Rotary's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force

As one of Rotary's Core Values, diversity should be one of our great strengths. We should be proud that Rotary reflects so many cultures, generations, and lived experiences, and offers the potential for countless leaders to tap into those experiences to make a difference. As a sign of our commitment to creating an organization that sets the standard for valuing and living the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), the Rotary International Board adopted Rotary's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion statement in January 2019.

While progress has been made, we need a concrete plan to make sure that DEI are ingrained into everything that we do as an organization and reflected in the actions Rotary takes as we engage with the communities we serve. In September 2020, we formed a DEI task force that is charged with shaping a comprehensive action plan with achievable, measurable, and meaningful outcomes for Rotary.

We tapped into the expertise of Rotary participants around the globe for this task force. They will devise a plan that assesses the current state of DEI at Rotary and articulates a vision that incorporates regional differences, needs, and priorities. And as key decisions are made and our plan takes shape, we will continue to share information with you.

Rotary's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force

Valarie Wafer (Chair)

RI Director and Rotarian
Canada

Valarie K. Wafer had a 27-year career as a Tim Hortons restaurant owner, one of Canada's iconic restaurant brands, where her restaurant operations were widely recognized for their inclusive hiring practices, particularly the employment of people with disabilities.

Valarie joined Rotary in 2005. She has served as an RI training, 2018 Toronto Convention Host Organization Committee member, assistant regional Rotary Foundation coordinator, and RI president's representative. She has led a vocational training team focused on youth suicide and depression, audited Rotary Foundation grant projects in Tanzania and Kenya, and volunteered during a 2012 National Immunization Day in India.

Valarie and her husband, Mark — who became a Rotarian after Valarie recruited him during her year as club president — are Paul Harris Fellows, Bequest Society members, and Major Donors to The Rotary Foundation. In 2012, Wafer received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, in recognition of her leadership with the Economic Case for Inclusion in Canada, an inclusive hiring initiative that was adopted by provincial and federal governments.

Julio César A. Silva-Santisteban (Task Force Vice Chair)

RI Director and Rotarian
Peru

Julio César A. Silva-Santisteban graduated from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú with degrees in law and political science before earning postgraduate degrees in civil law from the Universidad de Lima and in international and community law from the Universidad de la República de Uruguay. He has taught constitutional law at the Universidad de Lima and been an adviser to the constitution committee of the Peruvian Senate. As an expert in public international law, he handled several prominent cases for the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. As an entrepreneur, Silva-Santisteban has been a shareholder, director, and manager of several companies in the industrial and construction fields.

Silva-Santisteban joined Rotary in 1987. He has been a board member of El Rotario Peruano, an official Rotary regional magazine, since 1999, and was its director/editor. He has served as a member of several RI committees and as Rotary public image coordinator, intercountry committee coordinator, training leader, and RI presidential representative, among other roles.

Silva-Santisteban has received The Rotary Foundation's Citation for Meritorious Service. He and his wife, Sara, support the Foundation as Major Donors and Benefactors

Geeta Manek (Trustee Liaison)

Rotary Foundation Trustee
Kenya

Geeta Manek is a second-generation Kenyan, graduated from business school in the United Kingdom before returning to Nairobi to join the family retail and property management business, which she still runs.

Geeta joined Rotary in 1997. Her roles have included Rotary coordinator, chair of the Health Major Gifts Initiative and of the Joint Committee on Partnerships, member of the Major Gifts Initiative Oversight Team and the Rotary Institute Host Organizing Committee, RI training leader, lead facilitator at the Regional Leaders Training Institute, and RI president's representative. She was also the only female governor of District 9200 before it was divided into Districts 9211 and 9212 in 2012-13. She also served as her district's coordinator of the Kick Polio Out of Africa Campaign.

Geeta is passionate about initiatives that help women and improve education. She was a charter member of Lohana Ladies Circle, a women's club dedicated to community service, social welfare, and cultural heritage. She's also helping lead a Rotary literacy initiative in Kenya and the region. She has volunteered as a first responder during national crises, including in post-election violence and after terrorist attacks. She has led teams of Rotarians to collaborate and coordinate initiatives with organizations such as the Red Cross, the United Nations, and community-based institutions. In recognition of her humanitarian work, Geeta was awarded an honorary doctorate of humanities in 2019.

Geeta has been honored with the Service Above Self Award. She and her spouse, Kaushik — who served as governor of District 9200 in 2008-09 — are Rotary Foundation Major Donors and Benefactors, as well as Bequest Society and Arch Klumph Society members.

Katey Halliday (member)

Rotaractor and Rotarian
Australia

Katey Halliday is a past president and a founding member of the Adelaide City Rotaract Club, chartered in 2012. She recently joined the Rotary Club of Adelaide Light. She has served as a team leader, coordinator, and trainer for the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA), Rotary Youth Program of Enrichment (RYPEN), and is now a participant in the inaugural RYLA Oceania Program.

