



Why the pins?

By Nina Mandell
The Rotarian

While looking for a good way to promote a new club program, Don Garner, a member of the Rotary Club of Chicago, decided try a well-tested tactic to do the obvious: hand out lapel pins with the program's logo. "You know Rotarians and their pins," he says.

Rotarians do seem to have pins for *everything*. But why?

Quick history lesson

The first lapel pin in Rotary history was created in 1909 for the Rotary Club of New York. It wasn't given to every member, though: Only the club's president, Bradford Bullock, wore the first pin. After Bullock left office in 1911, the pin changed forms a few times. Today, it depicts the official Rotary emblem.

Now all Rotarians are encouraged to wear pins, if not for a specific program or club, at least for Rotary in general to show pride and membership.

But exclusive pins are still around, such as those given to Paul Harris Fellows or handed down in individual clubs, such as the Rotary Club of Laredo, Texas, USA. In Laredo, as a nod to the club's roots, the president proudly wears a pin passed down from its first district governor.

Pins also have been popular fundraising tools, as the Rotary Club of Orange, California, USA, knows well. In 1969, the club president began fining people who didn't wear their pins to meetings — a practice that continues today. The money goes into the club's general fund.

The pins provide some of the best publicity in the world for Rotary, especially when notable people wear them, says Randy Strong, a member of the Rotary Club of Westlake Village Sunrise, California, USA, and owner of a nonprofit marketing firm. According to Strong, "There are a lot of good organizations, but from the standpoint of publicity, if there's someone famous wearing the pin, that strengthens the image."