

THE ROTARIAN EFFECT TRAINING YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS

Around The World



Hello,

There are three billion people in the world under the age of 30. More than half are between the ages of 14 and 24. Many are eager to make a difference, including as peacebuilders. The gap between aspiration and reality lies in a lack of access to peace education and support. That's one conclusion of the United Nations report **The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security**. The report drew on input from 4,000 young people and research across 44 countries.

In 2013, Rotarians Rick and Janet Manganello posed a question, “*Can peace education for young people be developed in a way that Rotarians around the world could support?*” This inspired the creation of NewGen Peacebuilders – peace education, training and mentoring that has been delivered in communities on five continents.

In 2020, Peter Kyle, Rotary International Director (RID) 2020-22, Rotary Zones 33 & 34, had this vision, “*What if we can show how peace education can be scaled starting with Rotarians as conveners and connectors of youth and peace in our communities?*” A year later, the Youth & Peace in Action (YPA) initiative was announced with financial and volunteer support from 20+ Rotary Districts. Peter invited Ana Patel and I – both Rotary Peace Fellows – to join him in moving the idea into action. In the 2021-22 year, 300+ high schools signed up; 45,000 hours of peace learning and project experiences were delivered; and 1,500 young received certifications in peace education and project development.

This booklet highlights examples of people working together to build a culture of peace. Passionate Rotarians from different Districts are central to the story, but a vast network of people connected to Rotary add special momentum. Some people call it the Rotary peace ecosystem. **The list of collaborations and collaborators is long and growing. Let's keep going!**



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Luther Moore and Tom Smith – Charlotte, NC, USA, D7680

In 2014, District Governor Luther Moore proposed that D7680 use District funds to sponsor and help launch NewGen Peacebuilders. Eighteen students from three high schools comprised the first cohort of participants. Since that inaugural program many Governors and Rotary Clubs in D7680 have supported program scholarships, and Past District Governor Tom Smith emerged as a *champion among champions* alongside Luther. Outstanding alumni who have written university application essays about their peace project results have received awards of nearly \$500,000. Several teams have partnered with local Rotary Clubs and nonprofits to sustain successful peace projects. This includes **New Places for Green**, an **innovative environmental peace project** to address the harm of carbon emissions. The team collaborated with Trees Charlotte and Heal Charlotte to identify a low-income neighborhood in need of green space; deliver an after-school environmental youth camp; and coordinate with public officials to plant an Urban Orchard for the community. Other peace projects have addressed issues as diverse as human trafficking and the needs of citizens affected by conflict in Venezuela. More than 500 young people have become certified NewGen Peacebuilders in D7680, and content has been used by K-12 teachers participating in peace education training through the prestigious Charlotte Teachers Institute.





Doug Johnson – Santa Rosa, CA, USA, D5130

Doug Johnson was on a mission when he attended a Rotary Peace Symposium in São Paulo, Brazil. He sought a turnkey peace education program to implement while serving as President of the Rotary Club of Santa Rosa. After a NewGen Peacebuilders presentation, Doug and club leaders agreed to sponsor a minimum of three cohorts



of high school students over three years. Each time, a team of trained Rotarians supported workshops as conversation guides and peace project mentors. The single largest-ever peace project team, with 25 members, developed and implemented **Foster the Future** – a project to serve young people in foster care that inspired similar projects in Virginia and North Carolina. During his senior year at university, alumnus Joe Seghesio – who was part of the Foster the Future team – reported that lessons learned on

compassion in action endured. They influenced Joe's thoughts about peacebuilding skills a leader can bring into a career in business. As for Doug – he continued his own peace education journey with online content available through the Rotary Positive Peace Academy developed by Rotary strategic partner the Institute for Economics & Peace.



Alfredo Fairbairn – Tandil, Argentina, D4920

How do you adapt and customize a peace education program to accommodate for geography, language, and culture? That's the question Alfredo Fairbairn addressed during his year as District Governor and with support of the first Rotary Global Grant for peace education in Argentina. Here are some decisions that were made. All Newgen Peacebuilders materials and most facilitations were delivered in Spanish. Rotarians and Rotaractors managed the translation and were intimately involved in planning, reviewing participant applications, and supporting interactive exercises. Rounds of training and peace project development with 140 high school students and 40 mentors took place in three different cities. One of the memorable projects was a unique student-focused campaign in collaboration with the Red Cross of Argentina-Tandil. The goal was to reduce the number of violent deaths from teenage drinking and driving – considered a public health crisis. Did the impact stop at the borders of Argentina? No! Insights from Argentina have informed other training and peace projects in Latin America and as far away as Lebanon and South Sudan.





