

100 Years of service to mankind

Rotary International's Centennial Birthday

On February 23rd, 2005, the oldest service club in the world, Rotary International, celebrates 100 years of service to mankind. Since its inception in 1905, Rotary International (R.I.) has grown to a membership of more than 1.2 million members, in over 30,000 clubs, in 166 countries.

It all began when, in a small office in Chicago, Illinois, Silvester Schiele (a coal dealer), Gustavus E. Lohr, (a mining engineer) and Hiram Shorey, (a merchant tailor), met with Paul Harris (a lawyer), to discuss

an idea. They 'rotated' regular meetings to each other's office and place of business to acquaint members with their vocation. The founding four were of American, Swedish, German and Irish descent, representing Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish faiths. To this day R.I. remains non-religious and non-political in its membership.

In 1910, Rotary spread to Canada when P.A.C. McIntyre organized the first Rotary Club in Winnipeg, Manitoba. From then on Canada has played a very

active role in leadership as ideas and formats were adopted and Canadians played a part to create what is now a truly world wide organization, Rotary International. Expansion of clubs to other cities in Canada soon followed. Toronto in 1912, Halifax, Hamilton, Montreal, Vancouver and Victoria in 1913. Calgary and St John, N.B. in 1914. London Ontario in 1915. The first Canadian R.I. President was Reverend E. Leslie Pidgeon who served from 1917-1918. Our own Rotary Club of

Colborne was sponsored by the Cobourg Rotary Club in 1949. Colborne, in turn, sponsored Brighton Rotary Club in 1989.

The motto of Rotary is "Service above Self" and through Rotary Clubs around the world this has helped to address such critical issues as polio, illiteracy, poverty, hunger, medical, optical and dental issues, substance abuse, pollution and the environment. Youth, namely children at risk, is a major area of concern both at home and abroad. Working with

tomorrow's leaders, Rotary sponsors service clubs for youth (Interact) and young adults (Rotaract), and offers career development and mentoring programmes. Large scale Health, Hunger and Humanity (3H) grants support substantial projects such as clean water and sanitation to help people help themselves. Each year more than 200 grants fund Rotary volunteers in 50 countries.

Rotary promotes cultural programmes of understanding and exchange to bring people and ideas together. Some 7000 secondary school students participate annually in the Rotary Youth Exchange Programme. Also, some 30,000 students from over 100 countries have studied abroad in the Ambassadorial Scholarship Programme. This amounts to the largest privately funded international scholarship programme. Added to this is the Group Study Exchange Programme that pairs professional study groups in different coun-

tries. Rotary is the only service club to have a seat at the United Nations.

The largest programme of all that Rotary International is involved in is, together with the World Health Organization, the eradication of Polio worldwide. Originally, the goal for eradication was the year 2005, Rotary International's One Hundredth Birthday. However, wars and political unrest in a couple of the last few countries has delayed that goal. More than 1 Billion children have been immunized with the help of over 1 million Rotarians and volunteers around the world and eight hundred million dollars. The occurrence of Polio has been reduced by 90% worldwide since the inception of the programme in 1981 and it is safe to say that the number of countries infected are down to 6 from 30 in 1999, and 128 in 1988.



Following the success of last year's contest, the Colborne Rotary Club is again in search of the Northumberland Idol of 2005. Auditions will be held at the Campbellford Library from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 26 and at Brighton's St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on Main Street during the same hours March 5. The grand finale is slated for the Keeler Centre in Colborne April 23. All money raised goes toward community projects, ranging from breakfast programs to seniors support and programming, as well as Christmas Hampers.

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