

Executive Director Sarah Kelly



Creating Thriving Communities Across America: How You Can Make a Difference

Ruritan's purpose is simple: to help people understand each other and make our communities better places to live and work by volunteering. This isn't just a nice idea—it's something we're meant to do. Think about the saguaro cactus. In the desert, the saguaro stands tall and helps life around it. Birds make nests in its branches, animals rest in its shade, and it stores water to share when times are tough. Like the saguaro, we can be a source of help and growth in our communities.

Each Ruritan club has its own "desert" to take care of. By figuring out what our communities need and working to meet those needs, we can create places where people feel supported and included. Our slogan—fellowship, goodwill, and community service—isn't just words; it's a promise we keep every day.

This work is so important. People today are becoming less connected. Communities are drifting apart, and fewer people are joining groups. This makes neighborhoods weaker. When you look at historical data of the US from 1900 to today, the chart of people joining groups from 1900 to the 1960s shows a steady increase and a steady decrease from the 1960s to today. The outlook is bleak. But there is hope—and that hope is you. The documentary *Join or Die*, streaming on Netflix, shows that when people join organizations and get involved in their communities, they build trust and connection. That's exactly what Ruritan does. We focus on what each community needs most, making our work personal and meaningful.

Living our vision starts with you. Our communities are strongest when they include people from all walks of life. Ruritan welcomes everyone—no matter their job, background, or viewpoint. This mix of people makes us stronger and better at solving problems.

Living our vision also means seeing service as more than just a task—it's a way of life. When we organize food drives, clean up roads, mentor kids, or simply listen to someone's concerns, we create ripples of change that reach far and wide. But to truly make a difference, we also need to build relationships. By fostering fellowship and goodwill—both in our clubs and with those we serve—we create trust and a sense of belonging.

This work can be hard. Like the saguaro, we face challenges and tough times. But remember, just like the saguaro's roots go deep and wide, we are supported by our purpose, our vision, and our community.

So, what needs do you see in your community? How can your club be a place of support? How can you inspire others to join us? Thriving communities don't happen overnight. They're built one step at a time—through acts of service, connections, and moments of fellowship.

Let's commit to standing strong, helping others, and creating places where everyone can grow. Let's lead with passion and believe in the difference we can make together.

