

Jean Irwin

Jean Irwin was a teacher of the Deaf for 7 years in Reno , Nevada . Her students were on the path to achieve the typical 4th grade level in reading upon graduation from high school. Then she heard about some children in England who were doing much better than that and made a comment at a party, "I wonder what they're doing in England that we're not doing here?" This question was heard by a Rotarian. He suggested that if she really wanted an answer to she should contact Rotary about their Foundation Scholar program which provided scholarships to study overseas and told her how . That was in 1989. She did apply, but didn't make the cut and so remained ignorant of those techniques.

Of course she didn't or she would not be speaking to you today! Jean received sponsorship from the Rotary Club of Sparks and went to Nottingham University to learn how to best foster reading in children who can't exactly "sound words out" . When she returned and used these reading methods her students ended up graduating at double the years of the national levels. Many of these students could, and have graduated from college- something only 5% of the profoundly deaf can do.

The Rotary Scholarship Jean received has enabled her not just to teach other teachers about what she learned, but to use it for second language learners. She has "added on" to Rotary grant projects internationally and lectures to teachers on these reading methods to get more bang out of those foundation bucks. Jean became a "real boy" and joined Rotary in 2003 as a charter member of Reno Centennial Sunset. After her marriage to Dave Hatfield in 2010 she moved to California and joined the Folsom Rotary club- where their theme song contains the lyrics, "I shot a man in Reno just to watch him die," bringing her full circle in Rotary.

Jean is retired. She has been the District Literacy chair both in Rotary Districts 5180 and 5190. If you were able to read this bio, remember: You're doing something 880 million adults on this planet cannot do (and you have a great tolerance for pretty dull material!) See you from the podium.