycletour.co.za for details.

Email info about your club's upcoming events to rotaryafrica@mweb.co.za



The **GAME CHANGER**

MEET YOUR 2026-27 ROTARY PRESIDENT, OLAYINKA HAKEEM BABALOLA

Olayinka “Yinka” Hakeem Babalola is sitting on the wrong side of his desk, staring at the tiny squares on the laptop perched in front of him. He’s just finished speaking on a call with 300 Rotaractors from the African continent and other parts of the world, Rotary’s president-elect explains as he turns down the volume. “They held a celebration for me because I’m a past Rotaractor,” he says. By seeing Babalola, himself once in their shoes, embarking on the highest position in Rotary, who knows how many of the 300 he will inspire.

It’s early October, less than two months since the Rotary International Board of Directors selected Babalola to lead Rotary, in a special session in late August after the resignation of RI President-elect SangKoo Yun, who died shortly after, following months of cancer treatment.

It’s only the second trip to Rotary headquarters for Babalola, of the Rotary Club of Trans Amadi in Nigeria, since his selection. His office is nearly empty; void so far of all the gifts Rotary leaders tend to accumulate during their travels as an incoming president.

While he’s new to the position, he has a long history with Rotary, starting as a Rotaractor in 1984 and then as a Rotarian in 1994. “One thing is for certain, preparing me for this role are my

many years of engaging with Rotary” - over four decades, he says. “Not many people who get to this position have that privilege.”

In that time, he’s served not only as RI vice president and a member of the RI Board of Directors but also as an active leader and participant in RI committees such as the End Polio Now Countdown to History Campaign Committee and the Nigeria PolioPlus Committee. Babalola was a trustee of ShelterBox. His Rotary honours include the Regional Service Award for a Polio-Free World, the Service Above Self Award and a Rotary Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service. He and his wife, Preba, a member of the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt Passport, are Arch Klumph Society members.

That’s all on top of his professional life. He worked for 25 years in the oil and gas industry, holding senior positions with Shell. He is the founder of two companies: Riviera Technical Services Ltd., an oil and gas infrastructure delivery company and Lead and Change Consulting, an executive coaching and organisational performance advisory group.

Rotary magazine senior staff writer Diana Schoberg sat down with Babalola to find out more about the president-elect.

He was inspired to join Rotary by something he watched on TV.

On summer break between his last year of high school and his first year of college, Babalola was hanging out at home watching TV when a well-dressed man on the screen caught his eye. The man was wearing all white and “his English was something else,” Babalola recalls. Curious, he listened more closely. The man was talking about Rotary. “It was the first time I heard anything about Rotary,” Babalola says. “Like with most TV interviews, it probably lasted one or two minutes, but he made an impression on me.”

Fast forward to Babalola’s second year at the university, when the school’s public image director, a member of the Rotary Club of Bauchi, approached him with a proposal: Would Babalola like to help organise a Rotaract club at the school? “I still tell people I have no idea why he approached me,” Babalola says. He recalled the well-spoken man in white and asked if the director was somehow connected. It turns out the director knew the man on TV, who was the past district governor. Babalola was sold on the connection and went on to become the Rotaract club’s charter president.

He met his wife at a Rotaract meeting.

After finishing up his university education, Babalola moved to Port Harcourt and joined the community-based Rotaract Club of Trans Amadi. At one event, he recalls noticing a beautiful woman, the president of a university-based club. He pointed her out to a friend and said, “That’s the one.” He was right.

But Yinka and Preba aren’t the only members of their family who have been involved in Rotary. Their oldest daughter was the charter president of the Interact club at her secondary school. She moved to North America for college and today belongs to the Rotary Club of Winnipeg in Manitoba. Another daughter was the president of her university’s Rotaract club.

His nickname is “the game changer.”

Babalola served as district governor in 2011-12 while employed by Shell, a multinational energy company. This was unlike his predecessors, who were either retired or running their own businesses while they held that role. He knew things had to change for him to be successful.

At his first meeting with the assistant governors and committee chairs, he asked them to include what would be the “game changer” in their proposals: how they used to do things and how their approach would change going forward. “If they have no answer,” he says, “the proposal is thrown away. They need to present it again.”

“It occurred to people that this guy actually wants something different,” he continues. “I’m called the game changer, but the ideas that changed the game were not mine.”

He raised \$80,000 with a text message.

Part of Babalola’s effort to make changes as district governor involved his use of technology. On 1 November, the start of Rotary Foundation Month, he woke up around 3 a.m. and sent a request to a district group on a BlackBerry messaging app asking everyone on the platform to give something to The Foundation that day, no matter how small.

Then he went back to sleep.

When he woke up a few hours later, he made his own donation and posted the evidence. Within a few hours, the group had raised \$80,000. “Usually, you would gather people together, you’d talk to them and ask for it,” he says. “But with technology, you could ask virtually.”

That year, every club throughout the district gave something to The Foundation. The nearly \$1 million raised was, he says, the highest amount ever raised by a district on the African continent for The Rotary Foundation.



