



ROTARY FOUNDATION TRUSTEE CHAIR'S ADDRESS

Brenda Cressey
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Good morning, everyone.

How many moments have you captured here in Hamburg? I have been so inspired while here, having the opportunity to speak with so many of you. But I wanted to take a moment this morning to thank our aides, Past District Governor Lynette Stassen and [her husband,] Koos, from District 9350 in Africa.

As the chair of The Rotary Foundation, it's a great honor for me to speak to you on Rotary Foundation service day — because service is what brought me to Rotary, and it lies at the heart of everything our Foundation does.

We gather together at Rotary Conventions because we are healers. If we thought everything in the world was fine, I doubt that anyone would make this long trip to Hamburg. We Rotarians aspire to do a little bit of healing in the world with everything we touch — and not just for the moment, but for the long term.

I felt the tug to help heal the world at a very young age as a little girl.

I recall, perhaps like many of you here today, those days as young children when we played hard from morning until night with our friends in our neighborhood. We skipped rope, played ball and hide and seek, and at the end of the day planned long and hard about what we might do tomorrow.

You see, one of those friends from my childhood, who I'll name Suzie, was very close to me, and one day Suzie mysteriously disappeared from my life. I kept asking my mother if I could play with Suzie and asked where she went.

Finally, one day, my mother — with tears in her eyes — told me that Suzie had a disease called polio and we wouldn't ever play again. Suzie, you see, had succumbed to polio, and those big plans for tomorrow disappeared as well.

I hadn't thought about Suzie for many years until three of my clients asked me to join Rotary back in 1989, and that is when I first learned about Rotary and its commitment to end polio around the world. Yes, 30 years ago! Suddenly, my heart was five years old and I was playing hopscotch with Suzie. And I knew immediately that I needed to join Rotary to help ensure that no little girl or boy would ever be stricken with polio again.

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

Polio, of course, will continue to be Rotary's No. 1 priority, and I know that you will all continue to support this effort until we have seen that last case of polio and beyond. In fact, you'll hear more about polio later in this morning's program.

Being part of Rotary has been one of the great joys of my life. And helping to lead your Rotary Foundation has been one of the most gratifying experiences I've ever had.

Fellow Rotarians, we've accomplished so much this past year. At this time, I would like to share some highlights and a few stories that will show how Rotary has helped change my life. I also want to encourage each of you to share your stories about how The Rotary Foundation has changed your life and the lives of others.

We know Rotary's humanitarian service makes a huge impact. As you may know, the Foundation has implemented a completely new grant model. The results are astounding. We have three times as many global grants under the new model! Even more impressive, we brought new rigor to our grant assessments — making sure that they meet local needs, are sustainable, and create lasting improvements. Let's keep up this incredible momentum.

Make sure you give to the Foundation every year to keep up with the demand for matching funds for these outstanding and transformational projects.

At this time, I would also like to thank you so much for your generous support. This year, the world has been struck with terrible fires, cyclones, floods, and droughts. And in true Rotary service, Rotarians wanted to respond.

This year, the Foundation Trustees listened to you and established the Rotary Disaster Response Fund. This is a new grant to help you respond quickly, effectively, and efficiently.

We know how critically these kinds of funds are needed, and I know concerned Rotarians will put the funds into action. Rotarians now have an opportunity to apply for disaster response grants of up to \$25,000. You can find more information at [Rotary.org](https://www.rotary.org). Please take a look and see how you can help.

Now I have some really inspiring news to share with you. I am happy to announce that together, this year, we have raised \$331.9 million, which will help us continue our vital service to humanity.

What I ask today is that, when you return from this outstanding and inspiring convention, consider making a year-end contribution to The Rotary Foundation and encourage others to join you in doing so. Remember, your gift to the Annual Fund changes lives today, and your gift to the Endowment Fund ensures our future. Remember, every donation — no matter how large or small — will help to transform lives.

Speaking of the Endowment Fund, perhaps you will consider creating your Rotary legacy by making a gift to the Endowment. The idea behind it is simple — endowments provide support to Foundation programs today and in perpetuity.

We have a goal of \$2.025 billion, and once it is fully funded, the investment earnings will provide approximately \$100 million for Rotarians to do all kinds of life-changing projects around the globe, year after year. This will be an amazing accomplishment and will truly secure our Foundation long into the future.

Of course, we all know that the ultimate value of every project is in the lives that we transform. It's what keeps me active in Rotary — and what makes me so proud to represent our Foundation. Rotary continues to give my life great purpose and I hope it does for you as well.

I would now like to share my story about a project that strengthened my connection to The Rotary Foundation. Several years ago, my husband and I were invited by the District 5280 governor to join a Rotary mission trip he organized to the city of Panama.

