

We care about your climate future

March, 2023

Volume 8, Issue 9

How Rotarians advance sustainability

Rotarians and Rotaractors from Sweden, Spain, Mexico, the US, and Canada share knowledge and success stories this month on sustainable living, from the District level to households. ESRAG's Latin American reporter reports on her sister's shattering experience with climate disaster to underline why this progress is crucial.

The work of four Rotaractors shines this month, demonstrating the environmental expertise and passion of Rotary's rising generation of leaders. We summarize the powerful points made by Judith Diment and Rotary International President-Nominee MÃirio CÃsar Martins de Camargo in their Feb. 7 webinar on the opportunities created by Rotary's expanding participation in the UN Climate Conference. The article links you to the recording.



Here's the March lineup:

- Climate courage: Judith Diment and MÃirio CÃsar report on Rotary's role at COP
- Swedish sustainability experts Ingrid Hesser and Gunilla Ostberg help you find your power over climate change
- PDG Ingrid Steinhoff shares how D 2202 in Spain achieved Net Zero
- Mexican Rotaractor Carlos Montoya describes design principles to shape a city fair to all concerned.
- American Rotaractor Will Nichols' nonprofit breaks new ground for energy justice
- US website designer Frank Gomez explains how to reduce the energy consumption of your Club website, AND make it more accessible.
- Canadian Dawn Byford offers advice on building fellowship with sustainable meals
- Colombian Natalia Luque describes how the Canadian wildfires forced her sister's family to flee for their lives last year, and asks: What will you pack when you have to evacuate?

And if you, like Will Nichols, have installed or raised money for solar panels, log your project for ESRAG's worldwide [Million Solar Panels](#) campaign!

For education and more inspiration:

- Projects + Webinars on Wednesdays
- Pollinators 101 Webinars March 6 and 13
- ESRAG members make headlines

Send us your news! Our April issue is on climate and health. May's topic is biodiversity. Also, let us know if you can serve as a guest editor for ESRAG in June, working on the July issue. We'll train you on how to produce it in iMembers, a cousin to DACdb.

Photo: A Canadian Rotary Youth Exchange student explaining a tree-planting project in May, 2023, part of D 2202's carbon offset project in Gipuzkoa, Spain, from a video created by Rotary Forests.

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Climate courage: Diment and CĂsar on Rotary's role at COP

By Ariel Miller, ESRAG Newsletter Editor



People from 62 nations registered for ESRAG's Feb. 7 webinar with Judith Diment of Great Britain and Rotary International President Nominee MĂrio CĂsar Martins de Camargo of Brazil, to learn about the results of Rotary's participation in COP 28, the 2023 UN Climate Conference.

In dialogue with ESRAG Chair Yasar Atacik and several of the Rotaractors chosen to represent RI at COP 28, these two top leaders gave a dynamic, practical, and candid read-out. It concluded with a compelling call to action from RIPN MĂrio, who has advocated for years to expand Rotary's environmental action. He urged us to lobby for Rotary's continued participation in COP, because the time and financial commitment Rotary made

to COP 28 is far from assured going forward.

You can listen to their report on ESRAG's website, by scrolling half way down the [Climate theme page](#).

As Dean of Rotary's Representative Network, Diment leads the global team of Rotary ambassadors to UN agencies and the Commonwealth. This is the third time she has chaired Rotary's official COP delegation, but COP 28 was the first attended by all three of Rotary's top leaders: RI President Gordon McNally, Foundation Chair Barry Rassin, and General Secretary John Hewko. It was also the first time Rotary reserved pavilions in both the Green (public) and Blue (policymakers) Zones, enabling RI to greatly expand networking.

Mounting these pavilions was expensive, requiring sponsorships from many donors, but Rotary's enhanced visibility and engagement catalyzed new or expanded partnerships. The event proved revelatory for Rotary leaders who met an array of other Rotarians attending on behalf of NGOs, government, or the private sector. The Rotary talks, conversations and social events in the pavilions created opportunities to forge friendships and connections that will facilitate collaboration with partners like the World Health Organization.