Dick Ray – Jonesborough, TN, USA, D7570

Richard (Dick) Ray's year as District Governor introduced an exciting twist to the NewGen Peacebuilders tale. The focus of Dick's vision was to bring peace education to Rotaractors in Western Virginia and Northeastern Tennessee. The first cohort with university students inspired a second year that had university and high school students completing training in separate but simultaneous workshops, side-by-side, in one venue. Program alumna and former Rotaractor Jelena Jevtić went on to become a program mentor, was selected for a prestigious summer institute program on peace in Norway, and made good on a promise to introduce NewGen Peacebuilders in her home country of Serbia. Over five years and during the global challenges of COVID-19, Dick remained an idealistic catalyst and steady influence for putting young people at the center of peacebuilding. Through a collaboration with Rotarians Assaad Mounzer and George Beyrouti, Dick co-initiated the first offering of Global Grant-funded peace education in Lebanon. Dick has also served as the Treasurer for the Rotary Donor Advised Fund which proved so necessary to the collective multi-District launch of the Youth & Peace in Action initiative in Rotary Zones 33 & 34.





Wayne Murphy – Charlottesville, VA, USA, D7610

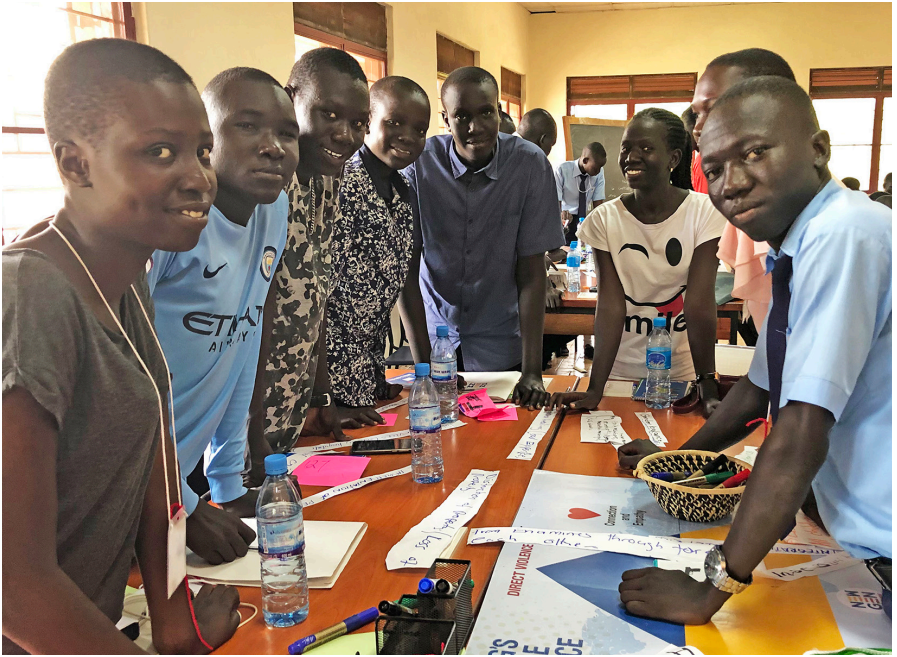
With trademark humility, Wayne Murphy has often shared how much he personally benefits when accompanying young people on their journeys to become certified NewGen Peacebuilders. In his first experience, Wayne mentored **Art for the Heart**, a peace project that achieved star status when team members were selected for an entrepreneurship incubator at the University of Virginia Darden School of Business. Several teams in Virginia, North Carolina, and Maryland have used Art for the Heart as inspiration for their own projects, and the case study is featured in an online course available through the Youth & Peace in Action initiative. Always ready to innovate, Wayne collaborated with Ravi Respetto, Rotarian and president of the local United Way, when she proposed that young certified peacebuilders facilitate conversations at a Charlottesville Unity Days event. Nearly 150 attendees explored four peace topics: access to education, affordable housing, equitable healthcare, and job opportunity. Said Wayne, *“These young people are trained to use active listening skills and activate compassion. They know how to guide productive conversations.”*



Carmen Cuneo - Houston, TX, USA, D5890

Rotary D5890 encompasses Houston, the third largest and most diverse city in the United States. Hosting a District peace conference was one of Carmen Cuneo's dreams for her year as District Governor. She also envisioned a peace conference designed for young people occurring at the same time. And so it happened! Over one weekend, the District hosted two events, one for Rotarians and another for Interactors, Junior Rotarians, and Rotary Youth Exchange. With content designed by NewGen Peacebuilders and facilitated by Rotary Peace Fellows, the youth-focused event attracted 200 students from 32 high schools. Together, they explored five types of conflict that pre-event surveys identified as most important to participants: gun violence, homelessness, human trafficking, intolerance, and pollution. The experience, including training of 20+ Rotarian conversation guides, became a model for Accelerator Summits where young people come to understand fundamentals of peacebuilding and generate peace project ideas.





