

Rotarians in Action




March/April 2025

My Rotary "Why?"

By Angie Swanson, District 5630 RAGAS Chair

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My Rotary "Why" and "Why Still" pretty much come down to two things: service and family. My journey in Rotary began in 2018 when a random stranger walked into my place of work and asked me if I wanted to join Rotary. I had no idea what Rotary was at the time, but when she (*Melisa Owens*, Imperial) followed the question up with "We only have three members, and our club is on the verge of dissolving," I didn't need to hear anything more and promised to be there and bring my husband.

Anyone who knows me knows that I am not the best at saying "NO." It's actually a fault of mine that I am working on, but at that time I didn't even hesitate. My husband *Michal* and I attended the next Rotary meeting and the next and the next. I still knew very little about Rotary, so when *DG Scott McLaughlin* visited our club months later I remember thinking to myself that it was pretty cool how the governor of the State of Nebraska  would come to small town Imperial to visit with us.

The club worked hard to come up with fun projects and fundraisers to help us grow our membership while serving our community. Within a couple of years, the membership had tripled, and the club was thriving.

In 2018, I received a call from then District Governor, Bob Taylor, asking me if I would like to be the first Anti-Human Trafficking Chair for District 5630. I bet you all can guess what I said. "Of course!"

For those who don't know, I graduated from UNK with a Criminal Justice degree in 2006. Besides working for a short time at the Buffalo County Attorney's Office in Kearney, I hadn't been able to use my degree, so I was very excited by Bob's offer. Not only would I get to serve others but would get to "fight crime" in my own little way.

I knew very little about human trafficking at that time, so I dove in headfirst and spent hours upon hours each day researching this horrible crime. The statistics were devastating, and I knew that this opportunity didn't just fall into my lap; God steered me there for a reason. I immediately joined the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS) and began planning projects and other ways to help in the fight to end human trafficking.

Awareness is one of the best tools we can provide to our communities and youth, so through coordination with the local McCook Public Schools we brought in a mobile human trafficking truck and trailer to McCook. Four hundred students passed through its doors during the week, and hundreds were able to visit it at Norris Park during Heritage Days Celebration that weekend. The trailer went on to many different communities in the district, state and all over the country, educating the public about this dangerous crime.

Through my research and reaching out to different organizations, my Rotary heart grew and grew, and I developed so many friendships along the way. I have had the luxury of attending conferences and training all over the country, and I leave each one with a handful of new friends and "family." Some of my favorite people in the world are my Rotary family members.

I love that Rotary is a passion my husband and I can share together, and since Rotary is a worldwide organization, I have potential friends and family all over the world with service hearts just like me!

Angie Swanson

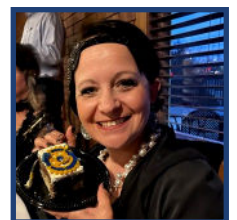
District Chair, [RAGAS](#)

(Rotary Action Group Against Slavery)

McCook Rotary Club

AngieSwanson@hotmail.com

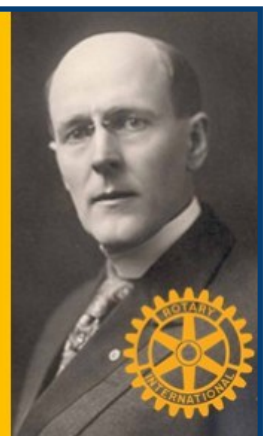
308-352-6016



*Rotary changes us
and those we serve.*

*I believe we can change the
world one life at a time.*

Paul Harris



Minden Students Learn about the Dangers of Human Trafficking

The Interact Club of Minden was pleased to welcome Trooper *Timothy Flick* of the Nebraska State Patrol to Minden High School on February 13, 2025. Trooper Flick spoke about the very serious problem of human trafficking. The presentation, which was completely arranged by students in the Interact Club of Minden, lasted slightly over an hour. In that short amount of time, students in grades 7 through 12 were exposed to the harsh realities of human trafficking.

Many of the students in attendance had previously stated that they were not too concerned about human trafficking, making comments such as “Doesn’t happen around Minden” and “Isn’t happening to me or anyone I care about.”

Trooper Flick presented the students with many eye-opening statistics. For example, students learned that human trafficking is in fact happening around Minden, including an Interstate 80 trafficking hotspot and an incident in Doniphan where a teen was trafficking several of his classmates.

Trooper Flick went on to explain that our cell phones present a trafficking risk that is even closer to home. He showed the students how dangerous cell phones can be if not used responsibly. He explained that every minute of the day there are 500,000 predators on the internet just waiting for people to fall into their traps.

“Not my circus, not my monkeys,” Trooper Flick stated when describing the attitude most people have towards human trafficking. He went on to explain that pretending that trafficking does not exist or that it is not happening around us only worsens the situation.



