

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

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Sixty Students to Work for Peace in the New Year

Evanston, Ill., USA -- Amid daily headlines of war, suicide bombings, ethnic and religious violence and social unrest, signs of peace are especially welcome -- and not just during the holiday season.

The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International – a humanitarian service organization dedicated to world peace and understanding - 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, academic and professional achievements.

“You have to only pick up a newspaper to realize how vitally important it is that our world leaders be skilled in the arts of conflict resolution and peaceful negotiation. Everything we do through our Rotary clubs is intended ultimately to promote world peace,” says Rotary Foundation Chair Jonathan Majiyagbe.

Like the members of the classes preceding them, the 60 students in the 2009-11 class are a diverse group, representing 34 countries and an array of professional and cultural backgrounds. Their interests and areas of expertise include public health, education, international law, economic development, journalism, and social justice. They include:

- Nisreen Abdallah, West Bank, Palestine, age 26, is program director for youth leadership development for OneVoice

Movement, which promotes a two-state solution for the Israeli and Palestinian conflict and trains Palestinian youth in conflict resolution.. Abdallah will attend the Rotary Center at the University of Bradford, England.

- Abu Sifian Taj Elassfia, Nyala, Sudan, age 28, has worked with International Non-Government Organizations in Darfur to help generate income for people living in camps for internally displaced people (IDP). As founder of Youth Without Borders, he assists youth by making a link between war refugees and host communities in southern Sudan. He will attend the Rotary Center at Duke University, USA.
- Rosa Maria Martinez Bolivar, Bogota, Colombia, age 22, works in the Human Rights Observatory of the Vice Presidency of Colombia where she monitors human rights violations and Colombian armed conflict. She will attend the Rotary Center at the University of California, Berkeley, USA.
- Humari Shafi Awan, Abbottabad, Pakistan, age 34, established the Al-Ansar Society which helps poor families improve their income and send their children to school. The society also raises funds to establish a schooling system for underprivileged children and has organized short term training courses for untrained teachers. She will attend the Rotary Center at the University of Queensland, Australia.
- Glenn Ian Raynor, Victoria, Canada, age 40, is the executive director for the Pacific People's Partnership in British Columbia, where he has worked on sustainable development initiatives in the developing states of Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. He will attend the Rotary Center at International Christian University, Tokyo.
- Sara Sarno, Naples, Italy, 28, works as a volunteer coordinator for Unnayan Uddog, which combats commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children in Bangladesh. As a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar in Quito, Ecuador she promoted the Yachana Project which helps with development and education in the Amazon. She also worked at UNICEF's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean on child protection issues. She will attend the Rotary Center at the Universidad del Salvador, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In addition to the two-year program, the Rotary Center at the Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand offers an intensive, three-month course aimed at mid-level professionals in governments, NGOs, and international industry.

Rotary Foundation Chair Jonathan Majiyagbe notes that 365 Rotary Center alumni already are making a difference in key decision-making positions in governments and organizations around the world. "It is this growing network of peacemakers worldwide that makes us believe that peace is possible," he says.

Rotary is an organization of business and professional leaders united worldwide to provide humanitarian service and the world's largest privately-funded source of international scholarships. Rotary 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

Interested in becoming a Rotary World Peace Fellow? Contact a Rotary Club in your area or send an email to rotarycenters@rotary.org

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