Photo: screenshot from Feb. 7 webinar. From left, clockwise: ESRAG Brazil Chapter Chair Alberto Palombo, RI President Nominee MĂrio CĂsar Martins de Camargo, ESRAG Chair Yasar Atacik, and Rotary's COP 28 Delegation Chair Judith Diment.

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Claim your personal power over climate change:

Getting Climate Priorities Straight!

By Ingrid Hesser and Gunilla Åstberg, ESRAG Europe Chapter

Just the other day, we attended a Rotary club meeting in central Stockholm. At our table was another guest Rotarian, and we got into the subject of climate and the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. “Just look at China and their emissions, and the same goes for India,” was his argument. The same line of thinking we have heard too many times, and sorry to say, too often from a man. It made us refer to a brilliant article by scientist Kimberly Nicholas, illuminating the confusion between GLOBAL statistics on effective actions for climate, and effectiveness of personal, national or company actions.

As Kimberly Nicholas writes, “A lot of well-meaning people are missing out on effective climate actions because they’re thinking about emissions at the wrong level. This is a problem because we need to use our limited time and resources well to reduce emissions fast and fairly.” In an [interview with the Washington Post](#) she added, “Ninety percent of the world doesn’t need to reduce their emissions, but most readers of The Washington Post probably do,” she said.

Those of us in the global top 10% of high-emitters (earning over \$38,000/year) *do* need to reduce our over-consumption. We tend to live bigger, have bigger cars, consume more, and fly significantly more than the remaining 90 percent. Yes, emissions from flying are small on a GLOBAL level, but that’s because a very small percentage of humanity can afford to fly. For an INDIVIDUAL high-emitter, see figure 1. Flying is likely to be their largest source of emissions. The higher our income, the more likely most of our emissions come from flying and driving, as indicated in figure 1.

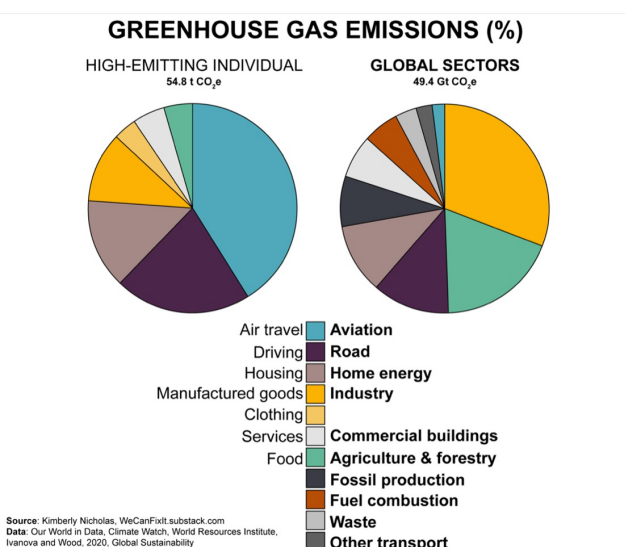
Just one round-trip flight between Seattle and New York emits 1 ton of greenhouse gases (GHG). That is as much as we are allowed to emit in a year, in order not to affect the climate negatively. For a round trip by air from Hamburg to Singapore the emissions are as high as 2.6 tons of GHG. (Refer to <https://flightemissionmap.org/> including high altitude effects).

The global top 10 percentage of high-emitters need to act now. Climate change already affects us today, mercilessly without exception, and the situation will escalate if we do not act now. The greatest responsibility rests with those of us who are wealthy: we need to make our lifestyle more sustainable immediately, choosing effective measures that create high-level lasting results. Flying less is one of them, driving less is another.

How to compensate for unavoidable travel: Perhaps you have already booked your flight to attend the next RI conference? Or need to fly for other reasons? There is a way to compensate the emissions created by your flight.

