

From Rotaract to Rotary

Brittany Catton and Liz Raines
Rotarians and former Rotaractors

We are Rotarians.

I'm Brittany Catton. I am 28 years old, and I work for the Armed Services YMCA. I was the first Rotaract president at the University of San Diego, I'm a charter member of the La Jolla New Generations Rotary club, and I have served on the club board as the public relations chair.

I'm Liz Raines. I'm 26, and I work for the Girl Scouts. I am a past Rotaract president from the University of San Diego and a past president from the La Jolla New Generations Rotary club of District 5340. At 24, I was the youngest president our district had ever had, and it was an incredible learning experience. Currently, I serve our district as the Rotaract chair.

We are here to tell you how we made the transition from Rotaract to the La Jolla New Generations Rotary club here in San Diego, California.

We were both Rotaractors in college and were exposed to Rotary through supportive Rotarian mentors, international service trips, local service projects, and a lot of Rotary meetings. My father and grandfather were both active Rotarians in Portland, Oregon. Rotary was a natural fit for me, but it was Rotaract that helped to shape that passion.

It was important for us to transition from Rotaract to Rotary, so that we could bring the strength of Rotary to our projects and our meetings. Rotaract was great but didn't offer the same structure that our Rotary club provides now. Also, we weren't as connected to the district and other clubs with Rotaract. We were ready to be in a full-functioning Rotary club that offered us a network of business professionals. We both wanted to be a part of a fellowship that was focused on bettering our world and our community through Rotary.

I knew early on that I had planned on being a Rotarian, I just didn't think it would happen so soon. Most clubs I went to were full of older people. I always enjoyed visiting these clubs, but I discovered that many of them were not inviting young professionals to join Rotary. It wasn't until a few district governors in San Diego created a New Generations club that Rotary was brought to younger members of our community.

What is our New Generations Rotary club? It is a Rotary club that follows the same constitution and bylaws as your club, with an average age of 33. We run weekly meetings, do international and local service projects, meet for fellowship, and sit through many long board meetings. The positive energy and enthusiasm for service makes our club electric. The welcoming, informal atmosphere makes members feel at home. With low dues of US\$55 a month, flexibility with attendance, and a wide range of service opportunities, we are able to invite a diverse group of membership to our club. Some of these populations include military members, school teachers, and nonprofit professionals like us. We meet in the evening after work and plan our projects during the weekends. This weekly bond of fellowship is what differentiates us from normal service opportunities. The fellowship is fostered through supporting our unique needs and challenges. Our club has had three marriages, one engagement, and many new babies, while many of our members remain happily single and looking. This creates a dynamic that is relatable and fun.

A few of our accomplishments include 16 Paul Harris Fellows and seven Multiple Paul Harris Fellows. We have met all of our PolioPlus goals and donate an average of \$190 per member per year to The Rotary Foundation. This is all planned during our weekly happy hour meeting

with a low-budget meal and drinks. One accomplishment that we are very proud of: We helped to charter a New Generations Rotary club in Kingston, Jamaica. Our Rotaract club went there to do service, and it truly touched our hearts. Liz and I were invited back to support them in their charter.

This New Generations concept was launched three years ago by our district governor and three supporting clubs. It was heavily promoted throughout our district to recruit past Rotaractors, younger Rotarians, and young professionals. We also utilized online communication tools, such as social networking websites, to reach out to young professionals in San Diego looking for fellowship and a way to do service in their community. Many of our members came to us from Rotarians' families, businesses, Rotaract clubs, and friends. We even had someone join our club because he sat next to a Rotarian on a six-hour plane ride who convinced him that he needed to come to one of our club meetings. We promote through every avenue that we can, but most times our enthusiasm for our club is the best selling point out there. It is hard not to get excited about Rotary at our club.

Our success is our lively, fast-paced meetings that support our young members' passion for service. Every project fosters and challenges the creativity of our members, like raising \$5,000 bowling for water projects, packing backpacks for wounded warriors, or raising \$500 through a "Jell-O shot for PolioPlus" at the bar of one of our members. Some months we have five projects going on simultaneously, and that gives members the flexibility to pick and choose what fits with their passion and their schedules.

This concept of a Rotary club targeted toward younger members is growing, as more and more young professionals are finding out about Rotary. New Generations clubs are being formed and are meeting the challenge of creating the perfect launch for a successful club, which includes supportive district leadership, strong mentors from other local clubs, and young leaders who are interested in serving.

We know the concept can flourish with your support. Together, we can bridge the youth divide and follow Rotarians through their entire journey of service through all the stages of their life alongside their peers in a community of Service Above Self.