



## THE SPECIALIST

# Aqua man

*Water expert lends his skills to The Rotary Foundation*

**work at the U.S. Geological Survey** for the water resources mission area. You'd probably be familiar with things that the USGS does in flood management and monitoring, volcanoes, or earthquakes. In my area, we are researching how nutrients and other contaminants, microbial communities, and metals all interact in the watershed as they go from the mountains down to the Mississippi River.

**We do a lot of what you might call “ground truthing.”** This is about confirming what you see from a satellite or from a monitoring station. We send out scientists to use traditional methods to verify and validate what's being seen in the field, and then we compare that to what's being reported from satellites or base stations. We compare observations to the models and ask, “How close are those models to what's actually happening on the ground? We spent, let's say,

**Jay Colingham**  
Rotary Club  
of Boulder  
Flatirons,  
Colorado

The Rotary  
Foundation  
Cadre of  
Technical  
Advisers

Supervisory  
biological  
scientist,  
U.S. Geological  
Survey

\$100 million on the satellite program, but how do we know it works?” We provide the proof.

**I grew up in the foothills of the Cascades** in Washington, east of Seattle, on a small farm. We had wetlands around us; we were on a lake and we were by streams. Water was part of everything.

**I wanted to give back right out of college.** I joined Rotary in 2008. Then I went to graduate school, and while I was there I realized, wait a minute, Rotary's doing so much stuff that I hadn't even seen yet. I was seeing these Rotary projects — seeing the Rotary wheel on water spigots all over the countryside.

**The Cadre of Technical Advisers** is this amazing network of technically proficient Rotarians who have enough experience to help others make their global grants and their projects and programs more efficient and more successful. We're there to lend an outside set of eyes, to look for ways we can make projects better. I've worked on a disease prevention project in Fiji, on a water, sanitation, and hygiene project in Central America. We're now working on drinking water programs in Tajikistan. — AS TOLD TO KRIS VIRE

Learn more about how The Rotary Foundation Cadre of Technical Advisers can help shape projects at [my.rotary.org/cadre-technical-advisers](https://my.rotary.org/cadre-technical-advisers).