

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



IN ROTARY, 23 February is our anniversary, and February is also the month when we focus on promoting peace. There is a reason for this: Contributing to peace and international understanding has been a high priority for us since our earliest days.

We are often asked: “How can we get involved in peace now?” There are many paths to peace in Rotary. Our youth programs point us in the direction of Positive Peace, as does the work of intercountry committees and the Rotary Action Group for Peace.

Another path is the Rotarian Peace Projects Incubator (RPPI), an inspirational collaboration among Rotarians, Rotaractors, and Rotary Peace Fellows and alumni. Led by Rotarians in Switzerland and Liechtenstein, RPPI has designed 48 global projects that any club can support, either directly or through Rotary Foundation global grants. Nino Lotishvili and Matthew Johnsen, alumni of the Rotary Peace Center at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand, are two of the many volunteers.

During my Rotary peace journey, I have learned how personal resilience helps build inner peace and create sustainable outer peace. This was the inspiration behind the Women Peace Ambassadors for the South Caucasus project, which is based on my field research in Georgia. The RPPI team of Rotarians and peace fellows recognized the incredible potential of women from mixed-ethnicity families who live on borderlands to be role models for peace within and beyond their communities. Through workshops on building inner and outer peace that draw on the power of storytelling, 40 participants will be sharing their stories and reaching around 400 extended family and community members. These inspiring but marginalized women

will reclaim their inner strength as peacebuilders at the grassroots level. In this way, we will take steps toward the sustainable, peaceful society we need so much, not only in our region, but throughout the world. — Nino Lotishvili

I was excited to join the peace incubator project and to further strengthen my ties with Rotary’s peace community by working with past and current peace fellows to develop these proposals. My team wrote five proposals — three in Bangladesh, one in Iraq, and one in Poland — that focus on the arts and on education to generate dialogue across religious divisions and avert the radicalization of young people. I was inspired by how, despite the pandemic, we came together via technology with a vision to develop, test, and strengthen ideas and to produce workable solutions that clubs across the world can support to advance peace. I am excited to work with Rotary’s peace community to transform these visions into reality. — Matthew Johnsen

Here is further proof that in Rotary, we prefer action to words. This is Rotary at its best. I encourage you to visit rppi.ch to explore the projects and support them.

We have lasted 116 years because of our strong ethics, our passion for Service Above Self, and our unique approach to problem-solving. One of our greatest strengths is how we reach across our communities and across national, ethnic, religious, and political divisions to unite people of all backgrounds and to help others. This month, let’s celebrate our history and the many ways that *Rotary Opens Opportunities* to advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace, our ultimate mission.

HOLGER KNAACK

President, Rotary International



Nino Lotishvili
Founder and CEO,
Peace Research
Center Tbilisi and
Mindful Georgia



Matthew Johnsen
Professor emeritus and
founding co-director,
Center for Social
Innovation, Worcester
State University,
Massachusetts