

## ROTARY YOUTH NETWORK (RYN)

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for connection during isolation, a group of Rotary Youth programs participants created Rotary Interactive Quarantine (RIQ), an online platform hosted by District 6840 in the United States that allowed students globally to share ideas, cultures, and experiences while working on projects throughout the quarantine. RIQ held semimonthly online meetings in different formats, engaging the youth community and building relationships with Rotaract and Rotary associations. Since then, the students have reached young leaders in 71 countries and impacted an estimated 5000 individuals. Participants expressed positive feedback and a desire to continue working together even after the quarantine ended worldwide. They felt empowered, gained knowledge about Rotary, expanded their networks, learned from other Clubs and Districts, and, most importantly, created meaningful international friendships.

Since March 2020, RIQ members identified two common challenges: the disconnect between participants of Rotary youth programs (Interact, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, and Rotary Youth Exchange) and the lack of meaningful engagement between Rotary and Rotaract with youth, and therefore discontinuity of participation in Rotary after the student finished the programs.

In this context, leaders of Rotary Interactive Quarantine have transformed RIQ into Rotary Youth Network (RYN), an online organization sponsored by District 6840 to empower, engage and connect participants of Rotary Programs for Young Leaders (Interact, Rotary Youth Exchange, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards), build the relationship between Rotary Youth, Rotaractors, and Rotarians, and develop opportunities for Rotary Youth to actively participate in accomplishing Rotary's Action Plan.

### **Mission**

*“Our mission is to strengthen Rotary Youth Programs by providing an inclusive and innovative online platform to connect, empower and support participants, promote peace through international friendships, foster collaboration on service projects and advocate for Rotary's Action Plan.”*

### **Aim**

- ★ **Connect** Rotary Youth through establishing a worldwide network of students to exchange ideas and take action to solve common challenges, increasing our ability to adapt while exchanging cultures and nurturing international friendships.
- ★ **Build** a stronger relationship between Rotary Youth Programs (RYLA/RYE/Interact), Rotaract, and Rotary by encouraging collaboration at the District, Zone, and International levels through Rotary Action Groups and Fellowships.

## *Membership*

All participants of Rotary Programs for Young Leaders (Interact, Rotary Youth Exchange, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards) and recent alums (under 21 years of age) are eligible for membership.

## *Organizational structure*

RYN is an organization led by youth under the mentorship of Rotaractors and Rotarians. The Board of Directors and committee members will be RYN members. The Board of Directors will consist of two co-chairs, a secretary, and chairs of the six committees.

Rotaractors and Rotarians will serve as mentors and advisors but not members of the network. Each committee must have at least one Rotaractor/Rotarian advisor.

## *Committees*

**Membership:** Identifies, markets, and implements membership development strategies that are appropriate for the network and will result in membership growth.

**Problem Solvers:** Gather students from different programs to identify common struggles, brainstorm and exchange ideas to overcome challenges, and contribute to improving local clubs, RYLA's, and RYE's experiences.

**Leaders and RYN Committee:** Works to make the RYN leadership team friendly and create meaningful connections. It provides an orientation to new leaders. Devise a strategy to introduce them to the work environment, organizational policies, and specific positions.

**Information technology (IT):** Has oversight responsibilities concerning the overall role of technology in executing RYN's activities. Each RYN committee sends one member to the IT committee.

**Partnerships committee:** Evaluate proposals for new strategic partnerships and monitors the progress of existing partnerships between RYN and other organizations.

**Public Image (PI):** Responsible for the overall management of marketing the Rotary Youth Network brand and message. They oversee external communication for the network, ensure messages are consistent and engaging and develop and implement effective communication strategies in line with Rotary Guidelines.

**Service projects:** Identifies and meets real needs in our communities and worldwide by developing and implementing meaningful service projects and exchanging service project ideas and successful best practices from different clubs and districts.

