

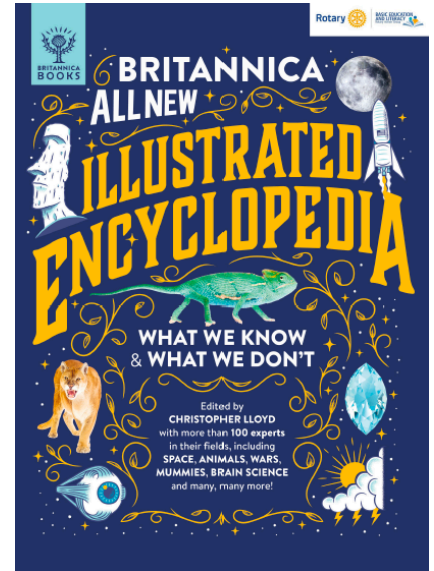
May 2021 Newsletter

BELRAG Announces Initiative to Provide Quality Education Resource

BELRAG is offering an exceptional opportunity for Rotarians to support education your local communities or enhance your international projects. Through a partnership with the world renown and respected Encyclopedia Britannica, Rotarians can acquire the new, one volume *Britannica Illustrated Encyclopedia: What We Know and What We Don't*. The book is a valuable resource for all learners, age 8-108. Enhanced by engaging photos and graphics, the text guides the reader through topics on the Universe, Earth, Matter, Life, Humans, Ancient & Medieval Times, Modern Times, and Today & Tomorrow.

This special edition is branded for Rotary - including a Rotary logo on the cover and, inside, a **special message by RI President Shekhar Mehta** and information about Rotary our world-wide commitment to service. Space will be available for your club or district to include a bookplate acknowledging your support. **Every order will include a donation to our Rotary Foundation!**

Incoming RI President Shekhar Mehta recently shared: *"Basic education and literacy is directly linked to Supporting Education - one of Rotary's seven areas of focus - that expands and creates opportunities for addressing other socioeconomic issues. By improving available basic education and literacy rates in our communities, Rotarians are able to have a broader impact by helping to reduce poverty, improve health, encourage community and economic development, and promote peace. Rotarians are encouraged to be people of action and support activities and training to improve education for all children and literacy for children and adults."*



This incredible opportunity is offered to Rotarians in all clubs and district who want to have an impact on education. Access to engaging, well researched, and interesting information is key to gaining the attention of readers, key to inviting them to read more and to learn more. These books are a perfect education to support your own community programs or to supplement education resources for international projects. Consider:

- donate copies to local schools for use in classrooms or to supplement library resources
- include as resources for school or library international projects
- substitute this encyclopedia project for an existing dictionary project to enhance learning
- use books as awards for literacy projects supported by your club
- donate to local shelters for families who are homeless or family-oriented women's shelters
- **request District Grants to support club funds to implement a District-wide project with greater impact**
- encourage parents and grandparents to purchase as a holiday gift for children in their lives

The basics:

- **Cost: \$20 (USD) per copy** - a substantial discount from retail price
- Each book is specially branded for Rotary - includes an endorsement by RI President Shekhar Mehta
- **Supplemental lessons** will be offered by BELRAG on a monthly basis - a great resource for classroom teachers or independent learning
- Each purchase includes a **donation to the Rotary Foundation**
- **Purchases must be in lots of 100 (or more) books**
- **Free shipping** anywhere in the world
- **Orders must be received by 15 August 2021** (delivery in late September)
- To order: <https://www.litrag.org/encyclopedia>

We challenge each club or district to get involved in this unique opportunity to support education in your community or enhance your international projects. For more information, contact Past RI Director and Past BELRAG Chair John Thorne rotary.tas@gmail.com

BELRAG Annual General Meeting

The BELRAG Annual General Meeting will be held virtually. This is an opportunity for BELRAG members to learn more about projects and partnerships in which our Action Group is involved and provide input for future projects. Officers and Board of Directors for 2021-22 will be confirmed. This year's Annual Meeting will be held twice, to accommodate multiple time zones and schedules.

BELRAG Annual General Meeting Registration information

Jun 24, 2021 08:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada) Check your corresponding time for your area - (afternoon for Europe, Africa, evening for India)

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85669493252?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85669493252?pwd=VW16TmdlbnREZzlya1psZmFBN1lBQT09)

[pwd=VW16TmdlbnREZzlya1psZmFBN1lBQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85669493252?pwd=VW16TmdlbnREZzlya1psZmFBN1lBQT09)

BELRAG Annual General Meeting (2) Registration information

Time: Jun 24, 2021 20:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada) Check your corresponding time for your area - (morning of 25 June for Australia, Asia)

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82634737828?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82634737828?pwd=VW16TmdlbnREZzlya1psZmFBN1lBQT09)

[pwd=VW16TmdlbnREZzlya1psZmFBN1lBQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82634737828?pwd=VW16TmdlbnREZzlya1psZmFBN1lBQT09)



Visit the BELRAG Virtual Booth at the RI Convention!!!!

