



Mental health and your club

Dear fellow Rotary members, The World Health Organization designates 10 October as World Mental Health Day, and with Rotary placing a special focus on mental health this year, I would like to help answer the question posed to me most often when I travel to meet members: How can my club get started?

There are some wonderful examples of Rotary members taking action already. In the Philippines, the Rotary Club of Tiaong-Hiyas held a 12-week health challenge for mothers in the community to promote some baseline health screenings and coaching on a healthier lifestyle.

By the end of the challenge, the mothers had a special bond and decided to form a Rotary Community Corps called Ilaw ng Tahanan (“one who lights up the home”) with the goal of involving more mothers in health education and wellness support — and later youth services, teen pregnancy prevention, and help with unhealthy substance use. Almost a year later, the RCC is preparing to open its own health center where mothers can come for peer-to-peer support.

Another strong example is in Colorado. In the fall of 2021, a small group of stakeholders from the Rotary Club of Highlands Ranch formed the Rotary Clubs of Colorado Endowed Fellowship for Pediatric Mental Health, which enhances the ability of Children’s Hospital Colorado to recruit and train pediatric psychiatry providers and allows the hospital network to make additional appointments. This increases access to mental health care for children and decreases provider shortages.

Since then, the project has brought on new supporters and is now fully funded with a \$500,000 endowment. Investment income from this endowment

will support a fellow — a psychologist or psychiatrist — at Children’s Hospital. A new fellow will be named every one to two years, beginning spring of 2024. Over time this will create a cohort to bolster the mental health workforce, treating kids from all 64 Colorado counties and neighboring states.

There are many more great mental health project stories on Rotary Showcase, and I invite you to share your experiences as you begin your own projects. Also, please reach out to mindhealth@rotary.org with any thoughts or ideas you would like to share about mental health in the Rotary world.

On 10 October, I will host a Facebook Live event when we will recognize World Mental Health Day and further explore how Rotary members can begin this journey. But I would like to leave you with one way every Rotary member can make a difference.

Right now, there is someone you know in the Rotary world — in your club, from a project you’ve worked on, in a Rotary Fellowship or Rotary Action Group — who could use a little more of your time and attention. Rotary is this great gift of global friendship, and that also means being there for each other.

Discovering the human connections that bind us is what we do through our membership every day. It’s what Rotary has always been about, and we can build on it by helping each other find peace at home.

We need to learn how to ask not just “How are you?” but also “How are you really?” By doing so, Rotary can continue to Create Hope in the World.

R. Gordon R. McNally
President, Rotary International