President-elect Olayinka Hakeem Babalola stands outside Rotary's headquarters building with Rotary Foundation Trustee Martha Peak Helman and RI Vice President Alain Van de Poel.

He wishes he had more time to go scuba diving.

Babalola is certified to dive to 30 metres and has done some diving in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Atlantic. He's looking forward to someday diving in Hurghada, a resort city on Egypt's Red Sea coast that's known for its marine life, iconic wrecks and high visibility in the water. "The reefs are wonderful," he says.

He also enjoys other outdoor pursuits including swimming, gardening and bird watching. One of the most interesting birds he's seen is the Ibadan malimbe, a rare songbird with bright red feathers around its head and face that is found only near his hometown.

The 2026-27 presidential message is Create Lasting Impact.

If you need it, here's a refresher on Rotary's vision statement: "Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change, across the globe, in our communities and in ourselves." This Rotary

year, Babalola explains, RI has been focusing on that first word, "together," through the message Unite for Good. In 2026-27, members will tackle the next part of the vision statement: creating change that lasts.

Lasting change across the globe is an easy idea for most Rotary members to understand, he says. "They can give you examples: our polio eradication work, our peace centres, global grants," he says. "When you talk about lasting change in communities, they know because they do things in their own communities. But each time I've been in a gathering of Rotarians and asked them about lasting change in themselves, usually the room goes quiet."

He thinks a key to growing Rotary is realising the effect it has on you.

While members can and should measure the impact of a project, Babalola wants to see that idea flipped, too. "How has doing all of that impacted you?"

He can clearly see how Rotary has changed his own life. “I had a privileged upbringing, a good education in a place where many did not have that opportunity,” he says. “Rotary grounded me. It pulled me out of my privileged world and put me in touch with the realities of my community.”

Many Rotary members have their own stories about how their membership has changed their lives for the better, how it humbled them or brought them closer to their fellow human beings. Babalola encourages them to share those stories. “If we are going to grow this organisation, we must let people understand how membership can make a lasting impact on their own lives,” he says. “That’s one of the things I’m hoping that I can help communicate.”

Rotary made him a diplomat.

As a Rotary director in 2018-20, Babalola represented more than 80 Rotary countries and geographical areas, over a third of the Rotary world, including countries in Africa (where at least 1,000 languages are spoken), the Middle East and parts of Europe. The zones he represented included politically sensitive areas

such as Israel, Lebanon, Ukraine and Afghanistan. “There are certain skills you end up building,” he says.

For example, at a Rotary institute he convened in Egypt, he received a phone call from a senior government official about a map of Africa used at the event. The map, which he’d found on the internet, showed Western Sahara as a separate country, which Morocco does not recognise. Egypt supports the position of Morocco. “That kind of situation brings a certain awareness straight to you,” he says.

He’ll be the second Rotary president from Africa.

“It means a lot for the people of that continent,” he says. And, he adds, everyone seems ready to do the work to support him, to show that his presidency is not a fluke. “I’m used to delivering results. We need to deliver results,” he says. That’s what he’s been preaching at the Rotary institutes he’s attended. “I’ve told them, stop talking about things. Just do it. If it works somewhere, copy it shamelessly. Don’t be afraid to fail, be afraid not to try.”

DID YOU KNOW?



Rotary truly spans the globe in dramatic ways.

- The Rotary Club of Barrow, Alaska, meets above the Arctic Circle.
- The Rotary Clubs of Papeete and Taravao-Tahiti Iti, Tahiti, (D9920, French Polynesia) are two of the most geographically isolated clubs, situated in the central Pacific Ocean and far from any neighbouring Rotary presence.
- The Rotary Club of El Centro in California meets at about 15 metres below sea level in the Imperial Valley.



Photo by Nasir/Senset, peris.com

The **ROTARY ACTION PLAN**

ENHANCE ENGAGEMENT: ASK MEMBERS WHAT THEY WANT

ENSURE THAT MEMBERS KNOW ROTARY'S FULL SCOPE

Scott Learned attended his first Rotary meeting at age six. He came along to help his dad, a Rotarian, with a presentation about how useful computers could be.

Learned eventually became president of that club, the Rotary Club of Boise, Idaho, (D5400, USA) and found that it, like many other clubs, sometimes faced challenges retaining members. While reviewing exit interviews for clues on how to keep people engaged, he realised that the familiarity he'd grown up with was missing.

