



HISTORY OF ROTARACT

Rotaract, Rotary International's service Club was a program for young adults and was officially inaugurated during January 1968 under RI President Luther Hodges. On 13 March 1968, the Rotaract Club of the University of North Carolina, sponsored by the Rotary Club of North Charlotte, North Carolina, USA, was the first Rotaract Club to receive its official charter. Although this Club is recognized as the first Rotaract Club, Rotarians have been sponsoring similar organizations for young adults since the early 1920s.

Perhaps the greatest impetus for the creation of the Rotaract program came from Rotary's youth service Club for secondary school students, Interact Clubs. Established in 1962, the Interact program enjoyed immediate success. However, since membership was only open to students in secondary schools, graduated Interactors and Rotarians were soon looking for ways to extend their relationship. Several proposals were brought before the RI Board of Directors to allow membership in Interact Clubs to extend for a few years after graduation. Instead of extending the age requirements for Interact, the Board decided to study the feasibility of creating a new service Club program for young adults at the university and young professional level.

The decision to adopt the Rotaract program came at a time when student protests worldwide were of growing concern to Rotarians. The Rotaract program was adopted not only as means of keeping former Interactors within the Rotary family, but as a means of channeling the energies of young adults into positive activities that could benefit their communities.

A special committee was convened to design the new service Club program for young adults during 1966. After polling students at the University of Houston, Texas, USA, the committee decided that "Rotaract" would be the best name for the program — a combination of the words "Rotary" and "action." Coincidentally, the service Club at the University of North Carolina had already adopted the name in 1966, but they coined it as a combination of the names "Rotary" and "Interact." The committee also decided that young women should be allowed to join on equal standing with male members at the discretion of the sponsoring Rotary Club. Today, Rotaract continues to experience phenomenal growth. There are currently more than 10,698 Rotaract Clubs in 180 countries and geographic areas, with an estimated membership of more than 203,298 Rotaractors. As the program continues to grow, Rotaractors repeatedly show that they are prepared for Fellowship through Service.