Emmanuel Ecodu - Juba, South Sudan, D9212



In 2011, South Sudan gained independence and became the newest country in the world after nearly 50 years of conflict including two civil wars. The country's history since has also been marked by legacy conflict, economic challenges, and periods of famine in some regions. While serving as President of the Rotary Club of Juba, Emmanuel Ecodu initiated what he thought would be a modest recruitment of participants into NewGen Peacebuilders. The plan called for 40 Interactors and Rotaractors to jointly have the experience. More than 100

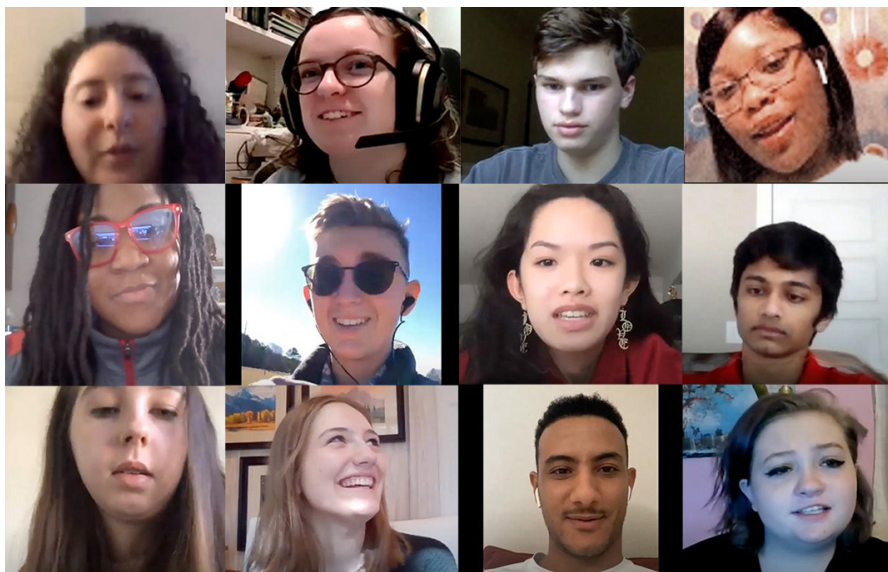
asked for admission, and many campaigned for the opportunity via phone, text, and social media messages. During training, students worked in groups to agree on peace opportunities that are priorities. Topics spanned equitable education access; gender violence reduction; freedom to engage in political dialogues and demonstrations without fear of retribution; and tips on alleviating traumatic stress. An overarching theme was the importance of young people's voices being taken seriously in a country where 70% of the population is under 30. A noteworthy takeaway – in a fluid and fragile environment, there is a sense of urgency for change and presumed connection between youth, peace, and security.



Assaad Mounzer and George Beyrouti – Beirut, Lebanon, D2452

Lebanon is small geographically but large in the mind's eye when it comes to the potential for positive peacebuilding. Together, Rotarians Richard (Dick) Ray and Assaad Mounzer in D7570 and George Beyrouti in D2452 nurtured the development of a Global Grant to bring the first Rotary-supported offering of peace education to young people in the country. It proved a journey of resilience against all odds. George and Mona Jarudi from the Rotary Club of Beirut Cosmopolitan co-guided a committee of 20+ Rotarians and Rotaractors to introduce NewGen Peacebuilders to universities. Nearly 300 university students and mentors from across the country applied; 100+ were accepted into the inaugural program. Despite a port explosion that caused damage in much of Beirut, COVID-19, and an economic crisis, every participant completed six days of interactive learning followed by implementation of multiple team peace projects. The culmination was a Training-of-Trainers (ToT) that equipped 20+ certified peacebuilders to work in teams to “repeat the peace.” Result? ToT facilitators organized mini-workshops for 500+ young people in several cities. Future aspirations include expansion in Lebanon and D2452 which includes multiple countries. Several university student affairs offices and nonprofits have reached out to explore peacebuilding collaborations.





Will Ratliff – Birmingham, AL, USA, D6860

A serendipitous conversation at a Rotary Peace Symposium in Hamburg, Germany, proved to be the beginning of a new peacebuilding relationship. Will Ratliff and other members of the very large and renowned Rotary Club of Birmingham had begun to envision an international peace conference in their home city, long associated with nonviolent resistance and Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. When COVID-19 and other factors delayed the conference, District leaders moved ahead with a youth peace education program that spanned the metro area. More than 100 high school students and mentors were accepted into a virtual format of NewGen Peacebuilders that unfolded from January through May 2021. Nineteen schools and four youth service organizations were represented, supported by 20+ Rotaractors and Rotarians trained as conversation guides and team peace project mentors. A post-experience survey showed that more than 90% of respondents felt more equipped and confident as peacebuilders. What happened after? Rotarians continued to collaborate with the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, University of Alabama at Birmingham Human Rights Institute, and the Office of the Mayor to deliver the international peace conference in May 2023. NewGen Peacebuilders and the Youth & Peace in Action initiative are collaborating on the parallel youth peace conference .





