

Report on the Recruitment of RI and TRF Alumni as Prospective Rotarians



Membership Development Division
Rotary International



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Executive Summary

Every year Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation invest significant amounts of time and money in their youth programs. Because of their previous experience with Rotary and their dedication to Rotary's values, it seems that **program alumni should make great Rotarians**. To explore the recruitment of RI and TRF program alumni as prospective members, the Membership Development Division initiated a research project including survey research, statistical analysis, and the compilation of anecdotal information.

Results

Regarding the current status of alumni recruitment:

- Approximately **2.9% of current Rotarians are program alumni**.
- **58% of clubs** admit that they **don't recruit program alumni** for membership.
- Only **22% of clubs** both claim to **recruit alumni and actually have alumni in them**.
- **80%** of Rotarian alumni respondents said they were **recruited** by their club, while **20%** had to **seek out information** on local clubs.
- Of those that were recruited, **68%** said they were recruited **specifically because** they were a program alum, while **32%** said their club recruited them **without knowing** they were a program alum.
- Rotarian alumni frequently indicate that their **exposure to Rotary through their program had a significant impact on their desire to join**.

Program alumni who have **not** become Rotarians generally had very **positive experiences in their program**. 90% of alumni have been to a Rotary club meeting either during or after their program, and most had positive impressions of the meeting.

84% of current program participants and 66% of program alumni are interested in joining Rotary. Additionally, **as more years pass after leaving the program, fewer and fewer alumni remain interested in joining a Rotary club** (see Table 8, page 16).

This decline in interest over time could be due to the fact that **contact with Rotary significantly drops off once participants are finished with their program** (see Table 5, page 13). Additionally, **alumni with more frequent Rotary contact after their program correspond to a higher rate of interest in joining Rotary** than those alumni with less frequent Rotary contact (see Table 10, page 18).

The top five reasons alumni identified for **not being interested** in joining Rotary are:

1. Too many other commitments / Not enough time for Rotary
2. Cannot make attendance at weekly meeting
3. Membership is too expensive
4. Age difference between self and current members
5. Clubs are all (or mostly) men

The top five reasons alumni identified for **wanting to join** Rotary are:

1. Community service
2. Meet a variety of people
3. Make a difference / Create a better world
4. Help others have the same experience
5. Rotary is a good organization to be involved in

However **many of the alumni who are interested in joining also expressed concerns and reservations about joining**, including the following:

1. Large time commitment required
2. High cost of membership
3. Weekly attendance requirement
4. Inconvenient meeting times
5. Age difference between self and current members

Another issue seems to be that **many alumni simply aren't asked to join**. Of those alumni who are both interested in joining and currently hold a professional, proprietary, executive, or managerial position:

- **58% of GSE alumni** have **not** been pursued for membership.
- **67% of Rotaract alumni** have **not** been pursued for membership.
- **82% of Scholarship alumni** have **not** been pursued for membership.

When asked **why more alumni aren't joining Rotary**, many **Rotarians** indicated the following:

- Many **clubs don't participate** in RI and TRF programs.
- Many clubs **don't develop a relationship** between themselves and their program participants.
- Because many alumni are not yet qualified for Rotary when they leave their program, Rotarians have **difficulty seeing them as future Rotarians**.
- Many clubs and districts have **poor record-keeping** and **lack organization** regarding alumni.
- Many clubs and districts have **difficulty maintaining up-to-date contact information** for alumni.
- Many communities **lack Rotaract clubs**, which makes it difficult to keep younger alumni involved in Rotary until they are qualified to join.
- Many clubs **don't ask alumni to join**, or don't extend a second invitation if the first was declined.
- Many alumni feel alienated by the **large age difference** between themselves and current Rotarians.

Recommendations

There are many **strategies** that **clubs and districts** can implement to **better utilize alumni as a source of potential members**, including:

- **Build strong relationships** with current program participants.
- **Develop an action plan** for keeping alumni involved in Rotary activities and transitioning them into Rotarians.
- **Promote alumni** so that other Rotarians understand their importance.
- **Ask alumni to join** – and continue asking even if an initial invitation is declined.
- Help alumni **find clubs that meet their needs**.
- Use alumni to **start new clubs**.
- **Maintain contact** with younger alumni until they are qualified for membership.
- **Involve alumni in other programs**.
- **Involve alumni in club and district activities**.

Potential for Growth

In 2004-05, **Rotary programs produced over 100,000 alumni**. Most of them have had great experiences in their programs and are excited about Rotary. They are members of the Rotary family and have had significant exposure to all that Rotary has to offer. Some are already qualified to join Rotary. Others aren't qualified yet, but someday will be.

If clubs and districts think about these alumni as **future community leaders**, they may be more likely to see them as **future Rotary leaders**, and therefore be more interested in continuing their relationship with the alumni and eventually pursuing them as prospective members.

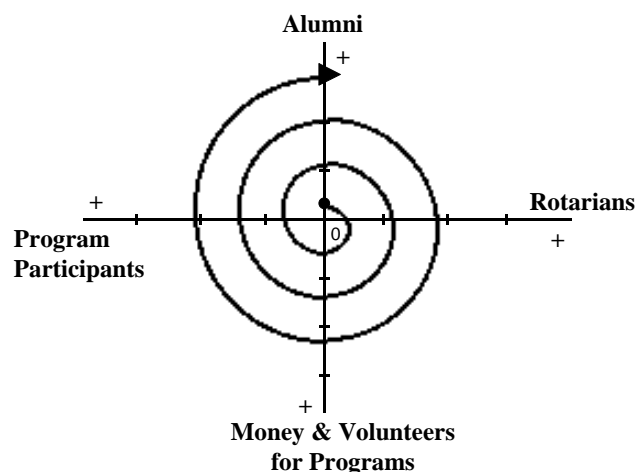
Report on the Recruitment of RI and TRF Alumni as Prospective Rotarians

Every year Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation invest significant amounts of time and money in their programs. In 2004-05 Rotary clubs and districts provided leadership training for more than 20,000 young people through RYLA, supported approximately 410,000 service-minded youth in Interact and Rotaract clubs, and provided study-abroad opportunities for more than 10,000 students and young professionals through Youth Exchange, Ambassadorial Scholarships, and Group Study Exchange.

These programs not only attract the best and brightest young people, they also produce individuals with a commitment to leadership, service, and international understanding. Often the individuals who participate in these programs become contributing members of their communities and share the values they learned in Rotary with the rest of the world.

Because of their dedication to Rotary's values, it seems that these program alumni could make great Rotarians. They are already more familiar with Rotary than the average prospective member and their participation in Rotary's programs indicates that they are interested in Rotary's objectives. Why not capitalize on their previous experience with Rotary and get a return on the investment by keeping them involved in Rotary as a member?

It is reasonable to project that better recruitment of alumni will produce more Rotarians. More Rotarians will generate more people and money to support RI and TRF programs. More money and support for the programs means more young people can get involved in them. More young people involved in the programs will produce more alumni. More alumni to recruit will generate even more Rotarians, and so on. The following spiral conceptualizes the potential growth Rotary could experience in all of these areas if alumni were regularly recruited as Rotarians.



METHOD

To explore the idea of identifying RI and TRF program alumni as prospective members, the Membership Development (MD) Division initiated a research project regarding Rotary clubs' current utilization of former RI and TRF program participants as prospective members. The purpose was to determine alumni interest in joining Rotary clubs, the current number of alumni in clubs, strategies to improve the rate of alumni induction in clubs, and the potential for membership growth if clubs regularly pursue alumni as prospective members. For the purposes of this project, the RI and TRF programs studied were Interact, Rotaract, Youth Exchange, RYLA, Group Study Exchange, and Ambassadorial Scholarships.

This information was sought via three main avenues:

- Survey research
- Analysis of RI and TRF statistics
- Compilation of anecdotal information

Survey Research

MD conducted four surveys for this project.

