REPORT TO THE 2017 CONVENTION
FROM JOHN HEWKO, GENERAL SECRETARY

SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN CLUBS

This year, we continued to identify ways to revitalize the traditional Rotary club experience, support a long-term membership strategy, and improve digital tools that attract, retain, and engage new generations of Rotarians and alumni.

• This Rotary year saw the third-highest membership figure in our history, and we continue to exceed 1.2 million members. We have a tremendous opportunity to achieve our highest membership ever by increasing our efforts to attract new members and retain existing ones, especially those who may be at risk of leaving Rotary.

• The Membership Leads online tool helps prospective members, relocating Rotarians, and people referred to Rotary by members to get connected to a club that’s right for them. In 2016-17, we received more than 15,000 membership inquiries worldwide, and we’re gaining four new members a day.

Providing resources that support Rotarians and the organization’s goals is one of our highest priorities, which made this year a busy yet fulfilling one. Here are some highlights of the Secretariat’s ongoing efforts to continuously serve as a valuable resource to Rotarians around the globe.
Support and Strengthen Clubs, continued

- The 2016 Council on Legislation was one of the most progressive in our history, giving clubs the option to vary meeting days, times, and frequency; alter attendance requirements; offer multiple types of membership; and invite Rotaractors to join their club. These changes, for the clubs that choose to implement them, are already having a positive impact on member attraction, retention, and engagement.

- The 2016 Council voted to increase annual dues by $4 a year for each of the next three years. The additional revenue is being used, in part, to improve members’ experience with several of Rotary’s online tools, and has already resulted in an improved global grant application, the redesign of the public-facing pages of Rotary.org, and a complete overhaul of Rotary Club Central.

- In July 2017, we will introduce a new Rotary Club Central that makes goal planning and tracking quicker and easier than ever before. Currently, almost 21,000 Rotary clubs — that’s 59 percent — have adopted Rotary Club Central to set and track their membership initiatives, service activities, and Rotary Foundation giving.

- Implementing a robust alumni database has helped club and district leaders facilitate more meaningful and direct contact with alumni to increase service, Foundation giving, and membership. As of 1 April 2017, we have identified 372,626 program alumni; 44,142 have created My Rotary accounts to join our online community, and 16,378 are Rotary members. In October, the alumni database helped clubs and districts participate in the most successful Rotary Alumni Reconnect Week yet, with events occurring in 23 countries. More than 14,000 Rotarians and alumni shared their stories of service through live events and social media.

- In 2015, we introduced Rotary Global Rewards, a member benefit program that allows Rotarians and Rotaractors to find discounts and special offers that give back to Rotary. Since it launched, the program has had more than 140,000 unique visits, over 31,000 members have signed in to access the program, and more than 21,000 members have redeemed offers. In addition, more than 500 Rotarians have added their own offers.
FOCUS AND INCREASE HUMANITARIAN SERVICE

The eradication of polio remains our top organizational priority. This year, we also increased humanitarian service efforts through Rotary grants and our areas of focus.

POLIO ERADICATION

• Fewer children were paralyzed by polio in 2016 than in any other year in history: 37 cases were reported last year. As of 1 April 2017, there have been only five reported cases in 2017. And while polio remains endemic only in Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Pakistan, immunization campaigns and surveillance activities continue unabated, because as long as the poliovirus circulates anywhere in the world, all children are at risk.

• The number of polio cases reported in Pakistan and Afghanistan has decreased by 90 percent in the past two years.

• We updated Rotary’s dedicated polio website, endpolio.org, with a new design and improved overall site functionality. It’s available in eight languages and includes a resource center with photos, videos, and graphics that users can download to share locally.

• The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will continue to provide a $2 match for each $1 we spend on ending polio, up to $50 million through 2020. Rotary is committing $150 million to polio eradication over the next three years. Thanks to the Gates Foundation’s 2-to-1 match, our contribution will triple, totaling $450 million committed to polio eradication efforts.

