

## **Rich Carson, Rotary International: summary of presentation for IRA's International Literacy Day 2011**

Rich Carson, a past Rotary International (RI) Governor and current RI representative to Organization of American States (OAS), encouraged the audience to meet their local Rotary clubs to develop literacy projects.

Rotary International, serving communities since 1905, is one of the largest international, humanitarian service organizations in the world with 1.2 million members in 200 countries working through 33,000 clubs. RI has six primary focus areas: basic education and literacy, disease prevention and treatment, maternal and child health, water and sanitation, economic and community development, and peace and conflict resolution. In FY 2008-09 The Rotary Foundation awarded \$187.8 million dollars in grants for these areas, with \$77,000,000 given for literacy since 1999. (The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recently awarded Rotary \$355 million for polio eradication, of which Rotary will match \$200 million by 2012.)

Rotary considers literacy a very important pillar for stability and personal growth. Rotary made an official commitment to literacy in 1985 and considers it to be a precondition for the development of peace throughout the world. Of the 33,000 rotary clubs worldwide 16,000 have engaged in literacy projects.

### **Rotary and International Reading Association's (IRA) Partnership**

RI has been working formally with IRA since 2002 with the common goal of advancing literacy worldwide. The strategic plan encourages local Rotary clubs and IRA councils to work together.

In addition to many project examples, The Pearson Foundation Award and the new [Rotary IRA Literacy guide](#) serve as additional excellent examples of cooperation between IRA and Rotary.

[Pearson Foundation](#) offers the IRA-RI Literacy Project Award that is a wonderful example of this partnership. The Pearson Foundation, the non-profit arm of Pearson, the international media company, is offering two \$2,500 awards for Joint IRA/Rotary literacy projects. Applications will be reviewed by qualified people from both IRA and Rotary. ([Details here](#))

[Rotary IRA Literacy guide](#) is a publication that helps Rotary clubs and IRA reading councils select literacy projects which meet community needs. Joint efforts include providing books and educational materials, building and supporting schools, mentoring students, training teachers, and establishing literacy programs for children and adults.

Examples of teacher training include projects in Ecuador and Sudan (though projects can be local and as simple as the local resources and needs allow).

### **Ecuador Project:**

The joint efforts of OAS and Rotary, and the relationships that developed with the Ecuador literacy officials and the Ecuador Minister of Education resulted in 60 teachers being trained in 15 schools and effecting 3,000 students. Rotary promotes community

development, knowing that something as simple as access to clean water and eye glasses improve school attendance. In Ecuador, of the four schools Carson recently visited, three had clean water provided by Rotary. For more information on the project contact Rachael Blair at [rachael.blair@verizon.net](mailto:rachael.blair@verizon.net).

**South Sudan Teacher Training Project:**

This project trains teachers to not only improve their own skills, but those of other aspiring teachers throughout this new country. This project was born when John Dau, Lost Sudanese Boy and humanitarian, spoke at IRA's International Literacy Day in 2007. Ellensburg Morning Rotary Club, Rotary Club of Juba, Rotary International, South Sudan Institute, and IRA, through the [South Sudan Institute](#), join with three Rotarians and IRA members from Central Washington University (CWU) to maintain this project. Rotarian and IRA members Judy Backlund and her husband Phil helped spearhead this project. Judy is the current Ellensburg Rotary Club President and Phil is a past president. Judy is also president of the [IRARI special interest group](#) that supports joint RI and IRA efforts. Their "training the trainer" approach is cost effective. The 2011 sessions trained 14 teachers who each trained five others resulting in 70 teachers with new skills to improve the lives of and inspire countless more children. For contact information on this project see [South Sudan Institute](#).