

Rotarians Strive toward World Peace

The Peace Project: A District 5790 Special Report

The Road to Peace: During the last century, Rotary International has developed the reputation as a philanthropic, non-threatening humanitarian organization throughout the globe. It invests in helping others, and asks nothing in return. The organization and its members are a wonderful example of how people can work together peacefully.

This year, Rotary International President Tanaka suggested a World Peace initiative, and challenged all Rotary clubs throughout the world to respond with a World Peace project. The Arlington West Club (Arlington, Texas) in concert with 64 clubs in District 5790 has responded to this challenge with an educational approach and the following goals:

- 1) to develop better knowledge, resources, and understanding of peace for ourselves and the public,
- 2) to develop, and implement within the District, a PowerPoint presentation on peace building.

Questions: In this fast changing and turbulent world, is a goal to sustain peace within ourselves, our family, and our world viable? Probably not, if we don't change our mindset. Most want peace, so why is it so difficult? With the ultimate goal of World Peace, how can we develop a program to monitor, measure, track, and improve the process? If the premise of understanding and acceptance creates peace within ourselves, can it create peace between individuals, between cultures, between nations? Many questions ...not so many answers.

Peace Classifications: The United Nations (U.N.) has three categories for peace initiatives:

1) **peace-making**, primarily involved in resolving conflict; 2) **peace-keeping**, related to enforcing treaty resolutions to provide stability and infrastructure of peace following conflict, and 3) **peace-building**, a visionary process that creates environments where peace, abundance, and joy can thrive. Our project addresses the peace-building aspect of peace.

Communication: A few years ago on September 21, the International Day of Peace, I attended a World Peace conclave in Dallas, Texas and heard an inspiring speech. It was presented by an extremely knowledgeable keynote speaker, who has since interviewed many other world class visionary peace builders. Their global views, which serve as the foundation for this project, have been collected in a recent book [Let It Begin With Me: 21 Voices of the New Peace Movement](#). Many of the peace builders interviewed are founders of peace related organizations, and leaders in the peace movement.

Some of the interview questions posed: What does it mean to be a peace builder and why should we care? Where do we start, and what are our resources to grow this movement on a planetary level? For additional insight and book preview, go to <http://letitbeginwithmebook.com> and play the video intro.

Many define peace in terms of what it is not, rather than what it is. For example, peace cannot co-exist when there is a state of war, of hunger, or natural disaster...but it does not necessarily exist even in the absence of these conditions. The state of inner peace goes beyond basic needs of food clothing and shelter. When one reads these interviews you find the peace visionaries are excellent communicators, and that they focus on easily understood mental components that embrace peace.

With the danger of over-simplification of developing peace within oneself and with others, there are key words that stand out in their discussions that fill the mind with positive, action oriented thoughts. They serve to provide excellent positioning of what peace involves at both personal and organization levels, and they delve far deeper than basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter. They are words like non-judgmental, inspired action, forgiving, mindset, awareness, attitude, passion, personal well being, spirit of peace, mutual understanding and acceptance. These peace terms embellish the peaceful relationship that need to be developed between both the giver and receiver of goodwill.

Peace-building begins within each individual, and can quickly travel through the home, the workplace, organizations, and the world. Can we, individually and collectively, take actions that will build peace, and should peace building be integrated within the six Rotary areas of focus? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then there is a need to better understand, develop, and communicate what peace is... then set goals and implement a plan to take both individual and organizational action.

Implementation: Rotary International is the oldest and largest service organization in the world with 1.2 million Rotarians who provide thousands of humanitarian projects every year. Included are projects like water filters for entire villages, wheelchairs for those who cannot walk, a crisis emergency response, and, ongoing since 1988, immunization for about one-third of the world's population against Polio. This flagship program of Rotary, "End Polio Now," has resulted in the reduction of this totally incapacitating disease from about one thousand cases a day worldwide to current day level of about one case per day.

I can only imagine how sweet the spirit of peace must be that fills the hearts of those volunteers administering the life altering polio drops. Now, with increased philanthropic support from strategic partners like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, together we are this close...within 1% of totally eliminating polio....throughout the planet!

There are those who incorrectly assume wealth is the only path to peace. Truth be known, the desire for wealth, or the envy of those who have wealth, can result in a mental state that may not be conducive to peace within. Some of the things we all can do to promote inner peace:

- 1) Enjoy life in whatever way you can. This can be as simple as observing the beauty of a sunrise or sunset. Take a picture and send it to others with a positive thought.
- 2) Be thankful for those things that are important. Things like good health, family, friends, and the capacity to serve others. Everyone has something to be thankful for.
- 3) Take a walk. Give the mind the opportunity to slow down, to think, and to meditate.
- 4) Read, both for enjoyment and for knowledge. Learn about peace.
- 5) Practice observing the good that is going on around us daily...locally and internationally.
- 6) Do something nice for someone you do not know well.

Conclusions: This project has increased my personal awareness of what peace is, and has provided better understanding as to why the idealistic goal of World Peace that encompasses each and every individual will be extremely difficult to accomplish; however, this should not deter us, as individuals or as an organization, from being a leader in the peace-building process. Achieving world peace may or may not be a realistic goal, but the process of building and working toward world peace, one individual at a time, is a very worthwhile objective.

Peace-building may start with goodwill, but it does not end there. Peace-building is like life, it is a work-in-progress process. It develops when there first is a deliberately planned and developed mental mindset within the individual, and then shared among others. It can begin with a simple acknowledgment of another, a handshake or perhaps a hug, or even holding a door open for another. Once the process is in auto-pilot, a signal reaches the heart and great things happen.

World peace is that final destination point at which all nations share the message that reflects peace within people of their respective countries. If we pursue peace through our service and goodwill, here is my top 10 list for organizations to better understand the peace-building process:

- 1) Make a short “to do” list and don’t start with the problem, start with the solution.
- 2) Know the cultural boundaries of personal interaction, and simplify communication.
- 3) Link the peace-building process to activities that provide joy, happiness, and contentment.
- 4) Collaborate, form alliances, and cooperate with other organizations that strive for peace.
- 5) Develop workshops to educate and prepare leaders for the peace-building process.
- 6) Make peace-building a long-range plan, and make this part of the organizational culture.
- 7) Develop peace-building ideas that may be linked to projects.
- 8) Utilize leaders who have inner peace, and educate them to train others about peace.
- 9) Ask others to join our clubs and share the fellowship spirit that exists among Rotarians.
- 10) Remember, world peace-building is the result of a well developed and well executed plan.

Hope for the Future: Enormous goodwill has been, and will continue to be generated with projects from Rotary clubs that address local community and world needs. The seed of peace is embedded within the spirit of goodwill from involved Rotarians, but it is also important to make peace an outward objective of goodwill. With Rotarians working shoulder to shoulder in over 200 countries and with media support to communicate the spirit of peace that represents the true source of service, humanitarian support, and goodwill, these projects can become a stepping stone to improving the world peace-building process.

This possibility springs forth hope that there will be progress toward world peace when individuals, world class organizations, and governments of all nations actively communicate the importance of living in harmony with one another, and link that message with the Spirit of Peace.

It is important for each of us to become active in the peace-building process, and now is the time to embrace President Tanaka’s challenge.

Dave Hurt, President, Arlington West Rotary Club

For a PowerPoint presentation on “Striving for Peace” for your club, e-mail your request to davidwhurt@sbcglobal.net