



**July, 2023**  
**Volume 8, Issue 1**

## **Rotary Blueprints for Circular Economy**

Brew yourself a perfect cup of tea, and infuse your day with energy and hope by choosing one of the stories sent by fellow Rotarians for this month's newsletter. Then [sign up](#) for Rotary International President-Elect Stephanie Urchick's keynote address for ESRAG's webinar Aug. 26 on making your club climate-friendly and sustainable.

ESRAG Chair Dr. Yasar Atacik shares ESRAG's strategy to mobilize worldwide Rotary action as the planet's environmental crises accelerate.

Our theme for August is circular economy. Here's the multinational menu of nourishing news:

- Rotarians Discover Paths Toward Circular Economy – PDG Jeff Smith, Eastern North America
- Revitalize Your Club with Repair Café – Ian Coult, Godalming, England
- Cape Cod Proving Ground – Brian Braginton-Smith, Yarmouth, USA
- Singapore Club's Climate-Friendly Installation – Ambaree Majumdar, Singapore
- Reconditioning PC's – Jorge Restrepo, Seattle, USA
- Teach Your Club to Recycle Right – John Perry, Ft. Lauderdale, USA



In addition, discover how Latin American Rotaractors organized the June 5-6 hybrid international environmental symposium that lifted Rotary's profile in catalyzing new collaborations for sustainability with business, government, and the academic community. We're thrilled to publish Natalia Luque's insightful reporting, the first major Spanish article in ESRAG's newsletter and [blog](#).

You too are essential to Rotary's worldwide impact. We invite you to share the news of your environmental projects and professional insights. Our September issue showcases pollution solutions, and October's theme food systems. Just email me [arielmillerwriter@gmail.com](mailto:arielmillerwriter@gmail.com) to get the conversation started.

*Photo: Priya Ranganathan using fresh greenery instead of plastic to decorate the banquet room for RC Maria City's climate-friendly installation of their new officers in Singapore.*

**Connect with us on social media**



## RIPE Stephanie Urchick keynotes Aug. 26 Webinar

**By Laurie Zuckerman, ESRAG Communications Chair**

Concerned about the climate or other environmental issues? You and your club can easily be part of the solution by becoming more climate-friendly and sustainable. How? Come hear Rotary International President-Elect Stephanie Urchick, Synergy Rotary Fellowship Alliance, and ESRAG leaders share ways you can succeed.



On Saturday 26 August at [2:30 - 4:00 pm UTC / 9:30 - 11:00 am CDT](#) (Evanston) join

- Stephanie Urchick, Rotary International President-Elect
- Dr. Yasar Atacik, ESRAG Chair
- Dr. Pat Armstrong, ESRAG immediate past Chair
- Urs Herzog, Rotary Synergy Friendship Alliance Chair
- Michael Koch, ESRAG Europe and Founder of Become Sustainable
- Dr. Meenakshi Venkataraman, ESRAG Projects Director

Register [HERE](#).

Can't make the meeting time? Register anyway, so you will be sent the recording. Share it with your club!

This event is sponsored by [Synergy Rotary Friendship Alliance](#) and [ESRAG](#), the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group.

---

## Rotary Paths to Circular Economy

**By Jeffrey Smith, ESRAG Eastern North America Chapter**



**Diane Cohen**  
Executive director, Finger Lakes ReUse Center

The Circular Economy is one of the six strategies that can be found on the ESRAG website. All six combine to represent a holistic approach to environmental sustainability. We focus on each twice a year to explain its importance and share news of effective projects Rotary clubs and districts are carrying out under that theme.

Definition of the Circular Economy: The [Ellen MacArthur Foundation](#) provides the following definition of the Circular Economy. "The circular

economy tackles climate change and other global challenges like biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution, by decoupling economic activity from the consumption of finite resources."

**The circular economy is based on three principles, driven by design:**

- [Eliminate waste and pollution](#)
- [Circulate products and materials \(at their highest value\)](#)

- [Regenerate nature](#)

Underpinned by a transition to renewable energy and materials, the circular economy is a resilient system that is good for business, people, and the environment. In our current, linear economy, we take materials from the Earth, make products from them, and eventually throw them away as waste. In a circular economy, by contrast, we prevent waste from being produced in the first place.

