

2011 International Assembly

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SPEECHES



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Reach Within to Embrace Humanity

Kalyan Banerjee
RI President-elect

Let me begin by extending Binota's and my sincere and personal welcome to each of you assembled here, leaders from 532 districts in over 200 countries and geographical areas from all over the world.

At the entrance to this Assembly Hall, you would have seen a sign that reads Enter to Learn. And that is what you and I shall do, as I join you today in all humility, but with a clarity about what it is that we want to achieve as we seek our answers over the next five days. It's going to be an experience that we shall long remember and always cherish.

Perhaps this is the time to take a look at your teammates. On each side of you this morning, as well as both in front and behind you, is a new friend. Just take a look. She or he may be from a different country, a different culture, perhaps a different creed. He speaks in a different tongue and has a different attire. But regardless of the differences, there is one single commonality among us: Each one around you is a Rotarian who has the same hopes, the same dreams, and similar aspirations to make the world around him or her safe and happy for his family, for his children and her grandchildren. Over the next few days, as we meet, greet, eat, live, and learn together, our friendship will grow stronger and firmer. Each one of you is waiting, I know, to do just that. So why don't you stand up now — just stand up — shake hands with your neighbor on either side (and in front of you and at your back). Let's go and just do it.

Thank you. Yes, it's a truly special day for each one of us today, you as well as me, as we bask in the presence of our illustrious past presidents, the Board of Directors and Trustees, and officers past, present, and future, leaders all, of our great organization.

Well, where do we start? Let me respond to that question by turning back a few pages in our history.

It was Past [RI] President Glen Kinross of Australia who initiated a low-cost shelter project in Rotary in 1997-98. And this led to Rotary clubs from Raipur, in District 3260 in India, to get the local government to give them some 8 acres of land so that they could build 500 shelters, each about 350 square feet in area, at a cost of US\$800 each. For each shelter, Australian Rotary clubs contributed \$300 and Raipur's five clubs came up with \$100, and The Rotary Foundation provided the rest in a Matching Grant. When the shelters were ready, the clubs in Raipur advertised in the local papers and received some 5,000 applications. Whereupon, the Rotarians decided that the shelters would be allocated by a public drawing of lots. On the appointed day, they all gathered in the open space adjoining the buildings — the Rotarians and about 3,000 people. I flew in from Mumbai, 1,500 miles away, to join them.

Perhaps the 135th name drawn was that of Anisa Begum. As her name was called, a slim woman in a white sari got up from the audience and made her way to the stage where she solemnly received her papers. But instead of going back, she suddenly asked the Rotary organizers if she could speak a few words. And something about her sincerity made the Rotarian hand the microphone to her, telling her she had just one minute. The woman began by saying:

"My Rotary brothers, I don't know you and you don't know me either.
I came here to Raipur with my husband and our three small children one

year ago. We lived in one small room until my husband came in one day and said, 'Anisa, I'm going to leave you. There is someone else.' Then he quickly said three times, '*Talaaq, talaaq, talaaq*' (I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you) and picked up his bag and just walked out.

"The sky fell on me. I had nowhere to go. The room's owner threw me and the children out the next day because my husband had not paid any rent. Then, we just roamed around, staying at the rail station, sometimes at the bus terminal, being chased away by security guards everywhere, or just slept on the sidewalks along with the street dogs. The children were always crying and hungry and sick. I had no money for food or medicines and no job, except sometimes as a sweeper of public toilets. I was getting absolutely desperate.

"And then, someone told me about your housing scheme and was kind enough to write an application out for me because I can't write myself. And so here I am."

And after saying this she suddenly sat down, there on the stage, in front of the thousands there and said:

"Rotarian brothers, you don't know what you have done for me. You have given a new life for my children and me. Thank you, thank you, thank you."

And then she wept unabashed and so, I must admit, did we, because we just could not help it. But through our tears, each one of us realized that day the true meaning of our Rotary membership like never before.

