

Alphabet Soup: Surviving the District Conference, A Novice's Guide

Congratulations! You've become a Rotarian and have made the decision to attend the DC, where you'll meet the RI Rep, various PDG's, RYE, RYLA, Interact, Rotaract, maybe even the GSE, and lots of PHFs. The DGE will have a reception for the PE's and SE's (all of whom attended PETS in February), then become DG, ushering in the Centennial, and allowing the DGN to become the DGE, so the DG can rest on his laurels as another PDG.

Whoa! Did you just join a secret society? Who's going to teach you the passwords and secret handshake and do you have to wear funny hats? Well, there's none of that but, Rotary does have a fair amount of organization which has evolved to manage 1.2 million members in 166 countries around the world. Like any other large organization, a lot of shorthand has led to a nearly incomprehensible, private language. This article is intended to help new Rotarians orient themselves and is specifically directed to the members of The Rotary eClub of the Southwest, USA survive the District Conference (DC) without their heads imploding!

Rotary International (RI) is 100 years old in 2004-2005, making this the Centennial year, usually referred to as just the Centennial. As the oldest service club in the world (some of the others you might think of are "Fraternal Organizations"), Rotary is proud of its history and accomplishments, and will spend the entire year celebrating them.

As a crowning achievement of the first century, 2005 is the year in which RI will help eradicate polio from the face of the planet. You have become a member of a club that has helped to remove forever the threat of "infantile paralysis", which crippled so many children in the 1950's as Rotary entered the second half of its first century. While polio hasn't had a major outbreak in the United States for 40 years, it is still endemic in parts of Asia and Africa, and no children are safe until all children are safe.

Organization

Each individual Rotarian is a member of a Rotary Club: it is the club that is a chartered member of Rotary International. Our club will be chartered by RI during the conference this year. I'm listing the organizational elements below, however, for practical purposes, most of us don't deal with anything beyond our club or district.

Rotary Club: A group of 10 to several hundred people who meet weekly for fellowship, service, and a program, headed by a president. Most clubs require 20 members to charter: once a club gets "too" big, another club is formed from existing members and/or new Rotarians. Once in a long while, a club becomes too small to operate and closes. The first Rotary club in Arizona is the Rotary Club of Phoenix, referred to as the Phoenix 100 because it was the 100th club that was chartered. Our president is Judy Taunt of Show Low.

Rotary District: A geographical group of 40 to 50 clubs, headed by a governor. The district functions as a practical funnel between the clubs and RI and many programs are administered at the district level, like RYE, GSE, or matching grants. (It's very hard to do this one piece at a time.) We're sponsored and hosted by, but not a member of, District 5510. District 5510's current governor is Greg Podd, of Phoenix Camelback.

Zone: A geographical grouping of 10 to 20 districts. Zones are grouped in pairs, headed by a RI Director who is a member of the RI Board of Directors. District 5510 is in Zone 25 and PDG Rodger Wagner will be a director beginning next year.

Rotary International: All 31,000 Rotary Clubs worldwide are directly chartered by Rotary International, headquartered in Evanston, IL. Evanston is a suburb of Chicago, where Paul Harris and a group of friends and business associates started the first Rotary Club in 1905. RI is headed by a President, who is a member of a Rotary Club somewhere in the world. The current RI President is Jonathan Majiyagbe from Nigeria.

People You'll Meet

Rotary changes its entire leadership structure every year: this means that in addition to current officers of the club or district, there are a lot of "has beens" around. Mel prefers that I refer to them as "Tarnished Brass" – I think that's the Navy in him talking. All the leadership positions are typically referred to by an acronym. I'm covering mostly the ones you're likely to see at District Conference.

Zone and RI Positions	
RIP	Rotary International President: nobody uses this . . I wonder why?
PR	President's Rep(resentative): as the RI President can't be at all District Conferences: a designated PDG represents him.
RID	Rotary International Director: heads up two RI Zones.
RIDE	Rotary International Director Elect: the zone 25/26 RIDE is PDG Rodger Wagner of District 5510: you can read more about him on the district website.
District Positions	
DG	District Governor – Current
DGE	District Governor Elect – the person who will become DG on July 1
DGN	District Governor Nominee – will become DGE on July 1 and DG next July 1
PDG	Past District Governor: anyone who once was DG. Mel Taunt, of our club, is a PDG, as is Jono's father. (I'm afraid to spell out his name because I'm having trouble spelling Jonathan correctly.)
Club Positions	
PP	Past President
PE	President Elect: Next year's president – all Arizona PEs are trained once a year at the annual PETS: President Elect Training Seminar.
SE	Secretary Elect: ditto except for SETS, which is conducted with PETS: they share a number of programs and have specialized training for administration.
Other Titles	
PHF	Paul Harris Fellows: any person, Rotarian or not, who has donated at least \$1000 to the Rotary Foundation. Funds can also be donated on behalf of a person: as far as I know without specifically asking, PHF members of this club include Judy Taunt, Mel Taunt, and Karen Naranjo. We can ask Gene.
PHS	Paul Harris Sustaining Member: Any person who donates at least \$100 per year to the Foundation. Many people do it at \$25/quarter: you can pay it with your dues and the Secretary will get it to the Foundation, or directly from the RI Website (that is a completely different subject).
Major Donor	Any person who has given an outright gift of more than \$10,000 to the