"It seemed some exiting members didn't fully get introduced to the big picture of Rotary," says Learned, who is now District 5400's learning facilitator. "They didn't understand how they were part of something bigger and how their work, their gifts, could travel far beyond their club and actually impact lives in other

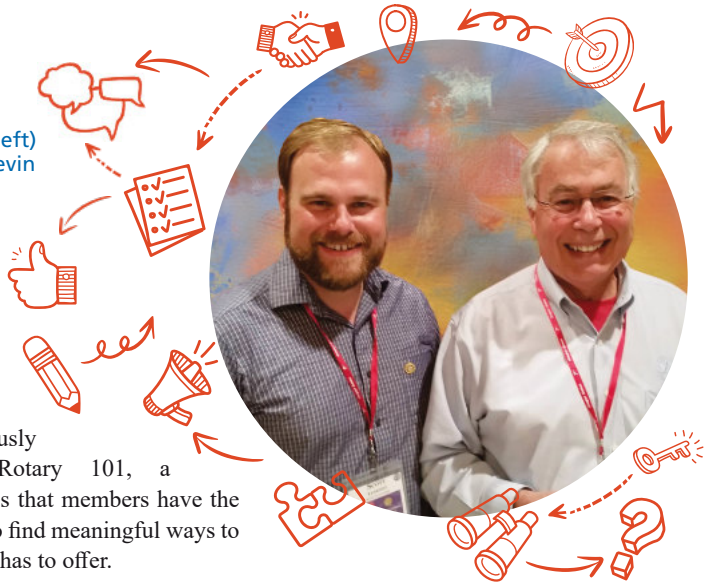
communities and even on other continents."

Learned saw an opportunity to bridge that gap. As his district's Action Plan champion, he used resources from rotary.org/actionplan to guide conversations with members about what they wanted from Rotary, building on what he'd learned from the exit interviews. When club leaders ask members what they want from Rotary and then recommend relevant programs and activities, it creates a positive club experience that helps retain members and attract new ones.

Learned found that several clubs had already started revamping their introductory materials to address the situation. He combined the ideas he heard with the materials



Scott Learned (left)
with his dad, Kevin
Learned



other Rotarians generously shared to create Rotary 101, a programme that ensures that members have the knowledge they need to find meaningful ways to engage with all Rotary has to offer.

PROGRAMMES AND OFFERINGS EMPOWER MEMBERS TO MAKE AN IMPACT

“Our goal is to educate and empower members,” Learned says. “We want every Rotarian to understand the avenues available to them to make an impact locally and globally.” Newer members might discover programmes like Rotary Friendship Exchange or learn how to use resources like the Learning Centre. And long-term members might find new ways to be people of action, like getting involved with their district resource network or the Cadre of Technical Advisers.

Through Rotary 101, members are introduced to essential aspects of our organisation, including local club dynamics, Rotary International’s structure and the work of The Rotary Foundation. By clarifying Rotary’s structure and highlighting transformative projects, members get a deeper understanding of our global impact.

FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO SURVEY MEMBERS ON THEIR SATISFACTION

A valuable component of this Rotary introduction is the participant survey. Through this questionnaire, the district can continue to

refine its Rotary 101 content based on members’ interests and needs. This is similar to Rotary’s customisable member satisfaction survey. By asking members for feedback regularly and then responding to it, clubs can identify what their members like and dislike about their club experience and develop plans to address those concerns and preferences.

That “take a leap and make it your own” mentality is one of the key ideas the Rotary introduction seeks to spark and nurture.

“If there’s a project or issue that interests you, it’s very likely there’s a Rotarian working on it and you’re within an introduction or two from meeting them and taking action,” Learned says. “Rather than six degrees of separation, at Rotary it’s only two or three degrees, because our global network connects people all over the world with a common intent to do good. To me, that truly is the power of Rotary that club on boarding helps everyone to see.”

Visit rotary.org/actionplan to find the Action Plan Toolkit to help you enhance engagement and member satisfaction survey.



DGE Grace van Zyl with President-Elect Olayinka Hakeem Babalola and his wife, Preba at the International Assembly in January 2026.

Global in Spirit

By DGE Grace Van Zyl (D9400)

Attending the Rotary International Assembly in Orlando was both a professional milestone and a deeply personal experience. It was my first visit to Florida, made even more special by travelling with my classmate and fellow District Governor-Elect, Melonie Gobel from D9370.

From the moment we arrived at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort, we were welcomed in true Rotary style, with five-star hospitality fit for what many affectionately referred to as “Rotary royalty”. The sense of excitement was tangible as 530 District Governors-Elect and their partners gathered from all corners of the globe. The arrivals shared on the DGE Facebook page reminded us we were stepping into something much bigger than ourselves.

This global unity came to life in the cohorts, small groups designed for connection and learning, mine included DGEs and partners from England, New York, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Illinois. We instantly aligned in terms of our values, purpose and our expectations for the year ahead.

The opening ceremony was unforgettable. As the

flags of the Rotary world entered the hall, cheers erupted from all sides. President-Elect Yinka’s address struck a chord. Grounded in Rotary’s mission, “Together, we see a world where we create lasting change in our communities and ourselves”, he urged us to start with the change within. His message was clear: Rotary has already changed us as individuals and it’s time to tell that story with courage. Only when we are willing to change ourselves can we truly create lasting impact. This is the foundation of the 2026/27 presidential theme.

The Assembly’s focus on youth was impossible to miss. Our hosts, Anniela Carracedo from Rotaract and Ben Bauer, brought an energy of professionalism and authenticity that shaped the event’s tone. One of the standout moments was when Ravishankar and Paola Dakoju pledged 85 percent of their wealth, a staggering \$60 million, to The Rotary Foundation, one of the largest individual contributions in Rotary’s history.