The *Program Participation and Utilization Survey* (Appendix 1) was sent to a random sampling of 5297 Rotary clubs worldwide, of which 1540 were returned, resulting in a 29% response rate. The returned surveys represent 80 countries and 485 districts. This survey sought information on clubs' current participation in various RI and TRF programs, whether or not clubs pursue program alumni as prospective members, and how many of their current members are program alumni.

Clubs responding to the *Program Participation and Utilization Survey* were asked to list current members who had participated in at least one RI or TRF program before joining the Rotary club and would be willing to fill out a survey. The *Current Rotarians Survey* (Appendix 2) was sent to these Rotarian alumni. 301 surveys were completed, representing 42 countries. This survey sought information on their perception of the program, why they became a Rotarian, how they became connected with their Rotary club, and whether or not their experience as a Rotarian has lived up to their expectations.

Of the clubs that reported having at least three alumni as members, 20 were randomly selected and contacted via e-mail. They were asked to describe their successful strategies for recruiting program alumni.

The *Former Program Participants Survey* (Appendix 3) was sent to program alumni who are not Rotarians. Surveys were distributed to a random sampling of former GSE participants and Ambassadorial Scholars selected from The Rotary Foundation's database. District chairpersons distributed surveys to former Interactors, Rotaractors, RYLArrians, and Youth Exchange students, because RI does not maintain contact information for these alumni. 957 surveys were completed, representing 64 countries. This survey sought information on

alumni's perception of their program, their experience with and perception of Rotary clubs, and their interest in joining a Rotary club either now or in the future.

The *Current Program Participants Survey* (Appendix 4) was completed by current RI and TRF program participants. It was sent to a random sampling of current GSE participants and Ambassadorial Scholars from The Rotary Foundation's databases. District chairpersons distributed surveys to current Interactors, Rotaractors, RYLarians, and Youth Exchange students, because RI does not maintain contact information for these participants. It was also distributed at a Rotaract conference and a Youth Exchange conference. 1339 surveys were completed, representing 73 countries. This survey sought information on current participants' perception of their program, their experience with and perception of Rotary clubs, and their interest in joining a Rotary club in the future.

In addition to the four surveys conducted exclusively for this study, one section of the *2004-05 District Membership Chair Survey* (Appendix 5) was devoted to program alumni recruitment efforts. 205 district membership chairs completed the survey, of which 199 completed the section on alumni. This survey section sought information about the district's tracking of, contact with, and recruitment of program alumni.

Statistical Analysis

MD analyzed information from various RI databases to calculate statistics regarding program participation. Staff compiled numbers from the TRF *Alumni* database, which maintains records on former GSE participants and Ambassadorial Scholars, the RI *People* database, which maintains records of Rotaract and Interact clubs, and from annual surveys of district RYLA and Youth Exchange chairs. Using data from all of these sources, MD sought to determine for each program the annual number of participants, the annual number of alumni created, and the current participation in all of these programs by Rotary clubs.

MD also analyzed Web-based prospective member forms submitted to RI in recent years to determine the number of program alumni who have reached out to Rotary clubs via this medium. Qualified non-Rotarians can express an interest in joining Rotary by filling out a Prospective Member Form on the RI Web site. Occasionally program alumni fill out this form to express interest in renewing contact with Rotary by joining a club.

Anecdotal Information

Throughout 2004-05 MD staff observed several events and workshops concerning current and former program participants to gather additional information regarding program participants' current status in Rotary and to learn strategies that could help transition alumni into Rotarians. These events and workshops included:

- 2004 Summer Conference of Central States Rotary Youth Exchange Program
- United States, Canada, Caribbean (USCC) 2004 Rotaract Conference
- Alumni Open Forum at the 2005 RRIMC Training Seminar
- Improving Alumni Relations Workshop at the 2005 Chicago Convention
- 2005 Foundation Alumni Resource Group Training Meeting

RESULTS

The results of the surveys, statistical analysis, and anecdotal information are outlined in this section of the report. The information presented provides possible answers for the following questions:

- How many alumni are currently Rotarians?
- What are alumni's current perceptions of Rotary?
- Do alumni want to join Rotary?
- Why are there not more alumni in Rotary clubs?

How many alumni are currently Rotarians?

In the *Program Participation and Utilization Survey* Rotary clubs were asked to record how many of their current members are former participants in each of the specified RI and TRF programs. The following table represents their responses. Note that the **overall average number of alumni per club is 1.08**, however the **average number from each program falls far below one per club**.

Table 1

	Average number of alumni per club
Rotaract	0.36
GSE	0.20
Youth Exchange	0.17
RYLA	0.15
Interact	0.15
Scholarships	0.05
<i>Overall average</i>	<i>1.08</i>

Some of the differences between programs could be indicative of fundamentally larger or smaller numbers of program participants. The approximate number of participants in each program in 2004-05 is identified in the following table. This provides a general comparison point from which to determine programs with generally more or fewer participants than others.

Table 2

	Participants in 2004-05
Interact	230,000
Rotaract	180,000
RYLA	20,000
Youth Exchange	7,000
GSE	2,100
Scholarships	1,000

Note that Rotaract generally has many more participants than other programs, so it would follow that more Rotarians are former Rotaractors, however GSE with generally far fewer participants produces more Rotarians than most other programs. Interact has the most participants, however it produces almost the lowest number of Rotarians.

Also in response to this survey, 58% of clubs admit that they don't recruit program alumni for membership. Of the 42% of clubs that claim to recruit alumni, nearly half have no alumni members. This means that only **22% of clubs both claim to recruit alumni and actually have alumni in them**. So even though the overall average is approximately one alum per club, **the majority of clubs have no alumni** in them, and therefore those clubs that do have alumni in them have many alumni members.

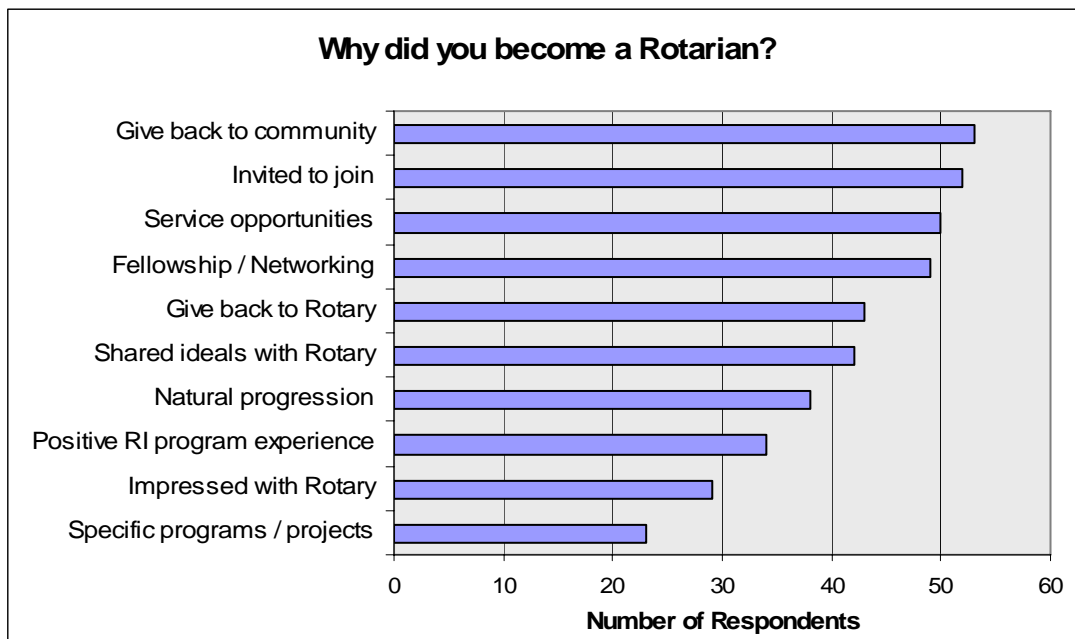
Based on these numbers, we estimate that **approximately 2.9% of current Rotarians are alumni**. Unfortunately we cannot determine what percent of all alumni become Rotarians due to two main factors:

1. A comprehensive database of all Interactors, Rotaractors, RYLarians, or Youth Exchange students does not exist. Clubs and districts report estimated numbers of participants in each program to RI, but because participants' names are not provided there is no way to track whether or not they become Rotarians.
2. The Rotary Foundation database that records the names of former GSE participants and Ambassadorial Scholars is independent of the database which contains Rotarian records. RI is dependent on former GSE participants and scholars to contact RI Headquarters to inform us if they have become Rotarians, which very few do.