Well, that was 12 years ago and ever since that day I have been convinced that if we want to bring hope and give dignity and confidence to our fellow human beings on this earth, we can do nothing better than to help them have a home to live in. A home is where the family begins. The mother and the child are the core of every family. And the communities we live in are not built of individual people but of families — families living in homes together, sharing their lives and their resources and their common destinies. Good families lead to good neighborhoods, and good neighborhoods build good communities. Good communities make great nations.

This is why, in the coming year, the first of our emphases will be the family, because the family is where all our goals are set. And then, we start looking at safe housing, at water and sanitation, at health care, at all the issues affecting mothers and children. For there to be a strong family, there must first be a strong and safe home. Only then can there be health and hope and harmony within its walls.

Years ago, I had the privilege to work with Mother Teresa of Calcutta. It was Mother Teresa who said: The world is upside down and is suffering so much because there is so little love in the home and in the life of the family. We have no time for our children, we have no time for each other, to enjoy each other. Love begins at home — love *lives* in homes and that is why the world suffers so much and is so unhappy today. Everyone is in a rush, and children have little time for parents and parents have no time for children or one another — and in the home begins the disruption of the peace of the world.

And so it is the home and the family we start with, to return to that peace.

Our second emphasis is to build on what we do well, on continuity, because there are so many things we are indeed good at: working for clean, safe water; spreading literacy; working in so many ways with the New Generations, our youth, in our newest Avenue of Service and assisting them to become the leaders of tomorrow. And, of course, we stay focused on eradicating polio. We are almost there — just this close, as Desmond Tutu said. To do all this,

we must continue to work with our strategic plan — expand on it, reinforce it, and take it to the next level. We must support The Rotary Foundation on its Future Vision Plan.

And since development leads to prosperity and prosperity leads to peace, let's continue to build communities. It may be by doing something huge, like building a dam or a bridge over rivers, as clubs in India have done. Or it may be something small, like putting desks or fans or blackboards in classrooms in a school. As you go ahead, you will find that what really matters is just your willingness to meet the need, and not the size of the project. This I have always seen: The difficult jobs can be done right now. The impossible may take just a bit longer.

But along with the big things, let's not ever forget the small gestures that change lives. A pat on the back, a word of cheer, sometimes just a smile is all it takes. And you will then see that almost everyone will smile back. Laugh and the world laughs with you. Let's make our year, in addition to all that we do, a year of laughter and joy and happiness, with at least three smiles each per Rotarian and spouse every day. That's eight million smiles daily! Wow! In this life, you will find we may not always be able to do great things. But we can always do small things, with great love.

It is my belief that we Rotarians are pragmatic idealists and that we bring our ideals to life through our Rotary service. We aspire to live our lives ethically, honestly, having The Four-Way Test to guide us, as we share goodwill and friendship, and try to see the worth of every human being. We are not interested in the lowest common denominator, for Rotary is anything but common. That is why we work to elevate ourselves and, thereby, elevate the world.

So, let's look at the things that we can do better, things that we should be changing, and things that we haven't started working on yet. I believe we must have the wisdom and courage to see these and identify them and engage ourselves in them. Indeed, I believe we are in Rotary to change the world, for why else would we be Rotarians? We believe our future will be better than the past. I'm so fond of quoting Mahatma Gandhi, who said: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

And so, our third emphasis in 2011-12 will be change, and we start by being the change we wish to see in the world ourselves. If we wish for peace, we start by living in peace ourselves, in our homes and in our communities. If we wish environmental degradation to stop, if we wish to reduce child mortality or to prevent hunger, we must be the instrument of that change — and recognize that it must start *within* us, with each of us.

And to bring about the changes, we will need to think out of the box. We need to explore the possibilities of working together with others similarly engaged as we are. I have often felt that Rotary and the United Nations form a symbiotic relationship. We can take this forward by our engagement with the Millennium Development Goals, striving to meet the needs of our communities. And the newly approved but well-tested Rotarian Action Groups — working in areas such as safe water, microcredit, AIDS prevention, or literacy — will significantly strengthen our arsenal of weapons to serve both effectively and efficiently.