**Programs:** Organize activities and groups to engage members and serve RYN's purpose. Each program will have a chair who will lead a team to design a plan to engage our members successfully. Members can propose changes and add programs.

**General meetings:** Regular events where people share their expertise on topics of interest.

**Social meetups:** Casual “get-togethers” where our members can connect based on a shared hobby/interest and meet Rotary Youth from all over the world.

**Twinning meetings:** Meetings where two or more Interact Clubs from different countries connect virtually to share cultures, club projects, and experiences. This initiative has proven to promote peacebuilding and international understanding by developing meaningful relationships.

**Annual Virtual Conference.** Content and structure to be determined.

## Tangible outcomes

- **Monthly Twinning Meetings:** As with Rotary Interactive Quarantine, RYN will host monthly twinning meetings, whereby Interact Clubs are paired together based on language and interests to develop lasting relationships to build peace and international understanding.
- **Quarterly General Meetings:** To facilitate the learning and development of Rotary Youth, RYN will host quarterly General Meetings with speakers on topics of interest to our membership. Individuals are encouraged to host hybrid meetings in their clubs and communities.
- **Regular Social Meetups:** To encourage fellowship, RYN members will organize regular social meetups, where students can join breakout rooms with different activities such as virtual parties, dance classes, and music and language exchange. Our main goal is to use entertainment to build relationships between RIQ's members. The RIQ meetups also created opportunities for our members to take on new Leadership Positions in the form of planning, coordinating, and leading breakout sessions.
- **Service projects:** The RYN leadership team will work with members to identify a common struggle in our communities and develop a global service project. The

initial project will be small and easy to achieve to develop a larger scale, sustainable global service project for Rotary Youth within 1-2 years.

- **Social media interaction:**

With Gen Z's spending a substantial amount of time on social media, we will continue using online platforms as an opportunity to engage, educate and inspire action from these individuals. RIQ successfully utilized social media to showcase club projects, work with members to compile cultural guides, host numerous quizzes, and our most popular subprogram in RIQ, *Takeover Wednesday*.

**Takeover Wednesday:** On Takeover Wednesday, an RYE student or Interactor takes over the RIQ account for the day and shares a typical day in their life, including service projects and cultural traditions. The activity aims to encourage our members to feel more connected and comfortable speaking to others while showcasing their culture, life, and service.

## Partnerships

RYN aims to build a strong relationship between Youth Program alumni, Rotaract, Rotary organizations, and associations by building partnerships with groups open to all participants of Rotary Youth programs. These partnerships include:

- **Rotary Action Groups**

There are very few opportunities for Rotary Youth to join Rotary Action Groups. One of the strategic priorities for RYN is to work with RAG leadership to create opportunities for students to participate in their activities, setting up a path for them to be members in the future.

*Opportunity:* Learn from the experience of Rotaract For Peace, and create a group of Rotary Youth to participate in the Rotary Action Group for Peace.

- **Multi-District Information Organizations**

Rotaract MDIO and agencies can support local Interact clubs by encouraging Rotaractors to serve as mentors and guides for Interactors, hosting events and programs that encourage students to join Rotaract, and connecting Rotary Youth Alumni with local Rotaract and Rotary clubs.

- **ROTEX International**

ROTEX is an extended network of students who completed the Rotary Youth Exchange program and serve as guides for students on or preparing for exchange. Rotary Youth Exchange (RYE) students will be encouraged to participate in RYN before and during their exchange. RYN and ROTEX will offer opportunities for

consistent engagement with ROTEX International throughout the exchange so that RYE students are already engaged and connected with the organization when their exchange ends.

- **External organizations**

To expand our reach, RYN will build connections and opportunities to work with organizations that share our passion for service, such as the Leo Club Advisory Panel at Lions International, [Global Youth Action Network](#), [State of Youth](#), and the [World Beyond War](#) Youth Network.

*Opportunity:* Host a panel with the leaders from several International Youth Organizations to exchange ideas, experiences, and perspectives.