



THE TALENT AROUND THE TABLE

Rotarian promotes peace at the grass roots

Steven Goldsmith is a mediation and training leader with Mediators Beyond Borders International, an organization that develops local skills for peace building and conflict resolution around the world. Goldsmith was among 150 experts and leaders who gathered at a Rotary presidential conference in Ontario, Calif., to discuss issues related to resolving conflicts and reducing violence. More than 1,500 people attended the conference, the first of five hosted this year by 2015-16 Rotary President K.R. Ravindran and Foundation Trustee Chair Ray Klingensmith. Each conference was in a different country and highlighted a Rotary area of focus. Goldsmith is a past president of the Rotary Club of Hawthorne/LAX/Lennox, Calif., and is the peace chair for Rotary District 5280.

THE ROTARIAN: How did the relationship between Mediators Beyond Borders and Rotary get started?

GOLDSMITH: In 2013, I chaired a congress of Mediators Beyond Borders in Istanbul. Our keynote speaker was past Rotary President Luis Giay. We had a workshop at the peace symposium and convention in Brazil, and over time, about 500 Rotarians have gotten in-

involved in our work. A few Mediators Beyond Borders members have joined Rotary as a result of learning about what Rotary does for peace.

TR: How are members of the two organizations collaborating?

GOLDSMITH: Mediators Beyond Borders is reaching out to Rotary clubs in countries where we have projects. One example is a long-term project of Mediators Beyond Borders in

Kenya with a group called the Pastoralist Network of Kenya. They have a tremendous amount of conflict among three ethnic groups who steal each other's cattle. Through my urging, the group started meeting with Rotarians in Kenya, including members of the Rotary Club of Ngong Hills, near Nairobi, who have expertise in animal husbandry. They're going to help people

learn to produce healthier cattle, and we're training them in conflict resolution and community dialogue.

TR: How do you envision the relationship between members of Mediators Beyond Borders and Rotary evolving?

GOLDSMITH: We have a collaboration with the Rotarian Action Group for Peace. The action group will help us build bridges to local clubs in areas where Mediators Beyond Borders has projects. As peace chair in my district, I'm pushing to get Rotary Peace Fellows involved in our projects. We've created a position called "peace synergist" to reach out to them for help. At least half of Mediators Beyond Borders' projects have a Rotary peace alum attached. One thing Mediators Beyond Borders would like to do is provide conflict resolution training to Rotarians. Everyone may agree it's a good idea to build a well in a village, but you should have a discussion about it: What are the ground rules? Who is going to get to use it? Who will maintain it?

TR: How do you maintain your optimism about the goal of peace?

GOLDSMITH: As a young person I was imprinted with the idea that you can change the world. I had the good luck – or the misfortune – of growing up in the segregated South, and I saw the walls tumble down and things change because of what people did. Then I encountered Rotary and found this huge organization of people who are really committed. There is a slogan going around: "Peace after polio." I like that idea. —PAUL ENGLEMAN