



Learn more about Carol Horner: <https://www.spiralofaccountability.com/>

Background of the situation

In 2018, District 5650 did an Appreciative Inquiry on Empowering Women in Rotary. During that process and subsequent report at the District Conference that year, it was discovered that there is a strong desire to expand the diversity, not only of women but all demographics, in our clubs and district in both membership and leadership. It was also discovered that there was a strong desire to increase inclusive behaviors within clubs and at club meetings.

Meanwhile, over the past five years there has been a general decline in our membership district wide. We have started 1 new club, but we lost 3 clubs. When we ask club members to bring a guest or ask a prospective member to join, they typically look like the current member and we are operating in small numbers.

Lastly, the demographics of our clubs do not reflect the communities they serve. Optics matter.

Objectives of the Inclusion Initiative

The Rotary position on diversity, equity, and inclusion:

As a global network that strives to build a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change, Rotary values diversity and celebrates the contributions of people of all backgrounds, regardless of their age, ethnicity, race, color, abilities, religion, socioeconomic status, culture, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

We take this on as our mission. We will, with intention, focus our actions to grow our diversity and increase our inclusive behaviors so that our clubs reflect the communities we serve and can make the greatest positive impact in those communities.

Initial Goals for 2020-2022:

- **Engage in a professionally conducted training program, provided by Inclusive Communities.** Participation will include the District Leadership Team, the District Membership Team, current Club Presidents and President-Elects, and any other interested Rotarian.
 - Scheduled for Fall 2020
 - 80 participants
- **Design and offer two programs to all clubs in the District, led by the Membership Team**
 - A regular club program (25 minutes)
 - A more significant experience (1.5-2 hours) for clubs to request and to offer at Vibrant Club events, Conferences, etc.
- **Reach out, as a District, through event sponsorship, to organizations of underrepresented groups to share Rotary's mission and values and encourage their interest in joining Rotary.**
 - Beginning in Spring of 2021

- **Grow satellite clubs in areas that are void of Rotary currently and are high potential for success as future clubs**
 - South Omaha
 - North Omaha
 - Cause-based
 - Community-based Rotaract

Early Wins

The first win, from my perspective, is that when I shared my single agenda of growing diversity and inclusion in our District as my reason for seeking the District Governor role, I was met with enthusiasm from the selection board.

Second win, again from my perspective, when I announce the Inclusion Initiative at the 2019 District Conference (before being confirmed at District Governor) it was met with enthusiasm.

Third win, our current District Governor string (and even going back a few years) is supportive of this effort.

Fourth win, the Omaha Suburban Club decided to be the champion club by securing the district grant and matching it to fund the Initiative.

Biggest challenge so far

There have been “rumblings” of fear that we may lose members who think our initiative is too much change or political. We have met this challenge with the following messaging:

- We are supporting the Four Way Test of the things we think, say, and do
 - Is it the truth
 - Is it fair to all concerned
 - Will it build goodwill and better friendships
 - Is it beneficial to all concerned
- We are fulfilling the Rotary vision of uniting to take action to create lasting change – across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves. To make this lasting change, we need to reflect the community we serve, and we need to look inside ourselves to become more inclusive in our language and our actions.
- We are fulfilling our mission to provide service to others, promote integrity, and advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through fellowship. This all begins at home.
- We are expressing the Rotary values of fellowship, integrity, diversity, service, and leadership.
- We are supporting the Rotary Strategic Plan’s 4 priorities of increasing our impact, expanding our reach, enhancing participant engagement, and increasing our ability to adapt.
- Our efforts are to build inclusion for all members (we have no intention of “leaving out” current dominant demographics). This is not a pie.
- None of this political, THIS IS WHO WE ARE!

Recommendations

- This is not a “program” or just the responsibility of a “task force”; integrate inclusion into everything, explore and evaluate all your efforts with an inclusion lens (membership, public image, foundation, youth services, service projects, meeting agenda’s, awards, images, stories, talking points, traditions, titles, everything!)

- Get help (both inside and outside Rotary), ask questions, learn from others, share with others
- Be willing to be vulnerable, there will be mis-steps and mis-takes—own them, understand the why, apologize for them and move on and don't make the same mis-step again.
- Be CURIOUS! If it is okay, when we go to the International Convention, that we can walk up to anyone from anywhere and engage in conversation, why wouldn't it be okay to do that in our own community.
- Build a coalition of the excited! That gets you momentum and closer to the tipping point of buy-in
- Do not be afraid to engage in difficult conversations or to call "in" those who are struggling to understand our efforts.
- It begins with focus. What you focus on grows. Focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion and it will grow. Examples: Since our focus on empowering women in Rotary as a district, we have had 4 of the last 5 named DGs be women. Since my club focused on reaching out to underrepresented groups for members and thus added diversity, we have been able impact our community more significantly in our projects and we are better known in the general public.