Breakout sessions equipped us with practical tools to activate the Action Plan, set bold goals, enhance club experiences and confidently tell our stories. With a changemaker like President-Elect Yinka leading the way and hundreds of DGEs ready to take up the mantle, Rotary is poised to reimagine itself and be better than our best.



Ische Mvundura, Pieter van Aswegan, Judy van Aswegan, Michelle Whitehead and Jan Buurman at one of the fellowship's monthly game days at Kelvin Grove, Cape Town.

Serving Friendship Globally

The International Tennis Fellowship of Rotarians brings Rotarians and their families together through a shared love of tennis. Founded in 2004 and officially recognised by Rotary International in 2005, with members from over 80 countries. Membership is free and open to Rotarians, Rotaractors and their partners, regardless of playing ability and even those no longer active on the court are welcome.

The fellowship's aim is to promote global friendship through tennis. It does this by organising matches, tours and social events that encourage fellowship, cultural exchange and goodwill. At the heart of its calendar is the World Tennis Championship of Rotarians, held annually in a different location, as well as smaller regional tournaments and friendly matches.

Beyond the courts, it aligns with Rotary's mission. Proceeds from events often support causes such as the End Polio Now campaign.

For many members, ITFR offers more than a sporting outlet. It is a community built on shared experiences, friendship and a commitment to making a difference through service and sport.

South African fellowship representative is current South African Masters player Michelle Whitehead. If you would like to start a fellowship in your area please contact michelle@growingtennis.co.za. The Cape Town zone meets last Sunday of every month at Kelvin Grove 10-12 pm

Rotary



Score an ace with Rotary... for a winning Service!

Cape Town Tennis Fellowship starts

LAST Sunday of each month: January 25 / February 22 / March 29

From **10 am to 12 midday**

At: Kelvin Grove Club, Newlands

Followed by fellowship drinks and lunch
(for your own account)

Cost: R 75-00 pp

**Please RSVP to Michelle
Whitehead:**

083 3101 007 (Must be able to play
matches – “rusty” players welcome)



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Float and Splash Lagoon Turns YELLOW

Bobbing along the tide in a sea of colour, more than 600 floaters kicked off the Knysna Rotary Splash Festival 2025 with laughter, sunscreen and inflatable toys. The Rotary Club of Knysna (D9350) launched its inaugural Flash Float on the morning of 30 December and the lagoon was packed with holidaymakers and locals making the most of the blue skies.

Starting from the Green Hole on Leisure Isle, the flotilla rode the incoming tide to Bollard Beach, covering a gentle two-kilometre route filled with smiles and a few waterlogged surprises. Canoeists from the NSRI Knysna kept drifting floaties on course, while the TS Knysna Sea Cadets welcomed participants at the finish line with bottled water,

sponsored by aQuellé.

Rotarian Butch Coetzee, part of the organising team, said the turnout was far greater than expected. “Thank you to all who bought tickets, participated with joy and made generous donations. All proceeds go to our community projects. A big thank you also goes to our Rotary family in St Francis Bay, who gave us the blueprint to run and manage this exciting event,” he said.

The weather played along perfectly. Skies were clear, a breeze rippled the water and cloud formations drifted in from the Western Head of the estuary. For a first-time event, the success was instant. Social media buzzed with photos and positive comments and organisers expect even bigger numbers next year.

Later that afternoon, the fun moved to the Knysna Waterfront for the Rotary Duck Race, an annual tradition and crowd favourite. A surge in online sales meant that all 1,180 duck tickets were snapped up before the race day. Spectators lined the bridge and banks to watch the bright yellow flotilla set off in two heats and a final, competing for R10,000 in prize money.



This year's ducks had the advantage of a boat engine gently nudging them along at the start, which helped speed up the race. On commentary was Splash Duckmaster Herb Hunter, keeping the crowd entertained with rapid-fire updates. Fellow Rotarian Mario du Toit made a splash of his own by diving into the channel after each race to scoop up stragglers.

The day's combined events were not just about holiday fun. Proceeds from ticket sales and donations will go toward the Knysna club's safe swimming initiative for local children, as well as other long-standing community projects supported by the club.

The Flash Float and Duck Race each drew their own kind of excitement. One was leisurely and buoyant, the other comically competitive. Together, they turned Knysna's waterways into a stage for community spirit, fundraising and family-friendly entertainment.

For the Knysna club, the festival marks the close of the year with purpose and joy. It's an example of how Rotary events can bring a town together while raising funds that make a tangible difference.

Plans are already under way to grow the Flash Float in 2026, building on what has become one of the summer's most cheerful mornings on the water. And if the speed of this year's ducks is anything to go by, next year's race might need a bigger finish line.



Changing the Game



A football star's rise from rural Malawi to the US pitch has sparked a nationwide movement for clean water and hygiene. The Temwa x Freshwater campaign is turning schoolyards into hubs of health, driven by sport, storytelling and the Rotary spirit.

