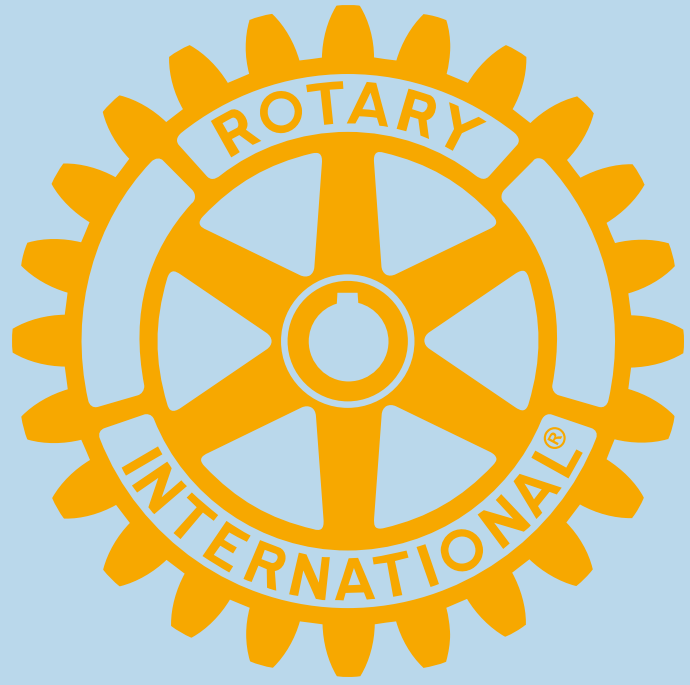


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# INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEECHES



SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, USA | 18-24 JANUARY 2015

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# Be a Gift to the World

K.R. Ravindran  
RI President-elect

My friends, my world-class governors:

It is not only a joy but perhaps the most significant moment of my life to be with you here this evening as we prepare together to take on the leadership of our great organization.

There are certain moments in one's life that are so pivotal, so transformative, that they become the temporal milestones by which all of our subsequent experiences are measured.

When we look back at the events that form our lives, we divide them all into "before" and "after." We can point at one moment and say: That is when everything changed.

I believe that for all of us here tonight, this is that moment.

Outside, the world carries on: our homes, our businesses, our families, our clubs. But here in San Diego, our worlds are shifting. Our vision is sharpening. Our understanding, our ambition, our drive — all of these are expanding.

During this week, you and I will begin to understand the breadth and depth of this organization and the complexities and complications that surround it. Perhaps in the past we may even have spoken about things we saw as being wrong with Rotary; now, we have both the privilege, and the awesome responsibility, of trying to make those things right.

Yet as our horizons stretch out before us, we know that they are not without limit, for we have but one year to lead. Three hundred and sixty-six days — each one of them numbered, without price, and never to return.

When we know that our time is limited, it becomes so much more precious. The drive to achieve, to create, to leave behind something that says, "I was here; I mattered," becomes so much stronger. And that is why so many see their year in Rotary office as the chance of a lifetime to make their mark.

But what I say to you is, if you really want to make a difference, then use your year not so much to make *your* mark on Rotary, but to bring the work of Rotary forward — to make *its* mark on the world.

We are all mortal. Our time on this earth is finite. And yet, we forget. We spend our days, as the poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote, in stringing and unstringing our guitars, while the song we came to sing remains unsung.

What will it take for us to see every hour, every day, every year that we have been given, as a gift — one that is precious, fleeting, and irreplaceable?

From the moment we are born, we receive gifts. The first gift is life itself. And then we receive gifts of love, of caring, and the nurture of our families; of education; of health; of every talent and ability that we learn and acquire. As we move through our lives, our parents, our friends, our spouses, and our children, our livelihoods and our material wealth — all are gifts to us.

Sometimes, a gift is so tremendous that we are overwhelmed with gratitude — as I felt a few months ago when we were blessed with our first grandchild — and as I feel tonight as I stand here, with all of you.

I know that you are thinking now of how many gifts you all have to be grateful for. And I ask myself and I ask you: What do we do in return?

Will we come to the end of our lives and realize that we have wasted our gifts, achieving nothing that will outlive us? Or will we look back and know that when we pass from this world, the good that we have done will remain?

We have only one chance at our lives. And we will have only one chance at the 2015-16 Rotary year. The time is so short, and there is so much to be done.

Our first challenge, our greatest challenge, is the eradication of polio.

When we made the promise to eradicate polio, more than a quarter of a century ago, we had 125 endemic countries. More than a thousand children were being paralyzed every single day.

Today, we have three countries that are endemic. And in all of last year, we had only 333 cases of polio.

Almost all of them were in one country: Pakistan. There, our fight is not only against the poliovirus but against the forces of ignorance, brutality, and oppression. Our challenges lie not only in getting the vaccine into the mouths of children but in getting the health workers safely past those who want to kill them. The government and people of Pakistan are striving, along with Rotary, to reach a polio-free future — while the Taliban on motorcycles shoot the women who are on their way to immunize babies, and now have resorted to killing innocent children in their classrooms.

No one could have envisioned 25 years ago that it would come to this. But the work of 25 years, the faith and dedication and trust of millions, will not be brought low by so lowly an opponent. We will battle on. We will prevail. Because a future without polio is a gift that we have promised to the children of the world. And indeed, it is a gift that we will give.

We know that Rotary has tremendous potential. But we also know that in so many clubs and districts, the reality of Rotary is not the way it ought to be.

I believe that we have to find a way to bring back the fundamentals that built our organization: the emphasis on high ethical standards in all aspects of our lives, and the classification system that encourages a diversity of expertise in each club.

Too often, these ideas are viewed as little more than inconvenient obstacles to increasing our membership rolls. But they have been essential to Rotary's success, and we ignore them at our own peril. For when you have a club formed of people whose honesty is unimpeachable and whose breadth of expertise allows them to do anything they set their minds to, then you have the kind of club that is truly a gift.

But we are all too aware that we cannot talk about Rotary today the way we did a century ago and still expect it to grow. We live in a new reality now. The new focus on branding is indeed necessary. We need to reposition our image, which we recognize has faded in many parts of the world.

And sometimes, there is a disconnect between how we as leaders see Rotary and how the Rotarians in our clubs see it.

We want to raise more money for our Foundation to do even more good, but we know that if we ask too insistently, or for too much, we will drive away members.

We want to attract younger members, but we do not want to alienate the older members who now form our backbone, or lose sight of the recently retired who still have so much to give.

We want to encourage club members to participate in activities beyond the club level, to become more involved in the network of Rotary, but we do not want membership to become a burden that demands too much in the way of time and resources.

There are no easy answers to any of these questions. And yet somehow, these answers must be found — and we are the ones who must find them.

You are the eyes and ears of the Rotary world. You know what your clubs need, and what they have to offer. You are the ones who can bring together what Rotary is and what it could be — and help us to chart a course forward, together.

I will ask all of you to give a great deal in the days and months ahead.

I will ask you to give your faith, I will ask you to give your dedication, I will ask you to give your commitment and your compassion.

I will ask you for all these gifts. And I will ask you for more, even more than that. For I will ask you, in this Rotary year, not merely to give these gifts — but to *be* a gift yourself.

We in Rotary aspire to great deeds. We look up to and admire the towering figures of history who gave such great gifts to humanity: Abraham Lincoln, who gave the gift of human dignity to so many; Mother Teresa, who gave the gift of compassion to the forgotten; Mahatma Gandhi, who gave the gift of peaceful change to the oppressed.

All of them gave their lives to others, and their very lives became gifts to the world.

We know that we are not like them, and we do not aspire to live the lives they led, but we can be inspired by their example. We can be inspired to say, "How can I, in the life that I live — and without neglecting the responsibilities that are so dear to me — how can I, too, become a gift to the world?"

We can. And we will.

For, my friends, this will be the challenge that we will embrace together. It will be what I ask of you. And it will be the theme that will guide us: *Be a Gift to the World*.

In Rotary, we give of our resources, but more importantly, we give of ourselves, because there is such a difference between a handout and an outstretched hand — especially when the outstretched hand is warmed by a caring heart.

As children, we understood that the simplest gift, crafted with care and love, was more precious than the most lavish gift given without thought.

And here in San Diego, we understand that our service is only of value when it carries each of us with it.

And that is why, encouraged as I am, I ask you, I implore you, to *Be a Gift to the World*.

As I considered my theme, I thought of the lessons I have learned through my Hindu faith. And I want to share with you the story of Sudama.

Sudama was a very poor child and a bosom friend of Krishna, who was born in a royal lineage as an avatar, an incarnation of the divine. As the two boys grew up, they drifted apart, and while Krishna became a military leader and king of great repute, Sudama stayed as a humble and somewhat impoverished villager.

Many years later, Sudama was going through some bad times and found himself without even enough money to feed his children. His wife reminded him of his childhood friendship with Krishna and suggested he go to him for help. Though initially reluctant, Sudama finally agreed. Not wanting to go empty-handed he carried with him some beaten rice tied in a piece of cloth to share with his friend.

Krishna is overjoyed to see Sudama, and receives him graciously and with much love. Overwhelmed by the grandeur around him, Sudama is too embarrassed to bring out his gift, but Krishna asks him,

“What are you hiding?” The cloth unrolls and out comes the rice, which Krishna joyfully consumes. Some hours later, Sudama leaves — having forgotten entirely to ask for help, but full of joy in his friend’s enduring love.

He returns home, realizing slowly along the way that he neglected the task that he set out to achieve, and his children will still be hungry. But in this, he is wrong. For when he stands finally before the hut he left, it has become a beautiful home, and standing before it is his family — well dressed, well fed by the bounty within their gates, and waiting to greet him.

Why? Because Krishna understood what Sudama had brought him as a gift. He had brought everything he had to give. And in return, Krishna gave him everything he needed.

From this we learn that it is not the material value of the gifts we give but how much of ourselves we give with them that will matter to the receiver.

And we all have a choice: whether to keep our gifts to ourselves or to use them, to *Be a Gift to the World*.

And I say to you: Use your gifts. Use them thoughtfully, use them wisely, use them generously.

Use them so that the girls who now sit at home will walk proudly next year to school.

Use them so that the fields that are now barren for want of irrigation will grow next spring, green with agriculture.

Use them to break the cycle of poverty, lift up the destitute, and give the gift of hope to all those who live in the margins of society.

All of you have been given so many gifts. And you have now been given this great gift of one year to take all your talents, all your gifts, everything that you are and can become — and *Be a Gift to the World*.

You have one year to take that potential and turn it into reality. You have one year to lead the clubs of your district and transform the lives of others. You have one year to build monuments that will endure forever — carved not in granite or marble but in the lives and hearts of generations to come.

This is our time. It will not come again. Let us grasp it.

Let us *Be a Gift to the World*.

Thank you.

# The Global Impact of the Rotary Brand

William B. Boyd  
Past RI President

I had been a member of a young persons' service organization and knew the satisfaction of doing something for others. I wanted to join Rotary and I was knocking on the door calling out, "Let me in, let me in," but my boss had my classification and I had to wait for him to be transferred. I knew many of the members of my club by reputation and they were the leaders in our community and I was proud and a little overawed to join them. I found we had shared values.

I worked on club projects with other clubs, which extended our circle of friends, and soon we were working with clubs in the South Pacific and my horizons were broadened. I was asked to represent Rotary on other community organizations and widened my experience.

Rotary is so special that I did not really understand why there were not others like me knocking on the door. I knew that Rotary changed lives because it had changed mine, and wondered why others did not understand this.

Now I realize that, for too many years, we Rotarians were naïve or maybe even a little arrogant, as we assumed that by putting a Rotary wheel on some of our projects, our communities would know what Rotary is and what Rotary does. This despite survey after survey telling us that most in our community had never heard of Rotary, and of those who had, only a few had any idea what we did.

One day, a Board decided that we should employ professionals to tell us why our story was not being heard, and appointed a group of Rotarians to work with them. After a very large survey, we confirmed that our values were still very relevant and what many in our communities want. The issue is not with the important principles that have made us what we are. The issue is that we have confused people. How focused can an organization be when we had accumulated over 120 logos and were working with 12 mission statements?

There was nothing wrong with Rotary, but we needed to improve the way we presented ourselves. Our message needed to be clear and presented in a way that people understood. Simply, we had been talking only to ourselves. We need to present a message that is personal for others. We need to tell our communities what Rotary offers them.

We confirmed that people join Rotary first to improve their communities and then for the relationships they know will follow from joining with others who think as they do. So what should our message be? "Join Rotary and make your community a better place. Do this in the company of people who are like you." Surely that is an attractive offer! Any salesman will tell you that you concentrate on the benefits to the customer.

We found that Rotarians are responsible leaders, both socially and ethically, and we connect strongly with each other and our communities. We should be saying so.

We developed what the professionals called an essence statement — who we are and what we do — not as a motto, but a form of checklist.

Rotary unites leaders from all continents, cultures, and occupations to exchange ideas and take action for communities around the world.

What we say to non-Rotarians should reflect this truth. Then we need to say why we are different. Are we just a service club? No. Are we just a humanitarian organization? No. We are in a category of one. Think about this.



Rotarians see things differently. Our classification system brings together people with many different backgrounds, and we apply the wisdom of all these points of view to issues and challenges.

We do things differently. We are leaders, and we bring our experience and skills into our Rotary service so that we achieve at a high level.

We have passion and perseverance. Look at the passion within your club and the perseverance that will eradicate polio.

The fourth example is one that made me think more deeply of the reason we exist: to benefit our communities. We bring community service into over 34,000 communities around the world, as your club's international service is what enables another club to perform its community service. A staggering concept — worldwide community service.

We have a great story of proven performance and limitless potential, yet we wonder why people are not rushing to us! This afternoon you will have your own opportunity to share ideas on what our message needs to be and how we can best promote it. The potential for Rotary in your community will depend on how well you can do this.

I hope what I have said has been a challenge for you but recognize that our issue is in our local communities. Think about some of the successes that come from the global impact of the Rotary brand. While many in our communities do not know Rotary, and that is important in the context of growing Rotary, organizations in the field that see us in action understand what we are, and our wheel means something to them.

If I can draw on my own experience as chair of the Water and Sanitation Rotarian Action Group (WASRAG), I can give some examples of current activities that are a direct result of our brand.

The One Drop Foundation set up by Guy Laliberté, who founded Cirque de Soleil, approached us and asked if we could work together on water and sanitation projects in Mali, one of the most-needy countries on earth. They are putting up \$5 million and we will see if we can match that figure over five years. Like all Rotary projects, we must work with clubs and districts as the starting point, and the choice of projects was made in Mali.

The Rotarians of Fiji set up the Fiji Water Foundation to bring water to rural communities. It has already changed the lives of over 65,000 people and spent some \$3.3 million. The major donors are the Government of New Zealand; Vodafone, the international communications company; Westpac, one of Australia's biggest banks; and several local companies.

They joined with us, as they recognized the power of Rotary to achieve our brand.

The Government of Mexico is focusing on improving water supplies in cities but was concerned about the many small communities of less than 2,500 people that they could not help. They know what Rotary is doing so they are entering into an agreement with Rotary districts and WASRAG for the government to fund 80 percent of the costs of bringing water and sanitation to small communities, and Rotary will fund 20 percent. The initial target is five of the most-needy communities so it is just a start, but 80 percent funding is a vote of confidence in Rotary.

In Uganda the clubs have joined together to set up the Uganda Rotary Water Plus committee, and they have established the model for the effective use of large global grants. The committee includes the World Bank representative and several aid agencies. The Government of Uganda is right behind us. We are seen as achievers, and also that we are prepared to come up with new solutions for old problems.

Procter & Gamble is among the United States' largest companies and is working with Rotary and another group in a Wash in Schools program to which it will contribute 50 percent, plus pay a project manager, and Rotary's share will be 25 percent. We are working at a number of schools in the south of Nigeria plus two other African countries.

The Government of India launched a five-year water and sanitation project in October, and at the launch the prime minister mentioned Rotary by name. Then came a letter from the ministry specifically asking Rotary to join with the government in the campaign.

One of the excellent Rotary projects that we saw in our year as president was the school rebuilding project after the 2004 tsunami, led by a committee headed by our President-elect Ravi, and it began with a \$1 million gift from Standard Chartered Bank. They could have given their money to any of many aid organizations but instead came to Rotary. The power of our brand.

