

Greeting from the Rotaract Club of Darling

To the Rotaract Club of Tophane,

We recently received your thoughtful letter and were excited to learn about your club's long-standing history of community service.

In response, we have been learning more about Bursa, and it is fascinating to discover the depth of your city's heritage. We understand that Bursa was the first capital of the Ottoman Empire and that both your historic city center and the village of Cumalıkızık are recognized on UNESCO's World Heritage List. It is also impressive to see how your community embraces the nature surrounding Uludağ Mountain, balancing your rich cultural identity, from your famous silk industry to the iconic İskender kebab - with such dynamic service projects.

We are the Rotaract Club of Darling, a new team based in the Swartland region of South Africa. Our community is well-known for its beautiful vineyards, vast golden wheat fields, and the spectacular spring wildflower season that draws visitors from all over. We are currently building our club's foundation, and we are keen to see how our stories might connect.

We appreciate you reaching out and starting this conversation between our clubs.

Kind regards,

The Rotaract Club of Darling

1. WHO WE ARE

The Rotaract Club of Darling is a young, passionate and community-driven service club based in Darling, Western Cape, and proudly part of **Rotaract District 9350**.

Although our club is still in its early stages, our members have already demonstrated that age and the size of our community do not determine the size of the impact we can create.

Our journey officially began on **17 January 2026**, when five young people came together with a shared desire to serve, develop themselves and make a meaningful difference in Darling.

The club was officially founded on **17 April 2026**.

Within only two months, our membership grew from **5 to 9 members** – a reflection of the enthusiasm, commitment and belief that young people in a small community can become powerful agents of positive change.

We are a particularly young club. Most of our members only completed high school in **2025**, including our President, Gavio Carstens. Today, our members are balancing tertiary studies, employment, personal responsibilities and community service.

That balance is not always easy. But it is precisely what makes our club special.

We are learning leadership while living it.

We are developing professionally while serving our community.

And we are growing together while trying to create opportunities for others.

2. THE STORY BEHIND OUR CLUB

The roots of the Rotaract Club of Darling began with a teacher and a young student who was introduced to the possibilities of service and leadership.

At the age of 18, our President, **Gavio Carstens**, was introduced to Rotaract by his high school Mathematics teacher.

That teacher was not only an educator, but also the founder of Rotaract Atlantis.

Having already seen Gavio take on multiple leadership responsibilities at school level, his teacher recognised his potential and introduced him to the world of Rotaract.

That introduction planted a seed.

The idea was simple: leadership should not only be something young people experience in classrooms, organisations or formal positions. Leadership should also be used to serve others.

That philosophy eventually became one of the foundations upon which the Rotaract Club of Darling was built.

Our club therefore did not begin with a large budget, a large membership base or extensive resources.

It began with **five young people, a willingness to serve, and a belief that something meaningful could be built in Darling.**

3. OUR FIRST MILESTONES

Our first months have been characterised by rapid growth and an eagerness to become actively involved in our community.

From 5 to 9 members

We began with five founding members and grew to nine members within approximately two months.

Our first DISCON

In 2026, we attended our **very first DISCON**, an important milestone for our young club.

At our first DISCON, we were honoured to receive recognition through the:

Newly Established Club Award – Dedication and Active Social Media

For a newly established club, this recognition meant more than an award.

It affirmed that our commitment, visibility and willingness to get involved were already being noticed within the wider Rotary and Rotaract family.

4. OUR MOTTO

“GROW INTERNALLY. IMPACT EXTERNALLY.”

This is more than a slogan for us.

Grow Internally

We believe that meaningful community impact begins with developing the people who serve.

Our members are encouraged to grow in:

- Leadership
- Communication
- Confidence
- Project management
- Teamwork
- Professional development
- Problem-solving
- Emotional intelligence
- Community awareness

We regularly create opportunities for our members to connect socially and celebrate milestones together.

We believe that a strong club culture creates stronger volunteers.

Our internal social activities are therefore not simply about having fun. They allow members to build friendships, trust one another, celebrate successful projects and create the sense of belonging necessary for sustainable service.

Impact Externally

Our internal growth must translate into external action.

We want our members to take what they learn and use it to address real challenges in Darling.

From education and mentorship to food security, menstrual dignity, women's empowerment and household support, our focus is on projects that respond to needs we can see and understand within our own community.

5. OUR COMMUNITY WORK

Even during our first year, the club has already initiated and supported a range of projects.

Tuberculosis Awareness

We have undertaken **Tuberculosis (TB) awareness initiatives at community schools**, helping to create greater awareness around an important public health issue.

Our approach is not simply to deliver information, but to encourage conversations that can help young people understand health, prevention and the importance of seeking support when needed.