Temwa Chawinga's journey from rural Malawi to record-breaking footballer in the United States has inspired a nationwide health and hygiene campaign back home. Led by Rotarians and backed by international partners, the Temwa x Freshwater initiative is using sport to bring safe water and hygiene education to schools across Malawi.

The campaign is spearheaded by Heidi Rickels, a long-standing Rotarian and past president of the Rotary E-Club of WASH (D9999), a virtual club focused on water, sanitation and hygiene. Rickels has worked in Malawi for more than two decades and now leads Freshwater Project International, a NGO that installs solar-powered piped water systems in schools, clinics and communities.

After years of steady progress, Rickels believed it was time to try a different approach. With a corporate marketing background, she wanted to tap into the power of music, sport and storytelling to engage new audiences. During a Freshwater board brainstorming session, someone mentioned a young Malawian woman playing professional football in the United States.

That woman was Temwa Chawinga.

Raised in rural Malawi with four sisters, Temwa began her days fetching water before school. She

saw how the lack of clean water and toilets forced many girls to miss class. Determined to change that, she embraced the chance to help more children stay healthy and stay in school.

Temwa had just signed with Kansas City Current in the US National Women's Soccer League, joining a team breaking new ground. The club became the first women's team in the world to build its own stadium specifically for women's football. It is co-owned by Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes and his wife Brittany, along with local business leaders Angie and Chris Long.

"At the time, I just thought it was incredible that a Malawian woman was playing professional football in the US," said Rickels. "I had no idea what was about to happen."

Temwa agreed to become Freshwater's first Brand Ambassador, just before going on to deliver one of the most remarkable seasons in league history. She broke the NWSL scoring record, won the Golden Boot and was voted League MVP. Fans nicknamed her "TemVP."

Freshwater acted quickly. An end-of-season celebration and fundraiser was held at the stadium's Pitch Club, drawing Rotarians, football fans, Malawian community leaders and US-based



Contributions from Temwa's football club, Rotary clubs across the United States and individual donors. The funds funded a solar-powered piped water system at a school in Malawi.

supporters. Malawian musician and humanitarian Faith Mussa performed alongside the University of Kansas African Drum Ensemble, while guests from the Malawian Embassy joined the celebrations.

During Temwa's international break, Freshwater hosted a homecoming tour in Malawi that included an airport welcome, press conference and school visits. The Temwa x Freshwater campaign was officially launched, linking sport, service and WASH infrastructure.

Over the next year, the campaign raised more than US\$100,000 through contributions from Temwa's club, Rotary clubs across the United States and individual donors. The funds funded a solar-powered piped water system at Kabwinja schools in Dowa District, bringing clean water to hundreds of students and families. A handover ceremony was held in December in Temwa's honour.

The campaign's reach expanded further through a partnership with Heart to Heart International (HHI), a Kansas-based humanitarian organisation founded thanks to the active involvement of local Rotary groups more than 30 years ago. HHI is dedicated to improving access to healthcare in under-resourced communities worldwide. Together, Freshwater and HHI coordinated the

distribution of 8,000 hygiene kits to Malawi, made possible through volunteer assembly and donor support.

Rotary clubs across Malawi played a hands-on role in delivering real impact. In coordination with health authorities, they organised school-based Community Health Days that were locally led, culturally relevant and sustainable.

In Zomba, the Rotary Club of Blantyre (D9210) hosted a Community Health Event at St Pius Primary School, distributing 1,000 hygiene kits in an area recently affected by a cholera outbreak. Rotarians and partners led hygiene lessons, handwashing demonstrations and health talks. Each event featured the Temwa x Freshwater branding to keep the message consistent and engaging.

"This campaign reflects Rotary's strength, local action with global partnerships," said Rotarian Patricia Khomani of the Blantyre club. "By working in schools, we are creating lasting change that communities can build on."

While infrastructure remains essential, the long-term goal is to build a healthier and more equitable future for the next generation. By turning schools into hubs for clean water, hygiene learning and community involvement, the campaign provides a model that can be scaled nationwide.



Building hygiene kits to send to Malawi in partnership with Freshwater Project International. Temwa Chawinga and Claire Gagan with the Kanas City Current soccer team came out to help. The kits were delivered to schools in Temwa's home country of Malawi in 2025..



By Carla Guedes Mendes

Mothers from Diepsloot and Fourways filled the courtyard of Witkoppen Clinic with prams, umbrellas and anxious anticipation. The Rotary Club of Fourways Main Reef (D9400) had partnered with nursing staff at the clinic to host a vaccination drive as part of Rotary's End Polio Now campaign.

The event, held last year, saw families gather to protect their children from the disease that once paralysed thousands across the globe. Despite the rain, energy built steadily as club members and medical staff prepared to administer doses of the oral vaccine.

The club's former District Polio Committee chair, Dr Mmatepeng Temane, addressed the families and medical team before the vaccinations began. Better known in the district as Dr Muda, she spoke about Rotary's commitment to disease prevention and its role in the global campaign to eradicate polio.

"We have this focus area in Rotary, which we say is disease prevention," she told the group. "And one of the diseases that we are really fighting to prevent, to make sure that we end it so it is no longer there in our community, is polio."