Katey initiated her District's first-ever participation in the local Pride March celebrations and is a member of her Rotaract Club's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) working group, creating a RAP designed to develop respectful relationships and create meaningful opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. She was awarded a Paul Harris Fellow by her district in 2019 for her vocational contributions to Rotary.

Professionally, Katey is a Diversity and Inclusion Project Officer and training facilitator for South Australia Police where she works on initiatives aimed at creating a diverse and inclusive organization where all people are safe, respected and supported to reach their potential.

Rukmini Iyer (member)

Peace Fellow Alumnus
India

Rukmini Iyer is a leadership development consultant and peacebuilder with 20 years of international professional experience. Her connection with the Rotary family started in 1999 as a Rotaractor, where she continued until 2008, handling several leadership roles including that of Club President and District Conference Chairperson. In 2009, she was part of a Group Study Exchange to Sri Lanka, and in 2013, she went on to be a Rotary Peace Fellow. She is actively associated with the Rotary Peace Fellow Alumni Association.

Her professional practice includes a consulting firm Exult! Solutions that delivers consulting, facilitation and coaching services to global corporations including Unilever, Mastercard, Barclays, Smiths Medical, Mediaocean, and others, in the areas of conscious leadership, systemic change, diversity and inclusion, wellbeing, non-violent communication, conflict management, and more. As a peacebuilder, her work revolves around peace education and dialogue. In association with the US-based NGO Seeds of Peace, she is engaged in running interfaith dialogues in India and other peace education programs for youth. She is also currently involved with an independent initiative around inner truth and reconciliation in the South Asian context.

She's often a speaker at conferences around leadership, gender, inclusion and peacebuilding. In the DEI space, her interest lies in balancing systemic work on diversity with inner work on inclusion of external and internal diversities, including neurodiversity. She is based in Mumbai, India.

Dr. Todd Jenkins "Dr. Bowtie" (member)

Rotarian
USA

Dr. Todd Jenkins is a Senior Diversity, Inclusion, and Innovation leader in corporate America at a Fortune 400 company and is the founder of Bowtie Leadership and Development company. As a global inclusion executive trainer, strategist, speaker, and consultant, Dr. Jenkins has worked with companies including Walmart, Google, Facebook, American Airlines, Deloitte, Kellogg's and in sectors across healthcare, government, education, national sports teams, oil and gas companies, small and large non-profits, and with entrepreneurs. He graduated with honors from the University of South Carolina with a Bachelor of Science degrees in Psychology and Sociology, went on to obtain a Master of Science from Illinois State University, and a Doctorate from the University of Arkansas.

His research focused on minority professionals, retention, and perception of their supervisor within the workplace. Currently, he is enrolled at Harvard University, completing post-doctorate studies as a Harvard Fellow. Moreover, Todd serves as a faculty member for the Executive Institute on Inclusion and a Diversity Business Journal Review Board member.

Todd is a Paul Harris Fellow from the Rotary Club of Fayetteville, Arkansas, having joined at 23. He served as the former Rotaract Advisor, Interact Sponsor, RYLA speaker, Youth Services Chair, two terms on Club Board of Directors, New Generations Service Exchange Alumni, and graduated from his District and Zone Leadership Academy.

Todd is currently one of the youngest Youth Exchange District Chairs in Rotary International. He has spoken at various Rotary districts, zones, and international conventions globally about diversity, equity, inclusion, leadership development, and youth services. Todd serves on multiple boards locally and internationally in education, business, and inclusion initiatives.

Jeremy Opperman (member)

Rotarian
South Africa

Jeremy was born with *Retinitis Pigmentosa*, a deteriorating eye condition which results in total blindness.

After graduating from the University of Cape Town in 1987, Jeremy worked as a marketer of cutting-edge people development and training services and products.

Since starting his own HR marketing consultancy in 1999, Jeremy started focusing increasingly on diversity and disability issues and is particularly passionate about the unhesitant and natural integration of people with disabilities into mainstream society.

Jeremy created the Meeting Disability suite of programs and has conducted hundreds of disability awareness workshops for both public and private sector organizations. In addition, Jeremy and his associates provided extensive access-auditing and consulting services to major stakeholders.

Jeremy is a committed advocate of centralized disability service facilities within organizations. He believes in promoting a strong culture of disability confidence all operational functions of the business including corporate social investment, customer service, sales, marketing, and built- and online infrastructure.

In 2015 he was asked to create a unique Disability Desk facility within the Western Cape Provincial Government. This provided, for the first time, a centralized resource for both internal and external stakeholders.