Food Parcel Projects

We have undertaken **food parcel projects twice**, providing practical support to members of our community experiencing food insecurity.

Food insecurity is not always visible.

For some households, a food parcel can mean one less difficult decision at the end of the month.

For us, these projects represent a simple but meaningful principle:

Service must respond to real needs.

6. EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITY

University Application Drive

We have also undertaken a **University Application Drive in partnership with Stellenbosch University**, helping young people access information and guidance around tertiary education and applications.

For learners from smaller communities, access to information can sometimes be as important as access to funding.

University applications can be intimidating.

Questions around admission requirements, application dates, programmes, funding and career choices can become barriers before a learner has even had the opportunity to dream bigger.

Through this initiative, we want to help ensure that a learner's postcode does not determine the size of their ambitions.

7. OUR ACTIVE SCHOOL PROGRAMME

Twice a month, on Wednesdays, we facilitate an **active fun day programme** at our **community schools**.

The purpose extends beyond recreation.

We want to create safe, positive spaces where young people can:

- Participate in healthy activities
- Build positive relationships
- Develop confidence
- Receive mentorship
- Stay engaged after school
- Discover positive alternatives to harmful behaviour
- Build aspirations for their future

We believe that prevention begins before a young person reaches a crisis point.

By being present consistently, we can build relationships with learners and become trusted mentors rather than only appearing when there is a problem.

8. OUR MENSTRUAL DIGNITY DRIVE

One of the most important projects currently underway is our **Menstrual Dignity Drive**.

We are seeing the effects of menstrual poverty within our community schools and believe that no young person should have their education, dignity or confidence compromised because they cannot afford menstrual products.

Our current target is:

500

menstrual product contributions

We have already reached:

325

contributions secured

We are now working towards the remaining 175.

Why this matters

Menstrual poverty is not simply about access to sanitary products.

It can affect:

- School attendance
- Participation in classroom activities
- Confidence
- Dignity
- Emotional wellbeing

South Africa's Department of Basic Education has recognised that inadequate access to menstrual products and suitable facilities can contribute to absenteeism, stress and inequality in education.

South African research has also found a significant relationship between menstrual-health challenges and school absenteeism, including the effects of painful menstruation and inadequate menstrual-management practices.

For us, this is not an abstract national issue.

We are seeing the need within our own community.

Our goal is therefore not merely to distribute products, but to help create an environment where young women can attend school, participate confidently and manage menstruation with dignity.

9. DARLING – OUR HOME

A SMALL TOWN WITH A BIG HEART

Darling is a small rural working village in the Swartland region of the Western Cape.

The town was established in **1853** and was named after Sir Charles Henry Darling, the Cape's Lieutenant Governor at the time.

Located approximately 75 kilometres from Cape Town, Darling is known for its **agricultural character, wildflowers, arts and cultural attractions, wine, craft beer and tourism.**

The town's identity is fascinating because it combines rural life with a surprisingly rich cultural and tourism offering.

10. WHY DARLING NEEDS INVESTMENT IN ITS YOUTH

Darling's charm is undeniable.

However, behind the tourism attractions and picturesque surroundings is a small community that faces the everyday realities of limited resources, unemployment, poverty and unequal access to opportunities.

As a smaller community, Darling does not have the same depth of resources, organisations and funding opportunities that larger urban centres can offer.

This creates both a challenge and an opportunity.

The challenge

Young people can be affected by:

- Limited exposure to opportunities
- Economic hardship
- Unemployment
- Limited access to mentorship
- Household financial pressure
- Risk of disengagement from education
- Social and behavioural challenges

The opportunity

- Because Darling is a relatively small community, relationships matter.
- A young volunteer can know a learner personally.
- A mentor can notice when something changes.
- A local business can see the direct effect of its contribution.
- A community project can have a visible and measurable impact.

This is why we believe that investing in Darling's young people is an investment in Darling's future.

11. OUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE – BUILDING FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

As a newly established club, one of our biggest challenges is financial sustainability.

Because we are still relatively new, some surrounding businesses are understandably hesitant to commit resources to a club that is still building its track record.

We understand this.

Trust takes time.

Therefore, our members frequently organise fundraising sales and other activities to generate the funds required to keep our projects moving.

This has taught our members something important:

A lack of resources cannot become an excuse for a lack of action.

At the same time, sustainable community impact requires sustainable partnerships.

That is why we are actively looking to build relationships with businesses, organisations and individuals who share our belief in youth development and community transformation.

12. THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE IMPACT

Perhaps our greatest strength is not our budget.