Past President Ebodaghe Iyere described how the tone of the day changed once the speeches

concluded. "At first, we were a bit nervous because of the wet weather conditions. As soon as Dr Muda arrived, she completely electrified the whole clinic with her presence and we immediately went into action," he said. The Fourways Main Reef club sponsored 1,000 doses of vaccine for the clinic, helping ease the strain on its regular stock. Clinic head Elaine Ngwenya coordinated the staff and volunteers to ensure each child received their dose without delay.

District Governor Angelica Salomão joined the outreach and assisted with administering drops, offering reassurance to nervous parents by standing shoulder to shoulder with local staff.

"It was indeed an honour to witness firsthand young children being vaccinated against polio," said President Glen Ross. "We are proud to have been instrumental in helping eradicate polio. Our club's donation of 1,000 vaccines will hopefully make a difference in the community."

Rotarian Sibongile Nkuna, who helped drive the campaign, said the experience deepened her commitment to Rotary.

"The enthusiasm and support from fellow Rotarians and the Witkoppen Clinic community were overwhelming," she said. "They reinforced my belief in the power of collective action to create a lasting impact."



Festive Food Relief

A festive buzz filled the entrance of Morningside Shopping Centre as shoppers dropped tins, boxes and packets into Rotary baskets. The Rotary Club of Morningside (D9400) and the Rotary E-Club of Southern Africa D9400 teamed up for their annual Christmas Food Drive, collecting non-perishable goods for families in need.

The event brought together more than 40 Rotarians, Interactors and community volunteers. Their goal was simple. To provide food support during the festive season for those who might otherwise go without.

By the end of the drive, they had collected goods valued at around R40,000. The donations were packaged and delivered to three community-based organisations: Alex Rehab

Centre, Khensani Collections and Africa Tikkun in Diepsloot.

The drive has become a staple on the Morningside club's calendar, with many volunteers returning each year.





Young voices, big dreams: Camp participants gathered for two days of confidence building, connection and creativity on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast.

Stronger Girls

Bright skies and the sound of surf set the scene for a two-day empowerment camp held at Umkomaas Beach in December. As part of the 16 Days of Activism campaign, the Rotary E-Club of South Africa One (D9370) partnered with The Dillon Trust to deliver a focused programme for girls aged 9 to 12.

The camp, themed “Strong. Brave. Loved”, created space for reflection, learning and confidence building. Organisers used art, storytelling, nature walks and vision boarding to help the girls explore their identity, goals and inner strength.

“This is proactive peacebuilding,” said Logie Naidoo, Projects Director for the e-club. “When we invest in emotional and psychological well being, we build future leaders, peacemakers and stronger communities”.

Participants joined symbolic weaving sessions, environmental clean-ups and creative art activities. A sisterhood circle gave space for sharing stories, talents and affirmations around a relaxed outdoor braai. Each girl received a care pack containing reusable sanitary towels, hygiene items, journals and printed affirmations to take home.

Support from the Rotary E-Club helped provide meals, transport and materials for the camp. The focus aligned closely with Rotary’s areas of maternal and child health, basic education and community development. Organisers emphasised the importance of holistic support that reaches both heart and mind.

“This is Rotary in action,” said Rotarian Iris Canham. “It’s about safe spaces, dignity and empowerment. And it shows that by lifting one girl, you can lift an entire community”.





Members of the Maloti and George clubs visit the site of the May 2024 building collapse, where survivor Shadrack Maine had worked.

Journey of Gratitude

By PDG Ann Wright

It's not often that a Rotary club travels more than 1,000 kilometres to say thank you. But that's exactly what five members of the Rotary Club of Maloti (D9370) did in November, journeying by bus from Lesotho to George in the Western Cape.

Their visit was a deeply personal gesture of gratitude to the Rotary Club of George (D9350), which had supported one of their own, Shadrack Maine, after the tragic building collapse that shook the local community in May 2024. Shadrack, who lost both a leg and an arm in the disaster, had been among dozens injured and left traumatised when a multi-storey construction site gave way, killing 34 people and injuring 28 others.

I was District Governor at the time of the

tragedy and had just attended the George club's DISCON24 event days before it happened. When the news broke, I stayed in contact with then President Di Kershaw and watched the club spring into action. With support from clubs across District 9350, they provided practical, ongoing care. Food, trauma counselling, transport, clothing and rent were all made available to survivors, including foreign workers far from home.

Wanting to help further, I connected Di with PDG Maud Boikanyo from the Maloti club. This opened the door for Shadrack's return to Lesotho, where Maloti Rotarian and physiotherapist Heshie Serobanyane worked closely with him during recovery. He later donated his mobility equipment to others in need.

So when the Maloti members decided to



District Governor Pam Rawbone, Past President Di Kershaw, Past District Governors Maude Boikanyo and Ann Wright during the Maloti club's visit to George.

make the long trip to George, I didn't hesitate to join them. None of us had met in person before. I was the only one with any prior connection to the group. But by the end of those three days, we were no longer strangers.

