

From Friendship Exchange to Sister-Clubs

Colorado Springs RC & Bisceglie RC, Italy

By Kathleen Saltmarsh-Voss



In 2018, Donna Dell'Olio was serving as the International Director for Rotary of Colorado Springs. She received word that one of her cousins in Bisceglie, Italy was celebrating a big milestone birthday so Donna decided to travel there and be part of the festivities. While there she attended a Rotary meeting. She sat next to a very kind young man who had great English-speaking skills at the Rotary meeting. His name was Massimo Cassanelli. She was welcomed warmly and invited to return. This chance encounter became the beginning of a wonderful friendship between the two clubs – Rotary of Colorado Springs and Rotary Club of Bisceglie, Italy.

Soon a trip was planned that brought members of the Italian club to visit Colorado Springs. Another trip brought members of Rotary of Colorado Springs to Bisceglie. When Massimo became President of his club in 2021, he initiated a global grant project that the Colorado Springs club quickly accepted. Now, we are partners in a vision clinic in Bisceglie for financially challenged individuals.

At the Rotary Convention in 2022, the two clubs came together again and presented a breakout session regarding how to leverage the Rotary Friendship Exchange program for more impact and greater funding for a large project. At the close of the breakout session, both club presidents, both district governors, and involved club members signed a twinning agreement to solidify the Friendship Exchange.



Soon there will be another trip planned for the Americans to visit Bisceglie. Until then, we have Zoom get-togethers and group conversation threads on WhatsApp.

Rotary describes the potential benefits of the Friendship Exchange as broadening international understanding, building enduring friendships, gaining opportunities for active project involvement and support, learning about a region's people, food, languages, customs, and history, and for finding partners for grants. The relationship between these two clubs has created all of the above!

As Rotarians, we have a greater chance of partnering with other clubs in different countries because we already share basic values.

If you are interested in discovering how your club can cultivate this type of relationship that can lead to a partnership through Friendship Exchange and even to Global Grant success, you can learn more about the Rotary Friendship Exchange right here: https://www.rotary.org/en/our-programs/friendship-exchange?gclid=Cj0KCQjwn4qWBhCvARIsAFNAMiixV3X43Rdnh_fKQ0jMV3D1-nqDcuhWKyLb3tmVK6DBwn1bNK0rZkQaAhEpEALw_wcB

