

# **Bringing the Rotary 4-Way Test to Youth: A Report on the Impact of RYLA and Interact and Recommendations for the Future**

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January 2008**

## **Abstract**

Rotary provides programs to assist young people in learning skills designed to help them become future leaders. Through the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA) and Interact clubs, young people learn the principles of ethics, service and fellowship. Under the direction of Rotary International Director Paul Netzel, a Zone 23 and 24 Ethics Task Force was created with a vision to effectively integrate the Rotary values (The Four-Way Test) and other ethical principles into RYLA, Interact and general Rotary club functions. Adults involved in RYLA and Interact, along with youth who are alumni of the programs, were surveyed regarding: Rotary's commitment to youth, character and ethics, curriculum, presentations and resources, staff and general Rotary functions related to ethics.

The findings of the study concluded that RYLA and Interact are good programs but both could be improved and made even better. These initiatives are effective in teaching youth the principles of leadership and many of the RYLA programs are positive experiences for those invited to attend. As RYLA is a highly decentralized program, it was determined there is a lack of uniformity and consistency in presenting the recommended core curriculum. Even though the ethics of positive leadership is one of the required components, there is significant disparity in what adults and youth believe about its importance and the frequency in which it actually occurs. The Four-Way Test was often not seen to be an integral component of RYLA or Interact and even when utilized, The Test was not applied with the greatest rigor. The findings indicated there is a lack of uniform and professionally developed materials, particularly in ethics of leadership and that there is a credible and desired need for staff to be trained. For both RYLA and Interact, there was only a minimal effort to establish or formally evaluate instructional objectives. Finally, quality resources are needed for a local Rotary club to utilize in the integration of The Four-Way Test.

The study recommends the development of critical core values and seamlessly integrating those values into RYLA and Interact. In designing the curriculum, it is recommended that Rotary make character development and the ethics of leadership a high priority by developing purposeful goals and objectives. For implementation, uniform materials clearly branded as Rotary with a range of time allocations for instruction, need to be developed. Rotary should promote the importance of only engaging counselors or advisors who possess positive character traits and then provide them with skilled and competent training. Finally, Rotary ought to craft an instrument to measure the effectiveness of RYLA and Interact and any long-term impact these initiatives may have upon the development of skills in youth. For general Rotary club activity, program topics should be developed utilizing The Four-Way Test or for use in a community-based program for presentation to professional, community and business leaders.