Our first stop was the disaster site. It's now an empty lot, eerily quiet. A single skip of rubble sits in the centre, a stark reminder of the thousands of tonnes of concrete that came crashing down that day. We stood together in silence, hands stacked in a spontaneous show of solidarity. It was a moment I won't forget.

Later, at a club meeting, PDG Maud read a letter from Shadrack's family. Their words were heartfelt and full of gratitude. "You facilitated prosthetics, gave him necessities and drove him back to Maseru," the letter said. "During the most frightening time of his life, you stood by him. Your kindness has reminded us that humanity, compassion and service still shine brightly in our world."

The visit coincided with DG Pam Rawbone's official visit, so the Maloti team joined project tours and even made a donation to the George club's Night Shelter project. President Wilhelm van der Vyver hosted a joyful club evening and the warmth between both clubs was unmistakable.

The group extended their stay to explore George, visit the Rosemoor Old Age Home project and walk the mosaic tunnel on the St Blaize trail. New friendships were formed and we received an open invitation to visit Maseru in return.

It began as a thank you and became a shared experience of Rotary in action. It reminded me how service connects people across countries, culture and language and how, when the work is done with compassion, it stays with us long after the project ends.

Take a bow, Maloti. Take a bow, George... This is what Rotary looks like!

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District Governor Steve Shone (D9370) visited Kimberley, where members of the Rotary Club of Kimberley and its Satellite E-Club of the Karoo Region showcased key community projects and hosted a dinner in his honour.

Celebrating Clubs' Service

The Rotary Club of Kimberley and its Satellite E-Club of the Karoo Region hosted a dinner to honour District Governor Steve Shone's (D9370) official visit.

Earlier that afternoon, club members took the DG to visit two of their cornerstone projects. The first, the Ebenezer Early Childhood Development Centre in Galeshewe, continues to provide a safe learning space for young children.

The second, a bicycle hub based at the Galeshewe Youth Network (GYN), now includes a reading programme supported by Sol Plaatje University and the Satellite E-Club.

The evening also saw four local leaders recognised with Service Above Self awards. These included Kenneth Niewenhuis, chair of both the Satellite E-Club and GYN; Francis

Hloma, head of a high school at St Patrick's CBC; and two Interact mentors, Wendy Peine and Debbie Smit, who shared stories from their school clubs' literacy and environmental projects.

The Kimberley club has worked with the Rotary Club of Northcliff (D9400) in Johannesburg on a long-running wheelchair distribution programme and supports Saint Theresa's Hospice with produce and funding. Members also donated a computer to Helen Bishop Orthopaedic Home earlier this year.

The Satellite E-Club, established in 2022 with support from Rotary Carroll Creek in the USA, focuses on menstrual health, gender-based violence awareness and after-school literacy. Its bicycle centre helps children get to school safely using donated bikes.



A vision board, a life coach and a small classroom in Mamelodi were all it took to change how young people saw their future.

Skills for Life

In 2025, the Rotary Club of Pretoria Hatfield (D9400) led a series of vocational service projects focused on equipping youth and adults with the skills to chart their own paths.

The club reached 99 participants through its vocational programmes. These included vision board workshops for school learners and life skills training sessions for out-of-school youth and adults in both Mamelodi and Pretoria Central. Each session focused on building self-esteem and developing practical life tools. Topics included job readiness, conflict resolution, financial literacy, leadership, cybercrime awareness, mental health and wellness, graphic design and self-mastery.

Life skills workshops were hosted at the

ANEW Hotel and Lesedi Baptist Church, while vision board sessions took place at Mamelodi Hall and Baphellog Independent School.

Participants were encouraged to reflect on their goals, understand their strengths and take ownership of their next steps. Guest speakers shared lived experiences and practical strategies to build confidence and direction.

Long-standing community partnerships helped bring the programme to life. Local schools, churches and civil organisations supported mobilisation efforts, while the club's volunteer facilitators guided each session with warmth and consistency.

The club plans to expand the programme in 2026 to reach even more communities.



Rotary clubs in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal joined forces to support the Nourish to Flourish feeding programme, collecting six tons of rice in response to a challenge issued by the Rotary Club of Morningside (D9400). What began as a call for 500 kilograms of rice grew into a regional drive led by the Rotary clubs of Morningside, Chatsworth and Chatsworth High Noon, along with the Rotaract Club of Chatsworth Anns (D9370).



Six Tons Delivered

The request was simple: 500 kilograms of rice to help feed vulnerable families. What came back was six tons.

A call from the Rotary Club of Morningside (D9400) quickly turned into a large-scale collaboration when members joined forces with the Rotary Club of Chatsworth, the Rotary Club of Chatsworth High Noon and the Rotaract Club of Chatsworth Anns (D9370). Together with friends, families and business partners, they rallied support for the Nourish to Flourish programme, a feeding initiative of the Chinmaya Mission South Africa.

The programme supplies 2,000 cooked meals a day to schools, welfare centres,

hospitals, old age homes and underserved communities. When pressure on food supplies increased, the Morningside club's president, Umesh Morar, challenged local Rotary clubs to donate half a ton of rice to help keep up with demand.