The chart above compares the breakdown of annual emissions from high-emitting individuals with global sectoral emissions. Global data broken down by [Our World in Data](#). High-emitting individual data from [Ivanova and Wood, 2020](#). Thanks to [Emma Li Johansson](#) for DataViz.

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How Spain's D 2202 achieved Net Zero certification

By PDG Ingrid Steinhoff, D 2202



I served as Governor of District 2202 for 2022-23, the year of "Imagine Rotary," and I understood that my passion for Rotary and my commitment to the environment would be reason enough to make our Rotary district an international benchmark. But this personal ambition collided with the reality that every governor necessarily has to face - accepting that the year goes by too fast and that there is hardly any time to turn those wonderful dreams and ideas into reality.

However, I decided to persevere, accepting that - beyond the limits of time - my Rotarian and environmental commitment prevailed over the ephemeral task as governor. This article describes how D 2202 worked with key groups within and beyond Rotary to become the first Rotary District to be certified as Net Zero by Rotary Green Revolution. Please [contact me](#) if

you have questions as you read, or want to explore how to implement Net Zero in your club or district.

"This is a spectacular and historic story," says Alfredo Valero of Rotary International. "Now we have obtained a double carbon footprint neutrality of 100% in 2023 through a Spanish Public Foundation, in addition to obtaining the NetZero Coalition certificate from Rotary Green Revolution."

How we started: After two months as governor, I decided to take advantage of the district seminar that I organized in Getxo (Basque Country, Spain) on Saturday 17 September 2022 and meet with Rotarians from my District and share with them my idea of organizing a breakout session at the Rotary International Convention in Melbourne, with the intention to present the District structure, the strategy and the importance of Rotary's 7th Area of Focus for D2202.

To my surprise, several Rotarians present told me about Rotary Green Revolution, a Rotarians in Action movement they had created to help Rotary clubs and Districts around the world, incorporating global strategies to mitigate climate change with cross-cutting projects. At the time, a project was underway with Rotary Forests to reforest 1,600 trees in Tauste (Zaragoza) which is a region with a semi-desert climate that suffers from chronic drought. This [region suffered a terrible fire](#) that devastated 5000 hectares in 2009, and has been included in a 40 hectare [reforestation project of the Ibercaja Bank](#) through its Foundation. I decided to plant another 1,600 trees, one for each Rotarian in my District, as my personal gift as governor, using the One Rotarian, One Tree program of [Rotary Forests](#).

At that same meeting I was introduced to Rotary Green Revolution's NetZero Coalition program, which offered to calculate the carbon footprint of District 2202 and offset 100% of CO₂ emissions with reforestation projects.

Transportation is the biggest factor in our District's carbon footprint.

I admit that at that time I didn't really understand the true magnitude of what was being proposed. But even though I am not a great expert, my passion for Rotary and my regular monitoring of ESRAG publications helped me to make a firm decision: I appreciated the generosity of the Rotarians of Rotary Forests and decided to join their NetZero Coalition program, being convinced that carbon neutrality should be the first environmental step for our clubs in the District. Through this, we could serve as an example for other districts.

*Photo: PDG Ingrid Steinhoff (in purple) with fellow Rotarians at the D2202 tree planting ceremony in Tauste, Zaragoza, Spain.
Credit: Alfredo Valero.*

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Shaping a city fair to all concerned