ESRAG's [links on circular economy](#) highlight the following actions: Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Re-choose, Repair, Reuse, Recycle towards zero waste. The principles of the circular economy are also described by leading writers on the climate challenge, including Bill Gates in his book *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need*. Some circular economy challenges are very significant and require further research and development. For example, solutions for achieving net zero waste for concrete and steel are not readily available. On the other hand, there are many initiatives that districts and clubs can consider today.

*Photo: Rotarian Diane Cohen, Executive Director of Finger Lakes ReUse, describing the adventure of deconstructing and recycling a house in a [video on the project](#), organized by Cornell University.*

[Read More](#)

---

## Going Far Together

**By Dr. Yasar Atacik, ESRAG Chair**

*If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. - African proverb*

Humans' success relies on acting together. All cultures have examples of similar proverbs appreciating the value of acting together. Rotarians understand this well: throughout our history, we have achieved huge impact because we work together, from club projects all the way to global initiatives. By joining hands, we have almost eliminated polio.

ESRAG is working to leverage this talent for teamwork by engaging as many groups within the Rotary family as possible in our Every Club Climate Friendly initiative. For example, several ESRAG Directors met in July with Matteo Facchietti, Social Services Director of Rotaract Europe, to discuss collaborating on ESRAG's Become Sustainable initiative. Together we set the goal of engaging 25% of the Rotaract clubs in Europe in using ESRAG's European carbon footprint calculator to measure the baseline emissions of their club activities and to document progress.



This year we plan to bring together all environmental organizations within Rotary. This includes other Rotary Action Groups, Protect Planet Earth (PPE) Committees, teams promoting specific kinds of projects such as pollinators, and regional and national Rotary environmental groups. As the most organized, largest environmental organization within Rotary, with members on six continents, it's on us to convene these discussions.

We need to act together because we are now in a deep triple crisis of climate, biodiversity and pollution. The climate crisis is not something that will happen in the future: it is happening here and now. These disasters affect everyone, with those who have done least to cause it disproportionately vulnerable. We Rotarians can and must do more. On July 27, the [Secretary General of the UN](#) issued the urgent warning: "the era of global warming has ended, the era of global boiling has arrived" and "leaders must lead!"

We believe it is time for Rotarians to step up, to act, and to lead, as Rotarians have done in the global campaign to end polio.

---



# Revitalize your Club with Repair Cafés

**By Ian Coult, Rotary Club of Godalming Woolsack**



Many wealthy parts of the world have lifestyles based on 'buy-use-throw away' economies which are doing enormous damage to the planet in terms of energy use and material loss. Our grandparents' resourcefulness in making do and mending may have been lost, but there is a growing interest now in reviving those skills. Our Rotary Club discovered a great way to contribute to a more circular, responsible, and thrifty approach by launching a Repair Café. This project also helped us overcome a challenge faced by many Rotary Clubs in Great Britain and Ireland (GB&I): the urgent need to inspire more – and younger – people to join Rotary. In just a year, our Repair Café volunteer team has grown from 14 to 40.

As readers will probably know, a Repair Café is an event where people can bring broken household items to other local people who have the skills needed to

help the owners fix them. The key requirements for a Rotary Repair Café are:

- 2 or 3 committed people to act as leaders, at least one a Rotarian
- A suitable place to welcome the public and carry out repairs
- Volunteers with diverse skills to act as repairers, greeters, registrars for the items brought in, publicists, refreshment providers, and record-keepers.
- A regular schedule. Ours is open for 2.5 hours on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday morning of each month, and this is typical of many cafés around the world.

Here's how we discovered, chose, and launched this project, and the amazing impact it's already had.

Shown here: Repair Café volunteers Ollie Janman and Ben Golding. [Click here to enjoy](#) the video of Ian Coult's presentation about Repair Café for ESRAG's Projects + Webinar on July 26, 2023.

[Read More](#)

## Cape Cod Proving Ground

**By Ariel Miller, ESRAG Newsletter Editor**

For over thirty years, Brian Braginton-Smith has been urging the United States to change course to prevent climate calamity. Working from the storm-battered Massachusetts coast where he grew up, this American Rotarian has developed a comprehensive plan for resiliency, carbon capture, and circular economy.