That is our brand on the grand scale, but it gets personal too. Lorna and I met Ynday Mijares in the Philippines. Ynday had polio as a child but recovered well, and in the 1990s she had a business, a happy family, and was a Rotarian. She started having pains in her legs and her doctor told her that she had developed post-polio syndrome and would spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair. She told us that she went home and shut herself away in her bedroom, yelled at her family when they tried to comfort her, and repeatedly asked, "Why me, why me? It just isn't fair." Then she said that one day, God sent her a candle and it was in the shape of a Rotary wheel. She came out of her bedroom, made up with her family, and became the charter president of the Rotary Club of Centennial Quezon City. She went on to be an assistant governor three times. I have never forgotten her words — that God had sent her a candle and it was in the shape of a Rotary wheel.

I belatedly started to put our Rotary photos into albums the other day and I reflected on how an ordinary citizen of little New Zealand had been given opportunities to meet Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon, Bill Gates, presidents of countries, heads of international organizations of all types and sizes, and I felt both humble and proud that I had been given the opportunity to do this because I was a Rotarian. For no other reason than that I was a Rotarian.

# Activating the Message of Rotary's Brand

Jennifer Jones  
RI Director-elect

Not long ago my husband, Nick, and I met with a group of Rotarians in Iowa. Just prior to leaving home, I had an email from a Rotary friend of mine asking us to go to a Detroit Tigers baseball game. When I wrote back and shared with him that we would be away and where we were going, he reminded me of the 1989 movie called "Field of Dreams" that was filmed there.

It's all about an Iowa corn farmer named Ray who hears voices and interprets them as a command to build a baseball diamond in his field; he does, and then, like magic ... the Chicago Black Sox show up.

My friend reminded me of the scene where Ray's deceased father appears on the field and asks, "Is this heaven?" and Ray says, "No, it's Iowa."

"Iowa? I could have sworn this was heaven," says his father.

And then Ray asks, "Is there a heaven?"

"Oh, yeah," says his dad. "It's the place where dreams come true."

There is another place where dreams come true, and that is what I want to talk with you about today. That place is Rotary, and you are going to be the class that more powerfully than ever shows this to the world. At the end of your term as district governor, no one will ever need to ask the question: Who, what, or why Rotary?

As Past President Bill just shared, we are the greatest story never told. For so long, we did our good work quietly and not for recognition. While this was noble, it made it difficult for people to understand the good work of Rotarians and why we exist. What we've learned is that when we tell our story, like-minded people want to join with us.

I would venture to say that if I asked everyone in this room, "What is Rotary?" we would have as many answers as people present. While Rotary provides the opportunity for a very personal experience with a broad palette of opportunities, the reality is, we need to have a common voice to help amplify our great message.

Can you envision if every McDonald's or Starbucks in the world looked or sounded different? They are strong because they have a simple and clear brand and we know exactly what we will get when we do business with them. Just imagine if everyone looked at Rotary the same way. We wouldn't be having this conversation, would we?

Albert Einstein, whose theories exploded and reshaped our ideas of how the universe works, is considered the most influential physicist and one of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century. Part of Einstein's charm was his disheveled look. In addition to his uncombed hair, one of his peculiar habits was to never wear socks. Whether it was while out sailing or to a formal dinner at the White House, Einstein went without socks everywhere.

Over his lifetime he was often quoted, and when I read the following, I thought he might have written this for Rotary. He said, "Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value."

This, my friends, is a game-changing concept for us, because if you turn that thought on its head, you can see that understanding our "value" is actually the key to our success.

So, how do we measure what is important to us and what is Rotary's "value proposition"? As you have heard, we studied this question closely, and the result is quite enlightening but not easily fixed with the wave of a wand.

What we learned is that we needed to simplify our message.

Recently, I was interviewed on an American television program about Rotary and all that we do. Just prior to the start of the taping, the host confessed to me that he had been a Rotarian for over 30 years — he attended regularly and enjoyed his lunch club and the fellowship, but it was only recently that he'd finally "got Rotary." He became involved in a project that delivered coats to disadvantaged children in his community, and for the first time, he became truly engaged.

Imagine that — more than 1,500 club meetings before he finally "got Rotary." How is that possible?

Quite simply, strengthening our brand is essential to Rotary's future.

Our strategy is made up of three components — our essence, our values, and our voice.

The first is our essence, or our reason for being.

It can be wrapped up in six simple words — three nouns and three verbs: Join leaders. Exchange ideas. Take Action.

This is how we frame who we are — we *join leaders*. Every single person in this room is a leader. And what happens when we get a group of leaders together? We *exchange ideas*. And let's be honest, once we have shared these thoughts, because we are leaders, we are then compelled to *take action*.

Our room is already broken into three areas, so let's have some fun and say this together. This side is "join leaders," the middle is "exchange ideas," and the far side is "take action." You can see the translations on the screen behind me, and I encourage you to say this in whichever language you are most comfortable, or maybe try one different from your own.

*(Leads them through saying this as outlined)*

"Join leaders, exchange ideas, take action" is such a compelling call to action. It is one that very easily explains who we are and what we do. We are leaders who act responsibly and take action to make our communities flourish and thrive.

If I asked you to describe the brand that is Harvard, what would you say? I suspect we might use words like *prestige, intellect, or excellence*.

So what do the folks at Harvard think about Rotary and *our* brand? They think we have taken a bold step in the right direction. According to the authors of an article written this past September in the Harvard Business Review, simplifying our message is the key to our success, and we have taken the right steps toward better clarifying who we are, what we do, and why it matters.

The authors tell us that achieving simplicity in an organization like ours is not easy, but the returns are well worth the effort.

Not that we needed the approval of our friends at Harvard, but they validated some things that we already knew. Like navigating our extensive and varied programming was difficult for members and the public alike, making it hard for our great organization to stay relevant. So we listened and we have changed.

Not only is this good in terms of attracting members but it is also the cornerstone of enhancing Rotary's public image to build stronger clubs and strengthen service.

The second component of our brand strategy is our values. What is important to note is that our core values, as outlined in our strategic plan, don't change — they are an important part of what defines us. What we needed to do was to activate the language around them and frame them in a more compelling way. So, for example:

Fellowship is about how we build lifelong relationships.

Ethics becomes how we honor our commitments.

Diversity is how we connect diverse perspectives.

And through service and leadership we apply our expertise to solve the world's most pressing issues.

And finally, the third component of our brand strategy is our voice, or how we express ourselves. As we create our communication tools, there are four key attributes to focus on. We are smart, compassionate, persevering, and inspiring. This reflects our ability to motivate others to act by conveying hope, enthusiasm, and passion.

On September 11, 2001, I was a young club president in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Who will ever forget that day? I suspect that almost everyone in this room can remember exactly what they were doing when they learned that the World Trade towers had been attacked in New York City.

It was just about 9 in the morning when the first plane hit, and within the hour I started receiving emails asking what we would do about our Rotary meeting that day. Instinctively, I knew that we needed to be together and I explained that our meeting would still take place at noon. When I arrived a few hours later, I wasn't sure what to expect. I don't think anyone missed that day — we needed to be together in shared experience.

As the meeting began, we stood as Canadians and faced the American flag and sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" with great gusto and with tears streaming down our faces.

We needed to connect.

This is the first of three key research findings. We discovered that people join and stay with Rotary because of the connections we make with others and the positive feelings we get by giving back to our community.

Secondly, we are leaders by mindset — the way we think — not by our titles.

This is a significant distinction, especially as we target younger members to be part of our organization. Are young leaders the top managers or CEOs of their company? They are likely not, but they are indeed leaders, and we have so much to learn from each other.

And, finally, Rotary is not just about global impact. We create community impact scaled globally.

The final component of strengthening Rotary revolves around our name. We had to ask ourselves the question: Why, when our wheel has been in existence for more than 100 years, do the vast majority of people in the world still not know who we are? I must confess, this one stung. How could people not know about an organization that, to most of us, feels like part of our DNA?

So, we inserted our first name and placed it next to the wheel as part of what we call Rotary's signature. Now, when the Rotary wheel appears, our name is front and center.

With the aid of a robust new visual identity toolkit, we are better prepared to share our Rotary story with our members, potential members, partners, and the community at large. Rotarians are embracing this, and I have heard from countless members all over the world that they love our fresh new look and feel.

As I conclude, I would like to take you back to the movie "Field of Dreams" and a passage from the character played by actor James Earl Jones. As I share this, I'd ask you to replace the concept of baseball with Rotary.

"People will come, Ray. They'll come for reasons they can't even fathom. They'll arrive at your door as innocent as children, longing for the past. 'Of course, we won't mind if you look around,' you'll say. They'll find they have reserved seats somewhere along one of the baselines, where they sat when they were children and cheered their heroes. And they'll watch the game ... and it'll be as if they dipped themselves in magic waters. The one constant through all the years has been baseball. It reminds us ... of all that was once good and could be again. People will most definitely come."

We, my friends, have reserved seats along the baseline of the greatest organization in the world, and you are here because you have dipped into the magic waters of Rotary.

Now, it's our job to make sure we are telling our story.

# Rotary's Membership

Gary C.K Huang  
RI President

*Ni hao!*

It is great to be here in San Diego, where the weather is always beautiful — quite a change from cold, snowy Evanston. This is one of the reasons that we picked this great city to have our International Assembly! In this way, you can have a beautiful start of your year as DG.

More importantly, San Diego is also a city with a strong Rotary presence. If you look up Rotary San Diego on the website, you'll notice a catchy slogan against the backdrop of the beautiful city skyline. It's "We are everywhere." I like the tagline very much because it has captured the power and strength of Rotary.

Over the past two years, I've traveled across the world to meet Rotarians and visit Rotary projects. Wherever I went, whether it was in a big city or small town, in the United States or Denmark, or in Nigeria or Peru, it is true to say that Rotary IS everywhere. In some of the most remote corners, you can feel the presence of Rotary — Rotary logos are on the school buildings and on water wells.

With 1.2 million members in 206 countries and regions, we are everywhere. Our membership and our services are what make Rotary powerful and strong. To keep it strong, membership recruitment and retention have to be a priority for every incoming Rotary leader. That is also the topic that I'm going to address today. Let me share with you some of my observations.

First, I want to urge everyone here to maintain and expand the core of Rotary. As you probably know, 70 percent of Rotarians are 50 years old or older. A large number of Rotarians have retired from their day jobs.

In comparison with the younger folks, people over 50 have more financial resources. We have wide business and community contacts. When it comes to giving back to our communities, we are the most willing and generous. We are wiser and more experienced. In other words, we are the most dedicated Rotarians. We are the backbone of Rotary.

I urge you to pay attention to this peer group and make some aggressive pitches. As an organization and as individuals, we need to embrace this core reality and maximize our strength.

With this core group of members as our strong backbone, I am suggesting to recruit younger members. It is important. I want to emphasize again that it is critical for us to set our eyes on young people who will bring energy and fresh ideas to our organization. They are our future.

Second, I would like to see more female Rotarians, especially women retirees, added to our ranks. In China, there is a popular saying: Women can hold up half the sky. This is certainly true in my own family. I was raised in a big family with six strong women — my mother, who is now 96 years old, and my five sisters. I can tell you that they hold more than half the sky.

As Rotary leaders, I'm sure you agree that this is also true for Rotary. Last October we had a Rotary Day celebration at the White House, where we honored a dozen U.S. Rotary Women of Action. I heard some powerful stories from the honorees. Some of them are leading the efforts to help with veterans, mentor women business leaders, provide much-needed health services to those in need, counsel battered women, and volunteer at schools. Others are launching programs to prevent trafficking and early marriage in India, teaching mentally challenged children in Russia, and offering medical care for people in Africa and Latin America. I was very touched.

Over the past few years, while the number of Rotarians in countries and regions has gone down, there is one bright spot: The number of women in Rotary has gone up. At present, one in five Rotarians is a woman. The 240,000 woman Rotarians worldwide have greatly strengthened and enriched our organization, bringing unique perspectives to Rotary. We have to build on that. We need to actively seek out those women in your community who are compassionate and willing to volunteer their time and efforts. We also need to ask our own family members to be involved.

Let me share a story with you. In October I visited District 7360. DG Jason Piatt, a young man who is not yet 40, served as a remarkable host. When I was going from Rotary meetings to projects, I noticed a lady who was always there, quietly and diligently helping DG Jason and making sure everything went smoothly. It turned out that the lady was Angela Piatt, DG Jason's mother. She has helped Rotary for many years, starting back when Jason's father was in Rotary. With such dedication, I was surprised that nobody had invited her to join Rotary. So I asked Jason's mother and his girlfriend, Elizabeth, "Are you willing to join Rotary?" They were so thrilled, and accepted. In fact, several Rotary clubs fought over them. Over the past several months, I have personally recruited several similarly remarkable women, including the first female principal of the oldest university in Sweden and the first vice president of Peru.

Now that we have identified our target groups for membership growth, how are we going to achieve our goal?

Based on my own experience, I have one simple suggestion: Don't be afraid to ask. Sometimes, all it takes is to ask when there is an opportunity. I always ask when I meet a new friend or when I'm invited to speak at an event. You would be surprised at how many qualified people are happy to join.

When I was traveling in California, Congressman Ed Royce came to a reception to honor Rotary for polio eradication. He said so many nice things about Rotary, I had to ask him, "Why are you not a Rotarian?" Guess what he said. "Nobody ever asked me!" I said, "I'm asking you now! I'll even give you my pin." He said, "OK!" And he joined on the spot.

And if you are thinking, OK, he just did that to be polite and he would never come again — no! A few weeks later, the district governor called me. He said, "Gary, I want to tell you, Congressman Royce paid his full dues!" Now, if you go to Washington, D.C., and you see him, you don't have to call him Congressman Royce. You can just call him Rotarian Ed Royce.

That was just one example. In Lusaka, Zambia, I invited the deputy mayor, Mulenga Sata, and he joined Rotary. I just learned that he's now the mayor of Lusaka and is a likely presidential candidate. In Turkey I met with the mayor of Istanbul. He said to me, "I love Rotary because I used to be a Rotaractor 20 years ago." I said, "So why are you not a Rotarian?" He said, "No one ever asked me!" I said, "I'm asking you!" And same thing — I gave him my pin.

In Rome we met with the minister of health. She is the youngest minister in the Italian government, only 39 years old. She told me she is very impressed by all of Rotary's good work in public health. So how come she wasn't a Rotarian? Nobody ever asked her.

You already know where the story ends. I lost another pin! If I don't ask all of you to help, I'm going to run out of my pins!

In China, which holds an important place in my heart because I was born there, I traveled last September to attend the second Rotary China Conference in Shanghai and map out a blueprint for Rotary's future extension there. More than 280 Rotarians representing 23 countries were there. We all witnessed the birth of China's third Rotary club, in the southwest city of Chengdu. In addition, we chartered five Interact clubs and two Rotaract clubs. Those young folks, our future Rotarians, are very active in China.

I want to thank the Rotary Board of Directors, which has ambitious goals for China. At its meeting last June, the Board approved chartering 10 more prospective Rotary clubs in China. Rotarians



there are making the Board truly proud. As of today, I'm pleased to report that we have received applications from five provisional clubs there, including the first Chinese-speaking club, the Rotary Club of Shanghai West, which is scheduled to be chartered on 21 May. They have already lined up 35 members! This is truly exciting. I hope the Rotary extension effort in China inspires all of us to do more in our own countries.

It doesn't matter where you come from; there are many people in our communities who want to become Rotarians and who are waiting to join Rotary. We sometimes take things for granted and make assumptions without trying. You know the old saying: If you want something done, ask a busy person to do it. The more things you do, the more you can do. Well, all of you are going to be very busy people next year, and I urge you to make a habit of asking other busy people. Don't leave them out of Rotary. Maybe some of them will say no — OK! But I don't want any of them to say they are not Rotarians because nobody ever asked!

There is a rock musician, Amanda Palmer, who made more fans and money by giving away her music free of charge. She wrote a book called "Art of Asking." Her TED video was seen over 6 million times. She says, "I didn't make people do things. I just asked. When I asked, I connected with them. When you connect with them, they will take actions." She doesn't see asking as a risk. She sees it as a trust. I think there is a lot we can learn from her. You should trust your future Rotarians, connect with them, and trust them. Look straight into their eyes and say, "I would like you to be a Rotarian."