By Ariel Miller

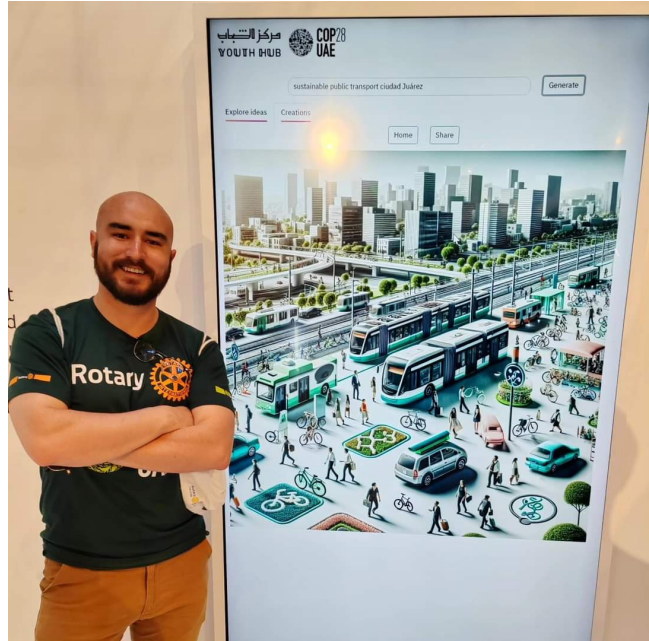
At the age of 28, Rotaractor Carlos Montoya heads the Integrated Transport Department of the North Zone of the State Government of Chihuahua, which serves principally for Ciudad Juárez, the most populous city in the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua. He's working passionately to shape a city fair to all concerned, and he's well-equipped, thanks to years of work building expertise in sustainable urban planning and earning the trust of community stakeholders.

"In the Chamber of Commerce and other networks, I take every opportunity to speak, and they listen," says this young ESRAG Director, one of only four Accredited Professionals Eco-District Certified in Mexico, and the only LEED Green Associate in his city. "I'm involved because this is where I live. In Ciudad Juárez they realize that they need more young people involved, and they know that young people are very worried about the future environmentally. The way things are going, I'd prefer not to have children. If things change for the good, I definitely want children."

Feasible solutions exist, and cities are ideal for maximizing impact. "Cities generate around 60% of greenhouse gases but only occupy 2% of the land surface of the planet," Carlos points out. "At the federal level, the political will to solve climate change is lacking, but we can do it at the city level."

The solutions he is recommending go beyond mitigating climate change: they will also alleviate poverty and foster social cohesion.

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Rotaractor's nonprofit breaks new ground for energy justice

By Will Nichols, e-Rotaract Club for the Environment



I began volunteering at the Durham, North Carolina (USA) Habitat for Humanity Restore the summer after my freshman year of high school. It was a wonderful experience. Not only did it satisfy my parents urging me to get out of the house, but it aligned directly with my first academic passion, creating affordable housing. I continued to work with Habitat for Humanity throughout my high school years and loved every second of my on-site work. Despite the heat and North Carolina's unbearable summer humidity, I learned to be handy and had the privilege of meeting the very families who would later move into the homes. During this same time period, I developed a fledgling passion for sustainability and found my niche within renewable energy. I launched my school's first ever sustainability branch of student government and worked tirelessly to make my campus a more sustainable and convivial place.

Upon enrolling at the University of North Carolina (UNC), I was introduced to Liz Henke, a local Rotarian with a goal of installing rooftop solar on Habitat for Humanity homes across the state. I jumped at the

chance to support her and the cadre of renewable energy enthusiasts at East Chapel Hill Rotary. During those first couple of months, I was lucky to secure a donation of 260 panels from Strata Clean Energy, enough to solarize 17 Habitat for Humanity homes in Hillsborough, NC. It was a really rewarding moment. I felt that I was truly making an impact on my local community by both mitigating carbon emissions and allaying the crippling energy burdens experienced by low-income families across the state.

As time passed, Liz Henke, Alan Young, and Brian Kileff continued to support me and eventually motivated me to found HabitatSolar, a UNC club dedicated to the installation of rooftop solar on Habitat for Humanity homes across the state. We worked at active build sites, continued to source solar panels, and developed a funding platform to fund new projects.

