

## November 2023 Newsletter

### Literacy Awards 2023: Acknowledging and Supporting Club BEL Initiatives

Since 2017, BELRAG emphasizes Rotary's commitment to basic education and literacy by offering clubs and districts opportunity to share their local BEL project. Four projects are selected to receive a \$500 award. Projects are evaluated based on their demonstration of identifying a community need, broad impact for beneficiaries, promotion to create public awareness or Rotary's involvement with education and literacy, Rotarian involvement, and the overall effectiveness of the project. We were pleased to receive project applications from all over the Rotary world. The quality of the projects was excellent - it was a difficult decision to choose one over the others. Our congratulations to Rotarians in Grove OK, USA (D7750), Golden Bauhinia, Hong Kong (D3450) and Blacksburg VA, USA (D7570). This year's Rotaract BEL Award was awarded to Retract Satinas Spondylus, who partners with their sponsoring Rotary Club to implement their project

Thanks to the BELRAG members who served on the review committee. Led by Joan Littleford (Canada) and Brenda Parsons (England), reviewers included Courtney Doldron (Canada), Frank Romano (USA) and Amanda Flayer (Guatemala), Carol Marcotte (USA), and Maria Mohammed-Maharaj (Benin)

These BEL projects Give Hope through Rotary's strong support for Literacy programs in our own communities. Detailed descriptions of the projects (and those selected in previous years) are posted on the BELRAG website. If one seems like a potential fit for your community, be sure to get in touch with the project developers. Throughout the year, additional notable projects will be featured in the newsletter. Congratulations to the award recipients.

### Grove (USA) Rotary Reassesses Their Response to Local Needs to Identify More Impactful Literacy Programs



Rotarians in Grove OK established an education foundation that supports a number of scholarships and charitable community grants. An annual outreach program was to distribute dictionaries to third grade students. They learned that the literacy rate in their county was at unacceptably low levels and realized their focus had been at the higher end of the education spectrum while many third graders, who received the Rotary Dictionaries, had never before owned a book. They learned that 41% of their students were at risk for reading difficulties in 2019-2020 and this only increased during and following the pandemic. They understood that, unless children succeeded in the early grades, they were not likely to be successful in their later schooling.

They researched programs that would help them to purchase books for children and decided to engage with the Dolly Parton Library

which provides free books to children from birth to age five. They located and enrolled local children and paid approximately \$1.10 per child to receive a new book each month to create a home library. In the first seven months they had located 950 eligible students and continue to locate more children until they have reached ALL eligible children, estimated to be 2020 children. This is a complex outreach using social media, flyers, brochures and personal outreach. These Rotarians realized that they had found the best way to get books into the hands of young children who might not otherwise have them. A strength of this project is the ability of Rotary members to realize that their earlier programs were no longer as effective as in the past. Rather than abandon the project, they engaged the community to determine current needs and how to address them.

**Mary Richardson** [DPILRotary@gmail.com](mailto:DPILRotary@gmail.com)  
**Rotary Club of Grove, OK, USA (D7750)**

## Rotaract and Rotary in Ecuador Collaborate to Improve Access to Books

Rotaractors and Rotarians worked together to create the **Rotary Rolling Library**. This project came from a concern of limited access to reading material, which is crucial to educating children but not all children have access to books. *“The rolling library seeks to promote the habit of reading from early childhood, bringing children closer to books and encouraging children and adolescents to cultivate a love of reading.”*

The Rolling Library comes to a designated school for one month at the beginning and the end of the school year. It is used by children, teachers, and parents. Several classrooms are able to access the library in their classrooms on a rotating schedule. In each participating school, a lead teacher is responsible for creating a schedule of activities for their school’s “Reading Month.” There is a book to record how often students, teachers or parents accesses the library. A supplemental project is working with the local university to create puppets and activities to accompany selected stories.



This project strengths included active involvement by Rotaractors and Rotarian and their ongoing collaboration with the schools. Additionally, the design is an innovative way to fill the need for children to regularly access good children’s literature. The award is presented to the Rotaract Club of Satinas Spondylus but the recognition is given to all three clubs for the co-operative effort on behalf of the children.

