

## GRSP: AN INTRODUCTION

This is the story of a vibrant, living, and compelling desire to further the Rotary ideal of International Service through the bonds of friendship and understanding. It's the story about a group of Georgia Rotarians dedicated to a humanitarian ideal that has led an entire state into an ongoing adventure.

This is a story which Georgia Rotarians believe should be told not in the spirit of boastful pride, but as an example of International Service which has encompassed the world and in return has given Georgia Rotarians the deep satisfaction of **Service Above Self**.

## BACKGROUND

In 1946, for the first time in many years, the world began to see the light of peace. At the same time it also saw widespread desolation, ruin, and despair in many war-torn countries. In this light, Georgia Rotarian William "Will" A. Watt of Thomasville saw the need for a practical application of the Rotary ideal of International Service. Such an approach had to look at the future of world peace while at the same time providing courage to those living in despair of the present. To Will Watt, it was only logical that this application of International Service be centered around the youth of the world in whose hands would rest the future of world peace.

So Will Watt's idea was born. As a past District Governor of Rotary, he advanced his idea to the Rotarians of former District 165 which at the time comprised the entire State of Georgia. District Governor Irwin Ingram (1945-46) strongly supported the proposal and the sum of \$4000 was provided -- \$1 per Rotarian. Three young men and one young woman from Europe were sponsored by Georgia Rotarians and became the Class of 1946-47. A small committee administered the program which later became the Georgia Rotary Student Program.

At about the same time, Atlanta Rotarian Kendall Weisiger convinced the Rotary Club of Atlanta that the Atlanta Rotary Foundation should expand its student program to include students from other countries. Ultimately, the Atlanta program was merged with the Georgia Rotary Student Program following Weisiger's death.

In 1949, District 165 was divided into two Rotary Districts and later into three Districts. The districts agreed that the Georgia Rotary Student Program, now incorporated, should continue as a joint effort administered by a committee with each district having equal representation through appointments made by the District Governors.

Over the years, Georgia Rotarians' interest in the Program grew. The per capita contributions and the special club donations increased, permitting a steady increase in the number of scholarships granted. The State University System, as well as privately-operated institutions, recognized the Program's value. As a result, the cost of scholarships were reduced when many schools began waiving the "out-of-state" tuition fees.

Since the Program began, Georgia Rotarians have brought over 3,000 young men and women from more than 102 countries to the campuses throughout the Peach State.

## THE PROGRAM

Ours is a simple program -- through the medium of scholarships we offer our friendship to young men and women of other lands in the interest of understanding instead of merely being understood. These young people are considered "ambassadors" of their countries. And we Georgia Rotarians are the examples by which they judge the United States. By being conscious of our responsibilities, we ourselves become better citizens of our own country. As is so often the case, in the application of **Service Above Self**, the giver benefits as does the receiver.

The scholarship is for one academic year. Since our purpose is to promote international acquaintance, scholarships for longer than one year are not offered because they would not allow as many students to participate.

Scholarships are awarded to college-age students, between the ages of 18 & 24 years, having strong character, high intelligence, adaptability and motivation. Applicants from Rotarian and non-Rotarian families are considered, equally. The financial means of the applicant's family is not a criterion. However, each applicant must be recommended by a Rotary Club or a District Governor.

GRSP provides a scholarship that covers the cost of tuition, books, room, and meals. The scholarship does not provide any funds for travel within our country, transportation to and from the student's home country, or the student's required medical insurance coverage.

Over 70 scholarships are awarded each year to students, academically qualified -- based on required aptitude & language proficiency tests -- to enter a college or university for undergraduate or graduate work. Since GRSP is not an "exchange program" in the traditional sense, there is no obligation for other countries to accept students from Georgia or the United States.

GRSP is often confused with other scholarship programs within the Rotary world, in particular -- The Rotary Foundation. The only direct connection is that both scholarship programs reflect Rotary "in action". GRSP is a state-oriented and funded program **unique to Georgia alone**. GRSP is a proud tradition and legacy for Georgia Rotarians!

## ORGANIZATION

The Program is administered by trustees from Districts 6900, 6910, and 6920. Each district governor appoints the trustees who serve three-year terms that are staggered to provide continuity. The group includes the district governors, the immediate past district governors, and the district governor nominees.

The Trustees elect their own chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary-treasurer. An administrator and administrative assistant work at the GRSP office in Savannah.

The Trustees meet at least three times annually and also as required during the year. They regularly publish reports and newsletters which are sent to all clubs and also arrange for student programs, as requested by the clubs and for district conferences. Trustees often speak about the Program to clubs

within the state, and they also welcome the opportunity to tell the GRSP story elsewhere.

District governors also publish news about the Program in their monthly newsletters, make periodic visits to the clubs, and also keep the Trustees informed about the opinions of Rotarians throughout the state.

## FINANCE

From a first budget of \$4,000, GRSP funding has grown to over \$1.2 million annually. All funds are furnished by Rotarians. **Part of the budget comes from an annual per capita contribution of \$7 from each Georgia Rotarian.** The remainder comes from club contributions which range from under \$1,000 to over \$22,000 annually; clubs making these contributions become sponsors or co-sponsors of selected students. Because the Program is completely operated by the Trustees, overhead expenses are nominal, covering printing, postage and the like. No salaries, expenses, or travel allowances are paid to the Trustees or the officers.

The Trustees employ a paid professional administrator and an administrative assistant to manage the day-to-day operations of the Program.