Looking to deepen our impact, HabitatSolar applied for 501(c)(3) status under the new name of [SolarEquity](#). Our mission was to empower North Carolina communities through the solarization of affordable housing by building valuable partnerships to drive an equitable and sustainable energy transition. No longer were we restricted to only working with Habitat for Humanity but could expand our portfolio of partners to affordable housing developers across the state.

Over the last year, our team of 25 students has blossomed.

[Read More](#)

Sustainable website? What is that?

By Frank Gomez, Rotary Club of Jasper

Rotary International is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion, but it also works to protect the environment through its Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (ESRAG). Here's how a sustainable website fits into ESRAG's overall mission and Every Club Climate Friendly initiative.



To create a new Rotary Club of Jasper (Georgia) website, 2023-24 President Sharon Wofford consulted me, a club member whose firm, Empowered Marketing, specializes in sustainable web design. With the goal of making the website sustainable and meeting the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, I rebuilt and improved the website, which had been neglected for a few years.

Many people don't realize that websites actually use energy. Energy is used in several places including the server where the website is hosted, all the points on the network, and eventually on the devices where the website is delivered (the client). The size of a page of a website is called "page weight" or "transfer size" which refers to the size of all the files transferred from the server to the client.

To make a website sustainable, the overall goal is to make it as lean as possible so it uses less energy and therefore reduces emissions. It is much more complicated than that because a sustainable website also needs to be easy to use. Ease of use also translates to reduced emissions. A great way to ensure the highest level of usability is to make the website ADA compliant.

The Rotary Club of Jasper website was rebuilt from the ground up to be both sustainable and ADA compliant by starting with a basic WordPress theme.

[Read More](#)

Creating a community of support for sustainability in Rotary

By Dawn Angela Byford, ESRAG Plant-Rich Diet Task Force

Sustainability is a key concept in today's world, encompassing practices that preserve the environment for future generations of all species. Transitioning to a [plant-rich diet is a powerful way to contribute to sustainability](#). But some big questions arise: Where do we start? More importantly, how do we sustain this lifestyle shift? How do we ensure it strengthens our relationships and keeps us motivated and engaged? Also, how do we find a supportive community if our loved ones are not as enthusiastic about this journey as we are? This is a challenge that can arise with any lifestyle shift.

Lifestyle changes are much more achievable and FUN with others, so we invite you to watch this 4-minute video: [P.L.A.T.E - 5 Tips to Guarantee Enjoyment and Success on Your Plant-Rich Journey](#). Don't worry about jotting down notes - we've [done it for you!](#)

Food must be delicious to satisfy us, but it also plays a crucial role in connecting with others in fellowship. We see how important that is for Rotarians as we gather at club meetings all over the world. Try adding more plant-based options to your weekly meeting menus, or maybe you're excited to organize a plant-rich event for your club. Here's some great tips on [Organizing a Plant-based Rotary Event](#) [The Beginning of a New Tradition](#).

Small, consistent behaviours add up to big positive changes over time, especially regarding plant-rich eating. Be patient and kind with yourself on this journey, and soon you will look back and see how truly impactful these actions can be, both for your health, and the health of our precious planet. The power is on your plate - one meal at a time.

Have questions or feedback? Need some recipes? Want to join us? We're here to help. Visit our [web page](#), or contact us at plantrich@esrag.org. Eat plants, plant trees!

Dawn Byford is a member of the Rotary Club of Canmore, Canada and an Operation Pollination Ambassador.



There's no place like home.

In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy discovered that she had the power all along to return home simply by clicking the heels of her ruby slippers.

We also have the personal power to reduce the climate disruption that is devastating our ecological home by simply eating more plant-based foods and fewer animal foods.

It's easier than you think. Find out more at [ESRAG.org/plant-rich-diet/](https://esrag.org/plant-rich-diet/)



What will you pack if you have to evacuate?