- It is our members.
- Our members are young.
- They are students.
- They are recent school graduates.
- They are future professionals.
- They are young people trying to build their own futures while simultaneously trying to improve the futures of others.
- They balance lectures, assignments, examinations, jobs, family responsibilities and community projects.
- And yet they continue to show up.

That passion is something we are proud of.

We also understand that service should not become a burden that destroys the joy of volunteering.

That is why we make time to celebrate one another.

We hold internal social events, recognise achievements, reflect on projects and create opportunities for our members to simply enjoy being part of something meaningful.

We believe:

Strong teams serve better.

13. OUR PLACE WITHIN ROTARACT DISTRICT 9350

The Rotaract Club of Darling proudly forms part of **Rotary District 9350**.

District 9350 describes its work through a focus on service, community impact, member development, leadership and building stronger communities.

Being part of this wider network gives our young club an opportunity to learn from experienced Rotarians and Rotaractors while contributing our own energy, ideas and local perspective.

We may be one of the newer clubs.

But we are determined to grow into a club that is known for consistency, creativity and genuine community impact.

14. OUR MESSAGE TO POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Darling has something special.

- It has history.
- It has culture.
- It has tourism.
- It has agriculture.
- It has small businesses.
- It has community spirit.
- But most importantly:

Darling has people.

Our responsibility as young leaders is to help ensure that the next generation does not only inherit Darling's history – but also inherits greater opportunities.

- We want young people to believe that they can study further.
- That they can become professionals.
- That they can become entrepreneurs.
- That they can lead.
- That they can serve.
- That they can create employment.
- And that they do not have to leave their community behind in order to succeed.

15. LOOKING AHEAD

- Our journey has only just begun.
- From five members to nine.
- From our first meeting to our official founding.
- From our first project to multiple community initiatives.
- From our first DISCON to our first award.
- From fundraising sales to building long-term partnerships.
- From a simple idea to a growing community movement.

We know that there is much more to do.

Our immediate priorities include completing our Menstrual Dignity Drive, expanding our school mentorship programme, supporting women through empowerment initiatives, assisting vulnerable households and continuing our educational projects.

Our long-term goal is bigger:

To help build a Darling where young people have more opportunities, families have greater support, and community organisations and businesses work together to address poverty and unemployment.

16. AN INVITATION TO PARTNER WITH US

We welcome conversations with businesses, organisations, foundations, schools, professionals and individuals who would like to contribute to the development of Darling.

Whether you can offer funding, products, expertise, mentorship, professional services or simply an opportunity to collaborate, we would love to hear from you.

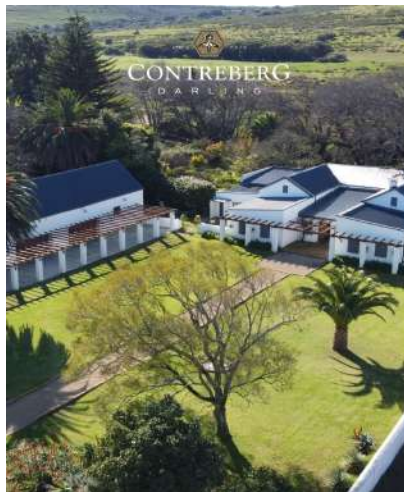
- **We are young.**
- **We are still growing.**
- **We do not have unlimited resources.**

But we have something that cannot easily be bought:

PASSION.

And we intend to turn that passion into lasting impact.

Section: Our Home – Darling:





Section: Our Impact:



A MESSAGE FROM THE ROTARACT CLUB OF DARLING

As the Rotaract Club of Darling, we would once again like to sincerely thank you for reaching out to us and for taking the time to learn more about our journey, our community and our vision.

Although we are still a young club, we believe that meaningful change begins with people who are willing to take the first step. Our journey has taught us that you do not need to have everything in place before you begin serving — you simply need the courage, passion and commitment to start.

We are incredibly proud of the work our members have already accomplished in such a short period of time, and we are even more excited about what lies ahead.

We value the opportunity to connect with fellow Rotaractors who share the same spirit of service, leadership and community development. We believe that when clubs connect, ideas are shared, experiences are exchanged and partnerships are formed, our collective ability to create lasting impact becomes even stronger.

We therefore look forward to staying connected with you and exploring opportunities to collaborate, learn from one another and serve our communities together.

Thank you for believing in the potential of young people and for giving our club the opportunity to share our story.

From the Rotaract Club of Darling, we look forward to growing together, serving together and creating a greater impact together.

GROW INTERNALLY. IMPACT EXTERNALLY.

With appreciation and warm regards,

The Rotaract Club of Darling

Rotary District 9350

Rotaract

Club of Darling

