

Overview of The Rotary Foundation

Through the award-winning Rotary Foundation, we protect children from polio. We fight waterborne diseases and help refugees get health care. We promote peace and create safe environments for mothers and children. We help communities recover after disasters.

All of this is built by generous contributions from our supporters, which allow us to maintain and expand our life-changing programs around the world. The Foundation transforms donations into service projects in which we unite to take action and make a lasting impact.

From the PolioPlus program to Rotary Peace Fellowships, the Foundation has used billions of dollars in contributions to reach our humanitarian goals.

Our mission is to promote world understanding, goodwill, and peace by improving people's health, supporting quality education, protecting the environment, and alleviating poverty.

The Rotary Foundation supports this mission through projects that impact lives close to home and around the world. Some key events in our history:

1917

Arch Klumph proposes an endowment

At the 1917 convention, outgoing Rotary president Arch Klumph proposes establishing an endowment “for the purpose of doing good in the world.” An initial contribution of \$26.50 sets in motion the work that has transformed millions of lives worldwide.

1928

The Rotary Foundation is formally named

At the 1928 convention, the Foundation is named and a Board of Trustees is created.

1947

The Foundation creates its first program

Our first ongoing program promotes international understanding by supporting graduate studies in other countries. Some early participants are from Norway, Australia, and the United States.

1965

Matching Grants are launched

For the first time, the Foundation has a regular program to fund club and district projects.

1979

Rotary begins its fight against polio

The first Health, Hunger and Humanity (3-H) grant is used to purchase polio vaccine to immunize 6 million children in the Philippines.

1985

Rotary launches the PolioPlus program

The “plus” in PolioPlus initially refers to other vaccines administered along with the polio vaccine. Today, it reflects the fact that the infrastructure, fundraising, and advocacy methods developed for the polio eradication effort are also used to fight other infectious diseases.

1990

The Foundation establishes SHARE

The Foundation begins using SHARE, a way to allocate a portion of Annual Fund contributions to districts so they can fund the Foundation programs of their choice.

1999

The Rotary Peace Centers program is created

The Rotary Peace Centers program is founded to offer fellowships that will develop leaders who can build peace and prevent and resolve conflict in their communities and around the world.

2020

Programs of scale grants are launched

These competitive grants focus on finding comprehensive solutions to large-scale issues.

Financial structure

The Rotary Foundation is organized as a public charity that is operated exclusively for charitable purposes and is governed by a [Board of Trustees](#).

As a global organization that operates in nearly every country, Rotary takes stewardship of its funds seriously. The Foundation has received the highest possible score from [Charity Navigator](#) — 100 of 100 points — for our strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency.

The Foundation supports humanitarian grants and programs including:

- The PolioPlus Fund
- Rotary grants
- Rotary Peace Fellowships