By Natalia Luque, *ESRAG Latin America Correspondent*

What will you do if your local government calls you and says that you have an hour to leave your home? The wildfires are going out of control and are coming too close to your house, so you must get yourself and all your family out of danger. What would you put in your bag? In the back of your car?

You would probably leave that place you call home thinking there are so many important memories there, objects you prize, but most of all wondering if you could ever come back. Is that place going to be safe... still there?

In August, 2023, my sister Johanna, who lives in Kelowna, Canada, sent us a message through the family WhatsApp chat. She attached a photo with a circle around her house, with huge smoking fires nearby. She told us they were ready to evacuate. I can't describe the feeling in my stomach. The images and videos she sent next showed a fire that had spread from 68 hectares to almost 70,000 hectares in just a day.

Taken from the other side of the lake, where they were at a friend's house with all the possessions they could fit in the car, her photos showed the entire mountain shrouded in smoke. In a phone call she said, "you know how big those helicopters are that they use to drop water on wildfires? Well, now they seem like a fly spitting at a dragon. It is terrifying what we are seeing, hearing and feeling!"

Five months later, the mountains around my hometown in Colombia, South America were on fire, with thousands of plants critical to maintaining the water cycle in our fragile ecosystems destroyed in hours, and many wild animals fleeing to a city of almost 10 million people in search of safety. Even bigger, more [destructive wildfires devastated central Chile](#) soon after.

Photo of Kelowna wildfires, August, 2023, by Johanna Luque.

[Read More](#)



March 2024 Projects Webinars



ESRAGâ€™s March webinars offer inspiration and projects to help you promote sustainable living. These webinars also give you the chance to network in real time with caring and knowledgeable people throughout the Rotary world. When you register, you can opt to receive updates which will give you the links to recordings of previous sessions on Vimeo â€“ ideal for sharing with your club or community. Your registration confirmation will give the time of the program in your time zone.

March 6: Composting: Key to Climate Protection and More, 2 pm UTC.

Speaker: Brenda Platt, Director for the Composting for Community Initiative of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. Learn the basics of composting and discuss how Rotary Clubs could help advance it as a way to build social connections at the community level. [Register here.](#)

March 13: Compostology: Food Waste and Youth Empowerment, 2 pm UTC

Speaker: Advika Agarwal, co-founder of the youth non-profit Compostology. This session explores the journey of a student-led team in Maryland, USA in demonstrating the success of school-based food waste solutions. A high school senior in the US state of Maryland, and part of the student team that won a 2023 award from the US Environmental Protection Agency, Advika served as one of the 12 Rotaractors chosen to represent RI at COP 28. She was part of a K-12 team of students who convinced the Maryland State Legislature to pass legislation and funding to equip schools across the state to launch Lunch out of Landfills. [Register here.](#)

March 20: Values-based Banking and Investing, 2 pm UTC

Speaker: Rob Sisson, entrepreneur, investor, and consultant working to foster sustainable business decisions beneficial to all concerned: nature, the community, and

business. This presentation makes the case for making the case for using money in a values-based way, rather than just looking through the financial lens. Rob represented Great Britain as one of the 12 Rotaractors chosen by Rotary International to attend and speak at COP 28 in 2023. [Register here.](#)

March 27: Transforming Lives and Land with Sand Dams, 2 pm UTC

Speaker. David Jordan, Chairman of [Sand Dams Worldwide](#), which equips some of the worldâ€™s poorest people to transform their own lives and land through water and soil conservation in drylands. Sand dams are a simple technology which stores clean water, revives arid farmland, and promotes community economic development. In addition to chairing Sand Dams Worldwide, David leads several other non-profits with the mission of restoring the natural environment for people and wildlife. [Register here.](#)

Photo: High school students Advika Agarwal (left) and Angelina Wu (right), receiving the 2023 USA EPAâ€™s Presidential Environmental Youth Award (Region 3) for their work on food waste solutions from Elana Goldstein (center), USA EPAâ€™s lead for Sustainable Management of Food for the Mid-Atlantic Region. Credit: Monika Maheshwari.