ROTARY GRANTS

- Using feedback gathered during the largest grant model evaluation in Rotary history, which included responses from almost 6,000 Rotarians in 154 countries, we launched a new Grant Center in December. The updated tool delivers a better user experience by improving reporting functionality and the application process and increases the website's speed.

- More Rotarians are using district and global grants to carry out projects, boosting our capacity to support Rotary's six areas of focus. As of 1 April 2017, 868 global grant applications were approved, an increase of 8 percent compared to a year ago, and 464 districts are participating in a global grant project.

- As of 1 April 2017, 434 district grant applications were approved, supporting more than 10,787 activities.

THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

- Rotarians, clubs, and districts have coordinated projects to celebrate The Rotary Foundation's centennial.

- In 2016, the Foundation was ranked the third-best charity of the year by CNBC's profile “Top 10 Charities Changing the World in 2016.” It was also recognized as the World's Outstanding Foundation by the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

- For the ninth straight year, the Foundation received a four-star rating, the highest possible, from Charity Navigator, the largest and most prestigious independent evaluator of nonprofits in the United States. The rating places us in the top 1 percent of U.S.-based charities.
ENHANCE PUBLIC IMAGE AND AWARENESS

This year, we invested in strengthening the Rotary brand and enhancing our public image to communicate the value proposition of Rotary, as well as the value and impact of our service projects, donations to Rotary, and our work to end polio.

• In January 2017, we unveiled a completely updated Rotary.org (the public-facing pages, accessed before signing in) to better highlight the impressive work of Rotarians. The new website provides a better user experience, thanks to a fresh, modern design that helps us tell our story in an interesting way. My Rotary (the site for members) has approximately 600,000 active registered users and averages 3.3 million visits per month.

• We continue to improve and expand our worldwide communications efforts. As a result, recognition of Rotary’s work is increasing. From the Rotary International Convention to World Polio Day, we received a tremendous amount of positive media coverage:
  - Eight hundred articles were featured in 20 countries, a 60 percent increase over the previous year.
  - One hundred stories were reported by top-tier international news organizations.
  - More than 540 stories covering Rotary and the Korea convention appeared in print, television, radio, and online news outlets. Of those stories, 38 were featured in Korea’s top-tier media.
  - Rotary’s social media presence grew to more than 1.7 million users overall, including a 23 percent increase in followers on Facebook and Twitter. Rotary’s Instagram following grew by 136 percent.


Enhance Public Image and Awareness, continued

- Our live-stream of the 2016 World Polio Day event drew more than 100,000 viewers, an 86 percent increase over 2015. We reached as many as 211 million people via social media, with engagements (i.e., likes, favorites, shares) increasing 69 percent compared to last year. Rotary clubs in 90 countries joined the celebration by hosting 1,460 World Polio Day events.

- As part of our multiyear brand-strengthening initiative, we introduced the People of Action campaign to tell Rotary’s story and highlight the impact we make around the world in a consistent and compelling way. Clubs and districts can use the suite of new assets and resources to show how Rotarians are people of action who connect with other leaders to exchange ideas and take action to address challenges in their communities.

- The Rotary Brand Center continues to be an integral part of our brand-strengthening initiative that helps clubs create visual and digital materials. As of 1 April 2017, the Brand Center has had 531,751 visits and 432,716 asset downloads, including the new youth program promotional postcards, which spotlight specific club projects and activities.

It is vital that we think about the future of Rotary: what we aspire to do and the impact we wish to have on the world. This is what drives us as we create our new vision statement — one that is compelling, inspirational, and aspirational. A new vision will allow Rotary to establish the critical foundation required to set a future course that supports ongoing growth and long-term success.

Rotary has determined that developing this new vision, which will guide our next strategic plan, requires widespread dialogue, input, and consensus from Rotarians and those involved in Rotary around the world. We’re working with consultants from Grant Thornton, with help from the Strategic Planning Committee, to talk to Rotarians, Rotaractors, Foundation partners, and members of various groups affiliated with and affected by Rotary to obtain feedback and input to ensure that our vision captures the shared values and priorities of Rotary.