Black History Month Literacy Initiative

For Black History Month, a time of acknowledging the many facets of Black achievements, struggles and present-day conditions, the Rotaract Club of Willowdale set out to bring ample awareness for the important month, and beyond. Our team of young professionals decided that forming a literacy program exclusive to young students in a high-risk neighbourhood would be most fitting. The school we partnered with was Willow Park Junior Secondary school, where we had the pleasure of working with grade 5 & 6 students for just over three weeks. Our team consisted of 8 Rotaractors and 2 Rotarians, With our members paired together, each group worked with four students during the course of this program. We shared stories on African and Caribbean diaspora through folk tales and modern-day storybooks about Diversity, Inclusion, Slavery and Civil Rights, just to name a few.



Along with executing our literacy program, our Rotaract Club was successful in raising over \$700.00 in pursuit of purchasing Rotarian Andre A Lewis' book *Excited to Serve*, which Willow Park Junior Secondary School has been gifted.

In concluding our first literacy project with much success we want to thank each Rotarian, Rotaractor and donor that contributed their time and money into our vision. We look forward to executing more literacy-focused work in the future!

For more information or to order *Excited to Serve*, contact <https://www.literarytools.org/>

Amy Taghavi

President of the Rotaract Club of Willowdale

How is your club involved in supporting literacy and education projects? Share your stories through the BELRAG newsletter. Articles should be 500 words and include a photo or two. Send to: Carolyn Johnson at cfj2@mac.com

Distance Learning Resources

We have lost yet another year for the pandemic and undoubtedly, children are the most affected. Never have we been more aware of the vulnerabilities of children and communities at risk at such scale. Never has there been a time to redefine our work to support our children to continue their education and build on their aspirations! In a recent BELRAG newsletter, we spotlighted the work of CLT India, a non-profit who partners with Rotarians in India to provide quality technology programs to support and enhance education. CLT is making available their entire digital STEM content suite in all the 3 languages for grades 5th-10th grades free of cost. The Jigi Jigi App can be downloaded from the Google Play store. Help CLT and Rotarians spread the word and the good work of thousands of individuals and teachers that have made this resource possible! In parallel, the team is relentlessly working with new communities to build awareness and confidence, and share the resources with training sessions.

The app is available to students in multiple languages for use in India. It is also available in English, so has application in developing countries where English is used for instruction (or taught as a subject). CLT has a proven record of success partnering with Rotary Clubs across India and welcomes opportunities to collaborate with Rotarians supporting education and literacy projects in other developing countries.

Bhagya Rangachar - Founder and CEO, CLT India

bhagya@cltindia.org



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Rehabilitation of a 113 years old Government School Building by Satellite Club of Rotary Bangalore West

In June 2020, the Rotary Bangalore West sponsored a Satellite club under the chairmanship of Rtn. Muralikrishnan with 10 members. Within six month this satellite club transformed a 113 years old Government school in Tiptur built on a 1586 Sq.ft land donated by the Late Maharaja of Mysore His Highness Nalvadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar into a happy school. They refurbished the school building, repairing all the doors, windows, blackboards, post repair chemical cleaning and repainting the entire school building. They also installed the Rotary 4 way test board to remind the students and teachers the importance of imbibing high ethical values in life. This happy school project was executed with a budget of Rs.4,50,000 (USD \$6250) pooling the amount from their internal resources. They intend establishing e-learning centre under our "e-Shala" project soon. This is the magic of Rotary and is an example of how "Grow Rotary" campaign could expand our reach to make a positive impact to our community.

Rtn. Muralikrishnan, Satellite Club of RC Bangalore West



Community Assessment: Five Common Sense Principles for Doing Good-Better!

Investing in a community assessment is not only a requirement for all Global Grants, it is the foundation for developing quality projects that have positive impact, are sustainable and are embraced by the community we intend to help. A very helpful resource, *Doing Good, Says Who? stories from volunteers, Non-profits, donors and those they want to help*, by Connie Newton and Fran Early use real tales from the field to illustrate the positive and the, often, unintended consequences of good intentions. Their approach is common sense and based on really listening to the people we hope to support. These five principles for Doing Good, Better! include:

