

# PEACE: A CORNERSTONE OF ROTARY'S MISSION



## What is Peace? Why is it important?

What does Peace mean to us as Rotarians, and specifically, Toledo Rotarians?

In the “About Rotary” section of the Rotary International website there is a section on “what we do.” That section states that “Rotary members... have a shared responsibility to act on our world’s most persistent issues. Our 45,000+ clubs work together to “promote peace”.

Promoting peace is the first bullet point under what we, as Rotarians do. As a humanitarian organization, peace is a cornerstone of our mission. We believe that when people work to create peace in their local communities, they can change the world. We promote peace by conducting service projects and supporting peace fellowships and scholarships. Rotarians take actions to address the underlying causes of conflict, including poverty, discrimination, ethnic tension, lack of access to education, and unequal distribution of resources.

As Toledo Rotarians, we believe that IMPROVEMENT IS PEACE. We challenge chaos by advocating for well-defined improvement. We take the time to understand what improvements are already established and working, seeking to optimize community resources. We represent professional values that demand contribution and honor the four-way test. We take time to reflect on service above self and what that means for our own self, soul, family and community.

## The History of Rotary's Peace Movement

Rotary International’s long history of promoting peace began in 1914 with a resolution to work for international peace and to incorporate peacemaking into its constitution in 1921. This was a bold move for our organization considering that Rotary International had been founded only two years before. But this timing could not have been more appropriate, because when the first World War began, it became instantly clear that there was a significant need to address peace as a global issue.

In 1921, shortly after the war ended, delegates to the 1921 Rotary International Convention in Edinburgh, Scotland, amended our constitution to include the goal “to aid in the advancement of international peace and goodwill through a fellowship of business and professional men of all nations united in the Rotary ideal of service.”

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## The History of Rotary's Peace Movement

Our founder, Paul Harris, also recognized the connection between international understanding and peace. In a message to the 1921 convention, Harris wrote, "Rotary believes that the better the people of one nation understand the people of other nations, the less the likelihood of friction, and Rotary will therefore encourage acquaintance and friendships between individuals of different nations."

In 1934, Rotarians in Nashville, Tennessee organized a peace program to encourage international understanding. It included 11 days of public community meetings, bringing in prominent authors, economists, scientists, politicians, and commentators to discuss issues such as the economy, world peace, and scientific advances. This idea eventually led to the Institutes of International Understanding and was expanded to 965 clubs worldwide.

During the second world war, Rotary made another bold statement that it would not hold a presence in any country "where freedom, justice, truth, sanctity of the pledged word, and respect for human rights do not exist..." When you think for a moment about our 4-Way test, this action was so aligned with these values and actively demonstrated our commitment to taking actions that supported the 4-way test!

The Rotary was so engaged in creating peace in the world that it was one of only forty-two organizations that were invited to serve as consultants to the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Charter Conference, which is where the UN was founded. Many Rotary members and honorary members from around the world attended the conference as members of and consultants to their nations' delegations.



1921 Rotary Convention



1945 UN Charter Conference



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## The Rotary Club of Toledo Peace Committee

Did you know that our Toledo Rotary has it's very own Peace Committee?

We established in ourselves in 2017, inspired by a grant request that was submitted by the Interministerial Alliance. The request was in support of crisis intervention facilitated by interfaith representatives of peace. They would intervene to de-escalate situations that were intensifying. The members of the Peace Committee invested time learning about neighborhood tensions and identifying leaders who are tangibly addressing problems specific to our community. As we listened, we noticed some trending topics that came up:

- Youth Enrichment and Recreation leads to more satisfied young adults who have less tendency to choose higher risk activities- Toledo can improve with increased engagement 6-12<sup>th</sup> grade youth.
- Community conflicts tend to function within neighborhoods, and tensions seem to increase when governing organizations neglect to maintain property standards; example: streetlights replaced
- When high conflict situations arise in Toledo communities, it is always going to be more effective to turn to an established, trusted member of that community to educate us on how to support- rather than inserting our solutions and ideas.



Service Above Self Day – Period Product Pack, supporting TPS Schools, (pictured above, March 2025)



Business Attire Clothing Drive, supporting folks in workforce development, (pictured right, Fall 2023)



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## The Rotary's Peace Efforts Today

Today, Rotary International holds the highest consultative status offered to a non-governmental organization by the UN's Economic and Social Council (UNESCO). Peace continues to be a primary focus of our organization, and we have made many advancements to increase our commitment to world peace. In the 1990s, Rotary leaders were inspired by the 50th anniversary of Paul Harris' death to consider a different approach.

The idea was simple, but the impact would be tremendous: Rotary would encourage people already engaged in peacebuilding as a career to apply for graduate-level study in the field, and The Rotary Foundation would provide scholarships to peace fellows that would allow them to enroll in established peace programs at existing universities. Rotary approved the creation of Rotary Peace Centers in 1999, and the inaugural class of Rotary Peace Fellows began their studies in 2002. Rotary Peace Centers now thrive in universities and communities across the globe.

Rotary's approach to peacemaking since the beginning has integrated grassroots efforts with support for higher education, to create resilient communities, and to equip members to build peace locally. We have witnessed firsthand in our own Rotary meetings the strong impact we have made in international peace efforts such as providing support to victims needing medical care in Ukraine, to children and families in garbage dump communities in Honduras. These are efforts we can all be proud to claim as our living commitment to the 4-way test!

## THE ROTARY 4-WAY TEST