	Foundation.
Benefactor	Rotary Foundation Benefactor: someone who has included a gift of at least \$1000 to the Foundation in their will.
Bequestor	A member of the Bequest Society: a benefactor who has willed a gift of more than \$10,000 to the Foundation.
This is all very confusing: it is theoretically possible to be a member of the Bequest Society and not to have a Paul Harris fellowship. Many Rotarians are sustaining members without being fellows (though after 10 years of sustaining . . .)	

Programs You'll Hear About

One of the benefits of belonging to a large service organization like RI, is that you are able to participate in and contribute to programs that are much larger than your own club can manage. At the DC, every program gets its 5 minutes: after a while, your head can begin to swim. As a person, you're probably more interested in some programs than in others. As a member of a Rotary club, you are likely to be asked to work with any one program for a year. If you're good at it and you like it, you can chair the committee forever!

RYLA: Rotary Youth Leadership Awards: A camp for outstanding high school, focusing on leadership development, ethics, and team building. District 5510 had 75 full scholarship RYLA delegates this year in Heber.

RYE: Rotary Youth Exchange: RI has two different foreign exchange programs for high school students. Our district participates actively in the inbound and outbound academic year exchange and sends/receives about 10-15 students each year. District 5510's 11(?) inbound youth exchange students will be at the conference.

Ambassadorial Scholars: Stipends awarded to college age students for 1 to 2 years of study abroad, to further international peace and understanding. Ellen Whetten was sponsored by the eClub and will be going to Italy to study.

Interact: A Rotary service club for high school students: each club is sponsored and guided by one or more Rotary Clubs. Phoenix Arcadia sponsors Camelback High School's Interact club, which sent 3 students to RYLA. This is a way of growing baby Rotarians: whether these students ever join a Rotary club or not, Interact fosters ethics, leadership and a commitment to service in this critical population (hmmm . . . where did that pomposity come from?)

Rotaract: A Rotary service club for young adults aged 18-30: whether at the college level or beyond, which fosters Rotary ideals. These clubs have lower costs and a big emphasis on hands-on projects. This is also part of growing Rotarians, and fosters Rotary fellowship in the specific age groups (so they don't have to hang around with us old people.) Some of these clubs are at colleges and universities – District 5510 sponsors one at ASU, and there are clubs forming at SCC and the UofA, and some are "community based" – the East Valley Rotaract Club is the first community-based club in Arizona.

Youth Conference: This year, DG Greg Podd is sponsoring a 1 day conference for all Rotary youth at the same time as our District conference. Attending will be RYE, RYLA, Interact, Rotaract, and I suspect some children of Rotarians, from across the district. This is a developing project to foster community and networking between all young Rotarians in the district.

Polio Plus: The fundraising and service project to complete eradication of polio. Last year, Rotary raised \$80 million dollars (payable over 3 years) to receive a \$25 million dollar grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. This money will be used in conjunction with the World Health Organization to immunize all children in the remaining 7 countries where polio remains endemic. (One sad note: more than two thirds of the

240 polio cases reported this year – 170 – are from Nigeria, home of our International President.)

Gift of Life (GOL): A program of Rotary members and clubs, but not RI specifically, that provides life saving heart surgery to children worldwide. Phoenix Arcadia Rotary, where I became a Rotarian, has 3 past and the current president of Arizona Gift of Life as members. Dr. Dudley Halpe, a member of PAR, performs the surgeries himself.

The Rotary Foundation: The Rotary Foundation (TRF) is the way that Rotary Clubs and Rotarians pool their resources to provide more money than any individual can do. Money donated by a member or a club to TRF is held and invested for 3 years and then returned to the district along with accrued interest for district projects. All operating costs of the fund are paid out of the income from the fund: \$1.00 sent to the Foundation always returns more than that to the district, though that depends on the markets.

The foundation and all its programs is a too big for this article (my hands hurt): you should read PDG Rodney Mazinter's program from 06/07/04 for more information.

I could go on forever (even not including the Foundation) – there are many more programs than can be squeezed into one weekly meeting. This simply covers some of the most likely terms you'll hear at the District Conference *next week(!)* I'm looking forward to seeing you all there.

Yours in Rotary Fellowship (aka With Loving Kindness),

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