



THE Rotary VOCAL

February 2026 ♦ NO. 8

DISTRICT GOVERNOR Tom Simon

Business as a Force for Good *Why Profit and Purpose Belong Together*



Many of us were taught that business exists to maximize profit, while service belongs to nonprofits and volunteer organizations. But that narrative is changing. Few thinkers have shaped this shift more clearly than **Raj Sisodia**, who reminds us that business may be the most powerful sustainable organization humanity has ever created.

In books such as *Firms of Endearment* and *The Healing Organization*, Sisodia documents companies that serve all stakeholders—employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and the environment—while still outperforming the market financially. These organizations don't see purpose as a cost center. They understand it as a competitive advantage. When people feel respected, connected, and proud of their work, innovation rises, loyalty deepens, and long-term profitability follows.

This idea should resonate deeply with Rotarians. **Rotary was built on the belief that ethical business and service to others are inseparable.** Our Vocational Avenue of Service calls on us to apply high ethical standards, honor all useful occupations, and use our work as a daily opportunity to serve society.

Rotary provides a platform for individuals to pool their resources and apply their collective skills towards addressing some of the world's most pressing challenges, enabling us to achieve a greater positive impact together than we could ever accomplish alone. But consider the fact that most of the world's financial and human capital lives inside for-profit enterprises. If even a fraction of business activity were intentionally aligned with community well-being, environmental stewardship, and human dignity, the impact would dwarf what philanthropy alone can achieve.

As Rotarians, many of us are business owners, executives, professionals, and entrepreneurs. We are uniquely positioned to model a better way—one where profit and purpose reinforce each other, not compete. When we lead with values, we don't just grow healthy companies; we help heal communities.

At this year's District Conference & Celebration in Santa Fe, we will explore these ideas more deeply as Raj Sisodia challenges us to re-imagine business as a powerful engine for good and ask the question: What kind of wake does my work leave behind?

Click here to learn about and register for the conference:

<https://rotary5520.org/events/2025-26-district-conference/>

Tom Simon, District Governor

District Governor 5520 2025-26

Phone: (505) 670-3007



Rotary District 5520 Conference & Celebration
Hilton Santa Fe Hotel
Inspiration – Connection – Engagement

Begin planning your vacation to Santa Fe today, by registering for the Rotary District Conference & Celebration.

Early Bird Registration starts now and goes through the end of February. Registration begins here:
<https://rotary5520.org/events/2025-26-district-conference/>

Prepare to be inspired by speakers such as pioneering thought leader **Raj Sisodia**, who has profoundly reshaped our understanding of the role of business in society, especially when managed by thoughtful and passionate Rotarians.

We will hear from **Alan Mallory**, an international speaker, author, and performance coach known for his engaging storytelling and leadership strategies. He is a world record-holding mountaineer who set a record with his family on Mount Everest in 2008.

You will have opportunities to engage with fellow Rotarians from all parts of our District and join Santa Fe Rotarians for **home hospitality on Thursday evening**.

We'll celebrate Youth Exchange, RYLA and the Next Generation during Saturday's youth programs. We'll celebrate the accomplishments of Rotarians throughout the District at Friday's All Club Luncheon and Saturday Night's Awards Gala.

Space is limited so don't wait to register.

See you in Santa Fe!

Tom Simon, District Governor



DG Tom

DISTRICT GOVERNOR ELECT JEFF WEINRACH AND CLARE AT THE ROTARY INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY!



District Governor Elect Jeff Weinrach and his wife Clare attended the International Assembly in Orlando, Florida, earlier this month. The Assembly is required for all District Governors from around the world, roughly 535 of them! Pictured above is DGE Jeff with his colleague and friend, DGE Marina Gonzalez, from District 4110, which is one of our partner Districts for the annual International Project Fair that will be held this year in Juarez. The other picture is Jeff and Clare with Rotary International President-Elect Yinka Babalola and his wife Precy, past Rotary International Director and member of the Rotary Foundation Board of Trustees, Vicki Puliz, and others in Jeff's DGE class.