All of us are proud of Rotary. We want a Rotary that creates a huge, positive impact in this world. Well, we all know great things don't happen by themselves. They happen when we work hard, when we have strong clubs, and when we have Rotarians who love Rotary.

Let's embrace the roots and our core. Focus on people who have the time and resources to light up their candles. The light of one candle might be feeble. But when other members of our community join hands, Rotary will be lit up and the neighborhoods will be much brighter. Let's do it! And *Be a Gift to the World*.

Thank you.

# The Membership Balance Among Acquisition, Retention, and New Clubs

Kalyan Banerjee  
Past RI President

When I look at all of you in this wonderful gathering here this morning, I believe that what we have in this hall is nothing short of amazing. And I'm sure that, like me, all of you are also a bit awestruck at what we are experiencing here: 535-plus men and women and our partners from every corner of the world, from more than 210 countries and regions.

And as we all squeeze into the hotel's elevators, we are seeing dresses we have never seen before and hearing languages we have never heard. And doesn't this incredibly amazing experience make us all stop and wonder at the miracle of Rotary? Because we are all here for the same reason. We are here simply because we love Rotary. We are here because of what we can DO because of Rotary, and because we are ready to do more.

Perhaps more than anything else, what really strikes us most here is something we don't always think about in our own club or in our own district, and that is the incredible diversity of Rotary and the opportunity to make friends and be friendly ourselves, starting from right down there, at our own club and district levels, from where each one of us comes.

But having said that, if I ask each one of you, "What is Rotary?", I'd probably get 540 different answers.

And you know what? When someone asks what Rotary is and we are not always sure about our answer, I believe we need to tell them simply about those things that have kept Rotary strong even after more than a hundred years. Tell them about our core strengths: about service, about our fellowship, our diversity, about integrity, and about leadership.

We have always lived by our core values — the roots of the Rotary tree that make our branches spread far and wide and strong, through its more than 34,000 clubs. It is a big tree and growing, and we have to see how we can make it grow bigger, because growth, as Past RI President Richard Evans used to say, is the only evidence of life.

But if that be true, then why is it that for almost the past two decades now, Rotary International has been fairly static in its membership? It was 1.22 million in 2007 and now, in 2015, stands at 1.18 million. And I believe the answer to that is the fact that the growth in Asia and Africa and Eastern Europe has been just about balancing the declines in both the American continents, in much of Europe, in Australia, and in Japan.

So could this mean that clubs that do more community projects — as clubs in much of Asia and Africa do — tend to attract more members?

Let me show you an interesting map of the world where the green, upward arrows highlight Rotary's growth areas and the orange-colored ones point to the downward growth areas. So, what I'm saying is that perhaps a greater focus on both community and international service projects in the clubs and districts with declining trends might promote growth faster. With our new Foundation grant model, which both encourages and facilitates the use of district grants for local and international projects, this direction will be easier to follow. So will that result in a membership increase overall? It could, indeed. Let's wait a couple of years and see.

One area, however, beginning to show positive results already, is the realization that one size does not fit all: Asia's needs and methods are different from those of Europe or Australia or, certainly, the Americas, where even North and South America show different needs and priorities. Even the practices followed in the Western USA and the Central or Eastern parts of USA do vary, depending on the ways communities and cities live and work. Increasingly, therefore, different ways and means are being tried.

For example, clubs of only younger people, or of former Rotaractors or Rotary alumni getting together, or e-clubs, which may be totally international and not meet physically at all, or more localized e-clubs meeting online mainly and, once in a while, physically, are all becoming popular. So are clubs meeting more than once a week, in nearby but different locations, per the decision of the last Council on Legislation. Indeed, what's beginning to happen is that Rotarians and clubs are realizing that the methods of today's fellowship may happen even through Facebook or WhatsApp, and having choices and options are the order of the day. Our COL is a comparatively staid and conservative body, meeting only once in three years, and so, while it is increasingly sensitive to our organization's need for change, the Board of Directors is helping the change process, permitting the exploration of new options on trial bases.

These perhaps are the reasons why Japan this year has been showing positive growth in Zones 1, 2, and 3. I met a 27-year Japanese Rotarian some months back, a member of an e-club and thoroughly enjoying his Rotary membership, as he seemed to have made a lot of friends. And that's a huge trend change in that Rotary-loving nation.

In Russia, and even Denmark and Sweden, former Rotaractors have been forming a number of clubs. India, and indeed South Asia, continues its membership surge, first because of the really community-changing projects they have the opportunities to do, and second because of the joint family way of life, where three or even four generations may be staying in close proximity, often engaged in similar business, and that keeps them together, in Rotary as well.

Let's move on.

Western European, English, and South American clubs are having some problems in their growth story. One reason for this could be that, in Europe, membership in a club is a matter of honor and prestige, and so the candidate has to truly deserve it. Connecting with potential younger members has also been an issue in some of the countries. But there, membership patterns remain steady because they are outstanding in retaining members, which is certainly a big problem in Asia and the other high-growth areas.

And I'd encourage you to ask your clubs to look at retention as an equally critical area in our quest to raise membership. Sometimes, we in Asia talk a lot about our joint families and then let the family chip away and break up, bit by bit. And you in Europe open the doors carefully and maybe only a bit, but then you keep them tightly shut. So, let all of us take a fresh look at what we are doing and see if we can all change.

This Rotary year, 2014-15, from the figures that President Gary had circulated to district governors and governors-elect a few weeks earlier, the trends are following the usual fault lines. Clubs in the Indian districts continue to grow fast, with 9,425 members added so far this year alone. Zones 11 in Western Europe, and 15 and 16, also around there, are the only zones to have lost members this year so far, while all other zones have grown the world over, showing varying increases between 70 and 400 members.

You can see that much of Asia, including Japan, is doing pretty well so far this year, while Canada and South America are struggling a bit. In fact, USA is showing a modest growth this year, and while a few districts are losing members, overall in the American zone, the thumbs are pointing upward, kind of.

So, when you go visiting your clubs as district governors on your official visits (though I understand that, in some instances, you might be asking your assistant governors to make that visit) or indeed, whenever you go to a club, chances are that you will be touching on Rotary's two most critical areas of concern today — club membership and contributions to The Rotary Foundation. And while the Foundation is less of a challenge — by way of comparison only, mind you — the issue of membership needs has been getting Rotary's most critical attention ever since our entry into the new century. It is my personal view that the several important initiatives that we have taken up in the past few years — such as the regional membership plans, our focus on core values, or our work on the strategic plan — they all perhaps have arrested the steeper decline of the earlier years, at least in these areas of the world. But I believe we still have some way to go before we acquire stability and then, hopefully, chart a modest growth path.

So, I believe each of us — district-wise, zone-wise, country-wise, culture-wise — has different challenges in increasing our membership. There can never be one best way, just the one right way; the rules for membership may remain the same worldwide, but the ways you interpret and implement those rules could, and indeed do, vary.

And while it is the job of every Rotarian to bring in new members, I think that in North America — the United States and Canada — it is the club president who has the most vital role to play. It is the president who must be seriously responsible for adding new members by motivating the current club members. The president needs to play the role not of a club manager but a strong leader, leading the club each week to a higher level. And so, he or she must think and plan and then work the plan.

And I tell you, if a president is good and caring and sacrificing and goal-oriented, he or she will convince the club members so that they work together. Perhaps 50 percent of club members could be asked to sponsor a member during the year. The others could be encouraged to bring their friends or visitors to the club, where they come to know about Rotary's core values that I mentioned earlier. And equally, we tell them about our engagement with stopping polio or spreading literacy or providing clean water and tackling diseases.

You do it your own way, highlighting your priorities. Some clubs are looking at energetic and enthusiastic early-retirees, often in their early 60s, to come and join them. Well, they sure bring in a lot of energy and firepower. At a multidistrict PETS here in the U.S., I heard it said that the president be urged to make his club a VIP club, where V stands for values, I for image, and P for product, and then work on it. And I've found that it helps if the president is in touch with the media, too — radio, TV, newspapers, and Facebook, too, if it works for him.

And let's not forget that, regardless of what or where you are, the Rotary pin is a great source of starting a conversation, as Past President Frank Devlyn has always told us.

I talked about values and image and product, and if you get them in place, you do get a VIP club: The Rotary Club of Birmingham, Alabama, USA, in District 6860, has 611 members and, believe it or not, a waiting list half as long. But, my brothers and sisters, it's not size that I'm talking about. There are hardworking clubs with below 10 members. It's the image that you have with the work that you do in the community that ultimately gets prospective members to queue up to join.

So, just go ahead and try some of these thoughts out.

Good luck!

# Membership in the 21st Century

Michael McQueen  
Founder, The Nexgen Group

Thanks so much for that warm welcome. It's an honor to be on this platform again.

Can I see a show of hands: How many of you have ever sat through a boring or irrelevant presentation before? Second question: How many of you have ever delivered a boring or irrelevant presentation yourself?

My commitment to you is that the minutes we have together today will be neither of those two things — boring nor irrelevant.

I'm not sure the last time you paused and reflected on just how much our world has changed in recent years. We are living in some pretty dynamic and fascinating times.

Consider these three facts:

- Since this time yesterday, 173,000 people have joined LinkedIn — that's two every second. In fact, LinkedIn now has a membership base larger than the population of the U.S.
- Recent studies have found that the average person's attention span today is just 7 seconds. To put that in perspective, it is one second less than the attention span of a goldfish.
- Currently, more people on the planet own a mobile phone than a toothbrush!

In an age where people are more connected, distracted, and busy than ever before, how do we as an organization stay relevant?

Charles Darwin once observed that it isn't the strongest that survive, nor is it the most intelligent, but it is those who are most responsive to change. This observation is as true for an organization as it is for an organism.

As a researcher and business consultant, much of my work over the last five years has centered on one all-important question: *What separates the enduring from the endangered?*

In fact, as part of the research for my most recent book, I tracked just over 500 organizations and brands in an attempt to discover why some manage to stay powerfully relevant while their competitors fall by the wayside. For instance, compare Lego with Meccano, Volvo with Saab, or Apple with Dell. Many of the lessons that stood out from this research have enormous implications for us as we consider the future of Rotary.

This morning, I want to share with you the three habits of every enduringly relevant organization. As leaders, these will be vitally important if we are to stay relevant as clubs, as districts, and as an organization in the years to come.

## **The first of these is a constant commitment to Re-Calibrating.**

This first step to staying relevant is all about alignment.

As we change what we do and how we do things in the years to come, it is critical that these changes stay in alignment with who we are and why we exist — the DNA that makes Rotary what it is.

To see how important recalibrating is, look what happens when an organization fails to do it.

For instance, consider how the seeds of irrelevance at Kodak were sown the moment they lost sight of *why* they existed and instead began to define themselves by *what* they did. In the middle of last century, Kodak forgot that they were a memory preservation company that sold film, and rather began to see themselves as a film company.

If Kodak had recalibrated as technology changed, instead of asking, How can we ensure people keep buying our film, they could have asked the far smarter question: How can we help customers preserve their memories in a non-film way? — a question that could have seen them dominate the digital age rather than be decimated by it.

As an organization, it is vital that Rotary avoids the trap that Kodak fell into. The best way to do this is to become crystal clear on the answer to one question: What is our DNA?

In our efforts to attract new members in the years to come, it is vital we never lose sight of the values, priorities, and commitments that will never change.

Here is the key message: relevance is not compromise. Any organization that is willing to compromise its DNA in order to stay relevant never lasts the distance. After all, if you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything.

**The second key to staying relevant in the face of change is Re-Engineering how we do things as times and needs evolve.**

In the words of legendary CEO Jack Welch, "The moment the rate of change outside an organization exceeds the rate of change within it, the end is near." As our world us continues to change, we must keep pace.

Woodrow Wilson once joked that "the fastest way to make enemies is to try and change something." As incoming district governors, this is a statement I imagine you will understand well by the end of your DG year!

Naturally, change can be confronting to many. As humans we are indeed creatures of habit.

That said, some of the traditions, processes and protocols that we hold on to so dearly in our clubs could be the very things that cause us to lose relevance. Many things that seem obvious and sensible to us can be entirely foreign and even off-putting to those potential members we are looking to attract.

Can I suggest that the most valuable asset you have in your clubs and districts for re-engineering and innovation are those who have got the freshest eyes. It may be Rotarians who have only recently joined. Perhaps it is the guest speaker from your community who visits a club meeting. It could be your own non-Rotarian children who dutifully tag along to inductions and special Rotary functions.

The beauty of people with fresh eyes is they don't know how things have always been done, because no one has told them yet. They have no trouble thinking outside the box because no one has told them what the box even looks like. The most powerful thing that people with fresh eyes do is they ask the question *why*.

They'll come into our clubs and meetings and innocently ask, "Why do you do it that way?" In reality, this is the most important question of all because we often forget why we do things the way we do — it's just the way it's always been done. The problem with this is that most of us don't realize there is a subtle but significant difference between being in a groove and being in a rut.

I was reading recently of a great example of the power of fresh eyes in bringing about innovation in the army. A group of new recruits were doing their basic training and got to the section where their instructing officer was teaching them how to use artillery guns.

“When you load a round into the guns,” he said, “you need to count 8 seconds before you fire it.”

Just as the officer was about to move onto the next step, one of the young recruits did something that isn’t generally encouraged in a military context — he raised his hand.

“Sir,” he asked, “Why do we wait 8 seconds?”

The officer was clearly thrown by the question, gave some nonresponse and moved on. However, the question stuck with him and a few days later he asked one of his colleagues about the 8-second rule. Being a military history enthusiast, this fellow officer did some research and discovered that the reason for the 8-second rule was that we used to use horses to haul artillery guns to the front line. The 8 seconds was the time necessary to move the horses away so they wouldn’t get frightened when the gun fired.

Now, we haven’t used horses to haul artillery guns for just a few decades, but the rule had stuck.

While that may seem crazy, the reality is that we do the same thing in Rotary. There are rules, procedures, and traditions that served a purpose five decades or five years ago but no longer do — and yet we hold on to them.

In the years to come, new members will join our clubs and innocently ask:

- Why do we ring a bell to start our meetings?
- Why do we have a speaker at every meeting?
- Why does the club president wear the bling around their neck?
- Why do we meet for a meal rather than simply a quick coffee or glass of wine after work?

Naturally, there is nothing wrong with any of these traditions in and of themselves. But by the same token, we must always be open to change and avoid the trap of ever feeling we have arrived at the winning formula, which we then set in stone. After all, the moment you think you’ve made it you’ve passed it.

Of course, the question is what to do with those clubs in our districts who are actively resistant to change in any form — you know the clubs I am talking about. In this regard, my encouragement would be this: it is easier to give birth than raise the dead. Rather than coercing the unwilling, try chartering some new clubs with energetic fresh thinkers and set an example of what is possible. I had the opportunity to visit the recently chartered San Francisco Evening club last week and saw this principle in action — it was absolutely inspiring.

**The third and final key centers on the importance of us Re-Positioning the Rotary brand and our value proposition as those who we want to engage continue to change.**

Any of you who have seen me speak before will know that a lot of my work in past years has centered on how organizations can engage the younger generation, sometimes called the Millennials or Generation Y.

This is a fascinating group of young people who represent an enormous opportunity to this organization from a membership point of view. They are an ambitious bunch of natural networkers who, contrary to popular opinion, have a strong sense of civic duty. Added to this, they are an enormous cohort — in fact, half of the world’s current population is under the age of 30.

One of the resources I recently put together is a two-DVD set designed for clubs focusing on how to engage young members. I know many clubs in your districts have been using this in recent months at a local level and it’s been fantastic to hear the feedback.

Whether you are looking to engage younger generation members or any other group in your community, repositioning is critical in doing so.

When I am working with my corporate clients, there are a series of questions I will run through with them to look at how they can reposition themselves. A few months ago I wrote an article for Rotary clubs with these seven questions designed to help clubs do the same things. If it would be useful, feel free to pass me a business card during the break or send me an email, and I'd be happy to send you that article so you can pass it on to your clubs.

As we consider the themes of change and reinvention, I believe there is a lot we can learn from the world of sailing. It seems an appropriate metaphor, considering we are in San Diego.

