

The Rotary Wheel, What Does It Mean?

Through the years, there has been much discussion on the development and meaning of our Rotary wheel. Here is some background on how the logo was developed and what it means.

Back in 1905, an engraver and Chicago Rotarian, Montague Bear, designed a simple Rotary wagon wheel, showing movement and dust. It was meant to represent civilization, movement and service work in action. Over time, many Rotary clubs adopted the wheel in one form or another.

In 1922 it was decided to create and develop an official Rotary emblem and in 1923 a gear with 24 teeth and six spokes was officially adopted. To me, the gear teeth around the outside represent the fact that work is to be done. The six spokes represent the inner direction and path of our Vocational Service, through the representation of our membership via the classification system. Similarly, these same spokes represent an outward distribution path of Rotary's ideals of service and the Four Way Test going out toward the community, vocations and businesses that our members represent.

At the 1929 Rotary International Convention, it was determined that blue and gold would be the official colors of the organization, so the wheel was designed with these colors. To some, the four blue bands within the outer radius of the gear represent our four avenues of service.

Some time later, Rotarian engineers pointed out that a gear could not be effective just turning freely on a shaft, so a key-way was added to signify the wheel was a "worker and not an idler."

The keyway in the center of the hub is of great significance, because it represents the individual Rotarian member, who is the key factor in every club. Quality members are the keys, needed for the hub to engage with the shaft and turn, putting the energy into motion and creating the power for the gears to do their work.

As Rotarians travel and visit clubs, districts and projects, they realize that the Rotary wheel stands for much more than a service club symbol or logo. It represents caring and sharing, friendship and love, plus a commitment with a "you can count on me" attitude. It portrays an "I give more than I take" culture by those who show they care, trying to shine a light of hope on all the despair in dark corners of the world.

The Rotary wheel has been a "magic key", opening doors to special places and unique experiences, including warm hospitality, and yes ...even opening the hearts of many new friends.

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