In 1983, a GRSP Endowment Fund was established. This visionary action was taken to ensure a sound financial foundation for the 21st Century. Only earnings of the Fund are used to support the Program. Contributions are made by individuals, clubs, foundations, businesses, and as memorials to individuals. Currently the endowment fund is worth over 6 million dollars.

The following levels of giving to the GRSP Endowment Fund are:

- **Ronnie Waller Fellow - \$10,000 & Above** - Recognized with a fund named for the contributor or an individual designated by the contributor. Used to honor outstanding Rotarians.
- **Kendall Weisiger Fellow - \$5,000 to \$9,999** - Special designation for the late Atlanta Rotarian's efforts on behalf of international student scholarships.
- **Hue Thomas Fellow - \$2,500 to \$4,999** - Special designation honoring the late GRSP Chairman who guided the Program through 35 years of growth.
- **Will Watt Fellow - \$1,000 to \$2,499** - Special designation honoring the founder of the Georgia Rotary Student Program.
- **Governor's Associate - \$500 to \$999** - (All gifts are accumulative).
- **Sustaining Member - \$100 to \$499.**

In 1989, the Trustees created a separate board of Endowment Trustees, equally representing each of the three districts. Working with a representative of each club, they are responsible for establishing a financial support system that will continue the Program's growth into the next century.

## STUDENT SELECTION

Student selections are made each year in January from a group of candidates proposed by Rotary clubs and District Governors throughout the world. Information about GRSP is sent to Rotary clubs world-wide inviting them to submit a candidate. In many instances, several candidates are submitted from the same country. In the case of Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Turkey, France, and Belgium all candidates are approved by a committee within their respective countries.

The Program has existed long enough for former students to recommend candidates. Also, some candidates come through recommendations of individual Rotarians and non-Rotarians who have known them in their home country. In these cases, GRSP asks the Rotary club nearest the candidates' home to investigate the applicant and then, if they desire, to recommend him/her for a scholarship.

Clubs are urged to select candidates having character, high intelligence, adaptability, and a personality that permits them to serve as an "ambassador" of their country. Undergraduate applicants must be scholastically in the top third of their class and achieve required scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), for both written and oral English usage. Graduate students must achieve required scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or the Graduate Management Administration Test (GMAT), in addition to the TOEFL.

Consideration is given to the applicant's social motivation in his/her choice of life goals. With a primary objective of fostering **World Peace through Understanding**, GRSP seeks candidates with life objectives that will bring them into contact with the greatest number of people in their native countries.

## CLUB PARTICIPATION

Georgia Rotarians financially support the Program through an annual \$7.00 individual contribution. Clubs that sponsor or co-sponsor students provide a club contribution.

Clubs select their student from a book that describes the qualifications of each candidate; all candidates in the book have been reviewed and approved by the Trustees. Upon a student's selection, the Club becomes the student's "host" and the club's community becomes the student's Georgia "hometown."

Each sponsoring club selects a Rotarian whose family serves as the student's "host family". Host family contact starts before the student leaves for Georgia. The Trustees make the first contact when they advise the student of the sponsorship arrangement. The host family then writes a letter of welcome to the student. The letter details the upcoming year and extends an invitation to become a "family member" of both the club and the host.

Each sponsoring club/host family is responsible for inviting its student to visit his or her Georgia "hometown" during weekends and holidays throughout the year. Each student is required to address their sponsoring club at least once. It's rare indeed, when a student returns to his or her native country without feeling a sense of having left a large adopted family in Georgia.

## RESULTS OF AN ADVENTURE

Georgia Rotarians have over a half-century of experience to draw on in assessing this adventure in International Service.

The keen interest and involvement of Georgia Rotarians is obvious -- over 70 scholarships are now offered each year. Over 80% of all clubs in the three districts now sponsor or co-sponsor a student. Many Rotarians feel the Georgia Rotary Student Program is the most constructive Rotary action in the three districts.

GRSP, through the time and financial contributions that support it, has made it possible for many young people to come to the United States for major scholastic and cultural contributions to their education. But in giving, we too have received. Many letters from our students attest to the friendships that we have gained, many starting with "Dear Mom and Pop" or other names that show the friendship between people of different age groups. And at the same time, each letter reflects the dignity and understanding of these life-long friendships.

It may be just a simple letter from a young lady now living in a small village in the Philippines, telling about teaching school, describing her husband (unknown to us), and about the wonders of their new baby. But always, there is some mention of her recollections about her year and family in Georgia.

It may be more formal such as decorations given Will Watt and Hue Thomas, Jr. by the King of Norway or Kendall Weisiger by the Republic of Germany. Or it may be a scholarship offered to some young Georgian to attend school in Mexico, summer school at the University of Oslo, Norway, or a one year scholarship to study in Germany or Denmark.

These are but a few of the visible signs which tell of GRSP's success in its adventure in International Service. More importantly, it takes only a look into the hearts, minds, and actions of hundreds of Rotarians, students and student families to know of the impact that Understanding makes on the humanitarian ideal of **World Peace**.

## THE FUTURE

Georgia Rotarians look forward to many friendships with young men and women from other lands: friends to be; friends to whom we shall offer friendship and whose understanding we shall receive; friends who will come into our homes, stay awhile and leave. All will take with them the idea that people of different lands, customs, and religions can truly understand each other. With such understanding, they too can offer leadership in achieving **World Peace**.