I'm told that one of the most important skills in sailing is being able to sail into a headwind. It's not easy and it requires a fair bit of skill, but it's something that every sailor will need to do from time to time.

I think that's a fairly good analogy for what you will need to do as Rotary leaders in the coming years. We often refer to change as being like the headwinds we are currently buffeted by from every angle.

However, any of you who are sailors will know that the only way to sail into a headwind is to tack — to go with the wind rather than against it.

That is precisely the challenge and opportunity ahead of us all. We can't change the direction of the wind but we can adjust our sails.

Echoing the words of Charles Darwin that we began with, many years ago our very own Paul Harris offered a mandate that I believe is more important today than ever before. He said, "If Rotary hopes to advance its aims, it must be evolutionary always and at times revolutionary."

As those who are at the helm of this incredible organization, that is the very same mandate I give you today. Will you be the evolutionary and even revolutionary leaders your clubs and districts are crying out for? I sincerely hope you will because, make no mistake, the future of Rotary depends on it.



# Your Support From Rotary Staff

John Hewko  
RI General Secretary

Good afternoon!

It's great to be here today, addressing this impressive class of incoming district governors.

Just as all of you have come here to learn and be inspired, we at the RI Secretariat look forward every year to the opportunity at the International Assembly to learn from, and be inspired by, our district governors-elect. We at One Rotary Center in Evanston, and in our international offices, work with one goal in mind: to strengthen and support our 34,000 clubs and 1.2 million members. We develop the tools, we administer the grants, and we provide the information, the connections, and the resources to help your clubs do more together than they could alone.

It's also our job to maintain a bird's-eye view of Rotary across zones, districts, and clubs by tracking trends in membership and financial stability; thinking strategically about how to maximize Rotary's impact on a global scale; and providing a platform that enables Rotarians to work as effectively as possible on both the local and international level.

And it is here, at an International Assembly, that we see all of that work come to life.

We get a chance to hear about what you're doing, the challenges you're facing, and how you're addressing those challenges. We learn how you're using the tools we've developed, and get the chance to talk together about how to make those tools even better. We get to see Rotary in action through your eyes — the eyes of some of Rotary's most knowledgeable, and most passionate, members.

2014 was a year of many achievements in Rotary, and I want to start out today by sharing some of those accomplishments with you.

Number one on the list, of course, is the progress we've made in our work to eradicate polio. You've all heard Hamid Jafari tell us about the encouraging news from Africa: no new cases since last August.

Nevertheless, we know how fragile this progress is, and how easily it could still be undone. But at the same time, there are no words in the English language that can overstate the magnitude of what we have achieved in polio eradication, or the pride I feel every day of being associated with an organization that is on the verge of leaving the world a gift that will last for as long as humans inhabit this planet.

And, that pride is based not only on our achievement, but in the understanding of just what it took — what it continues to take — every day to keep Africa at zero, India at zero, every country except for Pakistan and Afghanistan, right now, at zero. Because when you look back at the last 25 years of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, the scale of the endeavor is simply incredible.

Now, Rotary on its own has raised a great deal of money for polio, an incredible amount. But the amount we've contributed to the effort is only part of the story. What we've done, what has also taken us to where we are right now, is advocacy. We've kept polio in the news; we've kept it in the spotlight; we've pushed governments to commit funds; and we're pushing them to make good on their promises.

And we've built partnerships to leverage our resources, making sure to get the most out of every dollar we bring in. Our most recent agreement with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will bring up to \$525 million of funding to polio eradication, with their commitment to match Rotary spending

2-to-1, up to \$35 million per year for a total of five years. We've now reached our goal for the second year in a row, and the Gates Foundation just released the second full match amount of \$70 million last week.

As an added benefit, the health infrastructure we've put in place over the last decades to combat polio is continuing to make a major difference to local health in many parts of the world. The labs, administration, data, and expertise that we developed in fighting polio have been crucial in the efforts to combat malaria, measles, and Ebola. We've provided a successful model for others to emulate in terms of health care, and that model is being followed, with some very encouraging results.

So that is why we cannot give up now. We need to stay the course and continue to do all that we can to ensure that in 2018 we declare victory and celebrate zero cases of polio from here to eternity.

Globally, recognition of Rotary's work is increasing: not just the quality of our work, but the quality of our governance. In 2014, The Rotary Foundation earned a top rating of four stars from Charity Navigator, one of the leading rating agencies for U.S.-based charities. While we continue our fundraising and stewardship efforts to ensure that Rotarian donations are directed to sustainable change, the percent of the Foundation's expenses compared to our contributions continues to decrease. And we're able to do this because we are so good at leveraging our resources — our volunteer work, our local knowledge, our ability to get more done through our Rotary network.

Over the past two years we have introduced a number of new tools and completed several new undertakings: the new grant-making model (what was known as Future Vision); the comprehensive Rotary brand strengthening initiative and our new visual identity; a new website; Rotary Club Central; Showcase; the Ideas platform; a more robust social media presence; and most recently, our new club invoicing process. Each of these will help Rotarians do even more and help Rotary grow and prosper in our second century of service to the world.

These metrics aren't just something to be proud of. They're something we can use, something we can build on. They help us attract more partners, scale up our work, be taken more seriously by governments, increase our reach, and bring in more members. Success begets success, and as I mentioned a few minutes ago we are about to achieve the greatest success of Rotary's history: the eradication of polio.

But we cannot be complacent; we cannot rest on our laurels. As we move well into our second century, the question that needs to be answered, the question that is the most critical right now for every one of us here in this room, is quite simple: What do we as an organization have to do — what can we do — to take all of these successes, all of these strengths, and build on them? How can we leverage these successes to do the most good we can, for as many people as possible?

Standing here looking out at all of you, I see Rotary — the organization that we are, on the ground, achieving so much, in 34,000 communities around the world.

And I think you'll understand when I say that looking at all of you here today — I can't help but see something else as well: the Rotary we could be.

We are a great organization. But we could be even more phenomenal. We're changing lives, all over the world, every day. But we could be changing so many more, and in more lasting ways.

We do so much in Rotary. But how much more could we do if we had more great members — twice, three times as many? What if we worked harder to leverage our resources in partnership with other organizations? What if we decided, together, that it's time to put everything on the table — time to take a clear-eyed look at the things that might be holding us back in Rotary — and change them?

What could we do? Well, I think the answer is as simple as the question. We could do pretty much anything we set our minds on.

All of us know we could be doing more. The decision we're facing right now is not what we're able to do, but what we're willing to do. Are we willing to make the thoughtful changes that we need to make in order to grow? Are we willing to change our traditions, shake things up where we need to, and agree that our No. 1 priority is Rotary's success — not just one year at a time, but over the long term?

Of course, there are certain traditions such as the emphasis on high ethical standards and club diversity that are timeless and universal bedrocks of our organization and should never change. But perhaps others have become more of an obstacle rather than a benefit.

Let's take the tradition of yearly change in leadership. It clearly has its strengths. But it has one big weakness: any truly significant new initiative requires five to 10 years of consistent effort to achieve results. We simply can't afford the zigging and zagging and the yearly change in direction that often comes with the annual changeover in our clubs, districts, zones, and international governance.

Let's allow ourselves to imagine for a moment what Rotary might look like if, instead of each new leader setting new goals, we worked on a five- or a 10-year cycle — in which each new leader picked up the baton from his or her predecessor and seamlessly worked to meet the goals set out in a detailed long-term strategic plan.

And as part of that strategic focus, how might Rotary look, if we decided to put less emphasis on attendance, and more on engagement? Maybe it's time we took a hard look at some of our most hallowed traditions and provided those clubs that want it the flexibility to operate as they think best. I suspect that we might find that we have made ourselves more attractive to more members if we made it easier for them to engage with us. Again, the key is not attendance but engagement.

What if we thought differently about our club and district dues structures? We talk so much about the \$54 annual Rotary International dues, yet this amount is a pittance when compared with the real costs of being a Rotarian — which is largely the club and district dues and the cost of meals.

What if we asked every club to hold an exit interview with every Rotarian who leaves? What if we aggregated that data, understood the forces that cause 100,000 Rotarians to leave our organization each year — and worked to change them?

What if we started engaging our Rotaract clubs as equals and found ways to integrate them into our Rotary club activities in a much more meaningful manner, and found better ways to support their work? Rotaractors are exactly the people we need in our organization. They are a big part of our future. We can't afford to lose them, and right now, we lose almost all of them: only 5 percent ever join a Rotary club.

So I'm asking all of you, in the coming year, to be voices for doing everything we can in Rotary, not just everything that's comfortable or easy or represents the way things have always been done. Be advocates for thoughtful, positive, and lasting change. We have a great tradition in Rotary, but it's our tradition. We made it and we own it — it doesn't own us — and if it no longer serves its purpose, we can change it.

I would also urge you to engage more with your communities. Yes, we need to be talking among ourselves — but we also need to be directing our communications efforts outward to the non-Rotary world. We need to be much more aggressive in organizing events in our communities and regions that are designed for non-Rotarians. And, I would humbly suggest, we need to take a hard look at how we're being perceived. Ask your communities what your clubs need to do to make them want to join you. It just might provide an impetus, and a roadmap, for taking us in a new direction.

We need to ask ourselves, very simply, what kind of Rotary do we want to be? And there isn't a right or a wrong answer to that question. Clearly, the current model works in many parts of the world and doesn't need to be tinkered with. But in other regions the membership numbers tell us

that the market is simply not buying our product in the same way as it used to in the past. And this means that we need to be ready to adapt. I know very well, just as you do, that there are plenty of Rotarians who are perfectly happy with Rotary as it is, and plenty more who don't think beyond their own clubs. But I also know, as you do, that the more involved Rotarians get in their clubs and their activities, the more they see just what we can do, the more they want to do — and the more interested they become — in figuring out ways to do more and to do things differently.

For myself, in my wildest dreams I see a Rotary of 2 million to 3 million members, that is active in every community; one that connects with and builds relationships with the entire community; one that mentors those looking to improve their skills — leadership, vocational, personal, social, educational, or others; one that partners with governments and NGOs in their community and around the world to end poverty, to wipe out preventable disease, to stop conflicts before they start. I see a Rotary where we are top of mind and tip of tongue for anyone in the community who wants to join an organization to give back, but also to network professionally and to gain lifelong friends, skills, and expertise. I see a Rotary where the best of every community is part of a Rotary club, and being part of a Rotary club brings out the best in us all.

That might sound like a pipe dream. And yes, it is a bit ambitious, and yes, perhaps it is beyond our abilities right now.

But you know what? Not too long ago, the idea of eradicating polio seemed impossible, and ambitious, and beyond our abilities. It didn't stop us. Because we're not the kind of people who give up and go home the first time someone says, "You're aiming too high."

And I'm glad that we're not. And so are the 10 million kids who never got polio, thanks to the 1.2 million inspired and ambitious Rotarians who didn't listen to people telling them what they couldn't do.

I would like to conclude my comments today by honoring one of the very oldest Rotary traditions, one I hope we hang on to forever: and that's quoting our great founder, Paul Harris.

Many years ago he wrote, "If Rotary is to realize its proper destiny, it must be evolutionary at all times, revolutionary on occasions." Paul Harris was right then, and he is right now.

You are the ones who will *Be a Gift to the World* and help Rotary realize its destiny in the months ahead, and in the Rotary year to come, and in the years after that. And we at the Rotary Secretariat will be there for you, in every way we can. I know that I speak for every one of us on the Rotary International staff when I say how proud we feel to walk through the doors of One Rotary Center every morning, knowing that our work supports your work, and that your work is changing the world, day by day, community by community.

Thank you very much.

# What I Ask of Myself, I Ask of You

K.R. Ravindran  
RI President-elect

When I spoke to you on Sunday night, I spoke to you about our ambition and our ideals. I spoke to you about our role in Rotary, and about being a gift to the world.

But my role as your president, and your role as district governors, is not only to inspire — it is to be sure that Rotary functions at the highest possible level, in every respect. Today, I want to talk to you about the very important role that all of us will play next year, as administrators of this organization.

And I will begin by saying that I ask and expect you all to approach the practical duties of Rotary administration with the same zeal, and the same standards, you apply in your professional lives.

As CEO of my own company, every decision I make is based on the goal of maximum benefit to shareholders, with zero compromise of ethics. I ask: Why should it be any different in Rotary?

Everything we do as Rotary leaders, every decision we make, must be for the benefit of the members whom we represent and who have placed their confidence in us. The same efficiency and the same productivity that we look for outside of Rotary must also be uncompromisingly sought within Rotary, by every single Rotarian.

My success depends on your success, yours depends on that of your club presidents, your club presidents' success depends on the work of their Rotarians. None of us can succeed alone. And so, everything I am about to tell you, all of the changes I ask and expect of you, will apply equally to me.

Our members deserve this, our communities deserve it, and our supporters and financiers expect no less.

And so, the first thing I want to talk about today is simply accountability. Our Rotarians have all paid for us to be here today. They will pay for our travel and other expenses in the year ahead; they are paying the expenses of the senior leaders, including myself, and the salaries of our staff. They have a right to expect good value for that money.

To that end, I will set goals for myself, and I am accountable for achieving them. Equally, I will set KPIs — key performance indicators — for all of our directors.

In fact, in the next year the Board will meet every three months and we will devote much of the first day to evaluating how each of us performed in the quarter under consideration. We will equally examine the performance of the general secretary, and we will examine the work of our committees.

The overall goals of the organization, be they membership growth or Foundation giving, will need to be broken down and achieved through the districts. To this end, directors will agree with you, the district governors, on goals specific to your districts. Directors will also discuss with you certain regionally specific issues such as redistricting, stewardship, youth, or elections, as they may be relevant to your own goals. You, as district governors, will in turn be expected to break down those goals on a club-by-club basis.

All directors will be expected to plan a working visit to every district in their zone at some point in their term. At the least, they will certainly do so through conference calls.

I ask you to help defray the costs of these visits by hosting them, or arranging to have them hosted, as necessary. I emphasize that the directors will be coming to help you, not to inspect you, and I ask you to consider how best to take full advantage of your director's expertise. Having helped you

set your own goals, directors will assist you in monitoring your progress, they will meet with your leadership team, your successor, and other leaders, and they will work with your entire leadership team to clarify areas of long-term focus in your district.

Your director will also help you link up with our coordinators and advisers — our RPICs, RCs, E/MGAs, and RRFs. Our coordinators don't come cheap, and our membership pays that bill. We need to show a good return on their investment, and that return should be measurable in terms of increased membership, or Foundation giving, significant gifts, or media placements.

The success of our organization, its ability to utilize our resources and achieve our goals for next year, will rely on the combined efforts of our directors, coordinators, and DGs. Like your directors, your coordinators and advisers are there to help you. Your success depends on them, just as their success depends on you. The more you cooperate, the more closely you work with them, the better our resources will be utilized, and the better all of our results will be.

One of the most fundamental directives of good management is to surround yourself with the best people you can find, and empower them to do their jobs.

And so, I will say this simply and clearly: Please do not pick people based on friendship or favors owed. Look for the top professionals and experts your clubs have to offer and invite them to support you, especially in areas where professional expertise is most necessary: strategic planning, communications, finance, and so on.

What I am asking you to do I have done myself, by consciously and deliberately giving up the greatest power a president has: the power of appointment.

My key appointments have all been made on the basis of merit. Your training leaders and all incoming coordinators and advisers were identified by Rotary senior leaders worldwide, and a careful due diligence was done by independent teams, with input from staff particularly in researching previous performance. They are the best the Rotary world has to offer.

Even our new group of Foundation Trustees was selected in the same manner. In all these cases, I have not submitted a single name nor have I spoken to a single member of the selection committee.

You will want to know how I am going to select my president's representatives. Indeed, I intend to ask directors and past presidents to recommend to me only the most eligible persons fitting my criteria who have not gone before. I do intend to maintain for myself 15 percent to 20 percent of appointments to be chosen at my own discretion from senior persons including past presidents, Board members, and others; as the president's reps represent me, I believe there will be no objection to that.

We are also developing an online tool for evaluating the performance of president's reps. A link to this evaluation will be sent to all club presidents, with instructions that either they or a representative of their club who will attend the district conference should fill it out online. This way, we will have a more representative opinion on the president's rep and we will be able to forward that feedback to the proposers.

