

## Rotarians call for "Peace Without Borders" during Berlin forum

By Insa Feye and Arnold R. Grahl  
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More than 1,800 Rotarians, community leaders, and students and alumni of the Rotary Peace Centers program gathered in Berlin 30 November through 2 December to promote peace during the first of three Rotary Global Peace Forums.

"Peace is like bread. You have to bake it fresh every day," said Luis Vicente Giay, past RI president, in convening the forum.

Two upcoming forums will be held in Honolulu, Hawaii, 25-27 January, and in Hiroshima, Japan, 17-18 May. Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Member of Parliament Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar will be the keynote speaker in Hawaii.

The three-day Berlin forum was the largest Rotary event in Germany since the RI Convention in Munich 25 years ago. The audience was as diverse as the nationalities of the participants, with Rotaractors, Rotary Peace Fellows, exchange students, and guests joining Rotarians and community leaders. More than 100 participants from District 1940's Rotary Youth Leadership Award (RYLA) seminar involving 12 countries also took part in the forum.



Top: Former Rotary Peace Fellows Anne Kjaer Riechert, Wendi Boxx, and Sallie Lacy speak during a panel. Bottom: Rotarian Domenico Amatucci (left) visits the peace project Marketplace during the forum.

### Berlin declaration

The attendees adopted a [declaration](#) calling for "Peace Without Borders," recognizing that "all human beings have the right to live in a state of peace, free from violence, persecution, inequality,

and suffering."

The three sites for the peace forums were selected by RI President Sakuji Tanaka because each was heavily affected by the events of World War II and now represents the healing power of sustainable peace between nations.

"As a member of the first generation to grow up in Japan after World War II, I understand the importance of peace and its connection to our well-being," said Tanaka. "Working for peace is a lifelong task. Every day, in 34,000 clubs around the world, we work together for a more peaceful world by bringing water, health, education, and hope to the people who need it most."

## **My Rotary Moment**

Every Rotarian, said Tanaka, has a story to tell. Some of those are compiled in his new book "[My Rotary Moment](#)," a collection of personal essays and stories written by Rotary's senior leaders. Copies of the book, signed by Tanaka, were sold at the forum, with proceeds going to The Rotary Foundation.

Wilfrid J. Wilkinson, chair of The Rotary Foundation, noted that building peace in the world is one of the main elements of the Foundation's mission. He said Rotary's efforts to eradicate polio have demonstrated how Rotarians can band together to overcome barriers of culture, religion, language, and conflict.

"We can create one of the great miracles of polio eradication: Days of Tranquility, when those involved in an armed conflict call a cease-fire to allow children access to health care," Wilkinson said. "To save children from polio, we've convinced people to lay down their arms in Afghanistan, Southern Sudan, and Somalia. That's something no one else has been able to do. And if that's not creating peace through our Rotary Foundation, I don't know what is."

## **Calmer societies**

RI General Secretary John Hewko explained how Rotary's humanitarian service, even when it is not explicitly labeled peace-building, creates communities and societies that are calmer, more prosperous, and less violent.

“By helping to build a healthier, more literate society, you are doing the single most effective thing you can do to establish peace in the long term,” Hewko said. “A society that is educated, self-sufficient, and has its citizens productively engaged in commerce and agriculture and industry, is simply more stable, and less prone to conflict.”

Five former peace fellows took part in a panel at the forum. “I would like to encourage you to contact us and to use the resources you have invested so much in,” said Brigitta von Messling of Germany, a member of the first class of peace fellows, in 2002. Constanze Maria Abendroth, past chair of the Rotaract Germany Committee, presented the New Generation perspective on peace.

### **Peace project display**

More than 100 peace projects were also on display at the forum’s marketplace. Two of the projects were selected to receive an award from Tanaka during the final session.

[Intercountry committees](#) from all over the world convened separate meetings in the run-up to the forum, asking the question, “How can the intercountry committees make a more effective contribution to the Rotary peace initiatives?”

Past RI President Rajendra K. Saboo explained that ten years ago, Rotary created the Peace Centers program to promote research, teaching, public relations, and knowledge on issues of peace and conflict resolution.

“We believe that by providing advance education opportunities for peace fellows chosen from various countries and different cultures, they will grow into potential leaders in their respective regions or countries,” Saboo said. They will then be able to use their training “to promote greater tolerance and co-operation among peoples, leading to world peace and understanding.”

Rotary clubs have sponsored scholars earning master’s degrees in peace and conflict resolution at leading universities in Australia, England, Japan, Sweden, and the United States. A three-month professional development certificate program was established at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand in 2004.

- Learn more about the upcoming [Rotary Global Peace Forums](#), including the next

one, in Honolulu, Hawaii, featuring Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi

- Learn more about the [Rotary Peace Centers program](#)
  - Download the "[Peace Without Borders](#)" Declaration
  - Order a copy of "[My Rotary Moment](#)"
  - Read the personal reflections of an attendee on our blog, [Rotary Voices](#)
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2 Comments:

At 9:55AM on 7 December 2012, **Dennis Wong** wrote:

Rotarian Action Group for Peace made its first public appearance after receiving RI approval in November. The response in Berlin confirmed that such an Action Group for Peace could be of value to members. Please visit our Facebook page and "LIKE" us. Thank you. RTN Dennis Wong, Executive Director and co-founder of Rotarian Action Group for Peace

At 10:30AM on 6 December 2012, **PRIP Luis Vicente Giay** wrote:

Many thanks to all organizers and more than 1.800 participants from 46 nations in this memorable event. It was a good testimony that we can live in a world without borders. Peace was the great winner at this time. Regards. PRIP Luis Vicente Giay. Convener.

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