

During November I had the honor of being one of the Ankeny Rotarians who helped deliver dictionaries to fourth graders in Ankeny. It is one of the many projects that our local Rotary club helps with locally, nationally and internationally. But this is one of my favorites because of the excitement that you see on the faces of every kid.

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> year we have delivered a dictionary to each and every fourth grader in the Ankeny district and every year it remains fun. Let me tell you a little about how this works. First we spend a part of two meetings preparing over 750 dictionaries, putting our Rotary sticker inside the front cover and making sure each elementary has enough. The old adage that many hands make light work really holds true here.

Next we contact each of the elementary schools and set up a time where Rotarians can deliver our gifts. It always helps if the teachers know we are coming! When we come into the classroom we immediately start handing a paperback dictionary to each child and ask them to write their name on the inside of the front cover, so they know it is theirs to keep forever. Then we take a little time to explain the features of the book we just gave them.

We always start by asking the students have ever heard of the Rotary Club, and unless we happen to have a child of a Rotarian in the room, nobody knows. So, to help explain what a service club does, we ask everyone to look up a word, either service or volunteer or sometimes both words. Service: the work of a person who does things for other people. Volunteer: a person who offers to work or help without pay. We explain that we are there as a volunteer, we don't get paid for doing this, to perform a service for all fourth graders in Ankeny. Most of them think that is pretty cool.

But the dictionaries we give each child are more than simple dictionaries. They contain information about all 50 states, a biography of each U.S. president, the constitution and declaration of independence, a description of the planets, the alphabet in sign language and something the kids think is really fun, the longest word in the English language. All 1,909 letters. I usually ask the teachers to a) pronounce the word and b) give a definition. It is not fair because I don't think anyone without a PHD in molecular science could pronounce it and even the definition given is not easy to decipher.

One of the best sounds I hear from almost every classroom where I get to deliver dictionaries is the chatter from the kids as we walk out. You might wonder what Rotarians delivering dictionaries has to do with owning or managing a small business. It is about giving back to the community, doing something without the expectation of getting paid. It has been a rough couple of years for most businesses and most of us have had to struggle just to get by. But those of us who have weathered the storm are the lucky ones, because there are a lot of us who have not been so lucky.

This time of year reminds us that we need to be good corporate citizens. Helping those less fortunate than us is good business, and I am proud to be part of several organizations that truly believe in this ideal. I also believe people will reward good companies and people by doing more business with them. It is true that when we give, we also receive.

The Ankeny Rotary club does more than just dictionaries in Ankeny and around the world, find out more at [www.clubrunner.ca/ankeny](http://www.clubrunner.ca/ankeny). Feel free to join us!

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