One hundred Rotarians, partners, Rotaractors, and family members were working on a number of Matching Grant projects in Panama to provide a wide range of services. But on the first day, we focused on wheelchairs. It's an experience I will always remember as grace and mercy.

We were bused to a community center. And when we arrived, we noticed two different-sized boxes of wheelchairs. One, normal-sized wheelchairs for adults. The other, smaller wheelchairs we learned would benefit a group of children with leukemia. We spent some time putting those wheelchairs together. Then the recipients began to arrive.

We were all excited and anxious to begin delivering the wheelchairs and we saw so many grateful faces that day. But I recall this one woman who wore a huge hat filled with artificial flowers.

She had stuffed so many of those flowers on the brim of the hat that we kept waiting for either this small, frail lady or the hat to collapse, or for the flowers to fall off. But amazingly, nothing happened other than her making us smile at her joy when receiving that gift of mobility for her 59-year-old daughter, who was incapacitated by diabetes and couldn't leave her bed without the assistance of this frail lady.

And then there was a young, teenage boy who walked into the center of the room filled with Rotarians, with his two hands near his shoulders like he was supporting a very heavy backpack. Except it wasn't a backpack, it was his grandfather, who had no legs.

As the young boy brought his grandfather to the front of the room and placed him on a chair, a Rotarian came over and moved the elderly man onto his brand-new red wheelchair. You could see immediately that it was Christmas morning for this elderly man. He lifted his arms and praised the Lord with tears streaming down his face.

Then, he flashed us all a big, toothless smile and continued to thank us. No one in the room had a dry eye and we all had tears streaming down our faces. Much to my surprise, the man suddenly took off — and began making big circles all around the center of the room, as though he'd just won a Formula One car race.

At that same moment, I happened to look at the back of the room and noticed the grandson. You see, he, too, had tears streaming down his face as well. And it was then I

realized that we had not simply transformed the elderly man's life, we had changed the life of everyone around that man. We also changed the life of a teenage boy, a boy who had spent many hours carrying his grandfather wherever he needed to go. He could now go to school and he could now see his grandfather's joy and vigor in his life — instead of feeling hopeless!

The experience was life-changing for me, and just as our new vision statement says, "Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change — across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves."

Yes, that one experience made me realize the power and impact of every donation made to The Rotary Foundation and how we are blessed to change and save lives every day. Your gifts give people hope. They give people dignity and they give people a chance to improve their communities.

And all over the world, your gifts are helping to end polio forever. So together, we embrace the possibilities and keep dreaming and doing to make all our tomorrows better than today.

Speaking of embracing the possibilities, this year we received another generous matching gift from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and therefore we need you to help raise \$50 million to secure that 2-to-1 match for our PolioPlus goal. That way, we will ensure that we receive another \$100 million in matching funds next year.

Your generosity has already done so much. Between 2013 and 2018, we have helped reduce wild poliovirus cases by 99 percent, with more and more children being reached in hard-to-access areas. Four out of five people in the world now live in certified polio-free regions. And it has been four years since there has been an international spread of wild poliovirus outside of Afghanistan and Pakistan. And in August, Nigeria is on track to be declared polio-free!

Rotarians, we have made so much progress and are so close to wiping polio off the face of the earth. But challenges remain. We know that there is resistance to vaccines — not just in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but in Western nations as well.

I have even seen it in my own family. Several years ago, I was having a kitchen table debate with my own niece about vaccine safety and the importance to Rotary of eradicating polio. My grandnephew Micah — who was eight years old at the time — listened to the discussion intently. I was surprised when, three months later, I received a call from his mom to say that Micah wanted to talk with me about Rotary and our work to end polio, because he needed to write a school report.

After talking with Micah, I suggested he visit the Rotary website to learn more about the Purple Pinkie Project. Micah did just that, and went on to write the most beautiful class report you can imagine. He wrote about Paul Harris, Arch Klumph, the start of our polio campaign in the Philippines, and all the remarkable progress we have made to date.

He detailed the terrible toll that polio has taken, and the medical breakthroughs that have made its eradication possible. Micah wrote about how we immunized more than 2 billion children, sometimes with a million children vaccinated in just a couple of days.

At the end of his report, he offered to polish his classmates' pinkies purple — with the approval of his teacher, of course. He wanted them all to understand and experience how the Purple Pinkie Project works to help raise awareness as well.

I was so proud of Micah's school project. And I'm even prouder of all the resources Rotary has brought to this battle. Let us not forget the incredible PolioPlus infrastructure and resources we have in place around the world — and how they have been used to help stem an Ebola outbreak and are now being used to help curb measles outbreaks.

Our polio campaign has been an amazing gift to the world. Now, let's finish the job. Help The Rotary Foundation complete our greatest humanitarian mission.

Let's pass on to Micah's generation a healthier and more hopeful future — a future where all the children around the world can make those big plans at the end of their day, for what tomorrow may bring to them!

Thank you.