

# 7 Reasons Young (& Young-ish) People Should Join Rotary

**Want to meet people and make a real difference in your community? Rotary is the way.**

Ever heard of Rotary? No? That's what I expected! If you have, it was probably from your grandpa and you tuned out after three minutes of hearing about his club's weekly lunch spread. And hey, maybe you were interested until he got so passionate about the salad bar. I get it.

Salad bar aside, Rotary is kind of a big deal. With over 1.2 million members worldwide, it's the biggest service organization on the planet. And if you're a fan of the planet ... well, that's just what Rotary wants to preserve. Through peace. Through service. Through understanding.

And — get this — NOT through religious or national affiliation. We don't care what you believe or who you voted for. The way Rotary sees it, the most important thing is that we come together to accomplish some much-needed tasks for a lil' group we like to call humanity.

Rotary efforts have already helped eradicate 99.9% of global cases of polio. (Never heard of polio? Thank a Rotarian for your ability to NOT know about this awful disease.) Now, armed with a massive investment and partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Rotary is poised to take on even more ambitious global projects, including water and sanitation access, maternal and child health, basic education and literacy to name a few areas of focus. In addition to these large-scale, international projects, Rotary clubs are always working to improve their own communities, too.

So, now that you've heard of Rotary, you're probably thinking, "Wait, should I be a Rotarian?" I would never pressure you to do something that will improve your life in every conceivable way, but how about I just tell you the benefits I've personally seen from being involved in Rotary for seven years? And then you can decide on your own that you should absolutely, definitely join.



## 1. You'll make local connections.

Rotary can introduce you to other like-minded and wonderfully diverse people from your community. Ultimately, to most of us, this is what it's all about: local friends, local colleagues, clients and contacts. Heck, it's actually why Rotary was started by a group of young professionals in Chicago back in 1905. When it comes to networking and advancing your business, Rotary membership isn't like the fickle, transactional networking and "referral" groups you've likely been encouraged to join. It's authentic and real. With Rotary, if you're willing to put in the effort and give back to your club, I guarantee you will meet people who can open doors for you personally and professionally.



## 2. You'll make a global impact.

Two words: Bill. Gates. He and Melinda Gates see the efficiency and effectiveness of the Rotary Foundation. So much so that they partnered with Rotary to commit \$450 million to eradicating polio from this sweet planet we've got here. In addition to crushing polio once and for all, we're working on other humanitarian projects, like ensuring everyone on earth has access to clean water. Rotary doesn't mess around.

### 3. You'll see your work pay off locally.

Sure, the whole “saving the world” thing is cool, but if you’re wanting to make a difference a little closer to home, don’t worry, Rotary does that too! We tackle every local project we can. We are a funding source (through a grant program), a volunteer source (because we’re awesome like that) and we even come up with our own initiatives, like in when we recently helped the environment and planted over 1.2 million trees (controversial opinion alert!!! Fresh air is awesome!).

### 4. You can inspire the next generation...

We have amazing youth programs to get high schoolers involved in service and leadership, and being involved in Rotary is life-changing for these kids! Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, Youth Exchange and World Affairs are programs that fuel and shape the potential for greatness that’s already within them. The kids coming out of these programs are fired up about making the world a more peaceful, loving place — and have the contacts, plans and direction to make it happen.

### 5. ...and spend time with the Greatest Generation.

Sure, Rotary has a bit of a reputation for skewing older, and hey, there’s some truth there. But there is also a ton of great experience and perspective to be gained from the Greatest and Boomer generations. Trust me ... Rotary has all of the stories and great folks that are willing to tell them. They are good mentors too.

### 6. You'll get inspired.

No matter what your motive is in considering Rotary, the meetings you attend will likely include a guest speaker or performance. I’ve seen programs including amazing singers, legitimately awesome circus clowns, environmentalists, coaches — you name it.

There’s no telling what you might see at a Rotary meeting, but you will get a quality presentation about something that matters to a bunch of people in your town. Isn’t that enough?

### 7. You'll put your energy where it's really needed.

Here’s (perhaps) the best part of getting involved in Rotary: these clubs freakin’ need you like crazy! We need leaders from every community in the world to join Rotary and amplify our impact.

Also, insider tip: if you’re under 40, some of the club’s traditions might make you feel like you’re experiencing a throwback to another time — in a good way. There could be singing. There could be a public display of giving “Happy Bucks.” There could be a moment of silence for one our own that’s left this sweet world. But no matter what, it will be a real, genuine human experience. And you’ll be better for having been there. I promise.



*By: Ryan Bell, a 7 year Rotary member. He will tell you about the salad bar if you really want to know. He is the owner of Locals Love Us, Iowa City.*