**Dahiana Barzola Chavez, [barzoladahiana@gmail.com](mailto:barzoladahiana@gmail.com)**  
**Rotaract Club of Satinas Spondylus**  
**RC Satinas Spondylus and Gualaceo (D4400)**

## Virginia Rotarians “Giving Hope Through Literacy” Inspires Young Readers

“Giving Hope Through Literacy” is a new program of Blacksburg Rotary, designed to offer support through practice opportunities for beginning and struggling readers in one of their elementary schools. The project recognizes and reflects the passion of their District Governor (and club member, a former librarian).

A team of Rotarians work with first and second grade readers from a local school identified as a school in need of support. The Rotarians attend for at least one day each week for six weeks in both the fall and the spring term. They work in the same classroom each time, listening to children practice their reading, helping to develop their abilities and, most importantly, develop confidence in their reading. Ongoing feedback and encouragement from an interested and engaged adult will help students grow their reading fluency. The goal is to help students achieve their literacy goals by grade 3. Rotarians are given instructions in how best to help beginning readers so there is consistency between classroom instruction and how the Rotarian helps the children.



Additionally, the club purchases books and support materials identified by the Reading Specialists and the principal for use in classrooms from Kindergarten to Grade 3. All materials are marked with the Rotary Wheel. This project was selected because its strong collaboration with the local school and for its active involvement by Rotary members.

**Paula Alston. [paulakalston@gmail.com](mailto:paulakalston@gmail.com)**  
**RC Blackburg VA, USA D7570**

## Innovative Technology Helps Students Expand Horizons In Hong Kong

The Rotary Club of Golden Bauhinia Hong Kong created a multi-faceted approach to learning how new technology can help to shape the future for the a group of low income children. Their goal was for the youth to understand how life technology can shape our future.



Rotary members worked with 250 youth ages 10 to 16 who had been recommended by their social workers for inclusion. The project was divided into 3 phases:

- Experience** – the students experienced a broad range of new uses for technology and the application of AI. They also gave students access to the Future Now app that would accelerate their learning going forward.
- Understand** – they visited a local street market to learn about nutrition while also using AI to supplement their learning.
- Co-Create** – a visit to a farm, and a BBQ, allowed the students to learn how technology can create a sustainable future.

Rotary members summarized their project by saying: *“Over 280 underprivileged youth aged between 10-16 benefited from this program. Youth not only learned about the 3 key values (inspiration, attitude and values to enhance capabilities), but were given opportunity to apply these values and share them with their parents to spread the positivity outward, thus being ambassadors of Rotary’ theme for the year, Create Hope for the World.”*

This project was selected because of its innovative, multi-faceted approach to helping students experience the opportunities that are open to them through education.

**Raymond Yeung** [raymondyeung@riverland.com.hk](mailto:raymondyeung@riverland.com.hk)  
RC Golden Bauhinia, Hong Kong. D3450

Interested in learning about previous projects that received a BEL Literacy Month Award? Award recipient projects are posted on our website [Literacy Month Awards](#)

The [evaluation rubric](#) is posted along with tips for clubs.

Start planning now to enter your club’s project for the 2024 BEL Month Awards. We look forward to learning about exemplary club projects for the 2024 BEL Month Awards.

### Recording Available BELRAG / Save the Children’s [Webinar](#)

Community Partnerships are essential to supporting Early Literacy for our youngest learners. BELRAG is grateful for the supportive partnership with Save the Children who has generously supported Community Partnership Grants. Learn of three exemplary programs being implemented by Rotary Clubs in this [webinar recording](#).



## BEL Webinar series

### Designing effective education technology projects

*Sponsored by Rotary International and BEL Rotary Action Group*

Mark your calendar to join these webinars designed to provide research and examples of best practice in BEL projects using technology to enhance teaching and learning. Join experts in the education technology field, Rotary member project developers and Rotary grants staff for these enlightening programs to guide your BEL technology projects.

