

Reflective Philanthropy
Rotary Club #14
Lincoln, NE
2004-2006

Introduction

- *Why do people give?*
- *Why do some give so much, others very little?*
- *Why do certain people give to certain causes but not others?*
- *Do we define a “gift” to include volunteering one’s time and talents?*
- *What roles have giving and serving played in American society?*

These are some of the questions that members of Rotary Club #14, one of the oldest Rotary Clubs in the country, have explored in their three-year civic reflection program on Reflective Philanthropy. Each series consisted of four conversations, held after dinner at a local country club. Organizers focused on involving new, or Red Badge, members in the 2006 series, with the goal of making them feel welcome and encouraging them to become active Rotarians. In 2007, Rotary Club #14 built on the success of Reflective Philanthropy by launching a new civic reflection program, Reflections on Service, which is being held in members’ homes.

Participants

Participants have primarily been members of Rotary Club #14 and their spouses. Among them are educators, businesspeople, artists, nurses, scientists, attorneys, and people working in the nonprofit or human resources fields. The diversity of professions brings a diversity of perspectives to the conversations.

Readings *

“Toward a Fourth Philanthropic Response,” Elizabeth Lynn and Susan Wisely

“The Spur of the Moment,” Sarah Orne Jewett

“The Gospel of Wealth,” Andrew Carnegie

“Laws Concerning Gifts to the Poor,” Moses Maimonides

“The Eleventh,” Henri Barbusse

“Gift,” Rabindranath Tagore

“Self-Interest Properly Understood,” Alexis de Tocqueville

“The Bishop’s Beggar,” Stephen Vincent Benet

“Two Thanksgiving Day Gentlemen,” O. Henry

Guiding Questions

Why give?

How shall I give?

To whom shall I give?

How can giving be taught?

* All readings are from *The Perfect Gift: The Philanthropic Imagination in Poetry and Prose*, edited by Amy A. Kass (Indiana University Press, 2002).

Facilitators

Daniel and Sharon Wherry, Robert Manzer, and other local Rotary members.

Feedback from Participants

Participation in this program has helped to make me a more active and better Rotarian.

I feel that our Reflective Philanthropy conversations were excellent! It was a great cross section of people from various backgrounds and careers who all openly provided thoughtful opinions into our readings and related dialogue.

These gatherings have been a tremendous assistance for me. As one involved in fund-raising, the conversations have been very enlightening in understanding how others think and process.

The overall experience was excellent and a wonderful idea. It has built and strengthened relationships with fellow Rotarians and helped to build a common bond of care for those who need our help.

Great experience, great participants, and great facilitator! This should be a mandatory program for all Rotarians.

I believe this would be of benefit to every civic club: Rotary, Optimists, Kiwanis, and all others. It is relevant!

These sessions have expanded my understanding of what philanthropy is. . . i.e., not just the privileged few giving enormous sums of money, but each person's privilege regardless of his/her financial status. The conversations have inspired me to develop stronger philanthropic habits.

I think most of us are not often challenged in what we read on a day-to-day basis. It was good to be challenged.

It never ceases to amaze me how two individuals can read the same material and come to such different conclusions. It was not only a surprise, it was fascinating!

The "breaking of bread" provided a relaxed and congenial setting that facilitated the free flow of ideas.

I'm very grateful to have been a part of this endeavor. It is the most valuable experience I've had in Rotary. I would highly recommend it to anyone who enjoys genuine dialogue and critical thinking.