



Celebrate Literacy Month

March 2008

What is Rotary Literacy Month?

Rotary Literacy Month highlights literacy and education issues around the world. Celebrated in March each year, Rotary Literacy Month is an excellent opportunity for Rotary clubs and districts to raise awareness about literacy, launch new literacy initiatives and projects, and recognize literacy accomplishments from the past year. Rotarians everywhere are encouraged to participate in Rotary Literacy Month by engaging in service or activities that specifically address literacy and education issues either in their communities or abroad.

Why is literacy important?

Literacy is the foundation for virtually all forms of education and a crucial component of effective social and economic participation, human development, and poverty reduction. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) nearly 800 million people over the age of 15 lack even basic reading and writing skills worldwide. In addition, there are roughly 137 million school age children who are illiterate around the world. Sadly, over 64% of all illiterate people in the world today are women.

The benefits of literacy to society are undisputed. The Education for All Global Monitoring Report published in 2006 by UNESCO argues that literate populations are less likely to experience civil strife and are more likely to develop economically. There is also a direct connection between literacy rates and community health. People who are literate are generally more aware of health concerns in their communities and are therefore better equipped to avoid illness.

What can my club do to celebrate Rotary Literacy Month?

Rotary clubs and districts celebrate Rotary Literacy Month in many different ways. Some clubs invite speakers to discuss literacy and education issues that are important to their communities, some clubs plan literacy and education related service activities, and other clubs plan large community campaigns to encourage literacy.

Planning is crucial and many clubs appoint a special literacy committee at the beginning of each Rotary year to plan and coordinate literacy events during Rotary Literacy Month and throughout the year.

Some ideas for Rotary Literacy Month activities include:

Raising awareness about literacy and education

- Invite local literacy or education experts like teachers, school administrators, government education officers, and university professors, to speak at your club's meeting about local, regional, or international literacy and education issues.
- Arrange for club members to visit local schools, universities, libraries, and tutoring centers to learn about your community's literacy and education resources.
- Facilitate a discussion session at your club's meeting about literacy and education in your community.

Take action for literacy

- Launch a new literacy project during Rotary Literacy Month
- Work with existing literacy providers to plan a literacy project
- Arrange for club members to volunteer at a tutoring center

- Begin a student mentoring program
- Encourage local businesses to offer education opportunities for employees
- Start an adult education program at a local school or community center
- Conduct a teacher training event for your district
- Conduct a literacy awareness campaign in your community
- Donate books for a community library, school supplies for under privileged students, or teaching materials for underprivileged schools

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- Arrange a community award to recognize contributions to literacy and education
- Hold a literacy ball to raise money for literacy programs in your community
- Conduct an essay contest to encourage writing among students in your community
- Arrange a literacy fair and invite local bookstores to participate, local authors to read about literacy, and local government agencies to display information about literacy and education programs

Does Rotary International offer any additional resources for Literacy?

Rotary offers a variety of resources for literacy related projects. The following are some of the resources available to Rotary clubs and districts.

Communities in Action: A Guide to Effective Projects (605A)
www.rotary.org/newsroom/downloadcenter/pdfs/605a_en.pdf

A Menu of Service Opportunities (605B)
www.rotary.org/newsroom/downloadcenter/pdfs/605b_en.pdf

Community Assessment Tools (605C)
www.rotary.org/newsroom/downloadcenter/pdfs/605c_en.pdf

World Community Service Program
www.rotary.org/programs/wcs

The Rotary Foundation Humanitarian Grants Program
www.rotary.org/foundation/grants

The RI Community Projects Database
www.rotary.org/programs/projectsdb