

A ROTARY PRIMER

GLOBAL OUTLOOK

A ROTARIAN'S GUIDE TO VOCATIONAL SERVICE



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DO GOOD WORK



hink back to when you became a Rotarian. It's likely that someone recruited you because you were respected in your field. Using your professional skills to help others is at the heart of Rotary. But what does that involve? In this issue, we explore the many facets of vocational service. We speak with the founder of Mercy Ships, which staffs its medical ship with volunteers including doctors, nurses, teachers, and cooks; share tips for putting together a vocational training team (VTT); and look at the opportunities to serve in The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers. Vocational service also involves using your leadership position to model and encourage ethical behavior among employees, associates, and your community. Need ideas? Read on.

EXPERT ANALYSIS A CONVERSATION WITH MERCY SHIPS FOUNDER DONALD STEPHENS



Mercy Ships, a nonprofit that uses the hospital ship *Africa Mercy* to deliver free health care, is a global model of vocational service. Each year, more than 1,600 volunteers from dozens of nations board the ship, including surgeons, dentists, nurses, teachers, cooks, and engineers. (Rotarians can get involved with Mercy Ships through its strategic partnership with The Rotary Foundation, which offers packaged grants for vocational training teams (VTTs) of medical professionals.) Donald Stephens and his wife established the charity after their child was born with disabilities; the couple asked themselves how they would face similar circumstances if they lived in the developing world. Since 1978, Mercy Ships has provided services valued at more than US\$1 billion to almost 2.5 million people.

Why did you choose a ship as your health services delivery system? What are the advantages over building hospitals?

Our hospital ship can arrive in the port of a developing nation with a self-contained, state-of-the-art surgical unit, along with the housing and infrastructure for the expertise we provide. The hospital on board can also serve as a center of excellence for health care training in a controlled environment. I've spoken with those who have built hospitals in difficult areas of the developing world, and it is extremely challenging. The hospital may not be guaranteed electricity or running water. Supplies can be difficult to keep stocked, and can often be stolen.

Long-term volunteers are aboard the ship for at least two years. That is a long time. What's the appeal for professionals who take a break from their careers to serve?

Our volunteers know that what they are doing serves a cause far greater than themselves. That is a tremendous motivator. Joining with hundreds of others who share a common vision provides a powerful experience that money can't buy.

You and so many Mercy Ships volunteers live on an oceangoing ship nowhere near your homes. What types of adjustments are necessary?

The old adage is true: Home is where your heart is. There is a tremendous community spirit aboard our hospital ship, where crew are living and working in the same place. The friendships can last a lifetime. It can be difficult to find a quiet place sometimes or to have a boundary between "work" and "home." The close quarters aren't easy for everyone to adjust to. The ship changes ports every year, so while your "home" stays the same, your surroundings are always changing. Cabins may be small, but they're no less "home" than on land.

Marriages and humanitarian nonprofits can be demanding endeavors, yet you and your wife, Deyon, have managed to succeed at both for many years. Do you have any advice for other couples who want to undertake a humanitarian mission together?

First of all, it's a team effort. Each one of you is only 50 percent of the team. It is important to have open discussions about roles, responsibilities, and how best to show love for each other. It's also important not to let the

ILLUSTRATIONS BY OTTO STEININGER

USE YOUR VOCATION TO SERVE: JOIN THE ROTARY CADRE

With nearly 40 years of engineering experience, Francis “Tusu” Tusubira understands construction. He understands pricing. He understands procurement. But most important, Tusubira understands how things can go wrong. He shares his expertise with Rotary clubs and districts when he visits project sites as a member of The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers, a group of Rotarian volunteers who evaluate grant-funded projects around the world. “You learn from your own mistakes,” says Tusubira, vice chair of the cadre and a member of the Rotary Club of Kampala-North, Uganda. “So what you’re passing on is not just a technical perspective – it’s that you’ve seen what can go wrong in real practice.”

Cadre members volunteer in each of the Foundation’s six areas of focus, and in grant management and finances. So, for example, a lawyer, mediator, or social worker might advise Rotarians who are implementing a project in the peace and conflict prevention/resolution area of focus, while a doctor, nurse, or epidemiologist could provide technical expertise on an effort that’s addressing maternal and child health. Cadre members review the feasibility of a project, conduct site visits to monitor implementation, and evaluate impact. Their audits ensure that grant money is used responsibly. “You get a chance to help shape projects and point out where things have gone wrong and where there can be improvements for the future,” Tusubira says. You also get to meet Rotarians who are giving everything they have to improve their communities, he adds. “You learn something new every visit. You get inspired.”

The cadre is recruiting volunteers in the following areas. Write to cadre@rotary.org for details.