Part of succeeding in business is to look always for new paths to innovation and growth. And so must we approach our work in Rotary. To that end, you are all aware that we have invested a great deal of resources in strengthening Rotary's brand, to improve our public image and to clarify to ourselves and to the public who we are in Rotary and what we do.

We now have professionally designed and updated versions of our logo and the Rotary wheel for your use, and great care has been taken to ensure that these materials are consistent, recognizable, and attractive. I ask you to use them and to have your districts use them — whatever your own feelings may be in terms of their aesthetics. In these days at the International Assembly, you will see

on the screen several approved ways in which our design may be utilized. You will see how striking they are and how they project a modern and visually unified look.

In matters of taste and design, we will never achieve unanimity of opinion, and there will always be those who prefer a different look or a different color. But the time for those discussions is past. These decisions have been made by your representatives, and now is the time to stay the course, to use the products of our investment, so that we will get the best return.

We must also be using the resources we have developed in terms of our website, of Rotary Club Central, and the other online tools made available to you through our Secretariat staff. All of them are the product of a great deal of time and thought, and again, investment. They have been developed and provided to you for a reason: to help you plan your service and to help us at RI aggregate that data. This year, you will find that we have one whole day reserved for you to have hands-on experience in using our newly developed tools, and I ask you to similarly arrange time at each of your PETS to bring club presidents up-to-date with the use of these tools. Otherwise, they will be at a serious disadvantage, for I want you to note that even the club citations will be done online and in real time.

As we have been open to innovation in terms of our brand, in terms of technology, so must we be when it comes to our membership. This is not the time or the place to discuss the importance of membership, for you will be doing plenty of that elsewhere this week. But one message that has consistently come forth is that there is a need to add value to membership. We must answer the question: "What's in it for me?"

And with this in mind, we will launch a new benefit card on 1 July, to which every member will be automatically entitled. What I am calling a card will not be a physical membership card but a mobile app supported by both Android and Apple operating systems, bringing our members discounts and offers from reputable services, establishments, and organizations around the world. We do not expect or wish anyone to join Rotary only for this benefit, but we hope that those considering joining or leaving a club will view it as an added value of membership: one more reason to join, one more reason not to leave. Of course not every Rotarian in every part of the world will either approve or even want to use this benefit and that is understandable, but I am aware that many others are looking forward to such a program with great anticipation.

Another subject that I want to mention is that we will have the privilege in the 2015-16 year of participating in the Council on Legislation, which as you know, is our opportunity, given only once every three years, to make each district's voice heard in Rotary on the global level. This is serious business: It is how we amend and update the RI Constitution, Bylaws, and standard RI club charter, and you need to be sure that your district has had an opportunity to study some of the interesting proposals on offer. It is also an opportunity to educate your members on how our democratic system works and the manner in which legislation is made by our organization.

The genius of Rotary is that it provides a way to take the resources and skills of a diversity of people and harness them for good. But if we want to harness them with maximum impact, for maximum good, we have to do it efficiently, transparently, and with our full energy and attention. Our members deserve only the best.

What I ask of you is no more than what I ask — what I demand — of myself. And I hope that by making these changes, by putting good governance and accountability and efficiency at the forefront of our Rotary practices, we will be setting an example for Rotary that will be an enduring gift, from our class to our clubs, for many years to come.

This is our time. It will not come again. We will shirk no duty — and overlook no opportunity — to *Be a Gift to the World*.

Thank you.

# Your First Priority — Supporting Clubs

Jennifer Scott

2015 Assembly Seminar Trainer

Australia is a land of extremes, from floods to fire. Just over a year ago, the Blue Mountains, where I live, exploded into fire. More than 200 homes were destroyed. Every fire season, I pack up my most precious items — my photo albums — so that in an emergency I can quickly load them in the car and escape the fire. Why? My photos hold the story of my life, my family, and our achievements. Recently I have stored my documents and photos in the cloud, on Dropbox, so as to ensure all my business and personal documents are safe. Last year, most of the families who lost their homes also lost their photos, their history. Yet for some years now, technology tools have been available to ensure we can capture, share, and keep such important information and knowledge safely.

Are you and your clubs using the available tools to ensure you capture your key information, your stories, your achievements?

You are leaders in a dynamic and connected world, a world of great need and of great opportunities. Rotary provides you with the tools and training you need to make the most of that world as you lead your districts, but you have to use these tools and support your clubs and Rotarians in using them if they are to be effective. These tools are a Rotary gift!

Let's look at the gift of knowledge.

Knowledge management, according to Wikipedia, is the process of capturing, developing, sharing, and using organizational knowledge effectively. It refers to a multi-disciplined approach to achieving objectives by making the best use of knowledge. Rotary's objective, in simple terms, is to build world understanding, goodwill, and peace by connecting leaders — our members around the world — and moving them to action. To do so, we need to share resources, ideas, and knowledge.

Knowledge management efforts typically focus on improved performance, innovation, the sharing of lessons learned, and continuous improvement of the organization.

However, no matter how much knowledge Rotarians and clubs have, it does no benefit unless that knowledge is used to drive the organization forward, until it is used to innovate, improve projects, and make a difference. If not used, it is like a set of encyclopedia gathering dust on the bookshelf. Rotarians cannot afford to rely on out-of-date information; we can no longer afford to work in isolation. That is why we value joining leaders, exchanging ideas, and taking action.

How we acquire knowledge and how we communicate has changed dramatically since you and I joined Rotary. So, what knowledge is available through Rotary's online tools?

My club tracks its goals and achievements through Rotary Club Central.

Another key tool provided is the Rotary Learning Center.

In 1997 Past RI President Glen Kinross said, "Education is key to a better future." Although he was referring to our youth, continuing education is just as important for our Rotarians. Education enables Rotarians to move forward and build better clubs, which in turn will build better lives in needy communities.

The Learning Center provides information and guidance that helps Rotarians address problems quickly, feel confident in their organization, and develop ideas.

Have you clicked on Rotary Ideas?



In July 1988 Past RI President Royce Abbey's message to Rotarians was: "No Rotary club will be a great club by sitting down and waiting for opportunities to serve. The club must identify needs before it can even plan to meet them. It must create its own opportunities for service. And great clubs will not remain great unless they introduce fresh ideas from innovative thinkers."

The tool, Rotary Ideas, is not only available to share ideas but is also an innovative way of crowdsourcing and crowdfunding. During the Blue Mountains bushfires, we used crowdfunding to raise money to help the fire victims. Within weeks we had raised over \$200,000 from the public.

Many well-established businesses have been overtaken in recent years by young, vigorous competitors simply because the established business thought it knew all the answers. They were not willing to change with the times. The same can be said of Rotary clubs — Are you prepared to help your clubs change or leave them to stagnate?

You can help your clubs by making the best use of the talent and the knowledge we have in Rotary and using the tools provided to do so.

The Rotary Brand Center helps us to maximize the impact of our brand as we go about doing good in the world.

And Rotary Showcase is celebrating success stories and sharing ideas that work.

My challenge to YOU — Lead by example.

Aristotle once said, "For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them."

My challenge for this week: Create or update your profile on My Rotary, so every member in your district has the opportunity to really know you.

Next week: Review your own club's achievements on Rotary Club Central. If your club is not on Rotary Club Central, volunteer to list the goals for this year.

At presidents-elect training: Include training on the Rotary tools and repeat it at district assembly, because sometimes it takes a few practices before some members feel comfortable using the tools.

Lead by example.

As Rotarians, we should be leaders, not followers. Our dreams should not be about past victories but future challenges and how we are going to meet them using the technology that can reach all of us — our members, project partners, and sponsors. If we do not lead innovation and change, we stagnate. And we should start now as we were reminded by Gandhi: "The future depends on what we do now."

# If I Had a Water Buffalo

Marilyn Ann Fitzgerald  
Rotary Club of Traverse City, Michigan, USA

My passion lies in projects contributing to sustainable community economic development. I believe that Rotary International is uniquely positioned to change the world through sustainable economic development. We have the people, the energy, and the resources, and now we need the focus!

I have been convinced for years that if money could solve this tragedy of poverty, it would have been solved a long time ago. Yesterday, 33,000 people died and they died needlessly. Today, 33,000 people will die from things that can be prevented; tomorrow the same thing will happen, and the day after that. These people, many of them children under the age of five, die a miserable death from starvation, malnutrition, contaminated water, and lack of medical intervention.

The citizens of the United States alone invested over \$8 billion in humanitarian aid. That is money right out of our pockets given to humanitarian aid projects. This is not to mention the billions of volunteer hours that many of us have invested in helping others. Still, 33,000 people will die needlessly today. I submit to you, that is not a very good return on our investment. How can we secure our investment of our time, talent, and treasure?

Today I am going to follow the words of Gandhi when he said: "Don't tell people what to do; tell them a story and they will know what to do."

I will share my story of an education sponsorship project in Bali, Indonesia — how it changed from an unsustainable project to one that eventually brought dignity and self-respect to the villagers through sustainability.

I was encouraged to get involved in a project that would send impoverished children living in a rural village in Indonesia to school. When I first visited this village, it was clear that these were either truly forgotten or unnoticed or ignored people.

The impoverished people in Indonesia were no strangers to me, and they were not faceless. I was introduced to this village by a Rotary club in Indonesia while on a Group Study Exchange as the team leader.

When we visited impoverished villages, mothers of the village asked me to hold their babies. These children were very different from any other children I had seen before. Most of them were malnourished, with bloated little bellies; some were all skin and bone; many were naked and had chunks of hair missing, all due to malnutrition and starvation.

I asked my counterpart, Freddy Subiyanto, "Why do these mothers want me to hold their babies?" He told me it gave them hope. I was confused and asked, "Hope for what?" He did not know exactly what. "They probably think that you are a mother, too, and hope that something will change now that you have seen, and there will be help for their suffering children."

I don't remember anyone ever looking at me with hope before. It was a very uncomfortable feeling, and I felt a huge responsibility to do something, but I had no idea what. It felt overwhelming.

Later, I was given a UNICEF report submitted to the United Nations stating that the children of Indonesia were in the worst possible circumstance of children in all of Asia, due to malnutrition and lack of education.

Rotarians in Indonesia informed me that, for \$60 per year, we could send a child to school, paying for books, supplies, uniforms, one pair of shoes, one cup of rice a day, a small portion of meat two

times a week, and a daily nutritional supplement. Who in this room would not give \$60 for such a good cause of educating impoverished children? As many projects go, the population we intended to serve grew, because every time we visited the village, we could not bear to see the children who desperately wanted to go to school but had no funding.

Within a few years, the people we were hitting up for donations in the States — mostly my fellow Rotarians to include The Rotary Foundation — were supporting every child in that village to go to school. That meant 1,200 children at \$60 per child per year, for the annual fundraising goal of \$72,000.

The villagers were happy. The donors back home were happy when they saw the pictures every year of the children they were supporting. I felt empowered; it gave me an adrenaline rush just to think of the positive impact for these children, for future generations, the donors, and eventually the world.

My third year of returning to the remote village, we were approached by Nyoman, an impoverished farmer, walking up from his rice field. He was speaking with Freddy and asked if we *really* wanted to help them.

Nyoman told Freddy that three of his children were on our school list. He said if we really wanted to help, he needed a water buffalo. I assured him we did not “do” water buffaloes, only scholastic sponsorships.

He told Freddy that if he had a water buffalo, he could triple his rice production and have enough money to send his own children to school.

Later, I asked Freddy the cost of a water buffalo. He said about \$250, and it would be as valuable as a John Deere tractor to a farmer in the States.

I thought about Nyoman and the water buffalo on the long trip home from Indonesia. I thought, if we did this, for the first time, the number of children in need of our educational sponsorships would be shrinking rather than snowballing.

How would I convince my donors I needed a water buffalo? That seemed too complicated, with too many questions.

Then my family asked what I wanted for Christmas. I announced: “I want a water buffalo!” That did not go without questions either, but as strange as it felt, they gift-wrapped a box with \$250 in it, all in \$1 bills, and gave it to me for Christmas, along with a card telling me “not to spend it all in one place.” But I did! I wired the money to Freddy, and he was going to make it all happen.

The next spring, back in Indonesia, I was making my usual visit to the village when Nyoman rushed across the terraced rice field, greeting me. He took my hand and introduced his water buffalo — named Ibu Marilyn! How cool is that!

The women of the village were inspired by Nyoman and asked for funds to purchase 20 piglets to start a business. They intended to breed and raise pigs, sell some to neighboring villages for profit, eat some and have better nourishment for their families, and use the manure in the rice fields.

The villagers were taking great pride in thinking of entrepreneurial endeavors to finance their children’s education. My feelings of pride were changing to feelings of liberation. Within a few years, the entire village was no longer dependent on our funds. For less than a \$1,000 investment, this village was totally self-reliant and no longer in need of our \$72,000!

I have thought long and hard about the education project in Indonesia and how I helped design, and promoted, an unsustainable plan that robbed others of dignity and pride and built a dependency on us.

What was the message my annual visit was giving the villagers? "You need us to get your children an education? We don't have enough confidence in you to make it happen on your own?"

What about their dignity? Where was their voice? Who had the power in that message?

I could have, should have, been asking questions and listening to their ideas.

We can't save the world, but we certainly can change the world through opportunity.

Searching for sustainable programs: My personal odyssey continues!

This was a totally different humanitarian-aid world, and it represented what people can accomplish when provided an opportunity. These were smiling people who were proud to look me straight in the eye and tell me about their business. They are innovative, fiercely hardworking, resilient entrepreneurs benefiting from an opportunity created through microloans.

I had been involved in the western highlands of Guatemala, evaluating projects. Traveling with a local Mayan translator, we were going to see a rural microloan borrower, Shirley the tortilla maker. The translator introduced me and said: "This is Marilyn. She helped get the money for your first microloan." A tiny woman, about this tall, looked me straight in the eye and said, "Yes! And I have paid you back!" I was so proud of her, that she had enough self-esteem to own her success.

Shirley did not even know how to count a year earlier. She learned by counting coffee beans. Now, she pulled out her accounting notebook and, in her own writing, showed me how much it cost for her to make a tortilla and how many she had to sell to break even. It was amazing!

Not all projects intending a sustainable impact are successful. It would be wonderful if all sustainable economic development projects were as simple as buying a water buffalo or 20 piglets and maybe some hens for eggs. In reality, not even the project in Indonesia was that simple, even after we got on the sustainable track.

The village women did not know how to care for piglets or how to run a business, how to determine the cost of their goods sold, how to market, how to increase the capacity of their business or, for that matter, how to harvest a pig.

Local Rotarians mentored the new entrepreneurs, brought in educational systems and literacy programs for the entrepreneurs. The Rotary clubs in the U.S. provided financial resources, but the local Rotary clubs had to provide all the due diligence to ensure success.

Rotarians can provide opportunities for people to help themselves. How can we secure the return on our investment? We have got to give serious time, treasure, and talent to sustainable projects. We have to ask ourselves the difficult but important question: Are we leaving people with respect, dignity, and opportunity, or have we created a dependency?

Remember this: We have the people, the energy, and the resources to change the world with sustainable programs. You, as leaders in Rotary, have the power and the influence to propel change!

"Be the change that you hope to see in the world!" — Gandhi

# 2015-16 Rotary Foundation Goals

Ray Klingensmith  
Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair-elect

*(Walk-on music: "Cowboy Logic")*

Isn't that a great song? It is such happy music that it reminds me of the friendly atmosphere of Rotary meetings around the world. The name of the song is "Cowboy Logic," and I want to use it today to explain why I am the luckiest guy in Rotary. I grew up in a small country town during the 1950s, and my prospect of traveling to other countries was very remote. However, it was a dream inspired by both good books and good movies. Then suddenly, I was given the chance to go to South Africa as a Rotary Scholar at the University of Cape Town — to meet and mingle with many of the 5,000 students at the university from all over Africa and beyond, to travel 16,000 miles within the scenic beauty of Southern Africa, to speak to 38 Rotary clubs in four African countries, and to meet hundreds of Rotarians and hear their views about the world as it existed in 1961. Wow! It was more than a life-changing experience. It was a life-shaping event, and it all happened, because I was a Rotary Scholar!

