

# What Was I Thinking?

Sally Motta – District 5000

What was I thinking? Didn't I already have enough on my Rotary plate without enrolling in the Leadership Academy? I knew I wanted to contribute more towards Rotary, but would participating in the Academy really help me achieve my long-term goals?

Okay, I am a fast learner and tend to be very organized, so this should not be too time consuming. There are only six courses, BUT there is that essay at the end of the course to deal with too.....

Boy was I in for a rude awakening! Each assignment really made me think! Sure it was easy to take tests, as I had always done well at testing, but learning the material presented was another story and thinking of ways to incorporate that material into my daily life was opening up all kinds of new challenges.

I was able to put my skills to work on most of the assignments, but I was really tested when it got to what I considered the most difficult: publicity. I had learned early in my life that all though I have an analytical mind, I have a lack of imagination and creativity. Whenever I needed these skills, I would turn to others who had them. Where were these people now?

In this assignment, I had no one to count on but myself, and I needed to think outside of my comfort zone to create and promote an imaginary project.

I drew a blank, so I took the easy way out, and used an existing project that was coming up... our 2nd annual Estate Sale.

The timeline for completion of the project was easy. This was something I could really do, because I enjoy entertaining at home, and I am the best list maker in the world!

I decided to follow the same external PR format from last year, while enhancing the opportunities to share the Rotary story with our Estate Sale customers. Living on a small island without a television station, I know we need coverage in the newspaper and on the local radio station. Flyers are also very affective, but I know we cannot start the publicity too far in advance or people will forget. Our coconut wireless system will come in handy, and since this is the second year sale, our reputation from the previous sale will work to our advantage.

The newspaper ads will run on the garage sale page in the newspaper for two days before the event. I remember that last year we even had some buyers show up with the newspaper in their hands. Our signs will be posted on the highway and lead right to the yard. Our local radio DJ will be announcing the sale information for the first two hours of our sale day and everyone listens to Ron Wiley to know where to go on Saturday morning for the best deals!

We will hang our Rotary banners on the fence to make sure everyone knows they are at the right place. Last year a display of our latest project was on the wall for everyone to view as they were purchasing their items and a

contribution jar was located right there for accepting loose change. We raised over \$60.00 from buyers paying for their purchases. Hearing the comments from our buyers about what they thought of our event made all of us feel that it was well worth the time and energy used to make the sale possible. To make a long story short, the event was very successful and we raised more than we had expected. People showed up early and talked about how they are coming back next this year.

Looking back, I believe that once we got the customers “into the tent” we did not capitalized on the opportunity to personally share the Rotary story. External public relations got them there. We should have used more internal communication skills to endear them to the cause. This will no longer be just a fundraiser; it will be an opportunity to sell Rotary.

We will create a slide show to highlight Rotary projects we have completed. The community will be able to see the project we are currently working on at the local state hospital that will benefit them, their families, and their neighbors. We will also run Rotary in Motion DVDs on a computer to display international presence.

The publicity committee will have a separate table set up and have copies available of our club brochure, the Four Way Test, and the Basics of Rotary. There will be at least two of our current members available to answer questions about Rotary. When a potential new member shows an interest in making it to a meeting, we will offer to pay for their first lunch and the Membership chair will make a follow up phone or e-mail connection to make that person feel comfortable about attending.

I always felt that publicity is a key for the continuing success of Rotary, both, for obtaining new members and for getting donations of time, talent and money for our projects. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is proof enough of that. Most people are aware of Rotary's work throughout the world because of the eradication of polio, our water projects in many countries, and the exchange students that are sent to and from our island. We all like seeing our story in the newspaper, but hearing from people on a one on one basis can work even better...besides, not everyone reads the local paper. It is a special treat to see our neighbors' eyes light up when they see we are working right in their neighborhood.

Whether we are selling garage sale items or cookbooks at a table in front on the local grocery store, we need to use the occasion as an opportunity to sell Rotary. We need to have pictures of successful projects on the wall behind us, we need to have our brochures available and we need to be able to talk story about Rotary.

I am always amazed that most folks are not aware that the sweaty, middle-aged individuals they pass on the first Saturday of every month cleaning the highways are Rotarians! Hum, maybe if we wore our Rotary shirts instead of the highway shirts and chatted up the onlookers, they would get our message of Service Above Self.

Oh no, what is happening to me? Now that I have completed the publicity assignment, I find myself looking for new and more interpersonal ways to "publicize" the who, what, when, why and where of Rotary.

Do you think that maybe I did learn something??????