Why did they become Rotarians?

In the *Current Rotarians Survey*, program alumni who are now Rotarians were asked why they decided to become Rotarians. The top 10 responses are identified in the following chart.

Figure A



The recurring theme throughout many of the responses was that **the exposure to Rotary through their program had a significant impact on their desire to join**. Here are a few examples:

- *Having seen Rotary in action as an exchange student, and having benefited from Rotary personally, I wanted to GIVE something back to Rotary after having RECEIVED so much.*
– 49-year-old male, Australia, Youth Exchange
- *After my GSE trip I was so impressed with what Rotary stands for and does that I had to be a part.*
– 42-year-old female, USA, GSE
- *I was impressed by the work that the clubs I visited made. I wanted to do good work in the framework Rotary offered. I got to know the Rotary ideals while on GSE.*
– 34-year-old male, Sweden, GSE
- *As an Interact member, I witnessed the impact that Rotary has on a community – largely through the Avenue of Community Service. I told myself when I graduated from high school that when I had the necessary means, I would become a Rotarian.*
– 35-year-old male, USA, Interact & RYLA
- *Enjoyed the experience of Rotaract and wanted to continue with the charitable work and fellowship.*
– 36-year-old female, Scotland, Rotaract

How did they join their Rotary clubs?

To gain further insight into how alumni are joining clubs, program alumni who are current Rotarians were asked questions regarding the process of joining their club. The following tables identify how old the survey respondents were when they joined their club and how many years passed between ending the program and joining a Rotary club.

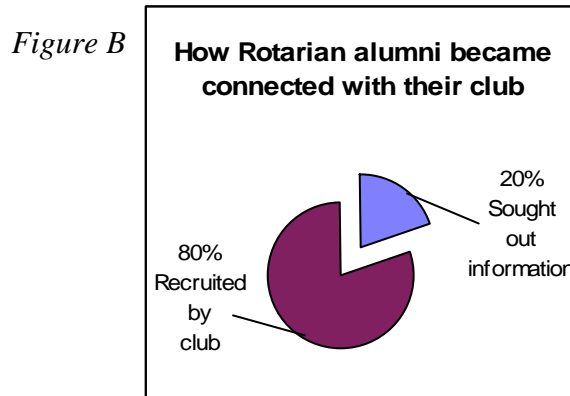
Table 3

	Average age when joined Rotary club
RYLA	28
Rotaract	34
Youth Exchange	34
Interact	37
GSE	37
Scholarships	38
Overall average:	36

Table 4

	Years between ending program and joining club
GSE	4.0
Rotaract	6.9
RYLA	7.2
Scholarships	13.2
Youth Exchange	16.8
Interact	20.2
Overall Average:	8.1

When asked how they became connected with their current club, **80%** of respondents said that they were **recruited** by the club and **20%** said that they had to **seek out** information on their local clubs, as identified in the following chart.



Of those that were **recruited**, **68%** reported that they were recruited **specifically because** they were a program alum, while **32%** reported that their club recruited them **without knowing** that they were a program alum (see Figure C). Of those respondents who **sought out** information on clubs, **73%** said that the clubs responded to their inquiries **positively**, **12%** said that the clubs responded **negatively**, and **15%** didn't indicate either a positive or negative club response (see Figure D).

Figure C

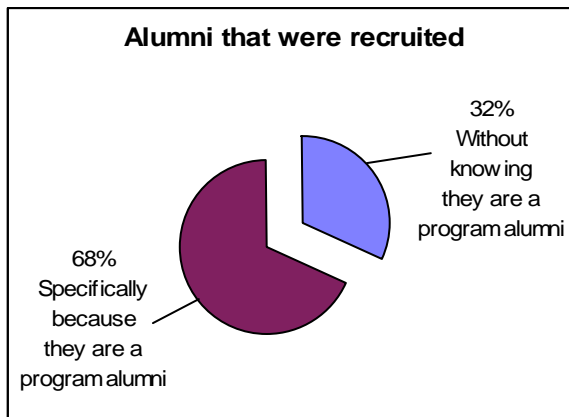
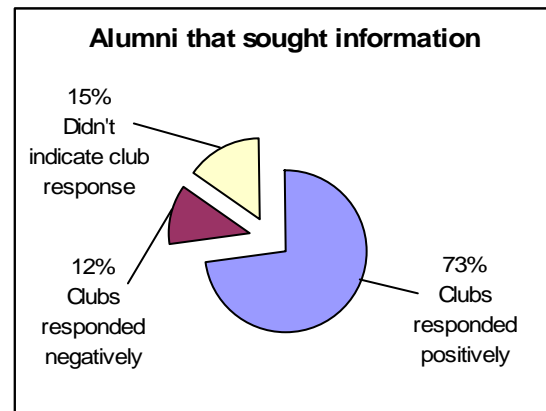


Figure D



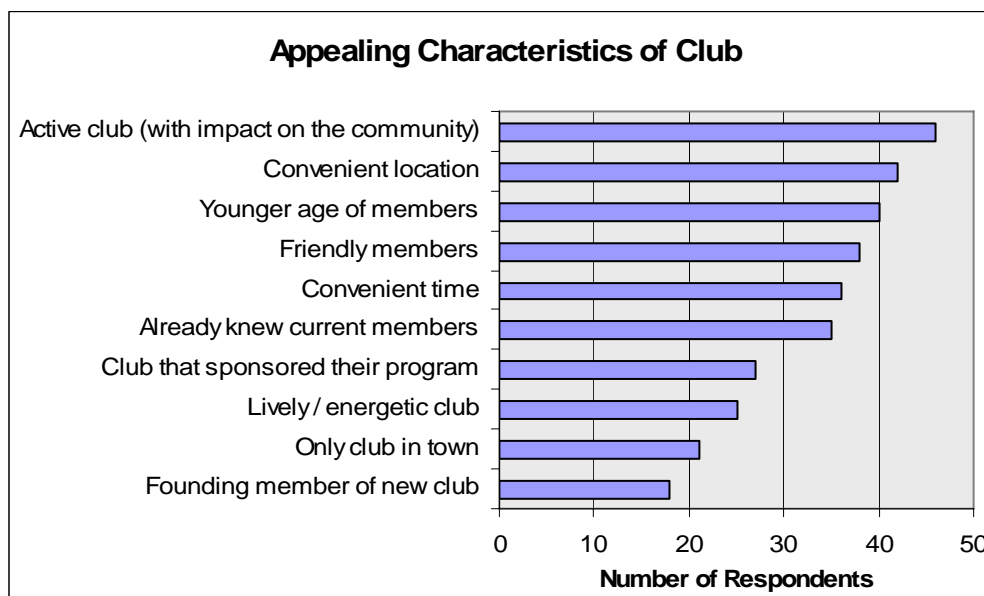
The following are both positive and negative examples from those alumni who **sought out information on clubs**.

