Mayors along the Mississippi River Announce Effort with Rotary International on Water Infrastructure

Mississippi River Mayors and Rotary International come together to restore natural and built infrastructure of the Corridor to enhance community resilience

Memphis, TN - Rotary International is a network of 1.2 million members within over 35,000 clubs world-wide. One of Rotary’s core missions is to develop and improve communities and grow local economies through the restoration and sustainbility of critical water infrastructure. Given the Mayors along the Mississippi share the same core mission and have a Rotary in almost every Mississippi River City that is part of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI), the two organizations are a perfect match to work together.

“Here in Memphis, our Rotarians are our neighbors, our friends, even members of our family. The Memphis Rotary will celebrate their 105th anniversary this year and in that time, they have become a constant presence in and companion to our city. Memphis Rotarians work on clean water systems, hunger relief, and even local reading programs,” detailed Mayor Jim Strickland, of Memphis, TN.

“Considering the historic flood, we just sustained as the longest and largest in recorded history, our cities are going to need broad and innovative partnerships to help us meet our increasing infrastructure needs. Therefore, we jumped at the chance to build a working relationship with Rotary,” said Lionel Johnson, Mayor of St. Gabriel, LA and Co-Chair of MRCTI.

“Fifty cities and over 20 million people drink the water from the Mississippi River every day and/or use it to power their manufacturing, tourism, and agriculture. It made complete sense to us to begin working with the cities along the Mississippi River through our community development mandate,” explained Barry Rassin, Immediate Past President of Rotary International.

This relationship would not be possible without the direct involvement of one of the River’s most dedicated and storied champions and that is Ambassador Andrew Young. Andrew Young was born in Louisiana and grew-up near the Mississippi River. Ambassador Young has been working with MRCTI since 2016 to help America’s waterway; He is the reason for this new collaboration with Rotary.

“Here are two organizations with the same mission, working in the very communities these Mayors represent. Why not have them join forces around one of this nation’s most urgent needs – restoration of our natural and built infrastructure. MRCTI is a new partner of mt Foundation and I’ve worked with Rotary International for decades – this collaboration will work,” emphasized Ambassador Andrew Young, President of the Andrew Young Foundation.

Mississippi River Mayors and Rotary International unveiled a broad strategy to link Rotary Clubs to their city halls on local infrastructure projects.
“In La Crosse, WI we’ve been very fortunate to work closely with our local Rotary on improving water quality and we believe the work we’re doing together can be an example for other Mayors on how these relationships can bring benefits to main street,” stated Mayor Tim Kabat of La Crosse, WI.

Rotary’s global reach is also a great compliment to communities along the Mississippi River especially given the waterway’s preeminent place in the global commodity supply chain.

“I would emphasize how good a fit this is for MRCTI and Rotary International to work together using the international footprint of Rotary and the global impact the Mississippi River has as examples. The world’s major food-producing river basins such as the Ganges, Nile, Yangtze, Rhine, and Parana River Basins are part of a robust community and we Mayors have brought the Mississippi into that community because our basin is the #1 food-producer on Earth,” said Mayor Frank Klipsch of Davenport, IA and MRCTI Co-Chair. “Because Rotary is already working in many of the countries occupied by these other basins, we can work together to secure the world’s access to freshwater and food thereby keeping commodity markets stable which sustains so much of our economy in Mississippi River cities.”

**Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative:** MRCTI was created to provide an influential voice for the Mississippi River. MRCTI addresses infrastructure, community development, river water quality and habitat restoration, flooding and floodplain issues, river-focused recreation, sustainable economies, and celebration of the River culture and history. The Mississippi River is critical natural asset. As the ecological linchpin to the 31-state Mississippi River Basin, the River supports the most agriculturally productive region on the planet; creates nearly $500 billion in annual revenue; transports 40 percent of the nation’s agricultural output; and directly supports more than one 1.5 million jobs.

**Rotary International:** Rotary is one of the world’s largest humanitarian organizations with a global network of 1.2 million neighbors, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers who see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change – across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves. For more than 110 years, Rotary’s people of action have used their passion, energy, and intelligence to take action on sustainable projects. From literacy and peace to water and health, we are always working to better our world, and we stay committed to the end. Rotary members believe that we have a shared responsibility to take action on our world’s most persistent issues. Our 35,000+ clubs work together to: Promote peace; Fight disease; Provide clean water, sanitation, and hygiene; Support education; and Grow local economies.

**Andrew Young Foundation:** The Andrew Young Foundation works to improve life, health and well-being of humanity through programs and initiatives created to assist challenged communities. The vision of the Foundation is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, house the homeless, liberate the oppressed, and do it in our lifetime.

More information is available at [www.mrcti.org](http://www.mrcti.org). Contact: Jim Gwinner JGwinner@LS2Group.com, 314-791-2774

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