Pollinator Conservation 101 zooms straight to your study in March


Tuesday, February 27, 2024

“The Pollinator Partnership will provide FREE pollinator project idea training through Pollinator Conservation 101 on March 6th and 13th of 2024, by Zoom,” writes Rotarian and naturalist Chris Stein, Chair of ESRAG's Operation Pollination. This will teach you the basics of pollinator conservation and activities you can launch in your community, like building a bee-friendly garden.

"EVERYONE is invited to attend this training opportunity, but you must register to attend," says Chris, "so please do so right away."

[Register here for the March 6 session](#) (8:30 am Central Time, US), or [here for March 13th](#) (6 pm Central Time, US).

The link should bring up the correct time for your part of the world.



POLLINATOR PARTNERSHIP
OPERATION POLLINATION

POLLINATOR CONSERVATION 101

FOR: All who are interested in pollinator conservation including partner organizations that signed the Mississippi River Operation Pollination Partnership.

WHAT: Learn the basics of pollinator conservation and activities you can engage in to help pollinators, like:

- ✓ Building a Bee Friendly Garden - www.beefriendlygardening.org
- ✓ Signing a pollinator pledge with Operation Pollination: <https://esrag.org/operation-pollination>

WHEN:

- ☑ Wednesday March 6 8:30-9:30 central [REGISTER NOW](#)
- ☑ Wednesday March 13 6:00-7:00 central [REGISTER NOW](#)

Virtual webinar will be hosted on Zoom; please adjust for your time zone

ESRAG members make headlines



Environmental Envoys Program

By PDS David Brown
ESRAG Director

IN November 2023, District 9705's Environmental Envoy Outreach Program won an award for communication and engagement in the prestigious Keep Australia Beautiful Tidy Towns Contest for New South Wales. Judges commended the extraordinary growth of environmental action by Rotarians since the Envoy Program began in 2021.

The new environmental area of focus

In the middle of a global pandemic, a handful of Rotarians launched a program to engage and equip Rotary clubs to implement goals and actions many had never envisioned before. Within two and a half years, 80 per cent of the district's clubs have put Rotary's newest area of focus into action. Together, clubs have launched 122 environmental projects, completed or underway by June 2023.

Here's how it was done.

Launching the new area of focus globally

Launching a new area of focus in Rotary is not trivial. It had never been done before and was therefore complicated. The six established areas of focus had been simply created by aggregating similar projects developed over many years. Rotary needed to develop

ESRAG Director David Brawn's reporting on his district's award-winning Environmental Envoys initiative won a three-page spread (pp. 46-48) in the February 2024 issue of [Rotary Down Under](#), reaching over 28,500 subscribers.

Rotary Magazine's March issue (p. 60) celebrates the dynamic role Rotarians and Rotaractors played at COP 28, noting the contributions of many ESRAG leaders including ESRAG Chair Dr. Yasar Atacik, Dr. Mina Venkataraman, and Salvador Rico as expert speakers and/or members of Rotary's official delegation.

The February, 2024 issue of *Rotary en el Corazón de las Américas* honors Central American Rotarians through ESRAG Latin America Reporter [Natalia Luque's article](#) on the multi-sector partnership they have catalyzed to stop the massive pollution of Guatemala's Rio Motagua.

In short, ESRAG members from all seven continents have been making headlines across the Rotary world for dynamic and multi-faceted environmental initiatives.

Thanks to the editors of *Rotary Magazine*, we now have contact information for all the regional Rotary periodicals! Now, when you send us articles or we interview you, we will be able to share your great work with the Rotary editors who cover your region so it can

reach many more eyes and hearts! If you know one of the editors or reporters personally, and are willing to advocate for them to publish ESRAG stories, [please let us know!](#)

The Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group

operates in accordance with Rotary International policy, but is not an agency of, or controlled by, Rotary International.