- *Most clubs were very supportive and active in helping me select and choose a club which was appropriate for my needs.*
 - 43-year-old female, Australia, Youth Exchange
- *I was readily accepted as a willing worker – at the time I was 22 years of age.*
 - 48-year-old male, Australia, Interact
- *Positively, but they acted like they didn't know what to do with a request for membership.*
 - 32-year-old male, New Zealand, Rotaract

- *I eventually bullied my way into [the] Rotary club after spending 12 years in Rotaract, with many years in office including club president four times and district chairman twice...*
 - male, United Kingdom, Rotaract
- *Extremely declining and dismissive...we were a group of about 40 interested candidates who for two years had already cultivated Rotary life, mainly as former Rotaractors...Finally we found a club ready to organize [us] as a new [Rotary] club...*
 - 37-year-old male, Germany, RYLA & Rotaract

To gain more information on the reasons why respondents joined their particular club, they were asked what characteristics drew them to their current Rotary club as opposed to other Rotary clubs. Their top 10 responses are identified in the following chart. It is interesting to note that **an active club was more appealing to these alumni than the club that sponsored their program.**

Figure E



Has the experience in the Rotary club lived up to their expectations?

When asked whether or not their experience in Rotary has lived up to their expectations, **94% of respondents said yes**. The top six reasons respondents gave for saying **yes it did** live up to their expectations are:

1. Club has good fellowship
2. Many service opportunities
3. Enjoy helping the community
4. Club has good programs/projects
5. Enjoy Rotary's internationality
6. Experienced personal growth

The top five reasons respondents gave for it **not** living up to their expectations are:

1. Club doesn't do enough activities/projects
2. Membership takes up too much time
3. Age gap in club members
4. Lack of member participation in club
5. Inefficient club administration

The Rotarian program alumni who responded to this survey generally seem to be active and dedicated Rotarians. They have been in their clubs for an average of 16 years. Since joining their Rotary clubs, **81%** have served in **club** leadership positions and **23%** have served in **district** leadership positions.

What are alumni's current perceptions of Rotary?

Alumni who are not Rotarians were asked to rank their experience in their program on a scale of 1 to 6 (1=excellent, 6=poor). **Alumni generally had very positive experiences** in their respective programs as the **overall average is 1.5**, a nearly excellent rating.

Non-Rotarian alumni were also asked about their contact with Rotary clubs both during and after their time in the program. The most frequent answers for each program are identified in the following table. Note that Rotary club contact with program participants **significantly drops off once they are finished with their program**.

Table 5

	Contact with Rotary	
	DURING the program	AFTER the program
GSE	Daily	Yearly
RYLA	Daily	No Contact
Interact	Weekly	No Contact
Scholarships	Monthly	Yearly
Youth Exchange	Monthly	Yearly
Rotaract	Monthly	No Contact

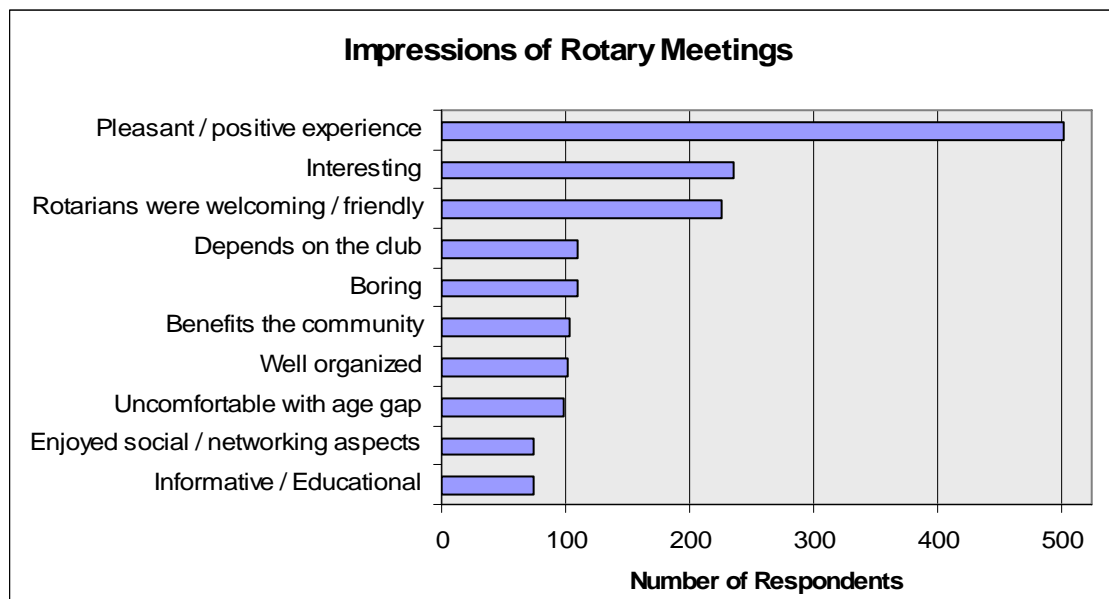
Current program participants and non-Rotarian alumni were asked whether or not they had ever **been to a Rotary club meeting**. The percent of respondents within each program who answered *yes* are identified in the following table.

Table 6

	Percent who have been to a Rotary club meeting
GSE	98%
Scholarships	96%
Youth Exchange	94%
Rotaract	83%
Interact	72%
RYLA	64%

Those who answered *yes* were then asked what they thought of the meeting(s) they had attended. **69%** had a generally **positive** impression of the meeting, **18%** had a **negative** impression, and **13% didn't indicate** either a positive or negative impression. The top 10 most frequent responses regarding their opinion of Rotary meetings are illustrated in the following chart.

Figure F



To understand how much non-Rotarian alumni and current program participants **know about membership in Rotary**, respondents were asked if they were aware of the following five elements of Rotary:

- 98% are aware that the Object of Rotary emphasizes humanitarian service, ethical business standards, and the advancement of international understanding and goodwill.
- 64% are aware that Rotarians must hold or be retired from a professional, proprietary, executive, or managerial position.
- 87% are aware that Rotarians are required to attend a club meeting every week.
- 86% are aware that one responsibility of membership in a Rotary club is to support The Rotary Foundation.
- 95% are aware Rotarians participate in several community service projects each year.

Conference Feedback

To gain additional insight into program participants' relationships with Rotary clubs, the current Rotaractors and Youth Exchange students that MD staff encountered at conferences were asked various questions regarding their interactions with Rotary clubs.

Most of the current Rotaractors had **very favorable opinions of Rotarians**, however many of them expressed frustrations with their current relationship with Rotary clubs. They said:

- It's difficult to get Rotary clubs and districts to be interested in the work done by Rotaract clubs.
- Their sponsoring club doesn't seem to know their role with the Rotaract club.
- Rotarians rarely come to Rotaract meetings.
- Many sponsor clubs only ask for participation on projects when they are short-handed.

The general opinion seemed to be that while Rotaractors respect Rotarians, they **would prefer more interaction** and a **more collaborative relationship** with Rotary clubs.

The majority of Youth Exchange participants had **very positive opinions** of Rotarians and Rotary clubs. Because they had exposure to at least two clubs (sponsor and host), many participants drew distinctions between clubs. For example, some students had a sponsor club that was very involved in their orientation process but had a host club that showed minimal involvement, or vice versa. These students' **experiences and perceptions varied significantly depending on the interaction and atmosphere in each club**, however generally students had very favorable impressions and expressed gratitude to Rotary for having given them a great experience.

Do alumni want to join Rotary?

Current program participants and non-Rotarian alumni were asked about their interest in joining a Rotary club either now or in the future. The percent of respondents within each program who answered *yes* are identified in the following table.