Two areas where we shall need to constantly revisit our goals are first, finding more Rotarians to do the work of Rotary. I believe the time has long since arrived when we must focus on getting newer, younger, current-generation, YouTube- and Facebook-savvy Rotarians. They are all there, willing to be invited, but we need to make space for them. In many parts of the Rotary world, this is beginning to happen. It needs to become universal as we put ourselves on fast forward and develop our own Rotary network. And it certainly will, if we focus on the changes that I am talking about.

And the other area we must look at is telling well the story of Rotary to the world. Too often do we believe that because we are doing so well, the world must be looking at us. Well,

the world isn't, for most of the time. Even in Evanston, two blocks from our headquarters, intelligent people often ask: "Rotary? What does it do?" We need a planned, imaginative, modern-day presentation of the Rotary story to the world. Newspapers and magazines carry enough stories of the bad. It's time to tell the stories of the good. The way we tell it may differ from place to place, country to country. But it needs to be told, because we surely do things worth telling.

Yes, today, as we get ready to commit a precious year of our lives to Rotary, let us clearly understand that each one of us has a part to play, to perform, to deliver. We cannot simply go back home from here saying we shall try our best. We need to commit ourselves absolutely, fully, and say what I must do shall indeed be done.

And I tell you that each one of you *will* succeed because the resolve and strength to do this — to do anything — comes from *within* yourselves. In order to achieve anything in this world, a person has to use all the resources he can draw on. And the only place to start is with ourselves and within ourselves. And the questions we need to ask ourselves are: Why am I here? Why are you here? It is because we all seek a sense of fulfillment in life, and the responsibilities we are about to take up are a part of that fulfillment.

To achieve the fulfillment, we have to find harmony between our inner self and the outer self; the inner dimensions are our desires, our will, our spirit, and our outer dimension is the action we take and the image we create. That is why I am asking you to reach within and unleash your inner power and then use it to embrace everything and everyone around you. Go ahead. First reach within yourself, and then move on confidently, firmly, toward the targets you have set for yourselves. Discover yourself, develop the strengths within you, and then unhesitatingly, unflinchingly, go forth and encircle the world, to embrace humanity. And that, my brothers and sisters in Rotary, is going to be our theme for our year: *Reach Within to Embrace Humanity*.

How do we do it? Well, that's just what we have been talking about, all this time. All the lights of the world cannot be compared even to a ray of inner light of the self. And I wish that: May the lamps of love and devotion burn brightly in your heart, may the light of understanding shine in your minds, may the light of harmony glow in your homes, and may the bright rays of service shine forth ceaselessly from your hands.

I want to end this morning with a little story. One of my favorite books is Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, the epic novel about the Napoleonic army's doomed efforts to conquer Russia. There is one scene in the book where the French troops are very close to the Russians, who appear to have their backs to the wall. Two Russians, an officer and his friend, are talking.

The officer says to the other: Tomorrow's battle will depend on us, and not on any others. Success never depends, and never will depend, on position, or equipment, or even on numbers.

His friend asks: But on what does it depend?

The officer says: On feelings — the feeling that is in me, and in him, and in each of us.

Why do I end with this story today? Well, for one thing, because we too have been talking about war and peace. But more, because for the past 20 minutes, I have been telling you that's what we are all about and that is what Rotary is all about: the feelings in you and in him and in me.

Reach Within to Embrace Humanity. And I wish that, for each one of you, this International Assembly will be everything that you hoped it would be.

Strengthening Families, Building Communities

Adélia A. Villas
Past District Governor

I have been invited to talk about family. To start, I'll focus on the experience of how this social institution helped me to grow both personally and professionally. I was born in the south of Brazil where I grew up in a family of Italian descent formed by my dad, Olympio, and my mom, Lucia, who unfortunately are no longer with us; my sister, Alice, who is a district governor; and my two brothers, Augusto and João. Very early on, we found out what living in a patriarchal and matriarchal system was like. My father, a strong man of good character and considerable culture, was not very successful in his endeavors. My maternal grandmother, Helena, however, was a successful farmer, which apparently made her believe that she had the right to make decisions on behalf of the family of her only daughter. If there was one thing my mother taught us, it was to respect adults and to learn from the difficult relationship between my father and his mother-in-law. It was indeed *una vera famiglia italiana*.