The message for this upcoming year is *Create Lasting Impact*; and much of the Assembly was dedicated to how we as District Governors can promote and enable Clubs to create lasting impact while still uniting for good (this year's message). They are both calls to action for us to consider as we plan for next Rotary year and beyond.

While the Assembly was informational for all of the DGE's to consider impactful service projects, increasing our membership, improving our public image, increasing our participation with the Rotary Foundation, and other key aspects of the Rotary experience; it was even more motivational and inspirational. The stories that we heard from Rotarians and our partners such as Shelterbox were extremely moving; and it reminded me and my DGE colleagues that, whether we are presenting at a Club meeting or discussing Rotary with our current and potential community partners, stories are critically important to share our message of service above self and doing good in the world.

It is truly an honor and a privilege to serve as District 5520 Governor; and Clare and I look forward to collaborating with you, sharing in fun and fellowship, and creating lasting impact for our world, our communities, and ourselves!

- Jeff Weinrach



Chick above to see Rotary International President-Elect Yinka Babalola announcing the new Rotary Message for 2026-2027



Erin Connelly
Rotary District 5520
RYLA Chair
505-660-1825

econnelly.rotary@outlook.com

Hello Everyone!

I'm happy to report that the online application for RYLA is now ready to share!

Here's the information about the application and a few other things. - Erin

APPLICATION (For campers, counselors, and speakers)

Online and available at <https://www.IsMyRotaryClub.org/App/?ID=358>

- ◆ This link is also posted on our RYLA webpage
(<https://rotary5520.org/page/rotary-youth-leadership-award>)

On the RYLA webpage, click on 'Join The Camp-Apply) Here' at the top of the page.

Each applicant will receive an auto-response email with additional information.

For Clubs

CAMPER COMMITMENT FORM

As a reminder, Clubs sponsoring students, please submit a [Camper Commitment Form](#) and remit **SPONSORSHIP FUNDS TO RYLA FOUNDATION** as instructed on the form if you have not already done so.

COUNSELORS

We won't be able to have RYLA camps without counselors. We need about 20 total for each of the Boys and Girls Camps. Join us as a volunteer counselor at camp! Also, if you know of folks who might be great counselors and interested, please let the appropriate director know or they can complete the online application and the Director will contact them. Boys Camp: Joe Gudenrath, jtgudenrath@gmail.com. Girls Camp: Jill Cook, jillcook4910@gmail.com

CLUB MEETINGS/ORIENTATIONS

The Camp Directors and I may be available to attend club meetings and orientations of campers either virtually or possibly in person. Please contact me (Erin) if you are interested.

OFFICE HOURS (Intended for Club RYLA Representatives and interested others)

I've set up "office hours" at the following dates and times. These meetings are informal and open. As always, if you have a question, you can contact me by phone/text/email

- Monday 2/2 5-6 pm
- Tuesday 2/3 12-1 pm
- Friday 2/6 9-10 am
- Monday 2/9 11 am - 12 pm
- Friday 2/13 12-1 pm

Topics will include Q and A time from you, how to access/use the RYLA database (DACdb) and it's new features, sharing outreach/recruitment ideas and success, and whatever else you'd like.

I encourage Club RYLA Representatives to attend at least one meeting and you could attend as many as you like.

ZOOM MEETING INFO FOR OFFICE HOURS

Join Zoom Meeting by clicking on link below

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83422717462?pwd=R9n5M86kEPfBgVA4UPhbi3GNoEaop8.1>

Meeting ID: 834 2271 7462

Passcode: 915539

One tap mobile: +13462487799,,83422717462# US (Houston)
+16694449171,,83422717462# US

Join instructions

[Click here for the join instructions](#)



PETS VS PELS



What's going on?

Don't look so worried, Carey! After I explain it, you will be an expert!

Rotary shifted from "PETS" (Presidents-Elect Training Seminar) to "PELS" (Presidents-Elect Learning Seminar) because the organization wanted the name to reflect Rotary's modern approach to leadership development: ongoing learning, collaboration, and skill-building—not just one-way "training."

