

## **Creating Rotary Awareness**

By Frank Deaver, Rotary Club of Tuscaloosa, Alabama USA on **23 August 2007**

A clever little verse was intended for promoting retail sales, but it has application to Rotary as well, especially in this month of Rotary Awareness.

He who whispers in a well  
About the things he has to sell  
Will never earn as many dollars  
As he who climbs a tree and hollers.

Just as the successful salesman must communicate his message, Rotary will reach out to more people if we polish our own communication – if we increase Rotary Awareness of our mission by better informing members and non-members alike.

For much of Rotary Global History, our service activities were "whispered in a well." The world knew little of our humanitarian and educational programs, and even Rotarians were largely unaware of the scope of activities of our own organization.

In his annual theme, Rotary President Frank Devlyn (2000-01) emphasized "Create Awareness." But the ongoing implication is that awareness requires communication in something more than a whisper. Rotarians should be in agreement that Rotary is something worth shouting about. To maximize our success, we must Create Rotary Awareness!

Rotary has a mission, but Rotary also has a message. And both the mission and the message can be summarized in a single word – Service.

Creating Awareness of that service function is called Public Relations, and it starts internally, with new member orientation, meaningful induction, and mentoring in the early months of membership. It continues with Rotary Information programs, keeping even long-time members informed about the scope of world-wide membership, fellowship, and service. This "internal" public relations strengthens Rotary Awareness within our own ranks.

Public relations becomes "external" when we inform the public about Rotary. If we don't tell them, they won't know that Rotary provides more international scholarships than any other organization. If we don't tell them, they won't know that Rotarians

contributed more than a half-billion dollars toward the polio eradication campaign, and that it has been Rotary manpower that delivered the vaccine to the most remote parts of the earth. If we don't tell them, they won't be aware of Rotary's world peace efforts through the Rotary Centers for International Studies in Peace and Conflict Resolution.

At the local level, Rotary Clubs sponsor community projects that serve important needs. If we don't make those services known, their benefits cannot be fully realized. And if we don't tell the local public about Rotary, our new-member recruitment is handicapped.

Rotary Awareness is promoted in January, but Rotary Awareness is a constant challenge. Public Relations is not just the job of a designated chairman and committee. Every Rotarian represents Rotary, and it's the job of every dedicated Rotarian to Create Rotary Awareness.