The **Interact Club of Minden** leadership team poses for a photo with State Trooper *Timothy Flick*. Left to right: *Frank Kovaks* (treasurer), *Danica Schoone* (president), *Tim Flick*, *Natali Uribe* (vice president), and *Hallee Schoone* (secretary)

Trooper Flick showed students the statistics from 2023 in which the State Patrol received 113 signals, leading to 23 cases and 33 trafficking victims. He estimated that the true number of victims is much higher.

Thanks to Trooper Flick’s wonderful presentation, our students left school that day with a much deeper understanding of human trafficking. They now realize that it does happen close to home, and that it really could happen to them or someone they love.

The Interact Club of Minden is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Minden. It is a community service organization, and its members are students from Minden High School.

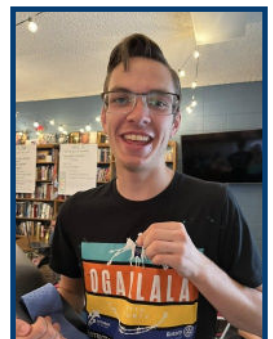
By Danica Schoone, Interact Club of Minden

MORE INTERACT NEWS



The **St. Paul Interact Club**, led by Rotarian *Riley Peters*, recently showed up in force and helped Rotary members pick up trash over several miles of Highway 92.

After receiving a Paul Harris award at District Conference for his work with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, **Central Nebraska Interactor** *Eli Rogers* re-gifted it to the District Interact Chair *Nicole Badgley* for “all she has done for us.”





Welcome!



Arnold club president *Buzz Lohmiller*, with new member, *Sally Hilderbrant*



4/10 **Holdrege Club** Membership Chair *Karen Stute*, New Member *Kristine Jacobson*, Sponsor *Chadd Jacobson*, and President *Dan Janssen*



Grand Island's clever Facebook introduction of two new members - *Lindsey Jurgens* and *Nicole Campbell*



4/16 **Holdrege** members *Angela Groothuis-Yung*, *Micah Huyser*, and club president *Dan Janssen* welcome new member *Brent Skiles* (second from right).



4/17 Another new member for **Holdrege**: *Cory O'Brien* (second from left), pictured with *Karen Stute*, *Robert McCormick* and club president *Dan Janssen*



McCook Rotary Club PE *Ronda Graff* and President *Angie Swanson* welcome new member *Elli Osborne*.



4/24 **Holdrege** gains another member, *Staci Trumble*, sponsored by *Roger Allmand*.



Welcome More New Members!



New Members for **O'Neill**, pictured with Club President *Marvin Fritz*.

Left - *Kylie Debus*, Center - *Tiffany Nicolaus*; Right - *Elliot Neuheisel*

More members added between February 15 and April 30 (per DACdb):

Cambridge	Gloria Hilton Michelle Raburn	North Platte Sunrise	Ryan Purdy
Chadron	Cali Frankovic	O'Neill	Jill Everitt John Kozyra Lauren Kozyra Carol Sibbel
Gothenburg	Scott Bahe Patrick Moore	Valentine	Erin Miller
Kearney Dawn	Timothy Burkink		
McCook	Vincent Allen Bruce Hoffman		

MAGICAL MOMENTS



Culture Night at **Arnold Rotary**, held every 5th Thursday of the month, In January, they learned fun facts and trivia about Mexico, and enjoyed tabletop nachos and mock margaritas. Next up: Italy.



From **PDG Deb McCaslin, Broken Bow Area**, with her grant writing team in Zimbabwe. "We are submitting a second grant, still focusing on the girls; bore holes and girl-friendly toilets for four secondary schools."

Rotary Youth Exchange As a Membership Strategy

We know and appreciate the impact of both our outgoing and incoming Rotary Youth Exchange (RYE) Students. They not only broaden their own world, preparing them to be compassionate leaders and citizens of their own country, they broaden our world. We delight in their intelligence and enthusiasm, in learning about their nation's customs, costumes, and food, and in discovering how they view our country—and our state.

But we may not appreciate how they can also influence the growth of our clubs.

Paula Witt, who has successfully led our RYE program for many years, explains how clubs can use RYE as a membership strategy. Here's a summary of a PowerPoint presentation she frequently uses.

Students have connections!

Representing the Best of the Best, they impact their schools, homes, communities, clubs and churches, locally and abroad

RYE is the Gold Standard for Study Abroad opportunities, receiving an A+ for our worldwide support system, safety and security, and cost and investment.

Because **Rotary is the only true Exchange program** (with a one-for-one exchange), the impact is doubled.

RYE families are potential members.

RYE and hosting are life-changing experiences for families. They experience and appreciate Rotary's investment in their students. They are grateful and proud when their students mature into awesome young adult leaders. Often, they become host families themselves. Younger siblings are also potential exchangers.