Jim Roxlo - Chattanooga, TN, USA, D6780

Past District Governor and Rotary Positive Peace Activator are just two of the many identifiers that make Jim Roxlo an inspirational Rotary catalyst for peace. So, “yes” was the only logical response when Jim proposed integrating NewGen Peacebuilders and the Pillars of Peace framework from Rotary strategic partner Institute for Economics & Peace into positive peace training for Rotaractors. Jim was inspired by a pilot positive peace training conducted with Rotaractors in Mexico. The approach to what became **Roots of Hunger, Pillars of Peace** training in Zones 30 & 31 and 33 & 34 was methodical. It began with a Rotaractor survey across 20 states in the US and several countries in the Caribbean.

A common interest emerged – concern about hunger and a desire to understand how to develop relevant community peace projects in response. Members of 16 Rotaract Clubs



joined in virtual workshops on peacebuilding coupled with project mentoring using the UNLEASH innovation process. The teams implemented 10 peace projects in collaboration with local nonprofits. In Trinidad and Tobago, the Minister of Agriculture recognized the Rotaractors for meaningful activities aligned with policies encouraging a return to locally grown foods. A University of Arkansas team was selected for a Food Systems Game Changers Lab that preceded a UN Food Systems Summit.



Debbie Roopchand, Soraya Gustave-Warner – the Caribbean, D7030

Together, let's do it! It's a spirit of cooperation that Peace Chair Debbie Roopchand and Interact Chair Soraya Gustave-Warner bring to peace education for young people in the Southern Caribbean and D7030. The District spans multiple countries, territories, and three languages: English, French, and Dutch. It was Debbie's positivity that led to the District's inclusion of Rotaractor teams in the Global-Grant supported "Roots of Hunger, Pillars of Peace" training and project implementation. And the creativity of the Rotaractors left a lasting impression; their peace projects collectively achieved public recognition from the Minister of Agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. The momentum continued when Debbie and Soraya



recruited 30+ Interact Clubs to sign up for Youth & Peace in Action 2021-22 and 300+ Interactors became certified peacebuilders. Always thinking about the future, Debbie and Soraya are quick to point out that the District has 70+ Interact Clubs (room for growth in peace education), an eagerness to do more team action peace projects, and an ever-present desire to be positive influencers in their communities.



Michael Walstrom – Boca Raton, FL, USA, D6930

How do some Rotarians recruit high schools and Interact Clubs to sign up for peacebuilding? They “Get Obsessed!” This was District Governor Michael Walstrom’s 2021-22 year theme applied to everything from an education project in Guatemala to engaging young people in Youth & Peace in Action (YPA). That obsession led Michael, encouraged by District YPA catalysts Dr. Sandy Burkart and Lisa Talley, to embark on a “Walk for Peace” covering 180+ miles and one million steps. Members of the District’s 46 Rotary Clubs joined at various points in the journey as Michael shared the importance of equipping young people with peacebuilding skills and project experiences. The walk raised awareness and funds to sustain the program in 2022-23 and beyond – \$30,000. A final celebration was attended by District Governors from three other Florida Districts that participated in the YPA pilot. Some of the most actively involved schools intend to make the peace education resources available to all teachers and service clubs in the future. And the first year’s peace projects led to a summer internship for a Boca Raton Community High School student. Young peacebuilder Reniah Curry plans to introduce environmental peace education and action opportunities across schools and student environment clubs in her school district.





Dana Orsini and Sara Soliven-De Guzman - D7360, USA and Philippines

Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. These are states in the US where more than 70,000 Rotarians in D7360 live. The geography is in many cases rural; it's vast; and relationships go even further thanks to the District's international eClub that includes Rotarians from India and the Philippines. So, when Youth & Peace in Action (YPA) was being introduced, District Governor Dana Orsini thought broadly, creatively, and inclusively. He asked Sara Soliven-De Guzman, eClub member and head of the OB Montessori K-12 school in the Philippines, if she would like to take advantage. Fast forward. Twelve teachers and administrators across five OBM campuses received 20 hours of virtual professional development in peace education. Several also completed 10+ hours of live, virtual peace project training alongside US high school students (The teachers participated in the middle of their night due to the time difference!). Teachers then worked with OBM student leaders to complete an online peacebuilder certification, develop five peace projects, and undertake a plan to incorporate customized YPA content into 9th and 10th grade leadership classes for 600 students. Go Dana! Go Sara! Go all concerned!





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