Although we didn't have enough money for a social life, we always had very good education. We all attended good schools, which were essential to our development. However, that was not an opinion shared by my grandmother. She used to say: "Girls need to learn how to sew and embroider, and they should start dating early so they can marry as soon as possible." To prove her theory, she gave us a sewing machine as soon as we turned 15.

I can say we were very happy during our childhood and teenage years, living enriching experiences at home and in our neighborhood. During World War II, we spent our nights playing dominoes and other games and singing opera while listening to the news and our father's explanation about what was going on.

Early on, our parents taught us by example, helping charities and participating in cultural groups. I was the first female to head the junior Scouts in my state. The whole family sang in religious and folk choirs. At the age of 16, I conducted a male choir during the time I was taking music classes. I took drama classes with a group led by the Jesuits. I played the piano in a ballet company and danced for many years. Even though we didn't have free time, we were surrounded by family and friends and we were happy. And so was our community, where adults, youth, and children had their separate roles and were respected.

The topic for the second session of this assembly of world Rotary leaders was not randomly chosen. President-elect Banerjee wants to call our attention to the importance of strengthening the institution called family — either our own family, our family in Rotary, or the family formed by our brothers and sisters in communities around the world.

As Rotarians, we are prompted to reflect on our role as family members. Past [RI] President Herb Brown put it best when he said: "When we Rotarians care for the world's children, we care for the world's families. Since the family is the basic unit of every community, we in turn strengthen our local communities and, ultimately, the world community."

If community members do not have access to basics, such as water, sanitation, health care, education, and vocational training and jobs, then we in Rotary are losing the battle against violence, drugs, prostitution, and other squalors of so-called modern society. It is inconceivable to have a separation between club and community.

Rotary's philosophy of world peace doesn't materialize because there is an international treaty in place. Instead, it starts with the ability that Rotarians have to detect local problems. These Rotarians, all of whom are business and professional people from that same community, will come up with possible solutions, creating awareness and thus empowering the people to take action and eradicate the problems. We Rotarians start with a small structure aiming to work for the short, mid, and long terms.

That's how the PolioPlus program came to be. Because of the collective power of Rotary clubs worldwide, our ideas have the potential to be expanded and re-created in the approximately 34,000 communities we serve. Solving small local conflicts is the first step toward peace. This is the role of a Rotarian, and that is what Rotary expects of us.

The late Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann, a Brazilian pediatrician and Nobel Prize nominee with a range of humanitarian work in South America and Africa (who died in the 2010 earthquake in Haiti), said: "Children are the seed for peace or violence in the future, depending on how they are cared for and stimulated. Thus, their family and community environment must be sown to grow a fairer and more fraternal world, a world to serve life and hope."

Remember that besides being an instrument of service, the Rotarian is an advocate for peace. We start building peace in our homes and in everything else related to our family members. By practicing the culture of nonviolence, we create the blueprint to build a peaceful society.

All around the world, Rotarians are trying to address these issues.

To help illustrate what I am saying, I would like to share with you a personal experience that Rotary made possible 13 years ago, when I was preparing to become governor of District 4570, in Rio de Janeiro. I received the opportunity to help a 100-year-old school that served 200 underprivileged children living in the port area, providing education up to the fourth grade of elementary school. The governors of German districts 1840 and 1950, who attended the Rotary Inter-American Conference for Peace in February 1998, had an excellent idea. Together, we visited the school and realized we could help that institution by offering classes through all elementary grades, expanding the school's capacity to 800 students, providing food, preventing dropouts to decrease the possibility of them going to the streets, introducing the students to computers, and offering basic training in some vocational areas. We would need five years to implement this plan and would have to expand the existing facilities.