Table 7

	Percent of current program participants who want to join Rotary	Percent of non-Rotarian alumni who want to join Rotary
Rotaract	93%	59%
Scholarships	84%	56%
GSE	80%	54%
RYLA	90%	75%
Youth Exchange	83%	71%
Interact	86%	85%

Note that a large percentage of both current program participants and program alumni are interested in joining a Rotary club. However, the **interest in joining Rotary is generally lower for former participants than current participants**, perhaps indicating a **loss of enthusiasm** after leaving the program as years pass with minimal or no contact from Rotary, as was demonstrated in Table 5 (page13).

This idea is further illustrated by looking at the relationship between the number of years that have passed since leaving the program and the percent of alumni who are interested in joining

a Rotary club. The following table indicates that **as more years pass after leaving the program, fewer and fewer alumni remain interested in joining a Rotary club.**

Table 8

Years since alumni participated in program	Percent of non-Rotarian alumni who want to join Rotary
1 - 3 years	72%
4 - 6 years	68%
7 - 9 years	62%
10 - 14 years	58%
15 - 19 years	48%
20+ years	30%

Nevertheless, it's still clear that **many alumni are interested in joining a Rotary club.** The fact that many alumni submit prospective member forms on the RI Web site demonstrates this interest. The Prospective Member Form is a form that qualified non-Rotarians can fill out to inform clubs of their interest in Rotary. These forms are submitted to RI Headquarters, screened, and then forwarded to the district leadership in the interested person's area. The district governor or membership chair can forward the form to appropriate clubs if they think the person is qualified. The club can then choose whether or not to contact the interested individual. Of course, all invitations for membership are at the club's discretion.

There is currently not a field on this form in which to identify one's self as an alum, however many individuals mention the fact that they are an alum in the *How did you hear about Rotary International* field. A review of the submissions from 2003-04 and 2004-05 identified **at least 300 prospective member forms submitted by program alumni.** The majority of inquiries from alumni via this form came from former Rotaractors and Youth Exchange participants.

Table 9

	Forms submitted by alumni in 2003-05	Percent of forms submitted by alumni
Rotaract	95	32%
Youth Exchange	81	27%
Interact	55	18%
Scholarships	53	18%
GSE	9	3%
RYLA	7	2%
Overall total	300	

The following are some examples of comments written on prospective member forms:

- *I was sponsored by the Rotary club on a one-year exchange to Resend, Brazil as a high school student in 1987-88. I have been interested in joining ever since. I am very excited to reestablish my commitment to this organization.*
 - former Youth Exchange student

- *I was actually a leader in my Rotaract club in college and loved it... I really enjoy serving others and firmly agree with Rotary's principles. I feel that we all should do our best to make a difference in the world.*
 - former Rotaractor
- *I still have the 4-Way Test pocket insert that I received at RYLA camp in 1997. I am committed to service and leadership within [my community].*
 - former RYLarian
- *I have been wanting to find a way to contribute to Rotary's local and international service programs for years. The Polio Eradication program is a stunning example of Rotary's successful mobilization of its international membership to accomplish an ambitious goal.*
 - former Ambassadorial Scholar
- *I come from a family of Rotarians and I have been a member of the Rotary family for a long time now. I started at Interact club, passing through Rotaract club and now, due to my age, I am interested in becoming a member of a Rotary club.*
 - former Interactor, Rotaractor
- *My Rotary Exchange to the Netherlands has had a profound impact on many aspects of my life. Not only did I gain considerable insight into a foreign culture, I also developed an appreciation of how an international organization such as Rotary can build goodwill and better friendships. I am excited about the possibility of contributing to my community through local Rotary initiatives and also to the larger vision and goals of Rotary International.*
 - former Youth Exchange student

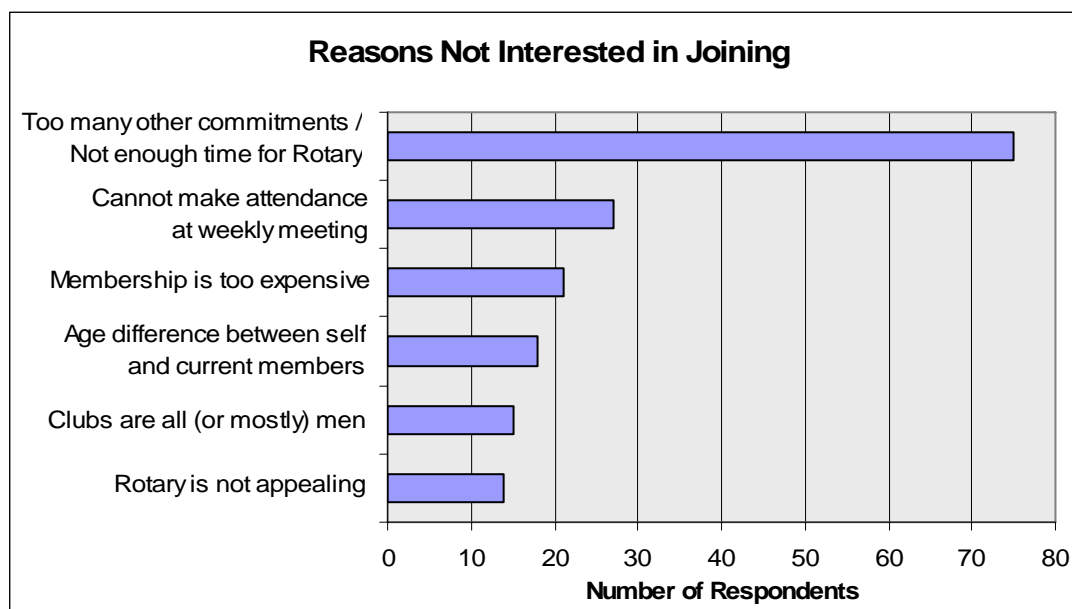
Why are there not more alumni in Rotary clubs?

Overall, **84% of current program participants and 66% of program alumni are interested in joining Rotary**. So, the question becomes, why are there not more alumni in Rotary clubs? To answer this question, both current program participants and non-Rotarian alumni were asked for further information on why they are or are not interested in joining Rotary. Their responses are summarized in this section.

Some alumni are not interested in joining

34% of non-Rotarian alumni indicated that they are **not interested in joining** a Rotary club. These respondents were asked **why** they are not interested in joining. The top six responses are illustrated in the following chart.

Figure G



Note that *Too many other commitments / Not enough time for Rotary* was by far the most frequently cited reason for not being interested in joining Rotary. Many respondents noted that they are just not ready or able to commit to the time required of membership. The second most frequently cited reason was *Cannot make attendance at weekly meeting*. These respondents specifically noted not being able to attend a meeting every week due to factors such as travel or a varied work schedule. It is interesting to note that the fifth most frequently cited reason, *Clubs are all (or mostly) men*, seemed to be mentioned just as often by men as by women.

Other respondents indicated that they had **lost interest** in Rotary. Perhaps this was due to the fact that contact with Rotary drops significantly once participants leave their program, as seen in Table 5 (page 13). The following table illustrates how **alumni who have more contact with Rotary after leaving their program are more interested in joining Rotary** than those alumni who have minimal or no contact with Rotary after leaving their program.