#### Webinar 1:

### What works in technology and education projects: insights from current evidence

November 28, 2023. 09:00 Eastern US

*A panel of technology in education experts will share evidence and research on how technology can improve the quality of instruction/learning, show evidence-based interventions around the globe*

Panelists include:

**Tony Bloom**, Rotarian and CEO of mEducation Alliance, non-profit organization focused on the evidence-driven and sustainable role of technology in education to advance quality educational outcomes

**Helen Compton**, PhD, Executive Director of the Research Institute of Digital Innovation in Learning (RIDIL) and Professor of Education Technology, Old Dominion University

**Sophia D'Angelo**, Phd, Inclusive Education Consultant for EdTech HUB, a global research partnership that empowers people by giving the evidence needed to make decisions about technology in education.

[Register for Session 1](#)

#### Webinar 2:

### Planning education technology projects using effective community assessment and measurement strategies

December 7, 2023. 09:00 Eastern US

*Learn from examples of effective education technology projects on how to conduct a community assessment for ed tech project project, how to select project measures, and build a monitoring and evaluation plan.*

[Register for Session 2](#)

#### Webinar 3:

### Planning effective teacher training within your technology in education project

December 14, 2023 09:00 Eastern US

*Rotary members and Rotary staff will lead participants through a process for developing strong teacher training program for BEL technology projects. Participants will learn strategies to design a teacher training plan and steps to identify appropriate trainers/collaborating organization*

[Register for Session 3](#)



**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 on topics such as 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 Nancy Leonhardt [wlrrotary@gmail.com](mailto:wlrrotary@gmail.com)

## Five Ways to Celebrate World Children's Day (through the year)

Annually, on 20 November, UNICEF hosts a day of action for children by children, called World Children's Day: a commemoration of the 1989 adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This year, young people are raising their voices on the issues that matter to their generation and are calling for adults to partner with them in creating a better future. With over 350,000 participants across Rotary's youth programs, Rotary International knows that young leaders are critical partners in driving social change. Join us in empowering young people and celebrating World Children's Day! Below are five ways to get involved:

1. Learn about Rotary's impactful youth programs. Youth Service, one of Rotary's five Avenues of Service, recognizes the importance of empowering youth and young professionals through service and leadership development programs, including [Interact](#), [Rotary Youth Leadership Awards \(RYLA\)](#), and [Rotary Youth Exchange](#).
2. **Engage young leaders as partners.** Young people are key collaborators in service and often [lead the way](#) in making positive change within their communities. Invite young people to your Rotary or Rotaract club meetings and partner in serving your shared community. Remember, positive youth-adult partnerships recognize that adults and youth both have something to contribute to and learn from each other. These partnerships require active listening, flexibility, honesty with each other, and openness to cultural differences between young people and adults.
3. **Amplify the power of youth voices.** [Elevating youth voices](#) means including the ideas, thoughts, and actions of young people. Additionally, it requires the inclusion of young leaders in the decision-making process for those things that affect and shape their lives. Create opportunities to include youth in leadership roles in your club and district and invite them to contribute in meaningful ways.
4. **Empower youth through service-learning.** Rotary's approach to youth service, service-learning, emphasizes that young people should oversee their service experience. Young leaders are empowered to identify the issues they care about and develop and implement an effective action plan, all while honing life skills and having a lasting impact on communities. To learn more, interactive courses and downloadable workbooks are available in Rotary's Learning Center for adult advisers and youth participants ages 16 and older. [Watch this informative video](#) and [get started with service-learning today](#).
5. **Prioritize Youth Protection.** Youth protection is the foundation upon which all Rotary youth programs are built. Review [Rotary's youth protection resources](#) for clubs and districts that participate in youth programs and commit to fostering environments that are safe and positive for young people.

**World Children's Day** is a time to celebrate the rights and potential of all young people. By engaging with Rotary's youth programs, we can partner with and empower young leaders to make a positive impact on local communities and the world. Through service-learning, we can provide young people with the skills and experience they need to become changemakers. And by prioritizing youth protection, we can ensure that all youth participants are safe and supported. Together with Rotary's young leaders, we can create a brighter future for all.

Casey Jones,

Rotary Programs for Young Leaders staff