Why Rotary Made the Change

"Learning" better matches Rotary's leadership philosophy Rotary has been shifting toward:

- Continuous learning rather than one-time training
- Interactive workshops, coaching, and peer collaboration
- Competency-based leadership development

The term Learning Seminar aligns with this modern approach.

Rotary International has been updating terminology to emphasize:

- Learning pathways
- Leadership development

Bottom Line

Rotary changed PETS to PELS because:

- "Learning" better reflects Rotary's modern leadership development model
- The old acronym caused confusion
- Districts wanted a name that supports ongoing education
- It aligns with Rotary's updated branding and training philosophy
- Ongoing education



PELS fits this branding shift.

Carey, now you, and the other 3 readers of this article, know all there is to know about PETS vs PELS. By the way, learning about Rotary isn't just for President Elects. It is for all upcoming leaders in the club. If you want to learn more about Rotary and to advance your leadership potential, get with your club President-Elect and tell them you would like to attend the PETS PELS meetings coming up. See the PELS flyer in this YUCCA. And, don't forget, the District Conference coming up! Another great place to learn about Rotary and have a good time also.

Assistent Governor (AG) and Lieutenant Governor (LG) Training





DISTRICT LEADERSHIP SESSION

FEBRUARY 27-28, 2026

SOCORRO, NEW MEXICO

Where is the ... District Governor?



Deborah and I took some R&R at Los Poblanos Historic Inn & Organic Farm located in Los Ranchos de Albuquerque following the completion of our last official club visit on January 14th in Eunice, NM. We found these lazy frogs hanging out, fat and happy, in the Greely Rose Garden outside of our Greely Suite 2. The garden will be glorious in the summer but for now, it's just the frogs and some beautiful hardscaping and wizened branches with great character that tell a story all their own.

We live in a beautiful part of the country with a rich history. Deborah and I have had the great pleasure of learning about our District from our fellow Rotarians. Thank you for making our visits to your clubs meaningful and making us feel honored and special to be with you. It has truly been our honor to be so warmly welcomed into your communities.

Tom and Deborah



<https://rghf.org/rotary-radio/>

The Rotary Golden Theater was produced by Rotary International in 1955 to celebrate its 50th Anniversary. It consisted of 13 fifteen minute episodes.

Rotary Global History is indebted to OTRR for providing the following series of 1955 radio programs for our world-wide audience. In addition to the programs, there is printed material to accompany each broadcast, marked as PDF files. (These follow up materials were created by Rotary International in 1955, and provided by the Rotary International archives in 2006)

These "mp3" files will take several minutes to open, but will be worth the wait when you begin to listen to **Rotary Global History from 1955**. Remember that these programs were created in "another time" but you'll marvel at the wisdom that translates to this present era.

Get your club activities on the District Facebook page so we can see all that our District is doing!



CLICK THE FACEBOOK LOGO TO SEE ALL THE OTHER GREAT THINGS GOING ON IN OUR DISTRICT!

GET A FACEBOOK PAGE AND JOIN IN!

IS THE ROTARY COMMUNITY CORP STILL AROUND ?



ROTARY COMMUNITY CORPS



CHANGING THE WORLD
THROUGH SERVICE PROJECTS



YES! **The Rotary Community Corps** program was initiated in 1985 by Rotary International President M.A.T. Caparas and was formally adopted by the RI Board in 1988

The Rotary Community Corps is still an active and vital program within Rotary International, empowering non-Rotarians to lead sustainable service projects in their own communities with Rotary's support, significantly extending Rotary's global impact. These groups of community members, not necessarily Rotarians, tackle local needs from disaster relief to education, using their local knowledge and Rotary's resources to create lasting change, with thousands of corps active worldwide.

Key Aspects of Rotary Community Corps:

Who they are: Groups of local, non-Rotarian volunteers committed to service.

What they do: Plan and execute community-based projects, sharing local knowledge and manpower, while Rotarians offer guidance and network support.