Table 10

Contact After the Program	Percent who want to join Rotary
Daily	92%
Weekly	79%
Monthly	78%
Quarterly	67%
Yearly	64%
No Contact	60%

Other reasons for non-interest frequently noted by respondents include:

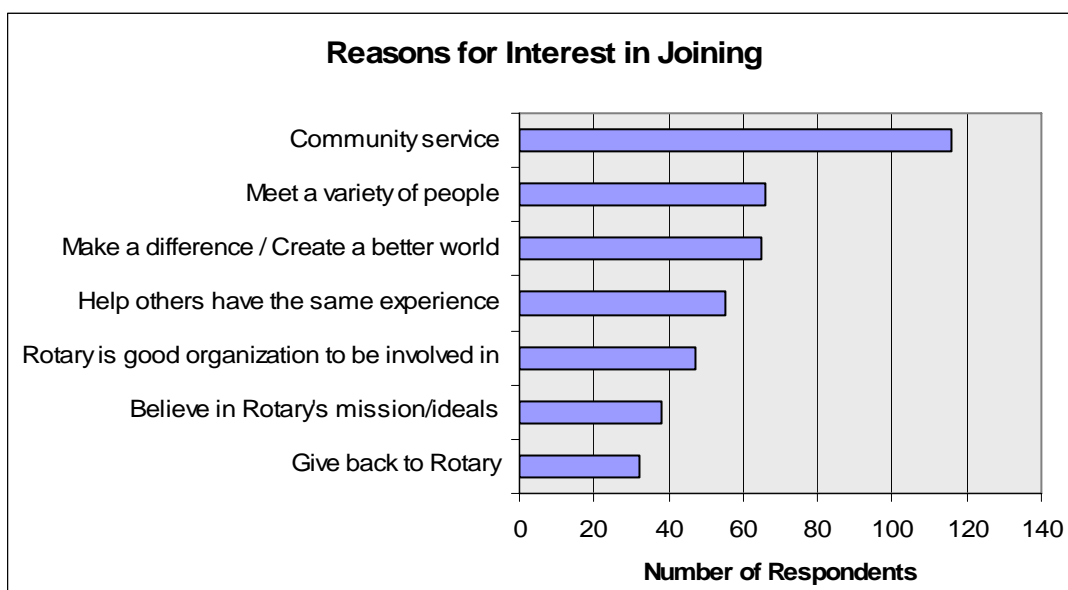
- Lack of knowledge of Rotary/the responsibilities of membership
- Clubs are too exclusive/elitist
- Already involved in another civic club
- Clubs are too ceremonial/formal
- Local club isn't active in projects
- Clubs are out-of-touch with young people

Nevertheless, many of the respondents who are not interested in membership **still expressed an interest in participating in Rotary activities**, and even more indicated that while they are not ready to join at this point in time, **they might be interested in joining in the future**.

Interested alumni have concerns about joining

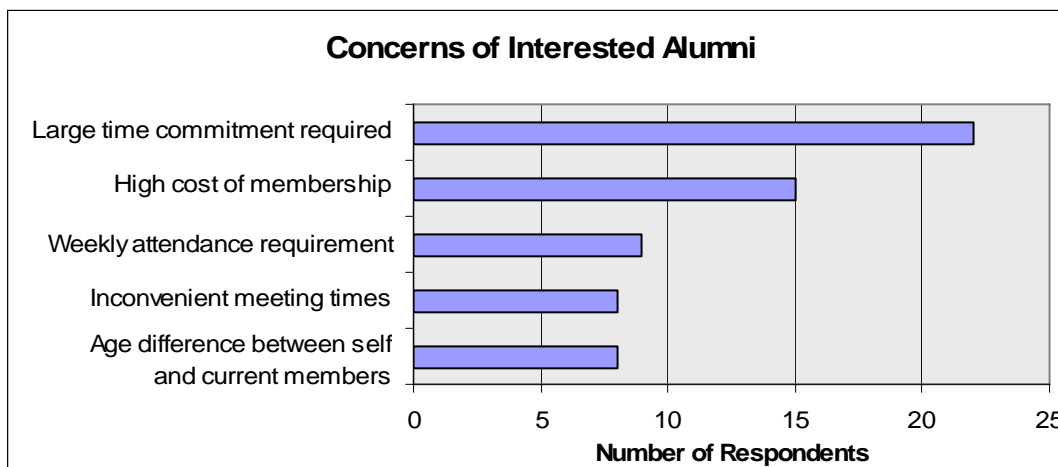
66% of non-Rotarian alumni indicated that they **are interested in joining** a Rotary club. These respondents were asked **why** they are interested in joining. The top seven responses are illustrated in the following chart.

Figure H



However many of the alumni who are interested in joining **also expressed concerns and reservations about membership**. The top five concerns identified by those alumni interested in joining Rotary are identified in the following chart.

Figure 1



As you can see, many of the concerns identified by those alumni who are interested in joining Rotary are the same issues mentioned by those alumni who are not interested in joining (identified in Figure G, page 18). These are clearly key issues since they were identified by both those who want to join and those who don't.

Some interested alumni aren't asked to join

Alumni who indicated an interest in joining a Rotary club were asked **whether or not they currently hold a professional, proprietary, executive, or managerial position**. The percent of respondents within each program who answered *yes* are identified in the following table.

Table 11

	Percent of interested alumni who currently hold a professional position
GSE	89%
Scholarships	81%
Rotaract	71%

To determine whether or not qualified alumni are being asked to join Rotary, those alumni who are **both interested in joining and currently hold a professional position** were asked whether or not they **have been pursued for membership** by local clubs. The percentages who said *yes* are indicated in the following table.

Table 12

	Percent of interested, professional alumni who have been pursued for membership
GSE	42%
Rotaract	33%
Scholarships	18%

Those alumni who are interested in joining, hold a professional position, but **have not been pursued for membership** were then asked **whether or not they have contacted local clubs to inform them of their interest**. The percent from each program that answered *yes* is indicated in the following table.

Table 13

	Percent of interested, professional alumni who have contacted clubs
Scholarships	25%
Rotaract	24%
GSE	17%

Those alumni who have contacted clubs to inform them of their interest were then asked how the clubs responded to their inquiry. **50%** indicated a **positive response**, **8%** said that the **clubs showed no interest**, and **17%** got **no response** at all from clubs. Of the 50% who indicated a positive response from clubs, several explained that they are no longer interested in joining the club they contacted due to the following factors:

- Scheduling conflict with meeting time
- Not enough free time to devote to club
- Age gap between self and current members

Note that former RYLarians, Interactors and Youth Exchange participants were removed from this section of analysis. Because contact with these groups had to be made through the district chairs, most of the survey respondents from these programs have only been out of their programs for a few years, resulting in an average age of 21 (generally not yet old enough to have a professional position).

Rotarians' opinions about why more alumni aren't joining

Because Rotarians might have a different perspective than alumni, various Rotarians were asked their opinions about why more alumni aren't joining Rotary.

One factor mentioned by Rotarians is that **many clubs don't participate in these programs** or understand and appreciate what the programs are about. They indicated that a lack of exposure to program participants creates disinterest in programs and alumni.

Another factor pointed out by Rotarians is that many clubs who do participate in programs **don't develop a relationship between themselves and their program participants**. Two programs specifically mentioned on this point were Ambassadorial Scholarships and Rotaract. Regarding Ambassadorial Scholarships, it was said that clubs often choose their scholar and send them away, with very little or no contact maintained while the scholar is abroad or after they return home. Regarding Rotaract, it was said that many Rotaract clubs are not well connected with their sponsor clubs. This makes it more difficult to build a relationship between Rotaractors and Rotarians, thus making it more difficult for the Rotaractors to transition into Rotary.

Many Rotarians noted that **most alumni are not yet qualified for Rotary when they leave their programs**. Some are in their late teens and have yet to go through university and develop careers. Others are older and finishing university but they still aren't established in their careers and qualified for Rotary membership. Because many are so young and unestablished in their professional and personal lives, **club members sometimes have difficulty seeing them as future Rotarians** and therefore often don't make an effort to keep in contact with alumni.

Even if they want to maintain contact, Rotarians indicated that **clubs often don't have a plan** to go about it. Clubs were said to have poor record-keeping and a lack of organization regarding alumni. They don't have a clear strategy for maintaining the relationship over time and don't think to invite alumni to key functions. It was generally said that clubs forget about alumni very quickly.

Districts were said to have similar problems as clubs regarding the lack of organization and a plan. It was said that **many districts don't know how to compile their information or coordinate their efforts**. Many don't have alumni sub-committee chairs (according to RI records, 29% of districts don't report having alumni chairs). Even of those districts that do have alumni chairs, many were said to have chairs that aren't very active.