- 1) **Respect and Value the People.** The best outcomes for the work of organizations are related to how they view the “beneficiaries” of their programs. Organizations that value and respect people describe their beneficiaries as people with agency, assets and priorities. Organizations that view beneficiaries as objects describe people based on what they lack. They focus on problems and needs. Recognizing that the “beneficiaries” have their own intrinsic value and strength holds the key to positive outcomes. Beneficiaries with their own unique human gifts are protagonists and partners with resources, who have their own ideas and priorities. How do you view the beneficiaries of its programs?
- 2) **Build Trust through Relationship.** There is an old saying that work moves at the speed of trust. And trust is built through creating mutually respectful relationships. When trust is built with respected and valued partners each has something to contribute to the construction of a mutually desired outcome. It means being present to one another and a lot of listening. Trust is behavior over time. It is intentional and takes months. The interaction yields the experience, recognition, and appreciation of one another’s value that constitutes trust. Trust becomes the foundation of open communication, the elasticity of give and take, and a welcoming attitude toward differences or conflicts as something normal to work through and learn from with one another on a mutual journey. Organizations that prioritize trust through relationships:
 - make safe spaces and regular time to listen to one another
 - value differing ideas
 - make plans collaboratively
- 3) **Do WITH rather than FOR.** Organizations working WITH people as peers, respect and appreciate the contribution of each party’s perspective and priorities, strengths and resources for creating change. Organizations working FOR people are most needed in situations of imminent peril or catastrophic events. Organizations doing FOR people living in poverty often perpetuate the status quo by giving handouts to those they see as lacking in resources and as objects of need. Doing WITH is a relationship between subjects, which fosters cooperation between contributing partners to bring a mutually desired change for good. Common practices include:
 - working together to define the outcomes of desired change
 - asset mapping
 - collaborative strategic planning and decision making
 - transparency in all financial work from budgets to fundraising
- 4) **Ensure Feedback and Accountability.** Regularly scheduled feedback is part of the process between trusted partners. In order to get the outcome partners have identified, there are usually lots of steps along the way. Those steps are taken by specific people or groups who are accountable for implementing them. When feedback and accountability are expected any problem that arises can be openly discussed, corrected, or altered. If the feedback and accountability are absent, trust is broken. Communication is no longer transparent nor constructive in reaching the agreed outcome. Some common practices are:
 - Regular reports on actions taken
 - Clear and consistent communication with internal and external stakeholders
 - Measurements for program progress
 - Gathering predetermined impact data
 - Reviewing well-defined financial data for staying on budget.
- 5) **Evaluate Every Step of the Way. Principles 4 and 5 are really sisters.** If feedback doesn’t get evaluated, the agreed upon outcomes may go off track and never be reached. Evaluation is constantly needed. Establishing mutual evaluation criteria is the basis for keeping the partnership on track. Examples include:

- Employees have work plans with check in points
- There are systems to regularly answer the questions: Is this working and how can we make it better – such as After Action Reviews, Regular review and discussion of performance metrics

Doing Good, Says Who? is required reading for all Peace Corps Volunteers assigned to Guatemala - and is a practical, thought provoking resource for anyone intending to get involved in service. Highly recommended to all Rotarians, whether beginning their first project or with great experience, as a must-read to help inform how to get involved with a community so that we are working with people rather than doing for them. <http://doinggoodsayswho.com/>

Free Reading Program Offers Demos at RI Virtual Convention

During the pandemic in particular, the Free Reading Program and the Rotary Clubs offering it have made a huge difference in the lives of children and families. Free Reading Program. The Free Reading Program, with over 350,000 online learners and seeing thousands of new learners sign up every month, is one of Rotary's most successful literacy program. This **kindergarten to grade six** comprehensive, **online** English literacy solution provides a fantastic way for any club, large or small to make a difference in their community or anywhere in the world.



Use this link to the [RI 2021 Convention](#) campus to sign up and try the Free Reading Program yourself! During the Rotary International Convention starting June 10, there will be daily demonstrations of the Free Reading Program to introduce it to more clubs, and to show you how fun, engaging, and effective it is for kids. This is particularly essential today, while so many children are still learning from home.

Looking for information or resources about Rotary BEL projects? Be sure to check the BELRAG website. You can find links to webinars, information about projects, examples of exemplary projects of Rotary clubs around the world. As a member of BELRAG, you can request expert advice or support for grant projects your club is considering. Be sure to keep your membership current by renewing it through the website.

www.BELRAG.org

Get Involved with BELRAG and Make a Difference!

BELRAG is seeking Rotarians and Rotaractors to get more involved and help us expand our outreach and impact. How can you get involved:

- **Newsletter:** help find great Rotary stories of impactful projects - local or international
- **Website:** oversee updating our website so that it remains current. No tech expertise is needed (we have a great webmaster to post the information) - someone to regularly review the site, share new information to be posted and move dated information.
- **Social media:** help keep develop and support BELRAG social media - share our good work!
- **Technical expertise:** participate with topic-focused teams to provide technical support for Rotary literacy/education projects and to share stories of program best practices. Join a team supporting early literacy/education, technology to support learning, students with disabilities, adult literacy, mentoring underperforming or out of school youth, girls education, library support or development, professional development for teachers.

To get involved, contact Carolyn Johnson cfj2@icloud.com