

# Shanghai first stop for Rotary chief as he eyes expansion in China

The worldwide organization's international president wants to establish more clubs in the country to further its charitable work in educational, humanitarian and health programs. Sam Riley reports.



Rotary International President John Kenny (center) travels the world meeting Rotarians and the young people who Rotary supports with education scholarships.



Rotary's new international president John Kenny and his wife June.

With more than 33,000 clubs around the world, Rotary's new international president John Kenny says he chose Shanghai as his first visit outside North America to focus on expanding in China. Rotary currently has a presence in both Shanghai and Beijing but Kenny says he was on a fact-finding mission to look at growing Rotary — the world's biggest service club organization — possibly in southern China.

"I am here to explore the possibilities for new clubs and how we can further the good Rotary can do in this country because there is a tremendous need," he says.

Rotary has a presence in more than 200 countries and regions and its members form a global network of business, professional and community volunteers who raise money on both a local and international level for a range of community programs.

The Shanghai Rotary Club has 57 members and has raised more than US\$2 million in the past two years for a range of worthy causes across China.

Programs the expatriate club has funded have helped a range of charitable

organizations in China from providers of wheelchairs to groups providing books to schools in poor rural areas.

It also provides a range of educational programs aimed at young Chinese, which includes scholarships and exchanges. The Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarships claim to be the world's largest privately funded scholarship program.

Last year the Rotary Foundation, the organization's major funding arm, spent more than US\$227 million worldwide on a range of educational, humanitarian and health programs.

### Strong growth

It also received more than US\$255 million from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to continue the fight to eradicate polio.

Kenny, who was in Shanghai last week, says Rotary's global growth continued to be strong with more than 1.2 million members worldwide.

The organization is growing strongly in Eastern Europe, India and South Korea which all experienced double digit membership growth last year. Kenny says membership had fallen off in North America, a fact he blamed on apathy.

"Younger people nowadays seem more prepared to support a cause but less likely to join an organization," he says.

Rotary accepted female members in 1989 and has seen a strong growth in its women members, recently electing a woman to its board.

In Shanghai, Kenny says he hoped that Rotary would continue to build trust by developing partnerships with local charities.

"As time passes it will be seen that Rotary is an organization that can benefit the community and from what I have seen the government welcomes our work," he says.

Rotary works closely with Shanghai Charity Foundation and has partnered with the organization to roll out a program training mainly migrant workers to care for the growing number of elderly in the city.

Shanghai Charity Foundation estimates that more than 21 percent of Shanghai's population is over the age of 60.

Rotary Shanghai donated 350,000 yuan (US\$51,083) toward the project that trained more than 1,000 caregivers last year.

Rotary has a long history in Shanghai where it was first established in 1919.

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The club was reformed in 1995 and operated as the Expatriate Rotarians and Friends in Shanghai until 2001. It became a fully chartered club in February last year.

Kenny says the Shanghai club provided a unique business network of expatriates who were interested in

making a positive difference in the community they were living and working in.

The Shanghai club has extensive links to fellow Rotarians and Rotary clubs around the world and often receives matching grants for money it raises in Shanghai. The club's major fundraising event of the year is its

annual Golf Day — last year members raised more than 590,000 yuan.

A Scot, Kenny is a retired judge and has been a Rotarian since 1970.

He will hold the presidency for one year and previously served as Rotary's president for Great Britain and Ireland.