Goals: Promote self-sufficiency, foster community responsibility, and mobilize collective work for local improvement.

Reach: Active globally, with significant presence in developing nations but also in places like the U.S. and Canada.

Flexibility: Can be formed in urban or rural areas and encompass individuals, villages, or neighborhoods.

In essence, Rotary Community Corps multiply Rotary's ability to serve by connecting local passion with Rotary's global network for community development.

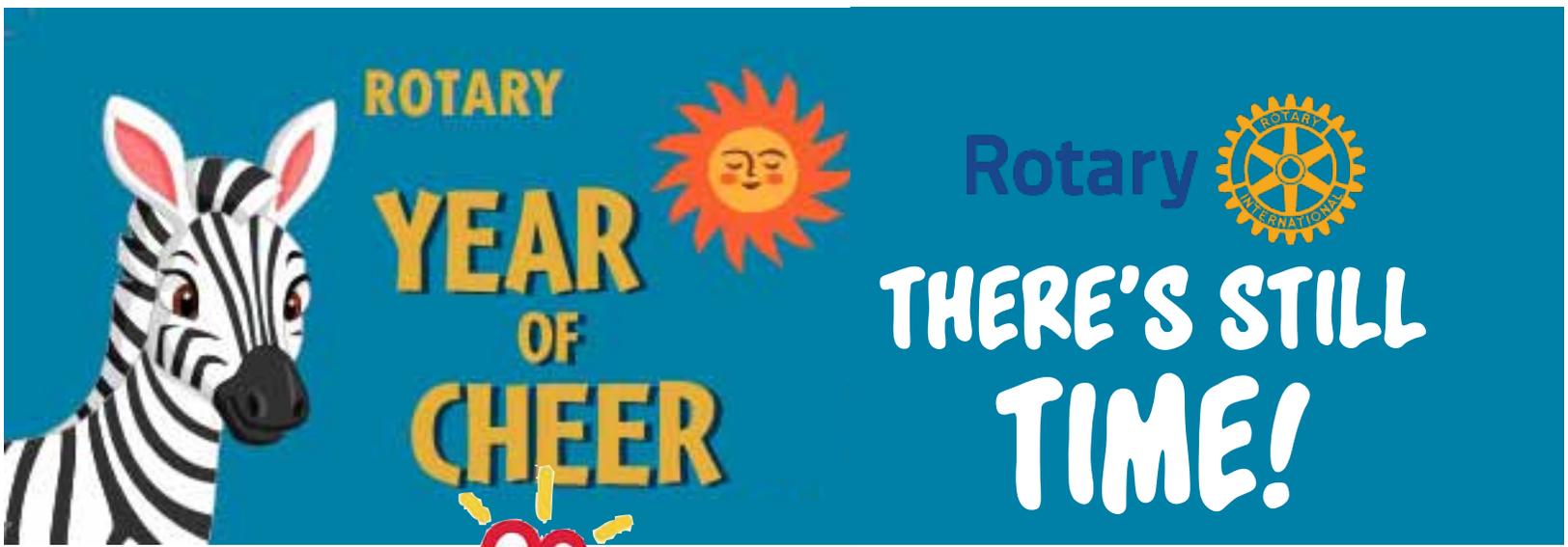


<https://www.facebook.com/groups/611348417787134/>

The Rotary Fellowship of Authors is a new, vibrant Rotary group fostering literary connections, support, and idea exchange among Rotarians who love writing, from aspiring authors to published professionals, creating a supportive literary ecosystem within the Rotary community for sharing, learning, and promoting reading and writing. They connect writers globally, hold events with published authors, and share resources, contrasting with older groups like the International Fellowship of Rotary Editors and Publishers (IFREP), which focuses more on Rotary's own publications and history.