It was terrific to learn with this project that we could make partnerships between clubs in the same district, a practice we had not followed until then. Five [Rotary Foundation] Matching Grants were requested, and in order to renovate eight nearby properties that belonged to the institution supporting the school, the Venerable Third Order of Saint Francis, the German district governors contacted their government through the BMZ (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development), which agreed to partner with Rotary in this educational project. As a result, half a million dollars was donated. The new school opened in November 2003, and the first junior high class graduated. The facilities have 3,500 square meters and cost nearly \$1 million to be built, a wonderful achievement that was only possible thanks to the partnerships we formed.

The school is now 113 years old and has 1,200 students enrolled all the way to high school. From the six Rotary clubs in three districts located in different countries originally responsible for the school's renovation, we are today 28 clubs in 12 districts located in eight countries. In the past seven years, we continued investing in the school with new Matching Grants to make sure that all our students — to date, more than 6,000 — have food, well-equipped labs, workshops, furniture, kitchen supplies, musical instruments, and a library.

Besides knowing that many of our students went to college, the wonderful human experience we had was to see the mothers taking on the responsibility of caring and providing for their families. With the modernization of the port in Rio de Janeiro, the dockworkers were laid off, which caused them to leave their families to find jobs elsewhere. The violence generated through drugs and weapons trafficking from nearby slums escalated. To solve this problem, the Third Order of Saint Francis asked the European Union to approve a project that would guarantee the protection of women and their children living in the port area. This project, called Humanizing the Neighborhood, has so far provided eight years of legal and psychological assistance to mothers and their children, a day care where working moms can leave their kids during the day, basic classes on how to take care of babies and the elderly, healthy meals, and basic medical aid. It also offers access to physicians, clinicians, pediatricians, and gynecologists to help avoid HIV/AIDS among teenagers; family planning to prevent teenage pregnancy; dental assistance for expectant mothers and students; and training courses on 18 basic skills. It has provided support through psychologists and social workers to help those who want to quit drugs and has implemented a community library, a music school, and a cultural center in the Morro da Conceição, where the school is located. In eight years, 70,000 people have benefited from the project.

Because of the good work of Rotarians, teachers, parents, and community members, many things have been accomplished in these past years. Today, mothers can take care of their kids because they feel protected and prepared, thanks to the support they received through the courses that allow them to keep their jobs and maintain the family unit.

These struggles are shared by many communities around the world, where severe economic and social problems hit the primary cell of society: the family. Rotarians must be aware of these problems and must change the status quo in order to build a better community and society. This is the only way we can win the battle against social injustice and achieve our goal of peace.

It is up to us to make the world a better place by going beyond our own limitations.

Bridging Continents to Embrace Humanity

Ray Klinginsmith
RI President

Despite the years, I can vividly recall my experience as an incoming district governor at the 1975 International Assembly in Boca Raton. It was the beginning of a new adventure in service for me, and I took seriously the advice offered by the various speakers. I also talked with my new friends about the incoming president's [RI] theme, and I hope you will do the same as you contemplate President-elect Kalyan's theme of *Reach Within to Embrace Humanity*. It is philosophical, and it deserves reflection and discussion.

Kalyan's theme is part of your new adventure in service, and I want to express my appreciation to Kalyan for giving me this opportunity to show the relationship between his theme and mine. In particular, he has asked me to tie one aspect of his theme, embracing humanity, to the second part of my theme, bridging continents, which is easy to do. We all know that Rotary is a premier organization, and we do many things well. But the area in which we clearly excel is international service, as we bridge continents in order to embrace humanity.

When a class of business students at Northwestern University recently used Rotary as a case study, they concluded that Rotary empowers people to become better friends, better professionals, and better citizens of the world. I like that statement because one of the objectives for this meeting is to expose you to the internationality of Rotary and thereby enable you to become better citizens of the world. In truth, I think it would be difficult to enjoy this wonderful week of meeting high-quality Rotarians from around the globe without becoming better citizens of the world. Indeed, it is the magic of Rotary!

So how do we proceed to embrace humanity with our new friends and our new commitment to bridge continents? The good news is that Rotary provides several options for our clubs and Rotarians to be involved in international service, and I want to review a few of them with you. After all, the quest for international understanding, goodwill, and peace is part of our Rotary DNA.

