

## Giving peace a chance: Rotary announces new class of World Peace Fellows

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EVANSTON, Ill. -- Amid daily headlines of war, suicide bombings, ethnic and religious violence and social unrest emerges some welcome positive news: The Rotary Foundation has named a new class of World Peace Fellows to study peacemaking and conflict resolution at the six Rotary Centers for International Studies located at leading universities in England, Japan, Australia, Argentina, and the United States.

Launched in 2002, this innovative approach to world peace is a master's level program aimed at equipping the next generation of global and community leaders with skills needed to reduce the threat of war and violence. The Rotary World Peace Fellows are selected every year in a globally competitive process that begins when they apply through their local Rotary clubs. Applicants must demonstrate a commitment to peace and international understanding through their personal and community service activities or academic and professional achievements.

Like the members of the classes preceding them, the 60 students in the 2008-10 class are a diverse group, representing 33 countries and an array of professional and cultural backgrounds. Their interests and areas of expertise include public health, education, international law, economic development, psychology, journalism, and social justice. They include:

- Mahamoud Abdi Sheikh Ahmed of Borama, Somalia, a team leader with the Norwegian Refugee Council in Somaliland, which provides basic education to children of displaced families. Ahmed's own childhood was interrupted by inter-clan violence, forcing his family to flee to Ethiopia. Ahmed eventually returned to Borama, finished college and became manager and newscaster of a local TV station. He will attend the Rotary Center at the University of Bradford, England.
- Rachel Davidson of Chicago, Ill., USA, a restorative justice specialist for Alternatives, Inc., a non-profit youth agency that provides technical assistance and training to peer jury and mediation programs in public high schools. She is also a senior editor for The Yalla Journal, a joint Jewish-Arab project that compiles the personal stories of young people affected by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Davidson, who holds a bachelor's degree in Hispanic studies, will attend the Rotary Center at the

Universidad del Salvador in Buenos Aires.

- Saran Koy of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, who grew up in poverty and forced labor during the radical Khmer Rouge regime before joining World Vision International, where he helped implement community development programs and child-focused educational, healthcare and water projects. Koy earlier worked as an election officer and translator for the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia. He will attend the Rotary Center at the International Christian University in Tokyo.

- Alejandra Rueda Zarate of Bogota, Columbia, who earned a bachelor's degree in economics and worked for an agro-industrial company that promotes social development in conflict areas through the development of sustainable palm oil operations. In her current job as marketing director for the National Federation of Palm Oil Growers and Producers, she seeks new markets for bio-degradable palm oil products and oversees the national bio-diesel program. Zarate will attend the Rotary Center at the University of California, Berkeley.

- Mohammad Sharif Azami of Kandahar, Afghanistan, whose family fled to Pakistan when he was four years old. He has worked for the last six years with several humanitarian organizations, including Oxfam Great Britain, the United Nations World Food Program and the Canadian International Development Agency, to bring peace and stability to one of the most volatile areas of Afghanistan. Azami, who holds a bachelor's degree in business administration, will attend the Rotary Center jointly operated by Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

- Zuzana Petovska of Bratislava, Slovakia, who grew up in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and has worked for the United Nations Refugee Agency UNCR since 1997. As senior program assistant, she helps improve the care and assistance to children separated from their families in Bosnia, Kosovo and Chechnya. She will attend the Rotary Center at the University of Queensland, Brisbane.

Rotary Foundation Chair Bob Scott notes that 225 Rotary Center alumni already are making a difference in key decision-making positions in governments and organizations around the world.

“It is this growing global network of participants, increasing by 60 every year, that makes us believe that peace is possible,” Scott says. “It’s not a dream -- it is reality.”

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Rotary is the world's largest privately-funded source of international scholarships and has more than 30,000 Rotary clubs in over 200 countries and geographic regions. For more information about the Rotary Centers for International Studies, please visit [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org)

Interested in becoming a Rotary World Peace Fellow? Contact a Rotary Club in your area or send an email to [rotarycenters@rotary.org](mailto:rotarycenters@rotary.org)

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