

RI President Rassin Encourages Growth in Rotaract

By Stephen Beer

Rotary Zone 33 recently held its annual leadership seminar in Greensboro, North Carolina. District leaders participate in programs about membership, public image, and The Rotary Foundation. This year's featured speaker was incoming Rotary International President Barry Rassin.

President Barry is such a down-to-earth speaker. He speaks from the heart and really 'is the inspiration'. One of his goals this year is for Rotary to double the number of Rotaract clubs and the number of Rotaractors. He called Rotaract over the long term 'Rotary's secret weapon' for increasing membership with young professionals.

There are two types of Rotaract Clubs. Institutional-based clubs are found at colleges and universities. Community-based Rotaract clubs can be situated anywhere. Rotaract is open to membership to adults aged 18 to 30 years old.

Rotaractors are ideal candidates to become future Rotarians. They have similar values as Rotarians, as they want to serve their community and enjoy being with other like-minded people. They have also already bought into the Rotary message and they believe in what we do as Rotarians. In other words, the recruiting process is very simple. President Barry said that only about 4% of Rotaractors eventually become Rotarians. He said they typically seek a Rotary Club that is much like their Rotaract Club. They like the informality, the low cost, and the involvement of family in club activities. However, Rotaractors also appreciate and admire the traditions of Rotary and the wisdom of more-experienced Rotarians. Helping start a Rotaract club has so much potential to increase your club's impact, expand your influence, and bring even more energy and passion to your club. Rotaractors have a lot of talent when it comes to public image and branding as well as innovation in terms of service projects and events. A partnership with Rotaract can do great things for your club.

Having a community-based Rotaract Club is a suitable strategy for Rotary Clubs that are challenged or not accepting of young professionals in their own club. Most Rotaract clubs around the world are community-based, not institutional based. Rotaractors are also encouraged by Rotary International to become dual members in both Rotary and Rotaract. In other words, current members of the Rotaract club could also join you as Rotarians.

Some tips for starting and engaging a Rotaract Club:

- Contact Alex Ritchie. Alex is a member of a Rotaract Club and a Rotary Club (yes, this is allowed), and is our district's Rotaract Chair. Alex can be reached at aritchie@mymail.vcu.edu or (804) 366-6418. Alex can help you with your planning and share best practices with you.
- Consider working with other Rotary Clubs in your area to start a community-based Rotaract Club.
- Invite the Rotaractors to Rotary meetings, service projects and other Rotary activities. When doing a service project, invite the Rotaractors to help lead the project, not just provide the labor.
- Create networking opportunities for the Rotaract members. They are interested in mentoring and making connections to grow their careers. Your members will benefit greatly from this relationship, too.