What followed surpassed every expectation. In just two weeks, the clubs had collected more than 12 times the original goal. Pallets of rice arrived from across the region, driven by Rotary's spirit of shared action and commitment to community service.

The donated rice was given to the Nourish to Flourish team to help sustain their daily operations across KwaZulu-Natal.

AFRICA IN BRIEF



School supplies were delivered by the Rotary Club of Flamingo-Welkom (D9370) to Grade 1 learners at Naudeville and Volkskool Primary Schools. The donation was collected through the Tree of Joy project



Fifty young learners at Rathby Primary School received SUBZ Pads and Panties packs from the Helderberg Rotary Anns (D9350). The reusable, washable pads are part of Project Dignity, a long-standing initiative that has supported menstrual health in the Helderberg area for 11 years. Packs are distributed through local school social workers. Each pack, worth nearly R300, has everything a girl needs to manage her period at school. To date, the Helderberg team has handed out over 1,000 packs across the region.



The Rotary Club of Klerksdorp (D9370), supported by the Rotary Club of Orkney (D9370) and the Klerksdorp Lions Club, stepped in to resolve a critical water shortage at the SAVF Evanna Tehuis. The home, which accommodates 80 elderly residents with the help of 37 staff members, had been struggling with limited access to hot and running water. In partnership with GTC Plumbing, the team restored the water supply, bringing much-needed relief and comfort to the residents and caregivers.



Santa brought smiles and sweet treats to La Como Lifestyle Centre, where the Rotary Club of Benoni Aurora (D9400) launched its Santa Sleigh and photo shoot. The festive initiative started with a community photo booth at the centre's holiday market, where children posed with Santa while Rotary volunteers in elf costumes handed out sweets. A week later, Santa took to the estate in a sleigh parade joined by the Rotary clubs of Benoni van Ryn and Springs Gold. Donations collected during the event were shared with four local organisations.

A convoy of lights, music and sirens lit up Germiston's streets in December as the Rotary Club of Germiston (D9400) led its ninth Project Sleigh campaign. Over three evenings, the festive convoy brought holiday cheer to parks, shopping centres and neighbourhoods, handing out nearly 3,000 goodie packs to excited children. The sleigh, decorated with lights and ribbons, was supported by local police, security groups, community forums and SARZA, while donations from Pick n Pay Hazelpark and Lambton stores, along with local sponsors, helped power the celebration.





Polio peace gala: Guests gathered

at Kelvin Grove Club for the 8th Annual End Polio Event, hosted by the Rotary Club of Blouberg (D9350). Held under the theme Africa Unite: A Gala for Peace and Polio, the evening featured music, keynote speakers and tributes to peacebuilders and the Rotary Club of Cape Town's (D9350) centenary. Performers included Kirsty Bows, Thandiswa Mpongwana and the Kayamandi High School Choir, adding sparkle to a night of reflection, fundraising and unity.



The Grade 9 learners of Appel Combined School shared their research on the global fight against polio during a World Polio Day event hosted by the Rotary Club of Haenertsburg (D9400). Despite limited resources, the learners delivered peer-to-peer presentations that highlighted Rotary's role in eradication efforts. Each participant received a certificate for their contribution to the awareness campaign.



A specialised buggy was given to a young boy by the Rotary Club of Melmoth Ulundi (D9370). The child is unable to sit or walk and was identified by local Interactors. With the help of AG Sr Patricia Shezi, the club was connected to a donor and an occupational therapist, who adapted the buggy to suit the child's condition.



EarlyActors from Outeniqua Primary School proudly display the stationery supplies they collected for the Môreson Child and Youth Care Centre in Denneoord. Sponsored by the Rotary Club of George (D9350), the club empowers learners through service. The visit continued a long-standing bond between the school and the centre, bringing practical support and heartfelt connection to children in care.



Seventeen-year-old Ian Cheruiyot from Kaplong, Bomet County, receives an LN-4 prosthetic hand at a clinic in Nairobi, Kenya, during a fitting facilitated by the Rotary Club of Nairobi Utumishi (D9212). Ian, a student, lost his hand in a chaff cutter accident in October 2025 and now hopes the device will support him in continuing his education. The LN-4 Prosthetic Hand Project, run in collaboration with Rotary clubs in Kenya and Oregon, USA, is supported by The Ellen Meadows Prosthetic Hand Foundation. Rotarian Dr Mussadiq Mir, the LN-4 Project Ambassador in Kenya, recorded Ian's fitting and coordinated his inclusion in the programme .

NEW MEMBERS



Angel Lite is a new member of the Rotary Club of Estcourt (D9370).



Karin Steyn is a new member of the Rotary Club of Worcester (D9350).



Susan Olwage is a new member of the Rotary Club of Worcester (D9350).



Callum Grey is a new member of the Rotary Club of Worcester (D9350).



President of the Rotary Club of Stellenbosch (D9350), Lawrence Chambers, with Rob and Liz Raven, who are new members of the Rotary Club of Stellenbosch (D9350).

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