During my experience as a Rotary Scholar, I noticed that the district governors in both my home district and my host district were the ones who seemed to get things done. They were the ones who were respected and appreciated by the clubs in their districts, and the ones who informed and encouraged their clubs by leadership and example. So, I was inspired at that early stage to serve as a district governor at some time in my life. Well, I had that chance 40 years ago, and you know what, the role is still the same today. You are the ones that our clubs will rely on for leadership and example. You are clearly our keys to success in your districts for next year, and we look for you not to be mere managers but to be real Rotary leaders. And be aware, it will require your very best efforts.

Upon my return home from Africa, I was lucky once more to be quickly invited to join the Rotary club in my hometown of Unionville, Missouri, USA, which had been the wonderfully supportive sponsor club for my scholarship. I immediately accepted the invitation to become a Rotarian at age 24, and I had no idea on that day in 1961 that I would be given the opportunity to serve in the variety of jobs that have made it possible for me to stand here today as the chair-elect for our Foundation. I have been such a lucky guy, and it all happened because I was a Rotary Scholar!

Now, you may be wondering what my story of good luck has to do with the success of the Foundation during your year as district governors. In my view, there is a direct correlation, because I owe more to The Rotary Foundation than anyone who has ever served as the chair. In short, I am a living, breathing product of The Rotary Foundation. Therefore, I am committed to doing everything I can do to make next year the very best year in the history of our Foundation. It's a history that started when RI President Arch Klumph uttered those magic words at the 1917 convention that Rotary should start an endowment for Doing Good in the World. From that simple start, look at the success of The Rotary Foundation, which has clearly provided an international role for our clubs and districts. It has truly been an invaluable partner in the rise of Rotary to the world stage.

Your year as district governors will be our Foundation's 99th year as we prepare for our important centennial year in 2016-17, and I am pleased to advise you that the Trustees have made a recent improvement in our planning for the Foundation. They have utilized the concept of the RI strategic plan and approved four priorities to be effective for the next three years, which clearly will provide more continuity and efficiency.

The four priorities are a little too long to recite in this presentation, but you will be given a copy of them in your discussion groups following this general session. And rest assured that the first priority is to end polio — now and forever. As you heard from Hamid Jafari earlier this week, we truly are

This Close in our noble quest to end a dread disease. Now we need to be sure that Rotary receives its fair share of the credit, because we started the polio eradication effort and we have never wavered in our resolve and our commitment for more than 30 years. All of us are lucky that, due to the genius of PolioPlus, we can be even prouder to be Rotarians.

The other three priorities adopted by the Trustees follow the model of the RI strategic plan. Simply stated, they are to strengthen the Foundation, to increase the Foundation's humanitarian service, and to enhance the image and awareness of the Foundation, particularly due to the success of PolioPlus and the 100-year record of Doing Good in the World.

Still more good news is that all four of the new priorities for the Foundation are supported by measurable goals, which will track our progress on an annual basis. It is the measurable goals that should be of highest interest to you as incoming district governors, because several of the annual goals will be measured at the district level. For example, one of the goals is to increase the number of clubs achieving the 100% Every Rotarian, Every Year recognition fundraising level by 15 percent in all districts. That goal should be both challenging and productive for all of you, and it is easily measurable. It is achievable for all districts, if you give it your time and attention, and if you first lead by example.

Another of the annual goals is to increase the number of global grant scholarships to at least one for every district. This one is very important to me, because the new scholarships are an exciting opportunity for us to return to the time when the number of our Ambassadorial Scholars was still sufficiently small that Rotarians took a genuine interest in the scholars, and as a result, the scholars took a genuine interest in Rotary. The new scholarships permit us to identify graduate students who want to make the world a better place through one or more of the six areas of focus, and then to help the students proceed with their education for not just one year but up to four years. The new scholarships are much more targeted on Rotary objectives than the Ambassadorial Scholarships, and they can and should involve the students with our clubs and districts at every turn. Please take the time to learn more about the global grant scholarships, and then start the search for a worthy scholar from your district. Who knows, he or she might end up as a district governor someday, or even as the chair of Foundation Trustees!

Some of the other annual goals are not so specific, but I think they are intriguing. For example, one of the goals is to use Rotary's experience in our advocacy work for polio eradication as a model for advocacy to help other humanitarian programs. I particularly like that possibility as we seek to fulfill the challenge of Rotary's branding consultant, Siegel+Gale, to "connect commerce and cause." Isn't that an interesting phrase, to connect commerce and cause? One of the reasons we have been so successful in our polio advocacy with governments and other NGOs is that we are business and professional people, and we are respected for our integrity and our business skills. As a result, are we not the best-equipped organization in the world to connect commerce and cause? I think we are! Just keep that phrase in your minds.

Another goal for next year is to encourage all clubs to learn more about Foundation programs by utilizing new and effective types of communication at their weekly meetings. Are you prepared to help your clubs utilize those new forms of communication? If not, then you need to find a computer-savvy friend who can help you deliver the new techniques to the clubs.

Perhaps the biggest departure from past practice is the Foundation goal to develop at least two new Foundation initiatives to recognize and publicize the need for membership growth in our clubs. The Trustees realize that Rotary cannot continue to provide larger and more sustainable humanitarian service projects unless the clubs themselves become bigger, better, and bolder. For many decades, Rotary grew at a steady rate of 3 percent per year, and we need to reclaim that legacy to be vibrant and dynamic into the future. We clearly offer the best chance for prospective members to improve their lives and their communities, and to use the Rotary network to leverage their time and talent to make the entire world a better place. The Foundation needs to be involved in telling that story to both Rotarians and non-Rotarians.

It should be clear from these remarks that I truly have been the luckiest guy in Rotary during the past 54 years, because I was a Rotary Scholar. My good luck is continuing, as I now have the chance to serve as the Foundation chair next year as so many exciting things are happening, just prior to the Foundation's centennial year. And all of you share in my good luck as you prepare to serve as district governors in our preparatory year for the centennial. And, even more importantly, you have the good luck to be district governors when Ravi Ravindran will be the president. He is clearly an outstanding businessman and Rotary leader, and he will take you to new heights of achievement. There is absolutely no doubt that you are very lucky district governors to serve with a special president like Ravi!

So, I urge you to take your jobs seriously, because it is extremely important for Rotary that you do your jobs well. We are the premier civic service organization in the entire world, and our continued success depends on your efforts to inform and motivate the clubs in your districts.

Now a word about Ravi's theme, *Be a Gift to the World*. Isn't that a great theme? So insightful, so motivational, so easy to use! It is very clear that if we take his challenge seriously, and if we motivate the Rotarians in our clubs and districts to be gifts to the world, there is no doubt that we will improve our communities — and other communities around the globe. And as Rotarians we should take immense pride and motivation from the simple fact that when it comes to making the world a better place, we do it better than anyone else in the world!

# Telling the Story of Peace

Kiran Singh Sirah

Executive Director, International Storytelling Center

Good afternoon, Rotarians. It is a pleasure and honor to speak to you all today.

There is a saying: The world is like a book, and those who do not travel will have only ever read the first page. For me, storytelling is a way of traveling the world. Why? Because it enables us to be inspired, to follow our dreams, and to realize that our stories belong to a world full of stories just waiting to unfold. Today I am here to tell you my story.

My name is Kiran Singh and I am a Rotary Peace Fellow.

But, as you can tell from my accent, I'm not actually from Tennessee. I'm in fact a newly adopted Tennessean. Although I now live and work in the United States, I was born and brought up in England and Scotland. My mother was born in Kenya, my father in India, and my brother in Uganda. Therefore, I like to think of my family as its own mini-United Nations — which is already a good starting point, I believe, for seeing the world as one family, with diverse stories to tell.

Human beings tell stories. It's what we all do. It's part of our DNA. Stories have the power to touch hearts, excite minds, make us laugh, and bring us to tears. Stories enrich us and help us build communities. They let us experience new worlds and give us the power to transcend borders, time, and space.

But our world is imbalanced and troubled. And there has never been a time more important than right now to tell our stories. As all of us in this room today work to empower other people to seek freedom, I believe we must start by freeing our minds, because out of conflict we may just hear new stories.

In 1972 my own family was forced to flee their homeland in Uganda, at gunpoint. They were expelled at a time when all Asians were being expelled by the dictator Idi Amin. Around 50,000 Ugandan Asians fled the border and settled in new countries. My family came to Britain. At this time, they could not take personal possessions with them, objects, temples, or houses, but they could take their traditions and beliefs and found ways to place them in the stories they told, stories they passed to me and to others. These same stories we used as first-generation British Asians to form a sense of our own dual identity, establish a sense of community and our place in the world. These same stories that as a child I told in school playgrounds, or used to fight off the slurs of racism, eventually became my greatest tool of nonviolent communication. And why, to this day, I am passionate about the arts of peace-building, the power and arts of storytelling, and why as a peace fellow I see art, culture, story-making, not as a tool to conquer or divide, but instead as a way to heal — to come together, to tell a shared story.

In 2001, on a total whim, I moved to Scotland. It's amazing how personal paths, new directions, and world events coincide. Now, not only I but the world was about to change. We sat round the TV and watched the twin towers collapse — moments like that we remember forever. Soon after, a local mosque and local synagogue were fire-bombed — not by each other but by people who were trying to stamp out difference by attacking places of worship at the heart of community. I decided I was NOT ready to retreat from my world; it was too important. I started to think beyond my own personal comfort zone.

In my life in Scotland, I was becoming redefined not only as a new Scot but also as a global citizen, where every moment and every connection meant something. I was determined to make a difference.



It was around that time I met two elderly Rotarians who listened to my story and then went on to tell me the inspiring story of Rotary's founder, Paul Harris. And how he himself created a roundtable so people could share their experiences, come together, and form a community.

At that point in my life and career, I kept thinking to myself: Who on this earth is going to believe that an artist, someone like me, could contribute to peace and conflict resolution? But these two Rotarians did. That day, based on the philosophy of Rotary's founder, we shared the belief in how stories provide an anchor — a chance to meet to discuss differences in a safe way, to unpack what it means to belong to a place, to cross a divide, to have a voice. These two Rotarians encouraged me to tell my story; they believed in me. They helped me to connect Rotary's belief: the idea that when we look beyond divisions, labels, and societies that we live in, when we think beyond borders and groups and allow ourselves to embrace the wider world, we become international citizens of the world and start to refigure and reshape our stories with others. And from that point, we can build a better world.

In 2013 I completed my Rotary Peace Fellowship program here in the U.S. Soon after, I was appointed as the executive director of the International Storytelling Center, based in Jonesborough, Tennessee — the world's leading institution that harnesses the power of storytelling to change lives and build a better world, that brings together the largest gathering of the world's master storytellers and engages with around 40,000 people worldwide in diverse storytelling and community-building programs. My role includes establishing global storytelling partnerships with organizations as diverse as the United Nations, Google, NASA, the Smithsonian, United Way, and the Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation; building narrative-based training to work on global atrocity prevention, democracy, poverty eradication programs, and other peace-building agencies across the world; and overseeing the world's oldest and largest storytelling festival, in the birthplace of the global revival in storytelling in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains.

Storytelling is a powerful tool. It is art and communication and peace-building at its most raw. From the era when humans etched visual pictographs onto cave walls to the day when NASA scientists inscribed a visual human story onto a space probe and sent it out into the universe, storytelling is what forms relationships with others. It is the single most powerful expressive realm in all its dimensions that gives voice to who we are and where we are going. Used wisely it may also be one of the greatest conflict prevention tools, a path to nonviolent communication and community as taught by the great Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the great Madiba and Paul Harris, who told stories and empowered millions to form communities of strength. We remember.

But I am just one of 800 Rotary Peace Fellows across the world — peace-builders all passionately working to redefine the arts, to reshape culture, elevate the arenas of education and policy development, government and nonprofit enterprises. Peace fellows are working across the world on initiatives to help the eradication of polio and spreading positive stories of peace, of community, of family and belonging. We are your representatives! In essence, you are the story behind this story. Because you are the ones that continue to believe in what we do.

And as the story behind the story, your story will always have the power to shape the world around us.

I believe Rotary stories can be used as an opportunity to unravel some of the underlying societal challenges and the foundations of prejudice that exist today.

I believe Rotary stories give precedence to historical accountability, because through them we discover how people have been affected by continuity and change, as we offer healing and reconciliation to the oppressed and the afflicted.

I believe Rotary stories tackle racism and can help us unpack the story of intercultural dialogue, since diversity lies at its core.

I believe Rotary stories help us tackle bigotry, because through them we can look at stories of communities on the margins as a result of war, persecution, and conflict.

And what I really believe is that Rotary stories can help us tackle violations of human rights, as we listen to stories of Rotarians all over the world working to give voice to all those who have been violated, abused, or stripped of their human dignity.

Rotarians are dreamers and, like Paul Harris, dreamers think BIG. Rotary's story gives rise to imagination and endless possibilities, in what we do as we nurture the next generation of peace-builders.

While studying as a Rotary Peace Fellow, I had an experience where I had to leave the U.S. and re-enter. When I returned I went through U.S. airport customs. Now, as a single brown man, I am not unfamiliar with special questioning from airport police officials! However, on this occasion, the airport customs officer looked up at me and asked me, "What are your plans and why are you here?" I told him I was a Rotary Peace Fellow. I went on to tell him how it's the program that is supported by Rotary and has become the highest educational program of its kind. He looked right at me, handed me back my passport — looked me right in the eye — and then smiled and thanked me for helping to make our world a better place. He said, "We need people like you in our world."

As a Rotary Peace Fellow, I can say with my hand on my heart: Rotarians, we need people like you in our world! Because you are the story behind this story, you are the reason Rotary Peace Fellows can make differences in the world, and you are the ones who are empowering peace fellows to negotiate the complex peace and conflict resolution programs, and to build the story and legacy of the Rotary family — the 1.2 million member family dedicated to making our world a better place.

I believe that Rotary's story is one of the greatest stories that needs to be told. After all, to achieve peace in our world, we all need to connect on this human level. So let's continue to tell our story.

As I close here, I would like to invite you all to repeat after me:

We are all storytellers. We are all peacemakers. Our stories enrich. Our stories build community, people, peace in our world.

My name is Kiran Singh and I am a Rotary Peace Fellow.

Thank you for being part of my story.

# Focusing on Rotary's Service

Stephen R. Brown

Past Rotary Foundation Trustee

Shortly after the attacks on September 11, 2001, Rotarian Fary Moini, a relatively new Rotarian in our La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club, asked if I could help her work with Afghan refugees. I arranged for her to spend two months in Afghan refugee camps near Peshawar, Pakistan. Upon her return, she suggested that our club build a school in Afghanistan. I was skeptical, but with encouragement from some Pakistani Rotarians, some fundraising on our part, and a grant from the Donner Foundation to help pay for the building of a school, Fary and I traveled to Jalalabad in November 2002 to explore this idea.

This turned out to be the first of 12 trips I have taken to Afghanistan in the last 12 years, and was the beginning of a chain of events I could never have imagined.

Upon arrival, we met with the governor of Nangarhar Province in Jalalabad. The governor advised us that there would soon be many Afghan refugees returning to the Jalalabad area and he would set aside a site for us to build a school. We went to the site and found two UNICEF tents where boys studied under one tent and girls under the other. We were sufficiently encouraged that we contracted with an Afghan nongovernmental organization to oversee the work, and held a groundbreaking ceremony.

We returned in early 2004 for the dedication of the school. It was built in two phases and, with its 20 classrooms, was designed for 1,000 students.

We have learned it is easier to build a school than it is to ensure the quality of the education. For example, one girl could find California and Afghanistan on the world maps we provided to each classroom, but her teacher could not. The typical primary school teacher may have, at best, only a high school education, let alone instruction in how to teach.

We also learned that girls were not going to go to the Rotary school after the sixth grade for lack of female teachers. We asked how many would attend if we could supply female teachers — and all raised their hands. For the cost of \$600 per teacher per year, we were able to hire eight female teachers, and in 2012 we had the first graduating class of girls who had completed grade 12. In 2010 the first class of boys had graduated.

While we were working with the local Afghans, they became curious about this Rotary organization. The idea that we were unpaid volunteers who kept returning to help them was a bit mystifying. However, they expressed an interest in becoming involved in Rotary, so during our trip of January 2005, we chartered the Rotary Club of Jalalabad.