To learn more about organization at the district level, the annual *District Membership Chair Survey* asked DMCs for information about their districts' contact with alumni. According to DMC responses:

- 60.5% of districts maintain a list or database of participants in district programs.
- 36.6% of districts maintain regular contact with the alumni of their district programs.
- 62.4% of districts encourage alumni of youth programs (like Youth Exchange) to participate in young adult programs (like Rotaract).
- 66.3% of districts encourage clubs to pursue qualified program alumni as prospective members.
- 43.9% of districts facilitate the connection of qualified program alumni with Rotary clubs in their area.

Even if clubs and districts do make an effort to maintain contact with alumni, many Rotarians mentioned that **alumni tend to move a lot** between when they finish their program and when they become settled in their career. Clubs and districts have **difficulty maintaining up-to-date contact information** for the alumni and keeping up with their latest endeavors.

Another concern mentioned was the **lack of enough Rotaract clubs**, especially community-based Rotaract clubs. Rotaract is a great way to keep younger alumni involved in Rotary until they become established in their careers. However it was said that many communities have few or no Rotaract clubs and therefore the younger alumni have no way to bridge the gap between when they leave their program and when they are finally qualified for Rotary membership.

Many Rotarians also recognized that often clubs simply **don't ask alumni to join**. Others mentioned that sometimes older alumni are asked to join as soon as they finish their program and the alumni decline because they are not yet ready to be involved. It was said that clubs then seem reluctant to maintain contact or extend a second invitation once they have been turned down.

Rotarians also echoed many of the other concerns identified by alumni. Regarding age, one Rotarian pointed out that some club members **have difficulty seeing alumni as equals**, but rather as children or grandchildren, and therefore communicate with alumni on that basis. Alumni then become hesitant to join a club where they would feel treated as a junior member instead of as equals.

Rotarians also mentioned that **alumni don't seem to have enough time or money** to join Rotary. Regarding Rotaract specifically it was pointed out that there is a significant difference in the time and money required of membership in Rotaract as compared to Rotary. Sometimes Rotaractors aren't willing or able to suddenly start investing so much more time and money than what they're accustomed to.

Some Rotarians thought that **Rotary clubs are having difficulty competing with other civic clubs that are focused more on younger people**, such as Junior Chamber of Commerce or Round Table. Because there is often a gap between when alumni finish their program and when they are finally qualified to join Rotary, alumni move on to other commitments and civic organizations instead of waiting for Rotary. By the time an invitation to join Rotary comes to them, they're already involved in other organizations and have difficulty making room in their busy schedules for Rotary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the large number of new alumni that are generated each year, it's clear that Rotary has tremendous growth potential if these alumni were more effectively transitioned into Rotary clubs. There are many strategies that can be implemented at the club, district, and international levels to better utilize alumni as a source of potential members. The following ideas were compiled from survey respondents and anecdotal information shared by Rotarians, current program participants, and program alumni.

Strategies for clubs and districts

Build strong relationships with current program participants

It's important for clubs and districts to instill in program participants a "connection for life" with Rotary. The stronger a participant's connection with Rotary while they're in their program, the better their experience will be and the more likely they will be to maintain contact with Rotary over time. As demonstrated in Figure E (page 12), many of the Rotarian alumni surveyed said they joined their club because they already knew and had a relationship with the current members.

Clubs and districts can instill this "connection for life" in many ways, including the following strategies.

- Conduct a monthly "Family of Rotary" meeting and invite both current and former program participants.
- Include program participants in club projects.
- Educate program participants about Rotary, its programs, and the benefits of membership.
- Encourage Rotarians to regularly attend meetings of Rotaract/Interact clubs.
- Create a special liaison committee between the Rotary club and the Rotaract/Interact club to coordinate joint projects and events.
- Train Rotaract club presidents at PETS.
- Include the district Rotaract representative at the district training team seminar.
- Participate in functions related to their programs, such as attending a regional Rotaract or Youth Exchange conference.
- Involve the district membership committee in regional scholar orientation seminars.
- Recognize special events – such as a Youth Exchange student's birthday, or a Rotaract/Interact club's anniversary.
- Host clubs can be involved in the activities of inbound Youth Exchange students, Ambassadorial Scholars, and GSE teams.
- Sponsoring clubs can conduct thorough orientation sessions for outbound Youth Exchange students, Ambassadorial Scholars, and GSE teams, and hold exciting welcome back events for them when they return from abroad.
- Introduce solitary program participants (such as Youth Exchange students and Ambassadorial Scholars) to other participants in their program. Bring them

together several times a year so that that they get to know each other and develop a network.

- Conduct exit interviews when participants finish/graduate from their programs to find out how they want to be involved in Rotary in the future.

Develop a plan

To better utilize program alumni as prospective members, clubs and districts should appoint alumni sub-committees and develop a plan of action for alumni relations. Alumni chairs should coordinate their efforts with the foundation, membership, and program chairs. The alumni sub-committee could be in charge of the following tasks:

- Accurate record-keeping
- Maintaining contact with the alumni
- Keeping alumni involved in various Rotary activities – including using them to recruit or train new program participants
- Tracking alumni that have gone missing and re-establishing a relationship with them

District alumni chairs may find the guidelines established in the *District Rotary Foundation Committee Manual* very helpful when developing a framework and assigning responsibilities. Rotary Foundation alumni coordinators (RFACs), regional Rotary Foundation coordinators (RRFCs), regional Rotary International membership coordinators (RRIMCs), and Rotary International membership zone coordinators (RIMZCs) can all be of help in developing an action plan for keeping alumni involved in Rotary activities and transitioning them into Rotarians.

Promote alumni

No matter how great alumni are, if other Rotarians don't see them as potential members, they won't treat them as potential members. It's important for alumni to be recognized as part of the family of Rotary. Other Rotarians must see how integral alumni are to Rotary so that the recruitment of alumni is incorporated into general practices of clubs and districts.

The best way for Rotarians to show others the value of alumni is to promote them. The promotion of alumni helps other Rotarians see where their contributions are going and helps them understand the importance of alumni. The following are some ideas for promoting alumni:

- Include both current program participants and alumni in the district directory.
- Feature alumni in club and district newsletters.
- Provide especially compelling alumni stories to the local media.
- Make certain outstanding alumni Paul Harris Fellows.
- Invite alumni to speak at club meetings and district events.

Ask alumni to join

Of course, the key strategy in recruiting alumni is simply to ask them to join as soon as they are qualified. It seems that many alumni are waiting for clubs to contact them, and the clubs are waiting for the alumni to contact them. However, because membership in Rotary is by invitation only, clubs must take the initiative.

For older alumni, like former Rotaractors and GSE team members, it's important for clubs to ask as soon as possible after their program has ended, while the experience is still fresh and while contact is still strong. If they are not asked relatively quickly, they will likely find something else to do with their time.

When inviting alumni to join, clubs should focus on the reasons why alumni typically want to join, which, as seen in Figure A (page 9), include community service, meeting new people, and helping others have the same great experience. Clubs should remind alumni of the specific benefits of Rotary that they would find most appealing, such as emphasizing service projects to former Interactors and Rotaractors, or emphasizing Rotary's internationality to former Youth Exchange students or GSE team members.

If an alum declines an invitation, the club should still keep in contact with them and find other ways that the alum can still be involved in the club. As time passes, the club should be persistent and keep asking. The alum may change their mind as life circumstances change.

Help alumni find clubs that meet their needs

If an alum declines an invitation to join, the club should not be discouraged, rather it should help the alum find a club that better meets their needs. The alum may want to join a club that better matches their own demographics. They may need a club that meets at a different time or place. Perhaps they want a club with a different meeting format or different projects. Many Rotarians say that when an alum finds a club that meets their needs, other reasons for not wanting to join, such as being too busy, quickly dissipate.

