

Social Justice Resolution

*by Donald Q. Smith,
Portland Pearl Communications Chair*

"An expanded focus of all club activities should be promoting social justice"-that's the proclamation that was endorsed Jan. 12 by the Portland Pearl Rotary board of directors.



The statement's adoption followed five months of study and discussion. Activities that resulted in this month's board endorsement included a conversation on racial injustice attended by 17 Rotarians in September; an initial presentation to the board in October about forming a subcommittee; and a recommendation following "additional study over the past three months...that the subcommittee's activity should be inclusive of all areas of social injustice, with the initial emphasis on race and racial justice."

President Pat Mahoney, presenting the initiative to the full club Jan. 24, explained that the final wording came "after a lot more dialogue, a lot more discussion, and feedback from the board." After reading the four paragraphs (printed below), Mahoney saluted the four Rotarians (Jack Bradley, Diane Brandsma, Tara Mussulman and Don Smith) who advanced the proposal:

"This process involved lots of feedback...this was not a mandate from Rotary International; this was not a mandate from the board of directors; it came from a grassroots movement within the club.

"This resolution is very important for the present and future of our club."

Board action called for establishing a task force rather than forming either a new committee or a subcommittee of the Peace Committee. That body, to be chaired by Rotarian Jack Bradley, will promote social justice within exiting PRRC committees.

Education, programming, goal-setting for 2017-18, conversations, workshops and "fireside chats" are seen as ways the resolution moves from words to action.

To reach a unanimous board vote, Bradley said at the Jan. 24th breakfast meeting, required time and careful study. "I greatly appreciate the collaboration and the thought process. This will be part of the ethos of the club moving forward."

Bradley sought more Rotarian volunteers for the task force before introducing speaker Kevin Jones, co-founder and artistic director of the August Wilson Red Door Project. His organization's "Hands Up" theatrical presentation late last year was one impetus to the task force.

Social Justice resolution (1/12/17)

"Be it resolved, the Portland Pearl Rotary Club board of directors believes that an expanded focus of all club activities should be promoting social justice, wherever possible, resulting in positive impacts on people, government and institutions.

"All club committees, and individual Rotarians, are urged to support and expand efforts towards peace, conflict resolution and social justice as projects are established and new possibilities are explored in our Portland community.

"Within Pearl Rotary, this Initiative can include all areas of injustice including but not limited to:

Towards people of color

Towards immigrants

Towards people of any religion

Towards women

Towards the gay, lesbian and transgender (LGBTQ) community

Towards economic disparity

Towards people with disabilities

Towards housing disparities

Towards educational doors not equally opened

Towards age, appearance, etc.

"A task force will be formed to support implementing this purposeful theme of Social Justice through workshops, education, conversations, 'fireside chats,' expanded or enhanced programming, and the volunteerism of existing committees."

One important Rotary goal is to help young people develop the leadership qualities and self-confidence they need to become the leaders our world needs, and RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Awards) is an important part of that goal. RYLA

participants gain important knowledge about themselves, learn how to work with others to promote their ideas, and become better people and leaders. All while being introduced to Rotary.