

# The Inauspicious Rotarian

It's hard to imagine, but at one time Bob Collins-Wright was turned away from Rotary. But back in the early 1950's, only one person per company was allowed to be a member and the president at Simplicity (where Bob worked) already held that position. Eventually, the rules changed and Bob was brought into the fold as an associate member in 1955.

From this inauspicious beginning, Bob charted a remarkable course up the ranks of Rotary, culminating in his ascension to president in 1971. While his contribution to the Rotary Club of Preston-Hespeler cannot be understated, it was his association with KidsAbility where he truly left his mark.

The year was 1991 and the K-W Rotary Children's Centre was seeking to build a state-of-the-art facility in Waterloo to replace the older and smaller facility in Kitchener. Stephen Swatridge (CEO of the Centre) and John Lynch (Chairman of the Board) knew they needed to find individuals who could drive a major fundraising campaign. They turned to Bob and his close friend, Jack Weber, naming them co-chairs of the Fundraising Committee.

Enlisting the help of the 10 local Rotary clubs, Bob and Jack quickly received pledges of \$600,000 by the summer of 1991. When the government officially approved the building project in 1994, the two men had obtained promises from 835 companies, organizations and individuals for \$2,350,000. As Bob notes, "I took great pride at the groundbreaking for the new facility, as we were able to get so many people to give to such a deserving organization. After all, what's more important than a child? Kids make all the difference. Anything we can do to make their lives better, we should be doing."

On September 26, 1995 — after a successful \$8 million capital campaign supported by government, local Rotary Clubs, corporations and private supporters — the new Centre opened to great fanfare. While Bob would have us downplay his role, he truly rose from his inauspicious beginnings at Rotary to be a force who made a difference in the lives of so many in need. And for his efforts, he received KidsAbility's highest honour in 2006: The Outstanding Supporter Butterfly Award.

“ After all, what's more important than a child? ”



*Bob Collins-Wright*

Rotarian, Donor and  
2006 Outstanding Supporter Award Recipient