



RI PRESIDENT-ELECT'S ADDRESS

Mark Daniel Maloney
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Thank you, Larry, Gay, and my family. As we look forward to next year's convention in Honolulu, aloha!

First of all, please join me in a rousing thank-you to our president, Barry Rassin, and his partner, Esther. President Barry and Esther are beloved around the world — and for good reason. Barry stepped into office under very difficult circumstances, with the sad passing of our friend Sam Owor, and he has proven to be one of our very best leaders. In particular, his personal connection to Rotaractors and his efforts to elevate Rotaract will have an impact for a generation and beyond — and we express our gratitude for his inspirational vision and his love for this organization.

President Barry and Esther traveled quite a bit around the world, and Gay and I look forward to that as well. I love to travel, especially to visit with fellow Rotarians.

But last year, my wife, Gay, and I had one of those travel experiences that would strain the optimism of even the most cheerful traveler. We found ourselves with six hours to wait, at an airport where we were not scheduled to be, on a day we had not planned still to be traveling, having woken up that morning at a hotel unknown to us the night before. It was one of those days.

As we waited at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City, Gay and I took a walk to people-watch. We went all the way from one end of the terminal to the other and back again, looking at every gate, every destination, every group of people waiting for their flight.

Each gate was its own island of humanity. When we walked down the center of the concourse, we were in New York, moving along with everyone in one river. But when you veered off into those seats, you left that current and landed on an island. You were already in Delhi, or Paris, or Tel Aviv.

As we started our walk, I thought, "All these different people, all these different countries, all in one place. This is like Rotary!" But as we walked past gate after gate, I realized something. It was not like Rotary at all. Because everyone in that river was heading for an island. And every island stayed an island. The people all heading to

This is the text of the remarks as they were prepared. The spoken remarks may have differed slightly.

Taipei might be talking to each other, but they were not talking to the people heading to Cairo or the people heading to Lagos.

Contrast that to Rotary. When we come to a convention like this one here in Hamburg, we get the chance to live and experience the world of Rotary. We get to connect in a way that simply is not possible anywhere else. We sit down next to someone from the other side of the globe and call them by their first name — and because we are all Rotarians, none of us are strangers. Connections like these change the world.

That is why I believe that *Rotary Connects the World*.

Rotary allows us to connect with each other, in deep and meaningful ways, across our differences. And we will harness the power of these connections this year when we begin to implement our new strategic plan. That plan is built on the values spelled out in our vision statement:

“Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change — across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.”

Now, let us break apart that statement a bit.

We see a world where people unite.

Rotary connects us to people we would never otherwise have met, who are more like us than we ever could have known. It connects us to our communities, to professional opportunities, and to the people who need our help.

We take action to create lasting change.

Rotary connects us with fellow Rotarians. We are people of action — people who not only want to change the world but also have the ability to turn inspiration into real and lasting change. We have that ability, because of who we are and because of what Rotary allows us to do.

Rotary connects us across the globe.

These connections are what make the experience of Rotary so very different from the experience of walking along the concourse at JFK airport. In Rotary, none of us is an island. All of us are here in Hamburg together — whoever we are, wherever we are from, whatever language we speak or traditions we follow. We are all connected to each other, and members not only of our clubs but also of this amazing global organization.

Rotary connects us with our communities.

We understand the needs of our neighbors in substantive, meaningful ways that so many others pass by without noticing. In the process, we forge sustainable projects and we gain a better understanding of all the resources that friends and neighbors can muster.

And finally, Rotary connects us with ourselves.

What does that mean? Rotary allows us to shape the best version of ourselves. Every Rotarian brings a unique point of view and a different way of getting things done. We are all born with different talents. Whether our strength is providing service on the ground or helping to administer projects from an office, Rotary gives each of us a chance to harness those talents to show leadership by making a powerful impact in our community and in our world.

Wherever you live, you benefit from being part of a community. But those benefits are not free. You need to give something back for the privilege of being part of that community. That philosophy lies at the heart of Rotary.

While we may approach things differently, together we are so powerful. We represent an organization of 1.2 million inspired women and men, who have come to Rotary with the goal of building a better world. Building a better world might seem like a daunting task — until you understand the power of connection. Because it is the power of connection that will allow all of us to do the tasks we have set out to do.

My friends, if you ever have doubts that Rotary can live up to all of our lofty goals — that we have set the bar too high, we are too ambitious, we are promising beyond what we can do — I want you to remember what Rotary has already accomplished in the eradication of polio. And I want you to remember, none of us are going to do anything alone.

We are Rotarians, Rotaractors, and supportive members of the family of Rotary. And we are going to harness the power of connection just as our organization has been doing now for over 114 years. We have a long, proud heritage. And we will thrive for another 114 years, because we are not afraid of change.

We are going to grow Rotary — reaching out to new members, engaging current members, and creating more alternatives for membership for the next generation of Rotarians. A key facet of that growth is becoming more diverse and providing leadership opportunities for every Rotarian.

I am so pleased that the RI Board made a commitment to increasing the percentage of women in Rotary to 30 percent by 2023 — and reaching that same 30 percent level for women in Rotary leadership positions. The sooner we attain those targets, the better.

We will become a more family-friendly Rotary — one that welcomes children to our activities and that is considerate of families in our scheduling. And we will be a Rotary that respects professional commitments and does not require Rotary leadership to be a full-time job.

And together, we will connect Rotary to the world, through the ties we have, and the goals we share, with the United Nations. There are so many parallels between the work we already do through our areas of focus and the work of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. While those goals are indeed incredibly ambitious, they are like any other ambitious goal we have ever undertaken, in Rotary or anywhere else.

Rotary was there at the beginning of the UN. We were there when the world pulled itself from the brink of destruction and rebuilt. Over the next year, the UN will mark the 75th anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter. And to celebrate our enduring relationship with the UN, Rotary will host five special events — UN Day in New York, three presidential conferences in Paris, Santiago, and Rome, and a final celebration just before the convention in Honolulu.

This relationship with the United Nations is but one example of how, together, we can serve the world. Alone, we cannot provide clean water for all. Alone, we cannot eliminate hunger. Alone, we cannot eradicate polio. But together? Of course we can.

We have a proud legacy upon which to build. This year, we will further that legacy as *Rotary Connects the World*. I look forward to leading you in this important journey.

So now, as we say goodbye to our wonderful host city of Hamburg and begin to contemplate our own journeys back home, I want to leave you with words my family always shares at the end of large family events. This convention is certainly a large event, and you are all now part of my family. So for me, this is a large family event! Those closing words are the Irish blessing:

May the road rise to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
And the rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Thank you.