“ People often say you become a Rotarian the day you take the oath. But I've come to believe that the real moment you become a Rotarian happens later—when you do something meaningful that makes you proud, something that reminds you why Rotary exists in the first place. It's that moment when service stops being a concept and becomes part of who you are. That's when you truly feel, in your gut, *'I am a Rotarian.'* ”

- Microsoft CoPilot



El Paso Children's
HOSPITAL



CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

The Rotary Year of Cheer Small Acts. Big Meaning

The Year of Cheer is a District 5520 supported, club-specific year-long effort to bring cheer and hope to the young patients of El Paso Children's Hospital and UNM Children's Hospital.

Children's hospitals have a "Donation Closet" meant to be filled with toys, stuffed animals, games, craft kits, and the like. However, it is reported that these supplies are quickly depleted after the holiday rush of generosity and gift giving.

The Year of Cheer initiative focuses on providing hospital staff with items they need to soften the pain and fears children face during these serious health challenges. Adding joy to birthdays or celebrating special milestones brings an extra touch of care to these young patients, and provides comfort to their families as well.

We are grateful for the support of current DG Tom Simon – a true champion for this cause. When Rotarians come together, small acts of kindness become moments of joy for children who need them most — and that's something worth being part of. Thank you for jumping in, adding a toy, and brightening a child's day.

* QR Code will take you to both hospitals and will allow you to donate money or to buy gifts.



Interested in hosting a toy drive, but don't know where to start? Reach out to any of these District Year of Cheer Representatives:

Alice Mehlberg, Co-Chair: amehlberg@yahoo.com

Berdel Boulanger, Co-Chair: berdelboulanger@gmail.com

Evelyn Bryant, Logistics Coordinator: bryantevelyn49@gmail.com

Fred Bryant, Jack-of-all-Trades and Master of Many: fredbryant300@gmail.com

Rachelle Ford, Social Media and Communications: rachellecford@gmail.com

Geneva Van Matre, Southern Region lead contact: ggvm62@gmail.com

Rotary
District 5520



**RIO GRANDE
PELS**



PRESIDENT ELECT LEARNING SEMINAR

Mar. 13, 2026 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. [Mountain Daylight Time](#) 📅

Dear Presidents-elect,

Registration is now open for this year's Presidents-Elect Leadership Seminar (PELS), March 13–14 at the Sheraton Uptown in Albuquerque!

PELS is required for all Presidents-elect and will give you the tools, inspiration, and connections to lead with confidence.

Your club officers and board members are also welcome to attend. Their presence can be especially valuable as you begin planning for the year ahead. Working together at PELS helps ensure your leadership team is ready, aligned, and energized to make the most of the opportunities and challenges that come with a new Rotary year.

Please feel free to share the registration link below with your leadership team if they are interested in participating.

Register soon to reserve your spot and take the first step in preparing for an impactful year of service.

Register by Jan 15th for \$30 savings! Register at web site below.

Warm regards,



Jeff Weinrach, District Governor 2026-2027
(505) 400-1403 Jweinrach5520@nmia.com



Jen Dresser, District Learning Facilitator
484-983-5514 jendresser.rotary@gmail.com



P.S. Save the Dates (all Saturdays, 9–11 AM):

Jan 17 – Pre-PELS I (required for Presidents-Elect; registration opening soon)

Jan 31 – Be A Vibrant Club Workshop (registration opening soon)

Feb 21 – Pre-PELS II (required for Presidents-Elect; registration opening soon)

<https://rotary5520.org/events/president-elect-training/>



rotary
youth
exchange

Rotary
District 5520



One way Rotary promotes peace is through the
Youth Exchange Program.

**Is your club interested in helping with this area of focus?
Host a high school student from August 2026 - July 2027.**

- Share your community
- Learn about different cultures
- Make lifelong global friends
- Expand club involvement with youth programs
- The club cost is about \$3,000



Bianca Cheney
District Youth Exchange Chair
bianca.cheney.rotary@gmail.com
Office: 575.622.1820
Cell: 575.637.8811

2026 Sonny Brown Business of the Year Award

Established in 2005, Rotary's Centennial Year, to honor
Past Rotary International Vice President and District 5520 Past Governor

Sonny Brown

Honoring Excellence in Business and Service Established in Rotary's Centennial Year (2005), the Sonny Brown Business of the Year Award celebrates businesses in District that exemplify Rotary's highest ethical standards and commitment to community service. This award honors **Sonny Brown**, Past Rotary International Vice President and District 5520 Past Governor, for his outstanding leadership and lifelong dedication to service.

