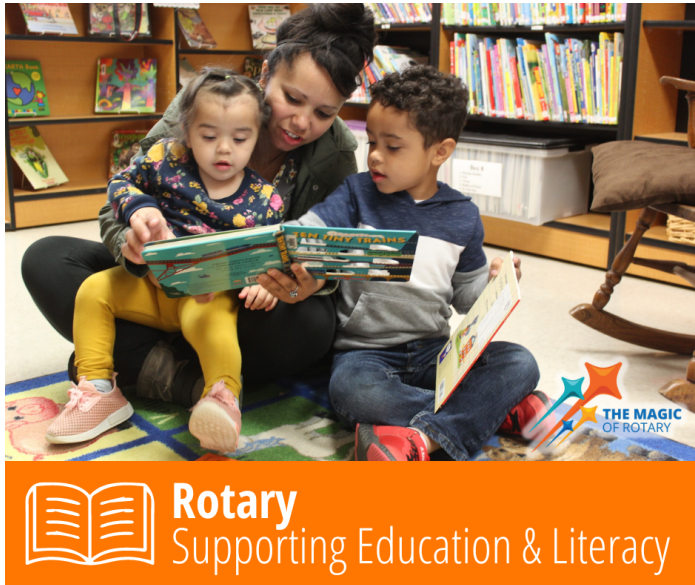




Basic Education & Literacy

September is Rotary's [Basic Education & Literacy Month](#) when we have an additional calling to bring attention to this important issue and one of Rotary International's 7 Areas of Focus.

Education sits at the lynchpin to many of Rotary's other areas of focus. Literacy and access to basic education are essential for reducing poverty, improving health, encouraging community and economic development, and promoting peace.

And to connect this back to our discussions during [Maternal and Child Health Month](#), here are a couple of powerful stats that underscore this correlation:

- Women who complete primary education are 66% less likely to die in childbirth.
- And a child born to a mother who can read is 50% more likely to survive past the age of five.

Today, literacy remains an issue that demands our focus. More than 775 million people over the age of 15 are illiterate. That's 17 percent of the world's adult population. Two thirds of that group are women.

We know that literacy and education enables upward socioeconomic mobility and is a key to escaping poverty. However despite years of steady growth in enrolment rates, non-proficiency rates remain disturbingly high. They are highest in sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia where more than 80% of students are not proficient in reading and lack basic mathematical skills. Even more disturbing is that these figures are only capturing STUDENTS. 262 million children and adolescents (one fifth of the global population of that age group) are out of school.

Rotary projects around the globe are working tirelessly to address these inadequacies. They facilitate community-based literacy programs, provide teacher training to educators, and match students with mentors invested in their success. And Rotary is using education to break the cycle of modern slavery. In the Uttar Pradesh state in India, the Schools4Freedom project is tackling debt bondage by educating villagers who become trapped by a system of predatory contracts that leaves multiple generations tapped in a cycle of poverty.

The Rotary Club of Portsmouth has a history of promoting literacy on the local level, with a commitment to distributing dictionaries in Portsmouth Public Schools that spanned decades and adding more than 8,000 books to the City's library shelves.

This month we will take a look at issues impacting education and literacy on the local level, welcoming [Dr. Elie Bracy, superintendent of Portsmouth Public Schools](#) and on the national level with the [Correctional Education Association](#), a professional association of educators and administrators working in adult and juvenile correctional settings all over the world, based locally in Norfolk.