

How to improve your photography: telling Rotary's story in pictures

Posted on [October 23, 2018](#)



Rotarians and Rotaractors plant mangrove trees at Bonefish Pond National Park in Nassau.

By Alyce Henson, Rotary International staff photographer

Over the last year, I have worked on a few assignments highlighting club projects in Nassau, Bahamas, and Seattle, Washington, USA. Each project demonstrates how Rotarians take action to solve problems in their own communities. These type of projects translate well into visual storytelling content.

My approach to photography remains consistent with the Rotary brand: I strive to make authentic images that represent the values and personality of Rotary. Because of this, I am able to create appealing images that tell a bigger story – one that reflects the projects and people who make the world a better place.

Using photography to tell a story can become complex and challenging, but it doesn't have to be. By following a few guidelines, having a focused mindset, and applying a bit of confidence, you can take great pictures with less intimidation. Below are some photo tips based on recent images I took in Nassau and Seattle. Try these, and you might be surprised what you can capture.



If you see a great moment happening naturally don't be afraid to ask people to continue doing the action that caught your eye in the first place. In this case, I saw these two Rotarians passing a seed pod to one another. I asked them to pass it back and forth a few times and to look at each other. It only took an extra minute or two to get a successful image. I was at a great vantage point that had plenty of empty space around the exchange between the two women, which met the needs of a brand image I was working on.

When people are wearing hats, especially baseball caps, it is important that you capture their face in the photo. This image would not have been successful if the man in the red shirt was looking down and his face was covered by the visor of the cap. When people wear caps, ask them to tip it up a little or take it off entirely if you can't get their face in the shot. This image ended up being cropped to a vertical image for the final ad. That worked because there is enough room around the image to crop it to a different orientation. I can't stress enough the importance of capturing volunteers having a good time. Often, people who are working and focused have a serious look on their face. A serious look can be mistaken for anger or not enjoying what they are doing. A few things I do to lighten the mood is talk to people while I am photographing. I might say things to get them to laugh, look at each other, or engage in a conversation. In this photo the two women saw a fellow club member approaching the scene. I asked that Rotarian to stay on the sideline to talk and joke around with the women as I was photographing them. That way the person remains off camera but enhances the mood of the people on camera.

Importance of having empty space!

Words and logos on clothing and hats can be challenging! Make sure people only wear Rotary branded clothing and not that of any other company or organization. Don't have everyone at

the project wear the exact same branded shirt either. Everyone doesn't have to match. Mix it up with neutral color clothing, small pops of color and shirts with small patterns, along with some Rotary shirts and caps.

Often, Rotarians are working outside in bright sunlight, wearing sunglasses for protection. Ask your subjects to take off their sunglasses for a few minutes while you photograph them. If someone is very sensitive to light, have the main person in action take off their sunglasses. We want to be able to see the eyes of the main subjects when we look at images, not have them hidden behind sunglasses or under hats.

Words of encouragement:

Our photography focuses on the connections we make in our communities. Our images should tell a genuine visual story. Capturing compelling images is one of the most important and universal ways to tell our story.

Use the photography section of the People of Action Style Guide (available on the [Brand Center](#)) for help taking pictures for your People of Action campaign materials. Becoming familiar with and applying these guidelines will set your club up for greater success and create continuity for our brand, no matter what part of the world our campaign is seen. Whether you take the pictures yourself or hire a photographer, this guide will help you take photos that are ideal for creating an effective, memorable image or ad.