On our first trip to Jalalabad, in 2002, we asked if there was a local university. We were advised that Nangarhar University is one of the top universities in Afghanistan, and our hosts arranged a visit. We met with the chancellor and the various department heads. We were advised that the university had 4,000 students, 250 faculty. Only a few professors held advanced degrees. It did not have a relationship with any other university; it did not have a single computer nor usable textbooks. The professors taught from 20- and 30-year-old lecture notes. They asked if we could help, but we made no promises.

When we returned in March 2004 for the dedication ceremony for the Rotary school, we also had a dedication ceremony for a computer lab we had funded at Nangarhar University. For this trip we brought Steve Spencer, a professor from San Diego State University who oversees some distance-learning programs in the Pacific region.

At the dedication ceremony for the computer lab, he provided a lecture about the Internet, and later helped set up some of the professors with email accounts.

Professor Spencer brought a projector with him, did a Web search, and displayed the Quran on the wall of the lab. Later, the head of the veterinary medicine faculty [joked] that he could bring some tetracycline to help with the computer virus problems Professor Spencer had discussed. Six months later, I received an email from that same professor advising that, through the use of the Internet and email communications, he had obtained a \$300,000 grant for his veterinary medicine faculty.

A few months after that trip, Steve Weber, then president of San Diego State University, learned about our activities in Jalalabad. When we met with him, he advised us that he would like his university to become involved. Fary and I met with a representative of the World Bank, which had just launched a program to fund partnerships between universities in Afghanistan and universities in other countries. We were able to facilitate putting together a \$2 million partnership between Nangarhar University and San Diego State University to build an English-language program at Nangarhar. And we were able to follow that with a second partnership between the two universities, to build a civil engineering department at Nangarhar, again with about \$2 million in funding from the World Bank.

Related to this, we were able to assist in obtaining Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarships for four Afghan professors. Mohibullah Israr and Fazal Rabani received master's degrees in teaching English, Rafi Sayad also studied English, and Ishaq Hassan received a master's degree from the University of San Diego's School for Peace and Justice.

We also constructed some buildings at Nangarhar University and furnished them using Rotary Foundation Matching Grants. For example, we designed and built an International Learning Center with a technology-rich environment. It has been used for live videoconferencing between the professors at San Diego State and Nangarhar, among other things.

In 2009, with partial financial assistance from the Donner Foundation, we constructed a women's dormitory for up to 72 residents on the main Nangarhar University campus and furnished it through a grant from The Rotary Foundation. Very few females attend the university since, in that culture, they are often not comfortable walking or being transported without a male relative. This dormitory allows for more female enrollment and will help more qualified women become English teachers, engineers, lawyers, and professionals in other fields.

All of these buildings were designed by Rick Clark, an architect and member of our Rotary club, who acted as a volunteer.

Our Rotary club's foundation has been able to enter into a variety of partnerships that have resulted in overlapping programs. Some of these partnerships are with the U.S. Department of State, NATO, and USAID. A common theme for all of these partnerships is to use technology to enhance learning in education and to enhance relationship-building. Different partners provide funding for various aspects of these programs.

For example, the U.S. Department of State provided funding for us to set up computer labs to serve 20 public high schools in Jalalabad. In addition to providing basic computer training, the programs we have underway have students in Jalalabad communicating through technology, using social media, with students in the U.S and other countries. The students must pass an English exam to participate in this program. We also use Skype for live videoconferencing with the students. Currently, about 7,000 Afghan students participate in the program.

We have also been able to obtain funding for some small grant at the Jalalabad high schools. Examples include students organizing cleanup and landscaping campaigns at their schools, and female high school students sponsoring a community forum to discuss violence against women. The audience for that program included male and female high school and college students.

We have been careful to meet with the elders to be certain that they are comfortable with our projects. In one instance, our trainer met with a group of elders who had raised concerns about females using the Internet. When the program was explained, the elders voted to have the females continue. In another instance, a religious leader who had expressed concern about the program was invited into the lab and received a demonstration of what the students are learning. He is now enrolled in the program.

We constructed a building containing a computer training facility and auditorium at Nangarhar University's Faculty of Education, which was opened in December 2011. One of our Rotary Scholars administers a program there, for which we received a grant, to teach English using technology and to provide information technology training to the male and female students studying to be teachers.

We obtained a grant from NATO to bring fiber optics to 16 buildings on the university's main campus and four remote campus locations.

Through the combined funding of The Rotary Foundation, U.S. Department of State, USAID, NATO, and other sources, we have provided computer labs, Internet connections, and training at the facilities listed.

In addition to IT programs, we also established the Jalalabad Female Sports Association, running female sports programs at nine high schools in Jalalabad for table tennis and volleyball.

During our first trip in 2002, I was surprised to see the Rotary logo on a sign in Kabul. As I looked more closely, I saw that this billboard was promoting the polio eradication efforts in Afghanistan. Since that time, we have assisted in having Jalalabad Rotarians become Rotary's representatives for polio eradication in Afghanistan.

During one of our trips, a meeting was arranged with the religious leaders to have a discussion about the importance of supporting the immunization efforts. Abdul Wakil, described to us as a local moderate Taliban leader, talked eloquently about how, under Islam, adults have an obligation to protect children, and thus the message must be provided through the mosques regarding the importance of supporting the polio immunization efforts.

During our trip to Afghanistan in April 2012, Kalyan Banerjee, then president of Rotary International, traveled with us for two days in Kabul. We had several meetings relating to the ongoing polio eradication efforts in Afghanistan. Public Health Minister Suraya Dalil met with us in her office and confirmed that polio eradication is one of her highest priorities.

We learned of a need for storage facilities for the medical supplies used for polio eradication, and later, through a PolioPlus grant, arranged for construction of a storage building.

Even the students in our IT program got behind the fundraising effort, and I just learned last month that the Rotary clubs in Afghanistan are contributing significantly to the polio eradication effort.

The highlight of the two days of meetings was meeting with then-Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who was a strong supporter of the polio eradication initiative throughout his presidency. He reaffirmed his commitment and asked, "What more can I do?" He offered to work more closely with religious leaders to advance communications regarding the importance of the vaccinations. RI President Banerjee gave a medal of appreciation to President Karzai.

In summary, what started out as a simple project to build one school has had a ripple effect, turning into a cascade involving numerous programs affecting thousands of Afghans directly and indirectly. This has been a team effort involving not only Rotarians but also numerous other individuals and their institutions with whom we have been able to connect and who are familiar with our Rotary identity and values — and our reputation for getting things done effectively and efficiently. They know what Rotary stands for and what we can accomplish.

The presidential theme of our current Foundation chair, John Kenny, was *The Future of Rotary Is in Your Hands*. I think this holds true particularly as we are working in partnership with other organizations. That has worked for us in Afghanistan, and offers much additional potential under our new grant model.

In fact, under the new grant structure, I can envision even more impactful and sustainable programs developing in each of our six areas of focus. In Afghanistan we have worked on programs in each of these areas of focus, many of which I have not had time to mention. The tools our Foundation now provides will allow for even more profound impact than we had been able to accomplish under the previous programs of the Foundation.

I believe the individuals in Afghanistan with whom we have been able to interact have appreciated the gift of service that Rotary has been able to bring them and their fellow citizens.

I encourage each of you, in returning to your home countries as Rotary leaders, to inspire all Rotarians to *Be a Gift to the World*. Thank you.

# Service That Changes Lives

Usha Saboo

Spouse of Past RI President

A group of children were playing in a park. Each one was boasting of his latest possession — a new phone or the latest iPad, a computer game or a trip to Disneyland. Little Johnny was standing nervously to the side, his eyes moist because he had nothing to boast about. When his turn came, the other kids asked, “Now tell us, Johnny, what have you got?” Spontaneously Johnny said, “Oh, I have my mother.”

Friends,

When I became a victim of President-elect Ravi’s power of persuasion and agreed to speak here, I was fully aware that I would be facing a most distinguished audience of past, current, and incoming Rotary leaders. I was also aware that I — being just a housewife, a mother, grandmother with no professional degrees or achievements — might have nothing to speak about.

But then, like little Johnny, I too remembered what I have.

I realized that being a mother is my asset; I have my caring hands and my loving heart. Most of all, I have a mother’s vision to see the unseen and hear the unheard cries of pain of people around me.

Flashing before me is a continuous flow of images of people, young and old, ailing and crawling, hopelessly needy people whose lives I have touched. So here I am with the stories of my patients — the many, many Martins and Kassims, Marias and Janakis — and my own story, how I chose the less traveled path that changed my life.

Chair-elect Ray and friends,

I am delighted to be here and consider it an honor to reflect and reminisce over the last several decades of my life and to tell you my story of Rotary.

When Rotary came into my life I was not ready for it. I had my priorities. I had two very young children to look after. When Raja became club president, I constantly complained, argued, and nagged him. Ultimately, one day I went to my spiritual teacher to seek his advice. I said to him, “Why should Raja join Rotary at a time when we, his family, need him most?”

Very patiently my teacher heard me and said, “Have you ever wondered why are you here on this earth? Look around and see how the world is broken and torn with suffering and strife. It is all in your attitude, how you look at Rotary — is it an obstacle in your family life or an opportunity to change your life?” And then he narrated a story.

A Zen master was fed up with his young student, who was always complaining of his problems. So one morning, the master brought a glass of water and a handful of salt and asked the young man to mix the salt in the water and drink it. Drinking one sip the young man spit it out. “How does it taste?” the master asked. “Oh, very bitter, Sir. I can’t drink it,” said the student.

Then the master took his young student to the nearby lake, put another handful of salt in the lake, and asked him to drink some water from the lake. The student sipped some water from the lake and exclaimed, “Oh, Master, in spite of the salt, this water is absolutely sweet.”

Then the wise master responded: “The problems of life are like that only. The degree of bitterness depends on the container. Enlarge your vision, young man. Stop being a glass. Be a lake.”

The Zen story and my teacher's remarks made me think deeply. My vision started widening from "mine" to "ours," from "I" to "we." I heard my inner voice urging me, "Stop being a glass. Be a lake."

I also remembered that long before CSR — corporate social responsibility — became a buzzword, my father had taught me the importance of ISR — that is, individual social responsibility, how much as an individual I owe to the community.

Very soon an opportunity for service came to me in a most unexpected way. One evening I went to the market. It was already dark and as I came out of my car, I stepped on a small heap of rags. A pathetic cry came out and to my horror I saw a leper in the rag heap. In place of his nose there were two holes, mutilated hands and feet, leaky wounds — the man was in great agony. I wanted to run away but better sense prevailed and I said, "Baba, pardon me for stepping on you, but why are you lying on the road?" His story was heart-rending. They were hundreds of them — men, women, children — all infected badly with leprosy, no home, no food, and no medication. Begging during the day and spending the nights on the roadsides, under the trees, on foot paths, in rain, in cold. Badly jolted by the cruel reality, I rushed home and shared the whole incident with Raja.

Next morning, we held an urgent meeting of our Rotary club, and planning and action started immediately. For years, it remained my top priority. The lepers are now totally disease free, self-reliant, their children going to schools, and their residential colony is a place of pride in our town.

God kept my eyes and heart open in that chance encounter with one leper, Basappa, which changed the lives of so many families forever and transformed my own life.

Some years back, a sister from Mother Teresa's Home phoned me seeking help for heart surgery of a small boy. We started raising funds but by the time we had the money, it was no longer required — the boy, Suresh, had died. This tragedy shook our conscience. Raja and I resolved to promote a free heart surgery project for poor children. Since 1998 more than 550 free congenital heart defect corrective surgeries have been done under our Rotary Heartline project, which includes children from our region and from countries like Uganda, Pakistan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Malawi, and most recently, Rwanda. The tragedy of Suresh's death proved to be a harbinger of a new lease on life for so many children. Recently, when we went to Rwanda, a big surprise was waiting for us at the Kigali airport. The children from Rwanda who had their heart surgeries done in Chandigarh had come to greet us with beautiful flowers, looking smart in (perhaps borrowed) dresses and their parents beaming with happiness.

On the faces of those kids I saw the imprint of Rotary. In the eyes of their parents I saw tears of peace.

They will not remember us or our names but definitely, most certainly, they will remember the one important name: Rotary.

Many such acts strengthened my belief in Rotary and made me what I am today.

After Raja completed his Rotary International and Rotary Foundation responsibilities, we both decided to dedicate some of our time and resources for hands-on service.

In 1991-92 *Look Beyond Yourself* was just a Rotary International theme, but our real journey of looking beyond ourselves started in 1998 when the seed of Serving Beyond Borders, the first medical mission to Uganda, was sown — opening the doors of unlimited service for us. Many Rotarians in India questioned us, asking, "Why Africa when there is so much need right here in our own country?"

Our answer was Africa because we wanted to reach out to our larger human family. Africa because we wanted to erase the manmade barriers.



From then onward — a span of 17 long years, serving in more than 12 countries and over 30 medical missions — I realize that it is not only the numbers that matter. More important are the countless lives that are changed every time, each time through our medical services.

Friends,

Lives are changed when thousands of children can walk after polio-corrective surgeries in our medical missions. Lives are changed when vision is restored to hundreds and thousands of people after their eye surgeries. Lives are changed when competent plastic surgeons give a new face to the victims of the most inhuman Rwanda genocide.

In Africa, for women so much abused and neglected — living in agony and shame with torn genitals or uterine tumors sometimes weighing up to 10-15 kilos — our Rotarian surgeons perform miracles and restore dignity to their lives.

Unlimited smiles are generated when we take toys and chocolates for sick children into the hospital wards.

In our medical missions we don't just do surgeries, we try to improve the lives of children, giving them the ability to face the challenges of their lives. We make them believe in the generosity of the human spirit and in the power of love.

Our medical missions comprise surgeons of five or six specialties and nonmedical volunteers, including Raja and me — in all, a group of 30 to 35 people, each one totally committed to the cause. There are many discomforts — long and tedious journeys, heavy loads of equipment and medicines, stay, food, local transport and operating facilities all very minimal — yet our surgeons innovate methods to overcome the deficiencies and perform intricate surgeries, using double, triple gloves to protect themselves from HIV and other blood-borne pathogens. We all are cheerful, positive, and always happy even after long and trying hours of work.

Each of us is a bridge between pain and happiness.

Each of us is an ambassador of goodwill and peace.

Each of us is a messenger of light and love.

My role as a nonmedical volunteer varies. I am a mother when pacifying a crying child. I am a nurse when assisting the doctors in bandaging or giving medicines to the patients. I am a waiter when serving coffee to the team members or food to attendants of the patients.

But what I like most is to meet little kids and their mothers in the hospital wards, all so scared and sad. I take some candy, toys, colorful tiffin boxes, to bring smiles on their faces.

A silent barter takes place on every visit. I leave behind a part of me and bring back beautiful memories and, above all, great lessons.

In a medical camp in India, as usual there were long queues of patients waiting for their turn. One old lady, Janaki, had traveled long hours and was waiting alone for almost four hours, without any water, food, or help. Moved by her plight I steered her for a checkup and then to the operation theater for her eye surgery. As she put her shaking hand on my head, silent tears of gratitude rolled out of her eyes. In her I saw my mother's face.

Young Kassim from Uganda who came for his heart surgery to Chandigarh was very frustrated and abusive. After his successful heart surgery, Kassim was completely changed. Before returning home, with tearful eyes he said, "Thank you, Ma'am, for what you all did for me." I learnt that love has the power to transform a human being.

In Ethiopia, five-year-old Martin, who had undergone four polio corrective surgeries on his little legs, was always happy, playing with me despite his pain. When a local doctor asked him, "You don't know English. How do you communicate with Madam?" Martin said, "Oh, Sir, that is so easy. Ma'am always smiles in my language." Martin taught me that a smile is the biggest bridge between people.

Friends,

Some of the great lessons I have learnt are not from any book or in a classroom. These lessons are from the open book of life.

Lessons of patience, tolerance, gratitude, the power of love, and above all, the lesson to smile at the odds and say these two important words: *Hakuna matata*, Swahili for "No problem."

After seeing the badly disfigured faces of the genocide victims in Rwanda, I am no more conscious of the leukoderma patches on my face and body, and I repeat the words "No problem." I count my blessings and realize how fortunate I am to have a healthy body.

All these service activities around the globe are happening because of your giving to The Rotary Foundation.