- Maternal and child health professionals (such as nurses and obstetricians) in Africa and Asia
- Water and sanitation professionals (such as civil and mechanical engineers) in Africa and Asia
- Spanish-speaking auditors in North and Central America
- Portuguese speakers in Europe and Africa, in all areas of focus
- Rotarians living in Africa, in all areas of focus
- Rotarians with professional expertise in monitoring and evaluation



work of the mission become first in your lives, but to find that balance of spending time with each other beyond the task you’re both called to.

Mercy Ships has provided hope and healing to underserved communities around the globe for many years. What do you consider the greatest stride the organization has made recently in continuing its mission?

Our greatest joy continues to be the thousands of individual lives transformed in each field of service, but the greatest stride is in building capacity in the nations we serve. Using our hospital ship as a platform, we train African surgeons and health care professionals. These professionals learn techniques and procedures that will serve the nation long after the ship sails to its next port of call.

Our emphasis on building health care capacity through training is intentional and ever-present. Surgeons are trained in ophthalmic, general, and maxillofacial surgical specialties. Other health care professionals are trained in dental hygiene, dental assisting, and palliative care. Through our strategic partnership with Rotary, we’re providing training in hygiene and infection control, and in cataract surgeries. Continuing education conferences focus on mental health, anesthesiology, midwifery, and leadership principles.

You focus on improving health in the developing world. How does good health care influence countries’ stability?

Healthy people are more productive people. We serve the world’s least-developed nations. In some of these



countries, health care is often nonexistent or expensive. The arrival of “the big white ship” is often the single most tangible sign of hope for many. By providing care to address immediate medical needs and offering training to meet future medical needs, we improve delivery of health care.

When did you know that Mercy Ships was succeeding?

After the first surgery. Just one changed life brings everything into perspective.

How can Rotarians best leverage the partnership between Rotary and Mercy Ships to meet their humanitarian goals?

Mercy is a group effort. The Rotary partnership is vital in helping to deliver health care and build capacity in the countries we serve. Rotarians can build teams of medical professionals to train local health care professionals. Together we meet both the immediate health needs of individuals and the longer-term need of strengthening a country’s health infrastructure. Each act of mercy is the result of those who volunteer and those who share their resources.

How will Mercy Ships decide when to expand its fleet?

We’ve already made the decision to expand our fleet, although the timetable is still in development. Our international board of directors has developed a comprehensive plan to build a second ship that will more than double the number of people we can serve. While significant capital is required to begin this project, a new purpose-designed ship would allow us to offer urgent medical care and medical training to even more people. ■

TIPS FOR A VOCATIONAL TRAINING TEAM PROJECT

Vocational training teams (VTTs) build on The Rotary Foundation’s longstanding commitment to vocational training. They take the concept of Group Study Exchange (GSE) – providing young professionals with a chance to observe their profession in another country – a step further by offering participants the opportunity to use their skills to help others. Teams can be funded through a district, global, or packaged grant, and requirements vary by grant type. “I loved the GSE program. But I’m now convinced that VTT is the way to go,” says Janet Kelly, a Rotarian who has headed up GSE programs and three VTTs for District 6400 (parts of Ontario, Canada, and Michigan, USA). VTTs are “a brilliant strategy to provide on-the-ground service,” she explains. Here’s her advice on how to ensure a successful VTT:

(1) Identify projects based on connections you already have. VTT projects should increase the host community’s ability to solve problems and improve quality of life. When developing ideas, rely on district governors and club members who already have extensive international contacts, Kelly suggests. “Every year, district governors meet for training with their counterparts. Some approach others with ideas about projects they can do together.”

(2) Take advantage of the new rules. GSE teams were required to include one Rotarian leader and four to six non-Rotarians between ages 25 and 40. VTTs are more flexible in that you can send as many team members as you want, and some can be Rotarians. For GSEs, each district had to send a team to the other district. For VTTs, there is no reciprocity requirement.

(3) Remember that the pre-trip process isn’t just one person’s responsibility. Kelly and her VTT cochair, Armando Sardanopoli, shared many of the preparation duties and recruited other Rotarians to help them. To find team members, one committee reached out to medical professionals, developed fliers, distributed them to Rotary clubs, and contacted local media. Kelly and a few others reviewed applications from candidates, and another committee conducted interviews.

HOW TO USE GRANTS TO SUPPORT VOCATIONAL TRAINING TEAMS

DISTRICT GRANT

District grant VTTs must support The Rotary Foundation's mission to promote goodwill and peace, improve health, support education, and alleviate poverty.

TEAM COMPOSITION: Determined by the district. Teams may include Rotarians or non-Rotarians of any age.

FOCUS AND LENGTH OF THE VISIT: Determined by sponsors. Districts may decide, for example, to incorporate cultural and social activities along with hands-on training or to sponsor an exchange with the partner district.