Award Criteria

Businesses nominated for this award demonstrate excellence in the following areas:

- ◆ Employee Relations
- ◆ Quality of Product and/or Representation
- ◆ Community Involvement by both management and employees
- ◆ Nominees must be located within District 5520. Each participating Rotary Club may submit one application per category, and nominees must receive the Clubs endorsement before submission to District 5520's Selection Committee.

Award Categories

- ◆ Non-Rotarian Owned Business
- ◆ Small Business Award: 1 to 10 employees
- ◆ Medium Business Award: 11 to 50 employees
- ◆ Large Business Award: More than 50 employees
- ◆ Rotarian Owned Business
- ◆ At-Large Business Award: Rotarian Owned Business of any size



How to Nominate

Applications must be submitted no later than March 25, 2026. Please send your club's endorsed nomination to: **PDG Dick Jones** – Email: rjones9755@aol.com or Mail to 2527 Calle Delfino, Santa Fe, NM 87505.

Selection & Recognition

The District Selection Committee will review all nominations, select recipients for each category, and notify the sponsoring Rotary Club. Award recipients will be invited as District guests to the District Conference's All Club Luncheon on April 10th in Santa Fe, NM. The sponsoring Rotary Club is responsible for arranging attendance for its recipients.

Special Incentive

This year, the winner of each category will receive four tickets to the Friday evening Presentation by Raj Sisodia, a renowned speaker on ethical principles in business.

About Sonny Brown

Irving J. "Sonny" Brown is Chairman and Founder of Sonny Brown Associates, an international commercial and industrial real estate consulting firm. Born in Parral, Chihuahua, Mexico, Spanish is his first language. Sonny is an active member of the Society of Industrial and Office Realtors and other regional and national real estate organizations.

He has served his community in numerous leadership roles, including director of the El Paso Industrial Development Corporation, commissioner on the Housing Authority of El Paso, and vice president and director of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce. For his service, he received the Distinguished Service Award from the Rotary Club of El Paso.

A Rotarian since 1960, Sonny has held many positions including club president, district governor, Rotary International director, and vice-president. He has contributed to Rotary International through various committees and training initiatives and has received the Rotary Foundation's Citation for Meritorious Service and the Distinguished Service Award. Both Sonny and his wife, Ann, are Major Donors and Bequest Society Members of the Rotary Foundation. They are proud parents of four children and grandparents to ten, with all family members recognized as Paul Harris Fellows.



We invite all clubs to nominate eligible businesses to participate in this prestigious recognition of ethical leadership and community service.

For questions or more information, please contact Dick Jones at rjones9755@aol.com



No. 40 – January 6 2025

1 minute to discover an aspect of Rotary history

The Impact of the First World War on Rotary's International Expansion

The First World War had a profound impact on Rotary's international expansion, representing both a challenge and an opportunity.

During the conflict, Rotary's growth in Europe slowed significantly.

International communications were disrupted, existing clubs were often isolated, and many Rotarians were mobilized for the war effort, halting development initiatives.

However, the war also strengthened Rotary's belief in the importance of international understanding and peace.

After the conflict, Rotary experienced rapid expansion, particularly in Europe.

In a continent seeking reconstruction and determined to prevent future wars, Rotary's ideals of service and international cooperation found strong resonance.

New clubs were established in countries such as France, Germany, and Italy, often with the support of American Rotarians involved in postwar reconstruction.

The war also influenced Rotary's growing commitment to international humanitarian projects, addressing reconstruction needs and supporting war victims.

This experience reinforced Rotary's dedication to global peace, positioning it as an early actor in citizen diplomacy and transforming it into a truly international movement.

