

Group Study Exchange Program

August 2005

Dear Amigos,

The 2005-06 Rotary year marks the 40th anniversary of the Group Study Exchange (GSE) program of The Rotary Foundation. A total of 34 GSE teams participated in exchanges during the first cycle of the program in 1965-1967; more than 400 teams participate today. It is incredible to think that since 1965, more than 11,000 GSE teams have traveled — involving over 50,000 team members.

Did you know that 20 percent of Rotary clubs around the world have at least one GSE program alumnus within their membership ranks? GSE is a great way to attract young, motivated Rotary Club member candidates with international experience. As we celebrate four decades of professional development, international understanding, and cross-cultural friendships established through this educational program, I urge you to think of creative ways to engage your district in Group Study Exchange, such as a special-focus or univocational GSE team.

GSE teams composed of members from one vocational field have a unique opportunity to enrich the communities they visit, as well as to expand their professional horizons. Promoting a univocational GSE team can be an effective method of recruiting potential GSE team members with an interest or skill in a specific field of work, and will help your district target certain companies for ideal team member candidates. Univocational GSE team members benefit by exchanging information, techniques, and ideas related to their profession with their fellow team members. One of my favorite examples of a univocational GSE is the team of ophthalmologists from District 3290 (India/Nepal) that visited District 1090 (England). Team members visited eye clinics, hospitals, and one-hour lens shops during their vocational days and were able to learn about innovative technology from their counterparts in the UK.

Time and time again, we see that GSE teams involved in activities relevant to the larger community achieve the greatest professional exposure and the most rewarding Rotary service experience. A GSE team with a special focus or project can also increase Rotary's visibility in the media. Take, for example, the GSE team from District 1610 (Netherlands) that visited District 3400 (Indonesia) shortly after the tsunami disaster of December 2004, during Rotary's 2004-05 centennial year. The GSE team members were acutely aware of the damage that had occurred in their host district and embarked on a mission: to return home with a project that would benefit tsunami victims. During their visit, they discovered that many Acehese students were no longer able to



The president of the Rotary Club of Bandung, Indonesia (District 3400), is pictured with university students from tsunami-stricken areas of West Java that will receive support to finish their studies thanks to a collaboration with Rotary clubs in District 1610 and 1590. The project is the result of a centennial year Group Study Exchange between districts 1610 and 3400.

support their studies because they had lost homes and families in the tsunami. The GSE team leader launched the appeal to Rotary clubs in the Netherlands who, through the coordination of the Rotary Club of Bandung in Indonesia, were able to identify deserving students in need of support to complete their study programs. The project, which was created through a GSE relationship, will ensure that many students from tsunami-stricken West Java have the resources necessary to realize their dream of obtaining a university degree.

Every district has the opportunity to design a Group Study Exchange program that will address local or international needs. The 40th anniversary of Group Study Exchange in 2005-06 is the perfect time to *Create Awareness* about developing the next generation of global-minded professionals. This year, I encourage you to reflect on your district's service goals and implement a GSE team that will *Take Action* to serve your community and the Rotary world.

Please continue to Create Awareness and Take Action by encouraging the family of Rotary to give needed personal increased donations to our Rotary Foundation.

Your Amigo in Mexico City,

Frank Devlyn

The Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair, 2005-06

Past Rotary International President, 2000-01