



October, 2011

To: The Club Presidents and Rotarians of District 5260

Flatly stating that one Avenue of Service is our most important Avenue is always a recipe for getting yourself in trouble—so I am going to stay away from saying that Vocational Service is our single most important Avenue; but it's really tempting to stir the pot by saying so.

Why? Because it is the one Avenue of Service that really and truly sets Rotary apart from so many other organizations that do good in the world. For someone who just wants to help out by serving his or her community or the world there are lots of groups out there; groups that don't ask you to come to meetings once a week and pay dues. What makes a Rotarian a Rotarian is that while we want to serve others, we want to extend that service all the way down to what we do in our businesses and professions every single day. We honor all "useful occupations" and encourage our members to conduct their lives according to the Four Way Test. Rotary has five "core values" and three of them relate very strongly back to Vocational Service: fellowship, leadership, and integrity.

We can't ever forget that Rotary started out in 1905 as an organization for men (and now, thank goodness, women) who were engaged in business and the professions, and who wanted to associate with others who shared their ethical standards and beliefs. They believed in coming together in friendship once a week to share experiences and contacts, and to serve others. We have never really been a "business referral network", and we are not supposed to expect any "advantage" from doing business with Rotarians, but our clubs have always been forums where individual Rotarians could trust in the integrity of their fellow club members, learn from them, and never worry about referring customers and clients in need of a product or service to a fellow member.

Perhaps most importantly, Rotary Clubs have always been made up of people who are active and working in the community. Back in 1905 we were founded by a group of “thirty-somethings” who wanted to be connected to their communities. Our Clubs should still be fulfilling that roll as a place in our communities where business, professional, and community leaders come together to make things happen.

This year, I am asking all the clubs in our District to implement a Vocational Service project that is directed to reminding Rotarians about our commitment to high ethical standards and personal integrity. While we have many Vocational Service projects, many of these are aimed at educating and helping non-Rotarians—so I want to see at least one project in every club for the members themselves that truly advances our commitment to being better individuals. Let’s remember that Vocational Service adds value back to each of us and gives us all a compelling reason to be Rotarians.

Maybe I will go ahead and risk it—Vocational Service *is* our most important Avenue of Service.

Rocking on . . .

Tom