

LIVING & ARTS

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SUNDAY CAMERA

SECTION

Rotary ventures into cyberspace with eClub

By Kevin Williams

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Last weekend in Boulder, Rotary International chartered the first official Internet-based Rotary Club in the world. This "model," Rotary eClub One, was sponsored by the Boulder Rotary Club as a three-year pilot project for individuals who could not meet traditional attendance requirements due to travel, business restrictions, distance or disability.

"Flexibility is the key word here," says John Minter, charter president of the eClub and a former member of the Boulder Rotary. "The whole purpose of this club is to inform, to inspire and to assist our members to perform community service."

Rotary eClub One is now part of Rotary International, an umbrella organization of more than 30,000 Rotary Clubs, the first of which was founded in Chicago in 1905. The goal of Rotary is to provide humani-

tarian service, encourage high ethical standards and help build goodwill.

"It's just a different medium," says Minter of the Web-based approach.

Still in its fledgling stages, eClub currently is composed of roughly 25 members who can access the club's Web page —

www.rotary5450.org/eclub — 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These online members, most

between the ages of 30 and 80, are expected to meet certain criteria: to be recognized as a leader in their profession or community; to be unable to attend traditional meetings; to commit to the personal ethic of "service above self;" to perform at least 48 hours of recognized community service per year; and to participate regularly on the Web.

For Kenneth Townsend, a busy securities broker for Dain Rauscher

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Rotary Club takes the group online

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in Denver, the eClub allows him to work around his schedule and his disability.

"I have not been involved in Rotary before and I realized just how beneficial of an organization it is to the people we are helping," says Townsend, who uses a wheelchair. "I find it appealing to take part in the club (and to) be able to do it from a computer."

Minter, along with a design team made up mostly of Boulder Rotarians, spent more than six months crafting a Web-based "community model" that could serve as a prototype for future online Rotary Clubs.

"We've tried very carefully to balance..." Minter says, searching for words. "Imagine

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John Minter
charter president of the eClub

taking a club method and style that's been successful on the ground and moving it on the Internet. It's not a trivial task," service projects members have undertaken.

Minter explains that the eClub is operating under a New Models program and that its members "have a fair amount of freedom to do whatever we think works and change it if it doesn't."

Anyone can go to the Web site to get in-depth information on Rotary, and members can

line," Minter says, referring, in part, to potential Web-based service projects. "Our meetings are just really cranking up this month."

Online projects could be community-oriented or individually driven, he says, depending on member wants and needs.

Whatever members end up doing, they will be part of an exclusive group of Rotarians.

"The leverage and connections through Rotary make it the world's largest, and this is my opinion, most effective volunteer service out there," Minter says. "You're part of a big successful operation."

*** For more information on Rotary eClub One or the Boulder Rotary Club, call (303) 554-7074 or visit www.rotary5450.org/eclub.*

"We haven't explored all the ramifications of doing this on-