RESOLUTION 19R-03

To request the RI Board to consider clarifying that Rotary is a philosophy of life based on the ideal of service

**Proposer(s):** District 2580, Japan  
**Endorsed by:** District 2580 through a ballot-by-mail, 15 May 2019

WHEREAS, the research report of Siegel+Gale, published on 25 January 2012, was used to develop what has ultimately become RI’s Strategic Plan. The document reports that, for every ten Rotarians who were asked what Rotary stands for, ten different answers were given, highlighting the fact that there is no clear definition among members. The document does not provide a clear answer to the question, but nevertheless proceeds on the assumption that Rotary is the organization itself, and

WHEREAS, there has already been such a debate in the history of Rotary, a debate so momentous that it nearly destroyed our organization and this resulted in Resolution 1923-34, which states that “Rotary is a philosophy of life,” which was the philosophy of “Service above self” (consider others before you act), which would then lead to “One profits most who serves best” (those who follow the first motto are rewarded most), and

WHEREAS, the Object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster, among others, the application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian’s personal, business, and community life, or, in other words, in all aspects of a Rotarian’s daily life, and

WHEREAS, Rotary is a philosophy of life, or the ideal of service, as implemented by Rotarians. Rotary clubs are organizations composed of individual Rotarians, just as RI is the collective expression of the clubs, and

WHEREAS, both RI’s previous strategic plan and its new strategic plan, scheduled for implementation in 2019, see Rotary as a respected organization that works to improve communities internationally, and

WHEREAS, the ideal of service is a philosophy that points to ways in which Rotarians can achieve personal satisfaction by working to improve the lives of others, thus fulfilling their own goals, as well as those they serve. In particular, by applying the ideal of service in one’s own profession or vocation, it is transformed from a means of making into a means of serving people and the communities in which they live. Along with community service, vocational service is a reward in and of itself, and
WHEREAS, RI’s Strategic Plan was established to develop our membership, which has stagnated for many years at around 1.2 million members. Membership development is significant because it will expand our capacity to provide service to communities, a process that, in itself, is inherently satisfying to Rotarians. Expanding or maintaining the organization should not be the sole purpose of the strategic plan, and

WHEREAS, the tendency to view Rotary as an entity rather than as a philosophy inevitably results in failure to recognize the individual Rotarian’s activity as a Rotary activity, or recognize the vocational service that each Rotarian performs in their own professional life. This leads to the misunderstanding that community service activities such as vocational training teams (VTTs) are the equivalent of vocational service, and

WHEREAS, in service activities, as well, there has been an overemphasis on donations and volunteer activities and a departure from Rotary’s original concept of vocational service as satisfying for both Rotarians and their communities. Just as it is more important to teach a starving person how to fish than to hand out a fish to them, it is more important to promote our ideal of service (i.e., why we implement certain service activities) than to publicize the individual service activities

IT IS RESOLVED by Rotary International that the Board of Directors of Rotary International consider clarifying that Rotary is a philosophy of life based on the ideal of service, so that the Object of Rotary can be properly implemented.

(End of Text)

PURPOSE AND EFFECT

Rotary is a philosophy of life. The ideal of service directs one to first consider others before acting, which would then lead to greater rewards for those who follow this precept. Rotarians are the ones that implement the ideal. Rotary clubs are organizations composed of Rotarians, just as RI is an entity that represents all of the clubs and supports them.

Based on proper recognition of the above, we should focus our principal membership development efforts on recruiting potential members who are still active in the workforce, as these make up the largest segment of the adult population, and we should encourage and foster the implementation of the ideal of service through vocational service, as this benefits both Rotarians and communities alike.

That is the true Object of Rotary, and it would lead to membership development.
FINANCIAL IMPACT

If implemented, this resolution would have a financial impact on RI which cannot be determined at this time. Cost would be dependent on the scope and extent of support provided by the RI Board to accomplish this goal.

Significant resources have been invested over the past four years in market research and the creation of messages, materials, and promotional campaigns that drive public awareness and understanding of Rotary.