In order to make themselves more attractive to alumni, some clubs have changed a few of their traditions and structures. Some waive certain fees for alumni for the first year of membership. Others have added more professional development opportunities to better compete with civic clubs like Junior Chamber of Commerce or Round Table. Still others have eliminated meals and keep their meetings short and business-focused since many younger members appreciate the efficiency. As seen in Figure E (page 12), alumni are generally most attracted to clubs that are very active, have younger members, are friendly and energetic, and meet at a convenient time and location.

Start new clubs

If alumni are having difficulty finding a club that meets their needs, clubs and districts could start new clubs. New all-alumni clubs have already been successfully started all over the world, including in the Philippines, Germany, Japan, Italy, and the USA. When starting a new

club, alumni can make it what they want it to be. Their commitment is likely to be stronger since they are joining a club that they have control over instead of joining a club they have difficulty relating to. Districts should seek out alumni from the full range of programs when seeking charter members for the new club.

Maintain contact

Clearly not all alumni are qualified for membership as soon as they leave their programs. However contact with younger alumni should not be disconnected just because they are not yet qualified for membership. As demonstrated in Table 10 (page 18), the less contact an alum has with Rotary after leaving their program, the less interest they have in joining Rotary. Therefore it's important for clubs and districts to maintain contact over time so that alumni sustain their enthusiasm and interest in joining Rotary. Some ideas for maintaining contact include the following:

- Keep alumni aware of Rotary's activities by sending them club and district newsletters and copies of regional magazines.
- Help alumni feel appreciated by sending recognition of birthdays, graduations, and other special events.
- Find out about the alumni's latest endeavors by sending periodic inquiries.
- Involve alumni in club and district activities.

Because alumni tend to move frequently, keeping up-to-date contact information is often difficult for clubs and districts. Developing an alumni spreadsheet or database can help clubs and districts better organize their record-keeping into one central location. They can use the spreadsheet/database to compile old records, or if no old records exist, they can use it to simply keep better records from this point on. Some districts have found it helpful to include a "permanent address" field of an alum's parent or guardian.

Maintaining contact also involves keeping alumni in touch with other alumni. Clubs and districts can organize reunions and other activities on a regular basis for alumni residing in their area. If clubs and districts facilitate alumni events, the alumni are more likely to stay in touch with one another, and therefore if a club or district stays in touch with one, they will have access to the whole network. Another advantage of these alumni gatherings is that the alumni occasionally ask to charter their own new Rotary club.

Involve alumni in other programs

Some of the younger alumni still have many years before they will be qualified to join a Rotary club. Clubs and districts can maintain the interest of these alumni over time by getting them involved in other Rotary programs until they become qualified for Rotary. For example, former Youth Exchange students can get involved in Interact and Rotaract clubs, former Interactors can participate in RYLA, or former Rotaractors can be part of GSE teams.

Because Rotaract can be a good, longer-term transitional environment between other programs and Rotary, it's important for clubs and districts to maintain high numbers of Rotaract clubs. They can use former Interactors, Youth Exchange students, and RYLArrians to

start new Rotaract clubs. By getting involved in young adult programs like Rotaract, younger alumni can better bridge the gap between when they finish their initial program and when they are qualified for Rotary membership.

Involve alumni in club and district activities

The best way to maintain contact with alumni is to involve them in club and district activities. As reported in the *Results* section on page 19, many of the alumni who are not yet ready to join a Rotary club still want to be involved in Rotary activities. The following are some of the ways clubs and districts can keep alumni involved:

- Include alumni on the selection and orientation committees for their program.
- Connect alumni with various speaking opportunities throughout Rotary.
- Encourage alumni to attend meetings at various different clubs.
- Involve alumni in service projects.
- Ensure there is an alumni event at every district conference.
- Connect alumni with other activities that interest them.
- Start a district alumni association.

POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH

According to RI and Foundation records, Rotary created over 100,000 alumni from these various programs in 2004-05 alone. Rotary has tremendous growth potential if these alumni were better recognized as potential Rotarians.

School-Age Alumni

In 2004-05:

- Approximately 48,000 Interactors graduated out of Interact.
- Approximately 7,000 students completed a Youth Exchange.
- Approximately 9,600 youth under the age of 18 finished a RYLA program.

This totals approximately **64,000 school-age alumni**.

These alumni are not qualified for Rotary immediately, however most of them have had great experiences in their programs and are excited about Rotary. They are members of the Rotary family and have had significant exposure to all that Rotary has to offer. If clubs and districts think about these young alumni as future community leaders, they may be more likely to see them as future *Rotary* leaders, and therefore be more interested in continuing their relationship with the alumni and eventually pursuing them as prospective members once they become qualified.

As seen in Table 8 (page 16), currently **48%** of alumni who have been out of their program for 15-19 years and **30%** of alumni who have been out of their program for 20 or more years **are interested in joining Rotary**. If clubs are better able to utilize these alumni as prospective members and just 30% of them eventually join, that creates **over 19,000 new Rotarians** available to support Rotary's mission.

University-Age Alumni

In 2004-05:

- Approximately 15,500 Rotaractors graduated out of a university-based Rotaract club.
- Approximately 1,000 students completed an Ambassadorial Scholarship.
- Approximately 6,600 youth between the ages of 18 and 24 finished a RYLA program.

This totals approximately **23,100 university-age alumni**.

These alumni are not yet qualified for Rotary membership, however they too have had great experiences in their programs and are excited about Rotary. They too are members of the Rotary family and have had significant exposure to all that Rotary has to offer. Clubs and districts should recognize their potential as future Rotary leaders, maintain contact with them as they become established in their careers, and pursue them as prospective members as soon as they are qualified.

As seen in Table 8 (page 16), currently **62%** of alumni who have been out of their program for 7-9 years and **58%** of alumni who have been out of their program for 10-14 years **are**

interested in joining Rotary. If clubs are better able to utilize these alumni as prospective members and just 58% of them eventually join, that creates **over 13,000 new Rotarians** available to support Rotary's mission.

Young Adult Alumni

In 2004-05:

- Approximately 19,000 Rotaractors left their community-based Rotaract club having reached the maximum age.
- Approximately 2,100 young professionals completed a Group Study Exchange.
- Approximately 3,800 individuals over the age of 25 finished a RYLA program.

This totals approximately **24,900 young adult alumni.**

Many of these alumni are already qualified for Rotary membership. Many of those who are not yet qualified will be qualified shortly. They too are members of the Rotary family, have had significant exposure to all that Rotary has to offer, and are excited about Rotary. Clubs and districts should help transition the qualified older alumni into Rotary clubs as soon as possible and maintain contact with those who are not quite ready to join Rotary.

As seen in Table 8 (page 16), currently **72%** of alumni who have been out of their program for 1-3 years and **68%** of alumni who have been out of their program for 4-6 years **are interested in joining Rotary.** If clubs are better able to utilize these alumni as prospective members and just 68% of them join, that creates **almost 17,000 new Rotarians** available to support Rotary's mission.

Overall Potential

RI and TRF program alumni are high quality individuals with a commitment to leadership, service, and international understanding. They are a largely untapped source of potential members. The above mentioned theoretical projections total approximately **49,000 new Rotarians** over time **created from just one year's worth of alumni.** If clubs and districts can improve their tracking and contact with alumni, alumni interest will likely increase and membership potential will continue to rise.

If Rotary clubs and districts can better transition alumni into Rotarians, these new members could generate more people and money to support RI and TRF programs, which means more young people can get involved in the programs, which would produce even more alumni, creating an even larger pool of future Rotarians, and so on. Better utilization of alumni as a source of potential members could produce a self-sustaining spiral of growth for Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation.