

August 2023 Newsletter

Welcome to our new Rotary year where **Education Creates Hope in the World**. The leadership of BELRAG is looking forward to a number of new and continuing initiatives to support Rotarians around the world in their local and international efforts to support basic education and literacy for children and adults.

Congratulations to BELRAG members elected at the Annual General Meeting to serve in leadership positions with the BELRAG Board. Please get in touch with leadership to let us know how we can support your clubs and program - and how we can best share your Rotary story of Education Creating Hope in the World.

BELRAG Officers

Continuing Board Members

Nancy Leonhardt Chair	RC Little Rock, USA	Anthony Bloom	RC Washington Global, USA
Brenda Parsons Vice Chair	RC Orpington District E-Club, UK	Enedelsey Escobar King	RC Panamá Norte, Panamá
Joan Littleford Secretary	RC Whitby, Canada	John Lawrence, PRID	RC Paddington Brisbane, Australia
Michele Bois-Gilbody, Treasurer	RC Freeport, USA	Ashok Mahajan	RC Mulumd, India
Sophie Bamwoyeraki Cadre Technical Advisor	RC Kasangati, Uganda	Debbie Pulido	RC Baguio South, Philippines
Carolyn Johnson Chair Emeritus	RC Yarmouth, USA	Kamal Sanghvi, PRID	RC Dhanvad, India
		Rachel Thwaites-Williams	RC Gros Islet, St Lucia



Welcome BELRAG's newest board member, **Carol Marcotte (RC Saco Bay Sunset, USA)**

Dr. Marcotte is a Senior Teaching Professor at the University of New England with experience as a teacher, building principal, and curriculum coordinator. Carol Immediate Past President of her Rotary Club where she championed projects to combat human trafficking and support relief efforts in Ukraine. She is a member of her District DEI Committee.

Our sincere thanks and appreciation is offered to **Courtney Doldron (RC Willowdale, Canada)** who steps down from the board after his six year tenure. Courtney has served as Secretary and is a consistent advocate for BELRAG, especially through his support of BEL projects throughout the Caribbean.



BELRAG is pleased to announce the 2023 BEL Awards. Four projects will be selected to receive an award of \$500 USD each. Share how your Rotary Club is improving the quality or access to education in your community. The application is straightforward: describe your project by telling how your club determined the need, explain what Rotarians (and community partners) are doing to address that need, and share results have come about as a result of your project. Let us know how Rotarians and Rotaractors are involved and how the project is promoted. Share a couple of photos (be sure to have permission to use photos) Submit entries to literacyaward@BELRAG.org by 30 September 2023 Examples of previous project awards, tips on submitting a successful project, and the evaluation rubric are posted on the BELRAG.org website.

Professional Expertise Teams - Get involved!

To better serve clubs in their efforts to promote basic education and literacy, BELRAG is forming professional expertise teams. These groups will collaborate to offer expertise and guidance within defined areas. They will work directly with Rotarians planning projects and grants as well as identifying resources of organizations and best practice within BEL, and examples of Rotary-led projects and programs. They will publish this information on our BELRAG website, share stories in the newsletter and create content for BELRAG webinars. Groups currently established include:

- **Adult Education:** contact Nancy Leonhardt wlrrotary@gmail.com
- **Technology in Education:** Tony Bloome tonybloome@gmail.com
- **Teacher Training:** Courtney Doldron csdoldron@rogers.com
- **Early Childhood Education:** Joan Littleford littlefordjoan@gmail.com

Additional groups are planned to focus on **tutoring/mentoring out of school youth, education for girls, libraries, education for children with disabilities, and language programs**. If you are interested in leading one of these groups, please contact wlrrotary@gmail.com

September 8 is International Literacy Day How will Your Club Promote Rotary's Commitment to Improving Literacy?

Each year on September 8, alongside the global community, Rotary celebrates **International Literacy Day**. The theme for 2023 is *"Promoting literacy for a world in transition: Building the foundation for sustainable and peaceful societies."* It aligns with USAID's commitment to building foundational education globally to foster a stronger, more sustainable world. Since 1967, **International Literacy Day** celebrations have taken place annually around the world to remind the public of the importance of literacy as a matter of dignity and human rights, and to advance a more literate and sustainable society. USAID supports literacy around the world all year long to ensure that all people – especially the most marginalized – have access to quality education in order to gain the foundational literacy skills they need to reach their fullest potential and be productive members of society.



Despite steady progress made across the globe, literacy challenges persist: at least 763 million young people and adults lacking basic literacy skills (2020). The recent COVID-19 crisis and other crises exacerbate the challenges. A rapidly changing global context took on a new meaning over the past years, hampering the literacy progress and widening inequalities across regions, countries, and populations. In low- and middle-income countries, the proportion of 10-year-old children who could not read and understand a simple text with comprehension has increased from 57 per cent in 2019 to an estimated 70 per cent in 2022.

International Literacy Day 2023 will be an opportunity to join efforts to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) on education and lifelong learning and to reflect on the role of literacy in building more inclusive, peaceful, just, and sustainable societies. In doing so, it will embrace the relationship between literacy and other areas of development. Literacy is central to the creation of such societies, while progress in other areas of development contributes to generating interest and motivation of people to acquire, use, and further develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

In looking forward to September, Rotary's **Basic Education and Literacy Month**, how will your club promote Rotary's commitment to providing quality literacy and education for all communities? This is an excellent opportunity to contact local school officials or education programs to invite them to visit your club to speak about their programs and ongoing needs that Rotarians might address. Promote Rotary's involvement in literacy and education by sharing projects in which your club is involved, both locally and internationally. Promote your BEL success stories through social media channels - and be sure to share with BELRAG! <https://www.facebook.com/basiceducationandliteracy>



Together, We Read is a successful collaboration between BELRAG and Save the Children to promote early childhood education. For the past two years, Save the Children has offered grants to US Rotary Clubs involved in early learning programs. Grants of up to \$15,000 each were awarded to ten Rotary Clubs serving rural communities, with a total expenditure of nearly \$130,000. The summaries below are an inspiration of what can be accomplished through Rotary-led partnerships in our communities.

BELRAG appreciates and thanks **Save the Children** for their generosity and their confidence in the stewardship and impact of Rotarians as, together, we support projects that enable communities to provide quality education for all children.

Imagination Library and K-Grade 3 Literacy Project,

Carroll County Youth Literacy Rotary Foundation, Holiday Island, AR D6110 (\$15,000)

By focusing on children from low-income households, this project will support 560 children to receive DPIL books for a year. Carroll County Rotary will participate in the ongoing community events across 4 areas in our county. Parent surveys indicate that as the children reach age 4-5, they want more books per month so visits to the library increase. Thus, to support this increased interest and to continue this progress toward 3rd Grade Proficiency in reading, it is important that our three partnering libraries in the county have the benefit of large print books for K-Grade 3 (children age 6-9). The grant funds assist Rotary in supplying books. Club members participate in distributing/ promoting their availability and usage. Books will be provided in Spanish as well as English, with the goal of reducing the disparity of literacy achievement for children for whom English is their second language.



Literacy in the Community

Le Sueur Rotary Club, MN D5960 (\$15,000)

Club was eager to help and partner with the school district to raise the awareness of the importance of early literacy. Programs will include Pop-up Family Learning Stations to raise the awareness of the importance of kindergarten readiness with an emphasis on early literacy, and to establish and build trust with school administration and school staff. Family Pot Luck dinners where families come to school to enjoy a community meal together and discuss how school and families can work together to support literacy development. Kindergarten/Preschool Open Husetop enable families and children to visit classrooms, meet preschool and kindergarten teachers, and receive a free book. The event will share with families what children need to know before they enter kindergarten and will emphasize the importance of reading to children and how to read books to children.



The Rotary Early Learning Partnership (RELP)

Manhattan Rotary KS D5710 (\$15,000)

The Early Learning Partnership seeks to mobilize and support community resources to enhance early childhood education and literacy. We seek to connect educators, librarians, Rotarians, and other partners in a multi-county network in North Central Kansas. We seek to reinforce and support, not duplicate, their work of increasing young people's access to books. Expand the Dolly Parton Imagination Library by adding 200 more children to the program. Provide registration fees for librarians and early learning educators to attend a state-wide early learning symposium on engaging families in supporting early learning. These educators will facilitate local dialogues in each of their communities. Fund mini-grant programs to enhance book accessibility programs.

Rotary Club of Boone Kindergarten Literacy Project

RC Boone IA (D6000) (\$6,774)

Teachers shared the need for improving kindergarten readiness skills in both literacy and numeracy. The project will provide tools that schools identified as a need, resulting from the impact of the pandemic on many young learners. Rotary will purchase the resources to build foundational skills in kindergarten students that they will use for this current school year and for many years to come. As the project is implemented, Rotary will reach out to the community and parents to enhance learning at home by helping parents download educational apps, teach parents to help their students, and find free community Wi-Fi access. Rotarians will attend parent-teacher conferences and share new apps and how to log on from home. Classroom teachers to measure the skill level of kindergartners at the beginning and end of the school year to measure impact of this outreach. (\$6,774)

Parents and Partners for Early Learning

RC Columbia Center, Kennewick WA (D5080) \$15,000

Rotarians will assist the Local United Way in launching a new Dolly Parton Imagination Library initiative. In addition to grant funding of this project, Rotarians will provide critical support for DPIL. We've started to recruit post office angels to "adopt" a post office to regularly pick up undeliverable books (there are 14 sites) and bring them to United Way for use in tabling events. Rotarians represent a great asset--they've typically been in the community for a while and have wide networks and deep relationships. They can provide introductions to church, community, and business contacts to help us make DPIL connections in our counties' areas of high need. For example, helping DPIL connect with manufacturers and food processing companies and then volunteering at tabling events during shift changes at food production and manufacturing facilities, or other DPIL parent outreach events.



LORE (Love of Reading Early)

RC International Falls WI D5580 (\$14,455)

The Rotary Club of International Falls Initiated project LORE (Love Of Reading Early) in 2016 to support and increase early literacy in all children in our community with a focus on 0 to 5. Our approach in LORE is collaborative and we seek to work with the many stakeholders who play a role in early childhood education. Efforts include successful advocacy for the establishment of Reach Out And Read at both local health Clinics. A goal of our Rotary Club is to have 100% participation in the Imagination Library program administered through United Way of Northeast Minnesota. Rotarians and friends sign-up to be readers in pre-school classrooms. A new targeted initiative of our Rotary Club is to provide age-appropriate books to our school district's Early Childhood Special Education interventionists who do home visits during the school year. We will use funding to provide 20 books per child in this program to encourage reading in the home. This is designed to initiate targeted service to children with special needs. Additionally, Rotary LORE finds itself in need of books to fill the LORE Library boxes. Their popularity has drained our stock of books. If funded, we would use grant money to rebuild the

collection of books for these LOREbraries.

Ste Genevieve Community-Wide Kindergarten

Readiness Project, Ste Genevieve, MO D6060 (\$10,000)

Surveys among our county Kindergarten teachers indicate the following gaps for Kindergarten readiness: inability to identify/write their name, lack of fine motor skills such as cutting and coloring, also the inability to count objects, identify colors, shapes, letters and numbers. Our first plan will be to let our county residents know about the importance of Kindergarten readiness through a Local and Social Media Campaign. An article outlining our project will be shared with local media. We will use our Club Facebook page as well as our partners' media outlets. Every February our Rotary club has a food drive at the two local grocery stores. During the 2 day event, Rotarians will distribute flyers and answer questions about our project. Laundromats, county health department and primary care offices hospital clinics have been identified as Early Learning Spaces that will house the preschool resources in plastic tote bags to allow the preschool age children activities to do while waiting. Parents/caregivers will have the ability to take the resources home. Our partners from the local food banks and churches have agreed to distribute the bags of early learning resources to families with the children between the ages of 3-5.

Parent Community Literacy Night and Summer Literacy Kickoff Carnival

RC Tipton IA D6000 (\$10,000)

Tipton Elementary School Rotary Club of Tipton will encourage parents and families to become involved in their child's education to ensure the child's academic success. In order to facilitate parent and family involvement, we will collaborate on outreach program and activities. We will develop 2 events that will promote early literacy. The first event, Family Literacy Night, will invite parents and families to school to engage in onsite literacy projects to learn and understand the importance of early literacy. Take home projects will extend the evening activities. The second event will be a summer school kickoff for all students to engage in fun learning activities and get creative with what to do in the summer to continue to learn during school vacation. This involve a small carnival like setting where students can engage in early reading activities and games. Community support booths will also be requested to be an outreach for our students and parents on what family supports are available in our community and surrounding areas. Members of the Rotary Club of Tipton will assist during these events, as well as helping to prepare take home kits.

Operation Rotary Club of Tulelake Early learning initiative

RC Tulelake WA D5110 (\$15,000)

This initiative has two objectives. Rotarians will continue to support our local pediatric office's Reach out and Read program, providing books to support early learning in local medical clinics. Rotarians want to create space for children to be read to while waiting for their appointments and have an activity table that encourages literacy. Additionally, public school teacher can request supplemental materials for literacy and numeracy support to help with students who are not meeting their benchmarks in literacy and numeracy. Due to the pandemic students have fallen behind and are not meeting their benchmarks. Teachers are in need of simple programs for independent student activities and of new/ additional benchmark readers classroom readers, books to send home for student home libraries and new books for school-based libraries. Teacher requests will be reviewed and prioritized by building administrators to assist Rotarians to determine the best course of action for purchasing the materials.

Dolly Parton Imagination Library

RC Troy MO D6060 (\$13,200)

Through our Parents as Teachers home visiting program, we have observed that our community's young children often do not have access to books or a variety of books. The DPIL is already an established program in Lincoln County, Missouri, that serves approximately 1,100 children each month. Due to the loss of another funding source, the project is in a period of financial uncertainty, which Rotary intends to fill. This collaboration of Rotary and other community organizations hosted the first Imagination Celebration for families with young children in 2022. This event provided a morning of early childhood entertainers, activities, free books, theatrical readings, and snacks. This helped educate the community about DPIL and brought new enrollments as well. The event had an impact of over 300 people in our community, and we hope to be able to grow this event in the future. Through events like this, we are able to engage our community partners and help spread awareness as well.

Get involved with BELRAG's outreach and impact. Opportunities to become involved include:

- **Webinar technical assistance** - help with technical production of webinars. Assist with video recording and editing to ensure high quality presentations.
- **Newsletter:** identify great Rotary stories of impactful projects - local or international. An editor is needed to do design and layout
- **Website:** oversee our website so that it is current. No tech expertise is needed (we have a great webmaster to post the information) - help review the site, share new information.
- **Social media:** help develop and support BELRAG social media - share our good work!

To get involved, contact Carolyn Johnson carolyn@belrag.org

BELRAG involved at the *Melbourne RI Convention*



BELRAG had a strong presence at the RI Convention in Melbourne. At our booth in the House of Friendship, we had a great time greeting convention participants, sharing our outreach, and inviting Rotarians to share their BEL projects and get involved with BELRAG. We learned of many wonderful BEL programs that Rotarians are implementing around the world.



BELRAG also hosted a highly successful break out session, *The ABC's of Effective BEL Projects*. The session illustrated effective strategies for conducting and using Community Assessment, working with Partner Organizations, the importance of enhancing expertise through effective training programs, and increasing impact through focused monitoring and evaluation. Thanks to **Manon Mitchell** (RC Calgary, Tuk Tut Reading), **Shirley Pat Chamberlain** (RC Steveston, Write to Read

Canada), **David Alexander** (RC Manningham, Teacher Literacy Enhancement Program) and **Regina Fuller** (BEL Area of Focus Manager, Rotary International) Stayed tuned, this excellent program will be offered as a webinar



Planning a BEL Project to Include Technology?

Are you planning a global grant project that will provide technology to schools? If so, have you reviewed the updated [Basic Education and Literacy Guidelines for Global Grant Funding](#)? Technology projects need to include both technology and pedagogical training for teachers. The community assessment should specify teachers' current knowledge of technology, along with the skills they'll need to develop through teacher training. The application should show how training and equipment will meet teachers' needs, as determined by the assessment.

Inspiring the Next Generation of STEM Leaders - Everywhere!
[Click here more information, a list of speakers, and to register](#)

**2023 mEducation Alliance
Annual Symposium**

**Inspiring the Next Generation of
S.T.E.M. Leaders - Everywhere!**

Set to LAUNCH at Mason Square
in Arlington, Virginia

September 11 - 14, 2023


meducationalalliance.org



BASIC EDUCATION & LITERACY MONTH

\$500 AWARDS

**CELEBRATE & BUILD AN AWARENESS OF
ROTARY'S COMMITMENT TO
BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY
IN OUR COMMUNITIES**

FOUR AWARDS OF \$500 (USD)

THREE AWARDS FOR ROTARY PROJECTS
ONE AWARD FOR ROTARACT PROJECT

Applications must be received by 30 September, 2023
(Project should be currently implemented or ongoing)

To enter:

- Describe your project: tell how your club decided the need, what Rotarians are doing to address that need (any community partners)
- Explain the impact, and tell who benefits from the project
- How are Rotarians involved?
- How is the project promoted?
- 2-3 photos (include a signed release for photos of children)

