

Women in Rotary

The admission of women into Rotary was discussed several times in our governors' monthly letters.

Women in Rotary	
Monthly Letter	Description
April 1973	“The Board of Directors of Rotary International has taken a somewhat changed attitude toward the organization of women relatives of Rotarians.” Heretofore, RI did not give formal official or legal recognition to women’s groups or auxiliaries; however, in recognition of the contribution that women relatives were giving to Rotary clubs, the Directors stated that it did “not wish to discourage women relatives of Rotarians from organizing in local groups separately from the Rotary club, for the purpose of having among their objectives the support of Rotary club activities.”
March 1983	“On 8 February, a California court ruled in favor of Rotary International in a lawsuit brought by the former Rotary Club of Duarte, California, U.S.A. The club had sought to enjoin the Board of Directors of R.I. from terminating the club’s membership in R.I. because the club had violated rules by admitting three women members.”
August 1984	<p>“The U.S. Supreme Court ruling that states may require the all-male Jaycees to admit women is not applicable to Rotary, in the opinion of R.I. President Carlos Canseco. After examining the 20-page decision, the President issued a statement which said: ‘It is my view that, because Rotary is an organization with the sole purpose of service to others the issues decided by the Supreme Court ... are outside the scope of, and therefore do not affect the membership policies of Rotary International.’ The president summarized several important differences between Rotary’s purpose and procedures and those of the Jaycees. He said that Rotary has selective membership provisions which are carefully observed and enforced, and that membership is by invitation only. Rotarians derive no services, no business or professional advantages from their membership, said Dr. Canseco; that fellowship among Rotarians which is reinforced by required weekly meeting attendance has been a keystone of Rotary since its founding 80 years ago.”</p> <p>“Rotary’s membership and other rules are set by a worldwide legislative body representative of the 950,000 members in 159 lands. The issue has been debated four times in the last 12 years. Most recently, a proposal to eliminate membership restrictions by gender was defeated at the Council on Legislation in Monaco in 1983. The next Council will meet in Chicago in 1986. ‘The decision of the U.S. Supreme Court requires no change in Rotary’s membership rules and, accordingly, none are authorized.’”</p>

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Monthly Letter	Description
June 1986	<p>“There is increasing pressure to admit women to Rotary. The California Appellate court has ruled against Rotary (see p. 54 of the June 1986 <i>Rotarian</i>) in its decision to terminate the membership in R.I. of the Rotary Club of Duarte, California, because the club admitted women. Rotary International will appeal the decision. It is the official policy of Rotary International, announced by its Board of Directors on May 28, 1986, that the Constitutional prohibition against female membership be adhered to by all Rotary clubs, whether in California or elsewhere.</p> <p>“Recognizing nonetheless that the membership rules of Rotary and particularly those relating to male membership are of substantial concern to many Rotary clubs and Rotarians around the world, the Board of Directors of R.I. has determined that it will promptly undertake a study of Rotary’s membership rules and the impact of possible changes. With the benefit of this study, which will include a survey of Rotary club attitudes worldwide, the Board, acting in the best interests of Rotary, will consider submission of appropriate legislation at the earliest possible time, the 1989 Council of Legislation.”</p>
January 1987	<p>“The January 1987 issue of <i>The Rotarian</i> addresses this most important question of “Do Women Belong in Rotary?” This is MUST reading as the editors ask that every Rotarian write to R.I. and express his feelings in the matter. Rotary wives should read these “Yes” and “No” articles.</p>
December 1987	<p>“Since the introduction of women into Rotary, they are joining at a rate of 100 per week and there are already 1,500 women in Rotary. The Council on Legislation, which meets in January 1989, will decide this issue for the remainder of the Rotary world. District 728 presently now has 12+ women in Rotary. The new membership reports do not list whether they are male or female, because of this, it would be most helpful if the club secretary would record if it is a woman, due to the fact that sometimes a first name can’t be determined as to gender.”</p>
February 1988	<p>“Inner Wheel U.S.A. This is an organization composed of wives and widows of Rotarians first formed in 1924 in England, during World War I.</p> <p>“Over the past 64 years they have grown to become one of the largest women’s service organizations in the world, operating in 78 countries on 5 continents with 3,335 clubs in 133 districts. We now presume that male spouses are included.</p> <p>“An Inner Wheel club can be formed by any Rotary Ann calling together at least twelve ladies who are interested in friendship, service, and international understanding. A letter has been sent to the president of each Rotary club.</p> <p>“For further information about facts, how to start a club, and a membership list, please write to this office.”</p>