If India achieved freedom from polio last March, it was because you contributed to The Rotary Foundation. If our dream of a polio-free world is to become a reality, it will need our continuous giving.

If Rotary is to become a world power in hope and healing, a strong Rotary Foundation will be needed to add more muscle to our caring hands and loving hearts.

Our work is not aimed for any award or recognition. For Raja and me it is a passion, a service addiction. It is our answer to the call from within. Our only wish is to keep serving as long as our age and health permit.

I know that you all present here are capable, much more capable than me to serve in so many different ways and bring the world close — closer, maybe by an inch per Rotarian — to our dream of peace.

I am grateful to the people I have served for changing my life. I am grateful to President-elect K.R. Ravindran for making me a victim of his affectionate persuasion. I am grateful for being the spouse of a Rotarian.

My Rotary family,

When you gift your time in service, you touch lives. When you gift your resources, you uplift lives. When you gift both your time and resources with love and compassion, you yourself become a gift to the world, to humanity.

# You Are the Conductor

Cliff Dochterman  
Past RI President

What kind of leadership will you give to the club presidents, secretaries, and district committees in your district next year?

Google lists over 4 million entries on *leadership*. But I don't believe there is one description of the leadership of a Rotary district governor. There are so many different styles of leadership. However, your leadership job is unique because you are leading a group of Rotary volunteers. What is the style of a successful governor?

A district governor won't survive very long using the leadership style of a top sergeant — no matter how much you try, those club presidents will never line up for marching orders.

A district governor will never be effective using the leadership skills of an animal trainer — whose tools are a whip and a chair. You can never keep club presidents under control.

A district governor will never find much success using the techniques of a football coach — yelling instructions to players in a championship game.

The leadership skills of a successful district governor, working with volunteer Rotarians, require special consideration and personal skills. There is no chance for you to fire your volunteers and hire a new group of club presidents.

Over the years, I have observed that some of the most effective Rotary leaders are those who exhibit the leadership skills and temperament of a symphony orchestra conductor. Just as your district leaders and club presidents are composed of a wide variety of men and women with unusual abilities, special interests, and many experiences — a symphony orchestra is also composed of many distinct units, unique individuals, with a variety of skills and abilities.

Over here is the orchestra's string section, composed of violins and cellos. I would compare them to those Rotarians who are important to your district, but often rather high strung and frequently need to be tuned in to the issues at hand since they carry the theme for the year.

Over here our orchestra has the woodwind section — clarinets, oboes, and bassoons, which have a wide range to cover in the musical score. In Rotary the woodwinds might be the quiet members of your leadership team, who are perfectly willing to take on the high and low notes of your performance. But once in a while you may hear a squeak or two from that section.

Over there is the orchestra's brass section — the trumpets, trombones, and tubas. In your district they are the Rotarians you can always hear loud and clear. When they toot their horn, you know they have an opinion — clearly expressed. And if it's the tuba guy, the sound may be just an occasional "oomph."

In the back of our orchestra is the percussion section, with drums, symbols, and all the bells and whistles. I suspect every Rotary club and district has a percussion section — they beat the drum for their pet projects or use a drum-roll to announce their arrival. You can't miss the percussion section in any club.

In every orchestra there are those who work behind the scenes — the stagehands. They place the stage risers, set out the chairs, and handle the lighting and sound effects. In your Rotary district these are those faithful members whom you can always count on. They are always ready, and seldom complain. They often serve as sergeants-at-arms or aides for the RI president's representatives.

Then there is the actual performance at the concert, which is the end result of the hours of practice, endless rehearsals and the thoughtful preparation. In your district, that is your district conference. It is the showplace of the very best you have to offer. It becomes the major production of your year.

And frequently there is another group attending the symphony — the music critics. They always have an opinion or observations about every performance. In Rotary these critics are frequently identified as — past district governors.

Just as the symphony orchestra is made up of many different instruments and players, you find the same differences, interests, and abilities in the club leaders in your districts. Your job is the same as the symphony maestro, who uses leadership skills to bring together the strings and woodwinds and brass and percussion units into a symphony of beautiful music.

How will you do it? What kind of leadership and management skills will you need to bring together the Rotarians in your district to create the concert you will direct during 2015-16?

Let's look at some of the skills of the symphony conductor:

1. *Prepared.* The conductor knows the music being performed. We say he "knows the score." The conductor continues to learn and practices every day to be a better leader. He or she is aware of all the notes, symbols, and marks that bring out the best of each performer. Yes, the conductor is prepared and prepares his musicians to be the best they can.
2. *Listens.* The maestro listens all the time. The conductor hears the slightest tunes that are out of key. They listen to unique combinations of sounds and seek the best. Yes, the conductor is a listener!
3. *Shares.* Symphony conductors are constantly sharing their experiences and giving instruction based upon training and knowledge. The music leader creates the tempo, the volume — and puts personal feeling into the music. Yes, every conductor must be a sharing person.
4. *Encourages.* The great symphony maestros encourage each of the musicians and recognize the exceptional performances of each musical section. He or she brings this group up and tones that section down as they interpret the entire composition. At every performance, the conductor may take a bow — but always recognizes the entire orchestra and always gives tribute to the soloists. Yes, the successful conductor encourages and recognizes all the players.
5. *Develops.* Every symphony musician is seated by levels of performance, and the conductor is constantly developing the musicians to move up to first chair. As you know, the first violin player is the concertmaster and sits in the chair nearest to the conductor. In each section the maestro is developing players to enhance their musical talents and moving to higher levels of performance.
6. *Performs.* The final achievement of an orchestra is the performance for the enjoyment of others. All the diverse parts come together in a beautiful concert. There is where the conductor's skills are on public display. All of the musicians, under the direction of the maestro, make the concert their finest hour.

The interesting thing is that these six leadership skills of the symphony conductor are almost identical to the leadership styles of successful Rotary district governors.

The successful district governor is carefully *prepared*.

In your district, the governor is the one who is well aware of the plans and goals of our Rotary International president. The governor is well aware of the policies, bylaws, and customs of Rotary within his or her district. The governor is prepared to give a year of committed leadership to the district.

The successful district governor is an excellent *listener*.

Governors who do more listening than talking will usually be the better leaders of their district. As you listen, you will become aware of the strengths and weaknesses, which should be addressed. It is amazing what you can learn when you just listen. The governor who is aware of the issues within the clubs will always be better prepared for effective action.

The successful district governor *shares* experiences and knowledge.

Most governors have experiences in service projects, club activities, The Rotary Foundation, and youth programs that can be shared with presidents and district committees. Throughout this week you have had many discussions and picked up ideas that give you excellent information to be shared with your district leaders. An effective governor will share thoughtful and friendly advice with all of the club and district workers.

A successful district governor gives *encouragement* and recognizes good work.

Well-deserved recognition is one of the most effective forms of motivation. A public word of appreciation or a short note of thanks is a vital part of a governor's leadership skills. Be generous with your encouragement. Be sincere with your praise. And I assure you that you will have the strongest team your district has ever seen. Recognition is a public form of a governor's thoughtfulness.

A successful district governor will *develop* new leaders to build a stronger district for the future.

Each year new Rotarians need to grow and blossom into future leaders. A district governor is in the ideal position to observe, discover, and develop the future leaders of your district. So many Rotarians have latent skills, unknown talents, hidden abilities — and these must be nurtured and given opportunities to be used for the Rotary of the future.

And finally, the effective district governor will be evaluated by the final performance of his or her district.

It is the ultimate concert of achievements, which are important. The kind of leadership you provide will be publicly demonstrated at your district conference. The judging of an orchestra's performance is not the single notes of the tuba player or the second violin — it is the evaluation of the conductor's ability to bring the parts together as seen under the microscope of excellence. That is your district conference.

In the next few weeks, you will be training and rehearsing your club presidents and district committee members to be ready for a new performance on 1 July. You will talk about goals and plans for the year ahead. You will have committees working on a district conference, The Rotary Foundation, membership promotion, and other dynamic programs.

The amazing thing will be that on 1 July, each one of you will step up to the music lectern, pick up the maestro's baton — and your symphony will begin.

*(As Ravel's "Bolero" begins to play, picks up a baton and uses it as if conducting)*

Do you hear that soloist? That is you beginning your visits to the clubs of your district. The music in the background comes from your committees. Then bring in the Interactors and Rotaractors. And over here the Youth Exchange students are added into the theme.

Hear that background sound? It's the district committee considering Rotary Foundation grants. That quiet group over there is preparing for the district conference. You feel the harmony as each group performs its mission.

You are still making your club visits. Don't overlook that Foundation fundraiser. Bring up the tones of the public relations committee. There is the melody of the RYLA group.

You are still making your club visits. The emails never stop — on and on and on. The district conference planning is getting ready. You continue the promotion for the Rotary International Convention in Seoul. Your assistant governors give you more reports.

Your club visits are almost ended. You still prepare materials for the district monthly newsletter. You are ready to introduce a vocational team from a matched district. You look over to see if that new club is prepared for its charter. Each section adds more to the musical theme.

Hear those soft notes: It's one of your club's plans and objectives, five months late; there is the Reach Out to Africa report; don't overlook that 10K run for PolioPlus; get in touch with President Ravi's representative to your district conference.

You can feel that crescendo in all of the activities. The tempo is picking up — more special visits; your spouse is telling you to pack for the Korea convention; more committee meetings; notes of appreciation; Paul Harris recognitions to be presented; district conference details; and more coordination with the governor-elect and -nominee.

You can feel the pulse of the music in your entire body! The music consumes every ounce of your energy. And then it comes to a beautiful climax .... and your symphony is over.

Amid the applause, you take a bow but give the real recognition to the entire orchestra. You acknowledge the soloists. And even the orchestra is applauding for your leadership skills!

Then comes your greatest moment. You pass the baton to the governor-elect to lead the next symphony on the concert program.

That's the cycle of Rotary. That is the task of leadership of a Rotary district. You have brought all of the divergent parts of your district committees and the club presidents into its greatest performance — because you had the leadership skills of a superior maestro.

As the music still rings in the air you can say: "We did it!" But your district will know that they had selected a super governor as their leader!

That, my friends, is great Rotary leadership.

So go to it!

# President's Closing Remarks

Gary C.K. Huang  
RI President

*Ni hao!*

As I'm standing here today, I am reminded of my first time at the International Assembly. It was in 1986, when I was elected the DG for District 345 in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. We gathered in another great American city — Nashville, Tennessee. When I walked into the meeting venue, I was greeted by my fellow incoming DGs from around the globe — people of different races and colors spoke different languages and dialects. It truly felt like attending a mini-United Nations conference. For the first time, I experienced the internationality of our organization. It made me feel proud to be part of this global family. It was also at the assembly that year that RI President M.A.T. Caparas from the Philippines delivered a stirring speech about his theme. It was called *Rotary Brings Hope*. It left a deep impression on me — I was in my early 40s and full of energy and excitement. You can imagine how motivated I was.

I sincerely hope this assembly has done the same for you.

As you all know, English is not my native language. When I learn a new word, I sometimes like to find out its historical meaning. One of the English words that fascinates me is *assembly* as in our International Assembly. In the Oxford English Dictionary, *assembly* is defined as “a group of people gathered together in one place for a common purpose.” That's what we were doing this week — getting together for the common purpose of learning how to lead Rotary to success. But, you go further down the list and you'll notice something new. Do you know that *assembly* was originally a French word, which meant in the old days a signal or a bugle call for troops to gather and get ready for action? I cannot find a better word than this to describe the objective of our gathering here. The International Assembly is not coming to an end tonight. It marks a new beginning for all of us. It is our bugle call for action.

When I was going through the training in 1986, our top job was to rally support for Rotary's first international undertaking — the PolioPlus campaign, which had just started a year earlier. We DGs went home and delivered remarkable results. For this year, our priority to drum up support for Rotary's membership drive is equally exciting and challenging. I want to reiterate my message here. When you go back home, I hope you can continue to make membership a priority and expand the influence of our organization in our communities and around the world.

It is no easy task, but sometimes all it takes is to ask when there is an opportunity. I urge you to reach out to your friends, colleagues, and members of our community, tell them about Rotary, welcome them to our meetings and invite them to participate in our community projects. In December I visited Sri Lanka for the first time. District 3220's DG is a very capable young lady governor. She told me all her family are all Rotarians except her mother. So, during my speech, I invited her mother and asked her to join. She was very happy and accepted the invitation. Now, five local clubs are fighting to get her to join their club!

I want to continue recommending one effective membership recruitment tool, that is, hosting a Rotary Day to educate your community about what Rotary is doing locally and internationally. Tell them about our fight against polio and ask what they can do to help! Tell them that we care about literacy, water, and the environment and invite them to make a contribution.

You can make a Rotary Day simple, you can make it fancy. You can spend a whole day, or just a couple hours. You can host a Rotary Day at a community center, or you can host it at a school or at a park. It can be a festival with entertainment, or it can be a small picnic. The goal is to make sure your community is joining up.

Over the past seven months, Rotary clubs have answered the call to *Light Up Rotary* and organized thousands of Rotary Day celebrations. Every place there is a Rotary Day, the Rotarians plan something different, something appropriate for that place. Every one has been unique. Every one has been fun!

But you know what I see, that is the same, in every Rotary Day? People with big smiles! Rotarians who are proud of Rotary and people who are proud of their community. This is what we need — and this is what shows the very best of Rotary.

President-elect Ravi told me that he likes the idea of Rotary Day, and he will continue this project next year. So please try to make it an annual event. Be creative and think of some interesting and new activities.

Let me give you two inspiring examples:

When I was in Chennai, India, on December 7 last year, Rotary District 3230 invited me to take part in a unique and colorful Rotary Day celebration. In an attempt to enter the Guinness Book of World Records, the Rotary clubs there embarked on a “My Flag, My India” campaign. Rotarians contacted local schools and universities, corporate firms and IT companies. In the end, they were able to register more than 50,000 college students and high school students, corporate and government employees, Rotarians, Rotaractors, Interactors, and other community members. They stood together, each one holding a sign in different colors to make the formation of the Indian flag. Under the flag were the words “Keep India Polio Free.” As you have probably guessed, a Rotary Day event of such scale and magnitude grabbed headlines and many major media outlets covered it. Rotarians also used the celebration to publicize Rotary’s role in polio eradication and put out many promotional materials for the public. It was very impressive.

Of course, I’m not asking that other Rotary districts follow suits and host such a grand event. A Rotary Day event doesn’t have to be so. Most clubs or districts probably prefer something small and cozy, which can be equally effective. Last October, when the Rotary Board and Trustees were in Evanston for our joint meeting, the RI staff hosted an open house and a Rotary Day event at our headquarters. They used social media tools, such as Twitter and Facebook, to promote the event to the city residents. They invited businesses in downtown Evanston, which donated food and snacks. Since our open house was held right after the city’s Day of Caring event, the city mayor, local residents, Rotarians, and staff members’ family all came. The spouses of Rotary leaders put on their traditional outfits to greet visitors. A group of volunteers played bagpipes. We showed Rotary videos in the hallway and illustrated our projects. During a three-hour period, more than 300 residents showed up, many brought their children over. It was so pleasant and many visitors expressed their appreciation for Rotary’s work and expressed strong interest in our organization.

I hope you can find similar ways to celebrate Rotary with your community.

Before you leave here, I want to inspire you with a Confucius quote about the art of leadership.

One day, during a discussion about making decisions, a student informed Confucius that he always thought three times before taking action. When the Master heard it, he said, “Twice will do.”

Oftentimes, too many leaders act without thinking, or sometimes, they don’t act at all and simply rely on the status quo. Confucius insists that you need to look before you leap, but don’t look for so long that you become indecisive. Wait too long and you’ll miss the opportunity.

At Rotary, we cannot afford to rely on the status quo. When the world changes and evolves around us, we have to grab every opportunity.

During this Rotary year, I have seen our clubs using different ways to illustrate the theme of *Lighting Up Rotary*, either burning a candle, lighting up lanterns, or releasing balloons in the air. Our message



is clear: Rotarians devote our time and sacrifice ourselves to help our communities and light up the world. When more people join Rotary, our organization will be stronger and our communities will be much better.

Fellow Rotary leaders, at the end of this productive assembly, let's answer the bugle call!

Let's rally our troops!

Let's take action!

Let's *Light Up Rotary* and *Be a Gift to the World!*