Jeremy speaks, writes, and consults widely on topics including achieving disability confidence in organizations; making a business case for universal access; eating elephants: A strategic approach to disability inclusion; and the benefits of a Disability Desk, a centralized approach.

Jeremy is involved with several disability institutions and has served on the board of directors for Western Cape Disability network. He currently serves on the board of the South African Guide Dog Association, as well as St. Dunstan's Institute for War Blinded Veterans. St. Dunstan's incorporates the Ian Fraser Bursary Fund, which provides bursaries to blind students, and the John & Esther Ellerman Memorial Trust, which provides funding for orientation and mobility instructors.

Jeremy joined Rotary in 2020. He is a member of Rotary Club Newlands in Cape Town South Africa District 9350, and currently holds the chair for the vocational portfolio in his club.

Brian Rusch (member)

Rotarian
USA

Brian has managed organizations for Nobel laureates Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama, taking the knowledge they have imparted to him and created programs to inspire youth on their own explorations of ethics, and that reshape conversations on peace, equality and forgiveness.

He is currently working on projects in India with Kailash Satyarthi and sits on the board of Leymah Gbowee's U.S organization. He was the founding executive director of the Human Thread Foundation, an organization with a mission to educate the public and drive awareness about human dignity and human trafficking. In addition, Brian was a co-creator of The Ubuntu Lab, an organization created to facilitate a better public understanding of our common humanity. He regularly consults with NGOs, governments, corporations and celebrities to help them strategize on how to best optimize their platforms to be change makers for good.

Brian was a Rotary Youth Exchange Student to Brazil and became a Rotarian in his 20s when he joined the Rotary Club of Hollywood, California. He helped to create the Rotary Club of San Francisco - Castro, Rotary's first LGBT-cultured club, and is currently the charter president of the Rotary Club for Global Action, an e-club based in District 5150 with membership from countries around the world including some countries where Rotary is not currently allowed to establish an in-country presence.

Ugo Nichetti (member)

Rotarian
Italy

Ugo is a member of the Inclusion Team of Snam Spa, where he is a Senior Counsel in the Legal Affairs Department. Ugo graduated from the Faculty of Law of the University of Milan, enrolled in the Milan Bar Association. He served as a non-commissioned officer of the Cavalry Army for one year, member of an Italian municipal council for twelve years, president for nine years of a voluntary association registered in the official list of the Province of Cremona and the Lombardy Region.

He was a founding member of the Rotary Club of Soncino and Orzinuovi, and has held Rotary leadership positions at the club and district levels. Ugo has been awarded seven Paul Harris Fellows. He is the Governor of District 2050 (North Italy) for the 2020-21 Rotary year.

Nadine Pemberton (member)

Rotarian
England

Nadine Pemberton is a coach, lawyer and diversity and inclusion educator, who splits her time between Yorkshire in England and St. Lucia. Nadine has extensive experience in front line, senior and executive leadership roles spanning regulatory, criminal law and civil law fields across the UK government.

Throughout her career Nadine has specialized in strategic organizational development, team change and transformation; and has a well-established and proven commitment to equity and inclusion in all areas of her work. Nadine recently founded Pemberton+ Coaching and Consulting, where she works internationally as a change consultant, helping people, teams and organizations on the cusp of change gain the freedom they need to flourish.

Nadine has been a Rotarian for eight years and is currently the Foundation chair at the Rotary Club of Sheffield. Nadine is a past Assistant Governor Rotary in London and District 1220 (East Midlands & South Yorkshire); and also past president of Past President of Westminster International Rotary Club.

In 2020, Nadine founded Rotarians against Racism, a global community of Rotary family, friends and supporters, all committed to being a voice for peace and to taking action in the fight against racism.

Sunghee Nam (member)

Rotarian
Korea

Sunghee Nam received her doctorate in Education from Yeungnam University in 2001 and is currently the president of Daegu Health College.
Since 2003 Sunghee Nam has served as the Chief Director of Daegu Bukgu Cultural Center. Since 2018 she's been a member of the Central Committee of Korean Red Cross. In 2020 she became the president of the Korean Council for University College Education. Prior to that she spent six years as governor of Korean Red Cross Daegu Chapter; four years as a member of the Government Performance Evaluation Committee; four years as commissioner and presidential Committee on Local Autonomy Development; four years as president of the Association of Korean University-College Foundations; and two years as president of the Association of Universities of Asia and the Pacific.

She is a founding member and past president of the Rotary Club of Daegu-Sooryeon, and has held various Rotary leadership positions at the club and district levels. In 2005-06, she served as the first female district governor in South Korea. She is currently RI President's Representative for District 3610. She was a member of the Council on Legislation in 2018-19.

Sunghee Nam is a Rotary Foundation Major Donor and Benefactor, as well as a Bequest Society and Arch Klumph Society member.