As RYE introduces families to Rotarians and Rotary values, parents become prime candidates for a turnaround investment by becoming involved in Rotary.

RYE students are catalysts.

RYE students are ahead of most of us in tech, IT, and communications, so we can learn from them. As someone has said, "They are already on the train While we are still standing on the platform trying to read the destination board."

RYE students are already shaping the future. They can drag us along—or we can join as partners.

They may move faster, but we know all the shortcuts, and they benefit from our wisdom and life skills.

So what can you do?

Talk with someone who has had experience as an RYE student. March's District "Lunch and Learn" included several District Rotarians who had RYE experience, either as a student or a host family.

Dena Beck, our District Learning Facilitator and host of the webinar, became involved with RYE because of its excellent reputation, first as a host parent then as the parent of an RYE student to Spain. When the time was right, she joined Rotary.

DG Lore Beckius was an incoming RYE student from Ecuador. Two of RYE Chair *Paula Witt's* sons were RYE students.

Lori Hinze, McCook Rotary, served as an RYE counselor. *PDG Bob Taylor*, Holdrege Rotary, went to Denmark as an RYE student. *Andy Raun* is President of Hastings Noon, which has sponsored many students.

Todd Madison, Valentine, who serves as our District RYE Inbound Coordinator, was an RYE student to South Africa. *Tonya Brown*, Grand Island Noon, has hosted an RYE student.

Over the years, 90 percent of District 5630 clubs have been involved in RYE. Take the opportunity to speak with a Rotarian with RYE experience. Learn how it has benefited their students, their local school, their community—and their club.

See Paula's contact information below. She'll be happy to answer your questions about the RYE program.

Paula Witt

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Hastings Sunrise Rotary Club
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402-460-0005





WOW! NOW **THAT** WAS A *Celebration!*

DG Lorena Beckius and her Ogallala club's 2025 District Conference Committee, chaired by Sarah Havermann and Brooke Robertson, outdid themselves in planning this year's District Conference.

Counting special guests and Rotary Youth Exchange students, ten countries—Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, India, Mexico, Romania, Spain, Ukraine, and the United States—were represented at the Conference, making it a true international occasion.

It featured American dignitaries like Past Rotary International President Mark Maloney, with his wife Gay; Nebraska Secretary of State Robert Evnen, and District Governors from Colorado and Montana, Whitney Smith and Shawna Secker; and Davanne Moul, Senior National Sales Director for Mary Kay.

PDG Scott McLaughlin has posted an excellent comprehensive review of the District Conference on the [District 5630 website](#). It also includes links to the presentations. You can [view or download photos](#) from the District Conference, taken by Ogallala Rotarian David Fowler.

District Conference Highlights



Arnold Rotary - Small Club of the Year



Dedication of the Rotary Peace Pole at the Ogallala YMCA. The international [Peace Pole Project](#), with the message "May Peace Prevail on Earth," emphasizes Rotary's goal of building a culture of peace throughout the world.

PDG Deb McCaslin, Rotarian of the Year, with PDG Neeraj Bhatnagar from D-3011, India



Holdrege - Large Club of the Year, represented by Membership Chair Karen Stute, President Dan Janssen, Robert McCormick, Secretary Lane Schulz, and Treasurer Kim Klein

The generous sponsors of the 2025 District Conference, with DG Lorena Beckius (on the right).





Congratulations to these Paul Harris Fellows

Continuing the legacy of our founder, the Paul Harris Fellow program recognizes individuals who contribute, or who have contributions made in their name, of \$1,000 to The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International. The honor was established in 1957 to show appreciation for contributions that support our Annual Fund, PolioPlus, or an approved Foundation grant.



North Platte Sunrise Club
President *Aaron Halling* presented Paul Harris Fellow pins to *Dr. Jobeth Halling*, *Kurt Pieper*, *Stuart Shepherd* (+1) and *Ron Roberts* (+6).



Ogallala Club President *Jessop Adams* presented *Jami Fleet* and *Travis Byers* with their first Paul Harris and *LuRae Hagan* with her Paul Harris +6!

O'Neill Club President *Marvin Fritz* with Paul Harris +6 recipient *Cindy Cole*.



Other Recent Ogallala Recipients: *Susie Martinson*, *Ariana Mungia*, *Jessop Adams* (+1), and *Teresa Delahunty* (+1)

THANK YOU TO OUR 2024-25 DISTRICT 5630 SPONSORS



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TRIANGLE BAR RANCH

2024-25 RI President: *Stephanie Urchick* | District Governor: *Lorena Beckius*

Send your club news items and photos to Newsletter Editor *Cheryl Bryan* (daa@5630mail.org)