Despite achievements including catalyzing offshore wind generation off Cape Cod, he couldn't get policy-makers to consider wholistic solutions to the looming crisis. Now, all of a sudden, everyone's paying attention: the US Government, the State of



Recent image of final construction of the Intermediate School at the DY Regional School Campus

Massachusetts, a Norwegian firm with a breakthrough solution for rechargeable batteries, and the Dennis-Yarmouth Regional Schools that educate the children of Cape Cod.

The result: that school district will become the heart and engine for teaching circular economy and developing the regional workforce essential to its success. Rotarians will need to help lead this transformation, and ESRAG's network will help get the roadmap to others worldwide who can replicate it.

Braginton-Smith has been awarded US \$1.37 million in funding from the State of Massachusetts to create the Cape Cod Watershed Institute as a collaboration of the [Lewis Bay Research Center](#) which he leads, the [Dennis-Yarmouth Regional Schools](#) led by Superintendent Carol Woodbury, and the [Cape Cod Collaborative](#) led by Phil Morris. All three are members of the Yarmouth Rotary Club.

[Read More](#)

## Singapore Club's Climate-Friendly installation

*By Ambaree Majumder, 2023-24 President, Rotary Club of Marina City*

On July 22, 2023, our club held its installation of new officers. Here's how we made the event climate-friendly, and how our members responded to this teachable moment.

**1. We had a completely plant-based menu.** As far as I can tell, this was the first time that a plant-based menu was featured during my club's installation. When we announced that the menu was completely vegan (which was before dinner was served), there were quite a few sighs of disappointment. However, when members tried it, we had EVERYONE saying only good things about it.



- "I wouldn't know this was plant-based, if it wasn't mentioned."
- "Who did the catering? I want to bring my friends there."
- "If this is how plant-based food tastes, I do not mind eating it."
- "I was very sad when I heard it was plant-based. I am glad I tried."
- "I thought there would be a lot of processed mock meat. I am surprised it has almost none."

**2. There was no food waste:** Because it was a buffet and although many of the guests had enjoyed their second serving (and some their third), there were some dishes which were left behind. We had brought reusable boxes which we gave away to all the guests to pack whatever they would like. Within minutes of making this announcement, all the food was gone into boxes.

**3. Single-use plastic was very close to zero:** The event was held at a condominium club house. We made sure that decorations and supplies had no plastic in them. We used only natural and biodegradable decorations like real leaves, branches and twigs. Also, because we weren't meeting in a hotel ballroom, we rented reusables from the caterer instead of using disposable cutlery. This cost us a few dollars extra but was totally worth it. As far as I saw, the only plastics used at this event were the dessert spoons and two bottles of drinking water when we suddenly had run out. I had to ask my husband to run down to the supermarket next door for that.

*Photos (from left): Past President Mary Kwok and 2023-24 President Ambaree Majumdar with some of the delicious vegan dishes at the celebration.*



---

## Reconditioning PCs: a Boon for People and Environment

**By Jorge Restrepo, Ballard Rotary Club**

I'm writing to offer a project that can make your club a boon for marginalized communities, low-income seniors, international service projects, non-profits, NGOs, and the environment. Here's how Rotarians can rescue PCs and their vital materials, and empower your community with free or affordable tech.

A very large percentage of high-tech devices are thrown away after becoming obsolete, creating a huge amount of toxic e-waste. The volume is growing shockingly fast. According to the [Global E-waste Statistics Partnership](#) (GESP), an initiative of the UN and other partners, e-waste grew by 21% in the five years up to 2019, when 53.6 million metric tonnes of e-waste were generated. Last year's e-waste weighed as much as 350 cruise ships. This growth is projected to continue as the use of computers, mobile phones and other electronics expands, along with their rapid obsolescence.

As a staunch environmentalist, I'm tackling this problem locally in Seattle by partnering with PC-reconditioning programs. My goal is to create a successful model Rotarians can implement in every city. Its mission will be to accept e-waste, **re-condition** devices that can be given a second life, **re-coup materials** (by "urban mining") from those devices that cannot be reconditioned, and **re-cycle** whatever components were mined. This opens rewarding service opportunities for Rotarians from many professions, as you'll see below.

