

# Our Rotary Foundation Goals for 2009-10

Glenn E. Estess Sr.  
Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair-elect

It is a very great pleasure for me to be here today in San Diego, greeting this new class of district governors-elect along with so many members of our family of Rotary. It is an especial pleasure to have the honor of sharing with you my own goals for the coming year, for our Rotary Foundation.

Having the chance to be Foundation chair is one of the best parts of being a past RI president. It is also a wonderful opportunity because a former RI president is in a position to speak about The Rotary Foundation in a way that few people can. Because every past RI president has had the incredible opportunity of seeing, up close, hundreds of the many thousands of projects that our Foundation makes possible, all around the world, every year.

This means that I can tell you firsthand that our Foundation supports work that no one else does, in a way that no one else can. Through the Foundation, we can take on challenges that no one else has the ability or the inclination or the organizational resources to tackle, because we share our resources and our skills in a way that no one else does — with love, with kindness, and with simple generosity. And that's why, when I was traveling with my wife, Mary, during Rotary's centennial year, she so often said to me, "The finest people in the world must be Rotarians."

What we saw, over and over again, was a pure and overwhelming desire to be of assistance, a desire that, thanks to the Foundation, is backed with financial and practical resources. Rotarians have both the skills and the desire to take on needs that seem so large or so intractable or sometimes even so insignificant that no one else can do it, or no one else will try or bother.

I saw so much as president that I will never forget — images and voices and memories of that wonderful year, some of them painful, some of them exhilarating. I will never forget the little girl I saw in Monterrey, Mexico, who had been deaf since birth, whose hearing loss could have easily been corrected with a hearing aid. But her parents did not have the money, or the access to health care, to have her evaluated, to purchase the device, or to have it fitted and adjusted for her needs.

But Rotarians knew of her need and the needs of other children like her. And so, with the aid of a Matching Grant, they bought dozens of rebuilt hearing aids. They brought one to that little girl in Monterrey, and I was there when she received it. I saw that one little girl sitting with her mother as her aid was adjusted, and I saw the look on her face when it was turned on and she heard her mother's voice for the first time. I saw the biggest smile you ever saw. And there wasn't a dry eye in that room.

As much as all of us there were rejoicing for that little girl and for her family and for the new life that had been opened up for her, I think all of us there were in awe and wonder of how that moment had arrived.

That moment did not arrive because of one person, or even because of a few people. It happened because of all of us: every Rotarian who serves, every Rotarian who builds trust in our organization, and every Rotarian who is dedicated to doing the things that we as Rotarians have committed to do.

And it happened because of The Rotary Foundation.

The year ahead of us will be a pivotal one in determining the course of the Foundation in this, our second century of Rotary service. There are new challenges before us — challenges that we must rise to meet, to keep the promises we have made and to be able to keep Rotary's promises for many generations to come.

The first of those promises, of course, is the promise to eradicate polio. This is our No. 1 priority as an organization, and it will remain so until the job is done. The race to finish polio has been a long race, more of a marathon than a sprint. But in any race, when you get to the end, when you see that finish line up ahead — still a little ways up the road, but well in sight — it is always natural to want to run a little faster and a little harder. That finish line is in sight, and it is time to give it everything we have. Eliminating polio is our first priority, and it is the first of the 2009-10 goals for our Rotary Foundation.

Our second goal is to work through our Foundation to achieve a better world, through the six areas of focus of the Future Vision Plan. They are:

Peace and conflict prevention/resolution

Disease prevention and treatment

Water and sanitation

Maternal and child health

Basic education and literacy

Economic and community development

All of these areas are priorities for us as Rotarians and echo the priorities set by President-elect John's theme and emphases. They are the areas in which Rotary service has been the most effective and had the greatest impact in past years and decades. And they are the areas where we should be focusing our efforts in the years and decades to come.

Our third goal is to implement the Future Vision Plan, which will help to revitalize and strengthen our Foundation so that it can adequately support another century of Rotary service. As you have already heard, part of that implementation will be the pilot of the new grant structure. I encourage you to have your districts apply to be part of the pilot, so that we can move to full implementation with a tried and effective structure.

Our fourth and final goal is to support Every Rotarian, Every Year and the Permanent Fund. Not every Rotarian realizes that every dollar, pound, yen, and euro in our Foundation's accounts comes from voluntary donations. None of it — absolutely none — comes from dues. It really is up to every one of us to make sure that Rotarians continue to give to the Foundation, generously, and that we continue to set a positive example by making our own donations every year.

It is not always easy to understand just how much the work of our Foundation can change lives. But they say that a picture is worth a thousand words, so I would like to take advantage of the big screen behind me to cut my speech short by about half an hour.

Our Foundation helps people go from this (screen shows a harrowing photograph of a man clinging to a rope near the edge of a broken stone bridge) to this (a photo of the restored bridge appears on screen).

Rotarian Ken Frantz, of the Rotary Club of Newport News, Virginia, USA, saw that first picture, of a broken bridge over the Blue Nile in Ethiopia, in an issue of National Geographic magazine. He learned that that bridge had been broken for over 70 years and that the only way to cross it

was by clinging to a rope, pulled by 12 men, with certain death below. Children were cut off from schools, communities were cut off from health care, and farmers were cut off from markets.

Being a Rotarian, Ken decided to do something about it. And being a Rotarian, he turned first to Rotary. Three clubs in Virginia and one in Ethiopia offered donations that were matched by The Rotary Foundation. With the help of Rotarian and local volunteers, 25,000 pounds of steel, cement, and equipment were packed on the backs of 250 donkeys. And the bridge was repaired.

But Ken didn't stop there. He leveraged donations from 31 Rotary clubs, including his own, along with Rotary Foundation Matching Grants, to build 40 more bridges in 11 other countries by the end of 2007. His goal is to be building 500 footbridges each year by 2020. Each one of those bridges builds economies, strengthens communities, and saves lives.

Because of our Rotary Foundation, Ken Frantz didn't have to look at that picture he saw and sigh and say, there is nothing I can do. Because of our Rotary Foundation, he could build that bridge — and has gone on to build hundreds more.

Mother Teresa, who was a longtime friend of Rotary, was once asked how she was able to keep doing the work that she did. How did she go on, day after day, doing work that was so difficult, so overwhelming, and that sometimes seemed so futile? Her answer was simple. She said, "I do what I can, where I am, with what I have."

In Rotary, we try to do the same thing. We try to do the most good we can, wherever we are, with what we have. And that is why our Rotary Foundation has a simple motto: Doing Good in the World.

In Rotary, we can do good in so many ways because there are over 1.2 million of us. We can do good in so many places because we are in over 200 countries and geographical areas. And we can do so much good that changes the world because we have the strength of our Rotary Foundation behind us.