BUDGET: Determined by sponsors

GLOBAL GRANT

Global grant VTTs must align with one or more areas of focus (peace and conflict prevention/resolution, disease prevention and treatment, water and sanitation, maternal and child health, basic education and literacy, and economic and community development). They also must build the capacity of either the team members or the beneficiaries, and have a sustainable and measurable impact. Each VTT must be sponsored by Rotary clubs or districts from two countries. A grant may support the travel of more than one team.

TEAM COMPOSITION: Teams must consist of at least two members (either Rotarians or non-Rotarians) with at least two years of professional experience in the designated area of focus. The Rotarian leader should be an expert in the area of focus and have international experience and general Rotary knowledge.

In certain cases, the Foundation may permit a non-Rotarian to serve as a team leader. There are no age restrictions.

LENGTH OF THE VISIT: Determined by sponsors

BUDGET: At least US\$30,000

PACKAGED GRANT

All packaged grants are carried out with one of Rotary's strategic partners. The partner defines the scope of activities, develops relationships with local professionals, and ensures that the outcome will be sustainable. Rotarians put together a team of Rotarian and non-Rotarian participants with the appropriate skill set. For example, working with the strategic partner Mercy Ships, Rotarians assemble teams of medical professionals who perform or assist in surgeries and provide skills training to local health care professionals.

TEAM COMPOSITION: Similar to that of a global grant VTT, except the leader must be a Rotarian

BUDGET: The Foundation and strategic partner pay all costs.



VTTs around the world

HOST COUNTRY: Australia

INTERNATIONAL PARTNER: Canada

GRANT TYPE: District

RESULTS: Two multidisciplinary teams of professionals participated in reciprocal exchanges to share information about programs and best practices in treating depression and addressing suicide among youth.

HOST COUNTRY: India

INTERNATIONAL PARTNER: England

GRANT TYPE: Global

RESULTS: A team trained gynecologists and other medical professionals involved in pre-natal, natal, and postnatal care in the tribal regions of Jawhar, Mokhada, and Vikramgad.



HOST COUNTRY: Ghana
INTERNATIONAL PARTNER: Canada
GRANT TYPE: Global
RESULTS: A team conducted eye surgeries, provided oral health education and screening, and trained local nurses and midwives in methods to reduce infant mortality in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

HOST COUNTRY: Bolivia
INTERNATIONAL PARTNER: Germany
GRANT TYPE: District
RESULTS: Doctors, nurses, and Rotarians provided plastic surgery for children with cleft palate, scarring from burns, and other medical issues in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and offered training to local doctors on reconstructive techniques.

HOST COUNTRY: South Africa
INTERNATIONAL PARTNER: USA
GRANT TYPE: Global
RESULTS: Two reciprocal teams of teachers from rural South Africa and urban Bridgeport, Conn., USA, taught one another about best practices in early childhood education, focusing on preschool curriculum, facilities, community support, and continuing education with online training modules for teachers.

HOST COUNTRY: Guatemala
INTERNATIONAL PARTNER: USA
GRANT TYPE: Global
RESULTS: A team from District 6420 (Illinois, USA) trained teachers at a vocational school run by Ak' Tenamit, a nonprofit that provides education and health care in the rain forests of Guatemala. Team members taught faculty in the sustainable tourism program about the hospitality industry, food preparation, marketing, and entrepreneurship.

ETHICS AND VOCATIONAL SERVICE

THE FOUR-WAY TEST and Rotary's CODE OF CONDUCT provide an ethical roadmap for Rotarians in the workplace and other areas of life. "I believe that Rotary's reputation for integrity and high ethical standards is one of its strongest assets for attracting young people," says Paul Netzel, past chair of the Vocational Service Committee. Here are some ways to take action:

- **DEDICATE TIME** to discussing the importance of The Four-Way Test and the Rotary Code of Conduct. Be sure to talk to new members about the importance of these documents as guiding principles.
- **ORGANIZE A WORKSHOP** on ethics in the workplace and invite local business leaders to attend. To help participants build practical skills, consider including an open discussion on ethical dilemmas.
- **GIVE AWARDS** to businesses or professionals who demonstrate high ethical standards in their treatment of employees, customers, and the community.
- **SPONSOR AN ESSAY OR SPEECH CONTEST** for young people. Hold local or regional competitions for students to address the theme "What The Four-Way Test Means to Me."



CONNECT WITH COLLEAGUES THROUGH A ROTARY FELLOWSHIP

MEET OTHER ROTARIANS in your line of work. The fellowships below focus on sharing best practices and promoting friendship among Rotarians of a certain vocation:

Rotarian Doctors Fellowship
Fellowship of Rotarian Editors and Publishers
Honorary Consuls' Fellowship of Rotarians
Vocational Fellowship of Law
Police/Law Enforcement Professionals Fellowship of Rotarians
International Fellowship of Travel Agents
Fellowship of Literacy Providers

Learn more about these fellowships and others at www.rotary.org/fellowships.