*Photo: the author with a stack of reconditioned PCs*

[Read More](#)

---



---

## Teach your community to recycle right!

**By Ariel Miller**

Inspired by the service ethic of Rotarians, John Perry joined the Rotary Club of Fort Lauderdale, Florida in 2023 along with his wife Mary. He had witnessed the fellowship and good deeds of members belonging to the International Fellowship of Rotarian Scuba Divers. For more than a decade he and his wife were invited – even though they were non-members - to join scuba diving trips with the Rotarians. “We often went to island destinations,” he explains. “Organizers always used a portion of our trip payment for programs benefitting the local community, sometimes humanitarian but often environmentally-focused, like coral reef restoration in Fiji.”

Since joining, he's discovered that many Rotarians have commonly-held misconceptions about recycling of post-consumer waste and how to promote a circular economy. This is a gap he can help fill. For decades, Perry served in various roles related to plastic production technology, then capped off his career managing one of the largest material recovery facilities



(MRF) in the United States. He will give a talk Aug. 23 to ESRAG's Projects + Webinar to address myths and facts related to recycling practices in the US market. [Click here](#) to register.

The first step – consistent with the Rotary test of truth – is raising awareness. In this interview, he discusses the issues complicating municipal recycling, explaining the factors shaping the decisions of citizens, cities, recycling companies, and buyers of recovered materials.

*Photo: Mary Boaz and John Perry as newly-minted Rotarians in Ft. Lauderdale*

[Read More](#)

---

## Insights from ESRAG LATAM's successful hybrid conference

**By Natalia Luque, ESRAG Latin America Reporter**

El 5 y 6 de junio de 2023, se llevó a cabo el Simposio Latinoamericano de Medio Ambiente, organizado por ESRAG Capítulo Latinoamérica, en Ciudad Juárez México. El evento contó con una masiva participación de aproximadamente 220 personas, 76 presenciales y los restantes fueron participantes virtuales que fluctuaron a lo largo del evento, provenientes de 14 países de América, India y Francia.

Para conocer un poco sobre esta importante iniciativa, los retos que implicó su organización, los temas tratados y los logros más relevantes, entrevistamos a Carlos Montoya, Rotaract de Ciudad Juárez del Distrito 4110 y organizador del evento.

*Dear reader, this is our first article in Spanish by ESRAG's Latin American reporter, biologist Natalia Luque of Colombia. Photo: ESRAG Director Carlos Montoya speaking at the Simposio.*

[Read More](#)

---



## Send us your stories on pollution or food systems

**By Ariel Miller**



If you are working on pollution solutions or sustainable food systems, now's the time to send us your news! ESRAG has six themes, and we feature each twice a year. Our September focus is pollution, and our October issue is food systems. Please email me right away at [arielmillerwriter@gmail.com](mailto:arielmillerwriter@gmail.com) if you have a pollution story, as we need to complete the September newsletter and blogs before Aug. 31.

Given the world's rapidly-escalating environmental crises, we're working to get news of your powerful projects to as many readers as possible, within and beyond Rotary. To accomplish that, Communications Director Laurie Zuckerman and Kirsten Weber of ESRAG's Great Britain and Ireland Chapter are working with a multinational team of ESRAG volunteers to multiply your reach through social media.

We want to showcase replicable projects from as many countries as possible. It is SO POWERFUL for readers to see work by people they identify with, addressing problems they are also struggling with. We're now publishing stories on [ESRAG's news blog](#) and via Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Your stories will also post on the relevant ESRAG theme page. Sharing the links to this reporting can help you raise new supporters - both volunteers and donors.

So there are two ways your leadership can help save our fragile, beautiful planetary home:

- Send us your news
- Follow ESRAG's social media (see the widgets above), and liking and sharing the content with your networks.

Thank you for all you do! Help share your good news with the world! *Photo by Rtn. Jaideep Malaviya: solar-powered water pump in Gujarat*

---

## **The Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group**

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

---