Include:

- Name, contact info of Rotarian submitting application
- Club name & District number
- City, State/province/Country

Send to: literacyaward@BELRAG.org

For further information, guidelines, project evaluation rubric
BELRAG.org

Rotarian submitting project must be a current member of BELRAG



Welcome New Rotarians: BEL Caused-Based Club

Club Satélite de Guatemala La Reforma - Educación y temas relacionados con la infancia chartered in June 2023. These new Rotarians, based in multiple communities in Guatemala, are focused on creating awareness and sharing resources to improve the quality of education for children in underserved communities. The club meets on Monday evenings (18:00, Guatemala). Their signature project is their Biblioteca Viajara (Traveling Library), a collection of children's literature that circulates among several organizations to ensure that young children have access to quality reading materials. In addition, teacher training programs are held to share classroom skills and strategies. For more information - or to join one of their meetings - contact Sarah de Lemus, Club President sarah.riggott@gmail.com The group meets in Spanish and welcomes English speakers.



Education to Empower the Next Generation

UNICEF has worked hard with partners and supporters for decades to bring hundreds of millions of children primary level education, but this is not the only area where we work. We also support their next 10 years too – which includes education in the so-called STEM subjects which give them skills and knowledge to help them get ready for their working and daily lives in a technology driven world. Millions of schoolchildren don't have access to technology for many reasons: gender barriers, online safety risks, disabilities; or because they have been uprooted from their homes; or have found themselves outside education. Providing hardware and software can make an enormous difference, but it is not a silver bullet. The work of UNICEF in Education goes further than just putting existing materials on a screen instead of on a chalkboard or in a textbook: STEM courses, virtual classrooms, accessible digital textbooks and e-learning platforms can provide unprecedented access to a vast repository of knowledge, transcending geographical boundaries and ensuring education equity, setting up children for their lives ahead.

We will take you on a journey to UNICEF operations in **Kazakhstan, South Africa, Mexico, among other locations**, as we showcase the many ways we use technology to make education systems better and more responsive to the needs of children and young people, and provide teachers with the skills to do so.

To be held at 10am CT (5pm CET), September 6. Register at: https://unicef.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_F9Y-oyzT2CrkOp-7dlcXA (French, German, Spanish live interpretation)

Get involved with BELRAG's outreach and impact. Opportunities to become involved include:

- **Newsletter:** identify great Rotary stories of impactful projects - local or international. An editor is needed to do design and layout
- **Website:** oversee our website so that it is current. No tech expertise is needed (we have a great webmaster to post the information) - help review the site, share new information.
- **Social media:** help develop and support BELRAG social media - share our good work!
- **Technical expertise:** join a topic-focused team to provide technical advice to project developers and share stories of best practice. Collaborate to promote early literacy/education, education technology, students with disabilities, adult literacy, mentoring youth, girls education, library support or development, professional development for teachers.

To get involved, contact Carolyn Johnson carolyn@belrag.org



Panama Norte Rotary Club

HELP THOUSANDS OF YOUNG CHILDREN, TEACHERS AND STUDENTS BY COOPERATING WITH OUR PROJECT TO BRIDGE THE DIGITAL GAP:



Digital Interactive Classrooms



The Digital Interactive Classrooms Program will provide access to technology and digital devices to schools in the public education system in Panama. This program will benefit 3000 school age children per year and 300 in-service and pre-service teachers. The program proposes four interventions:

- Establish digital interactive classrooms (both mobile and fixed-location) in 8 of 10 provinces in Panama, leveraging the presence of Rotary clubs in each province.
- Train teachers and students teachers (teachers to be) in digital competencies for a motivative learning environment in the classroom
- Provide a model for mainstream digitalization in the nation's education system, including training teachers and a system for equipment maintenance and replacement.
- Develop a center to provide continued training in digital competencies for teachers and students and be a repository of digital educational material for teachers to use.

This program will establish fixed-location digital interactive classrooms at 24 schools and provide Remote Area Community Hotspot for Education and Learning (RACHEL) devices to 72 mobile technology classrooms.



Will you join us?

This project was a finalist for the Programs of Scale. We are seeking funding for a Global Grant to enable the program to continue

Total budget: \$800,000 USD
GG2348095

<https://rotaryedutechforpanama.org/>

Contact Enedelsy Escobar-King:
eescobar_king@hotmail.com