One of my favorite programs for bridging continents is Rotary Youth Exchange. I agree with Past [RI] President Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar that if all the 17-year-olds in the world could spend a year with Rotarians in a country other than their own, there would be no more wars. Although we do not reach all the young people in the world, we do provide high-quality youth exchanges for more than 8,000 high school students every year, which is an amazing contribution to world understanding. Many of your districts have very strong Youth Exchange programs, and I salute all of the Rotarians involved in Youth Exchange. I often find that our Youth Exchange workers are some of the most committed Rotarians in all of Rotary.

One of my concerns about Rotary Youth Exchange is that it usually involves only the children of parents who can afford the travel expenses. Several districts are now providing scholarships for Rotary Youth Exchange students from developing countries whose parents cannot afford the travel costs, and I encourage your districts to consider such scholarships. Our Youth Exchange program will celebrate its finest hour when we make it possible for all highly qualified students to have an opportunity to participate and to promote peace in the world.

One of the chief benefits of the Rotary Youth Exchange program is the personal contacts and lasting friendships made by the students during their year abroad. It is a clear indica-

tion that the best way for all of us to be involved in bridging continents to embrace humanity is to take the time to travel. We have a network of 34,000 clubs awaiting the arrival of Rotarians who are truly interested in providing international service. For that reason, I hope you will encourage Rotarians in your districts to participate in National Immunization Days, often called NIDs, still to be conducted before the demise of polio. Such NID trips are not only helpful to support the eradication of polio but life-changing experiences for the Rotarians who participate. Such trips are good for all Rotarians, and if we help younger Rotarians to make the NID trips, we will gain their avid support of Rotary for many years to come.

The electronic age has made it much easier for Rotary clubs and districts to find international partners for Matching Grants and Rotary Foundation Global Grants, and Foundation programs are poised for expansion, which is exciting news. At the same time, we don't want to forget the value of personal friendships in our international service projects. I think that is a significant part of the message in Kalyan's theme because one of the definitions of the word *embrace* is to hug or cherish. We cannot hug or cherish humanity effectively without personal contact, and we have learned that the best Foundation projects usually are developed by districts that have established continuing partnerships. And the best partnerships are those forged through the personal visits of Rotarians back and forth between the partner districts.

It is the need for personal contacts to stimulate projects that caused me to develop the Rotary Project Safaris program, which encourages small teams of Rotarians to make international visits to spend a week in viewing Rotary projects that need funding, while visiting a few tourist sites at the same time. It is a program that I hope you will continue in your districts next year because the Rotary Project Safaris are designed for bridging continents to embrace humanity. The safaris are not an official program of Rotary, but they fit well with Kalyan's theme to *Reach Within to Embrace Humanity*.

I could go on and on with these remarks about embracing humanity through personal visits. After all, I am a past district governor, and it is well known that most PDGs like to talk — often for longer periods than they should! Please keep that allegation in mind when you join our ranks at the end of your year as governors. Don't add to our bad reputation for talking too much!

Many speakers miss some good opportunities to quit talking and sit down, which is understandable, because the most difficult part of public speaking is learning how to end a speech and exit the stage effectively. Please think carefully about your closing sentences as you develop the speeches for your clubs. A strong ending for a speech is critical to its success!

So now that I have offered this unsolicited advice, are you wondering how I plan to end these remarks and exit the stage? That is simple for me, because "cowboy logic" says that we should talk less and say more. It is easy for me to talk less when the topic assigned to me by President-elect Kalyan is so straightforward and self-evident. Is there any doubt that Rotary is the best in the world at bridging continents? And must we not embrace humanity to achieve our goal of international understanding, goodwill, and peace? The two phrases go together like a hand and glove, and I want to endorse Kalyan's theme, which brings these two concepts together so powerfully.

We are lucky to be Rotarians, and the time has come for us to fulfill our core essence as stated by the Northwestern University students in their report about Rotary. In their words, Rotary is a worldwide network of inspired individuals who translate their passions into relevant social causes to change lives in communities!

Let me say it again: Rotary is a worldwide network of inspired individuals who translate their passions into relevant social causes to change lives in communities. It is a tremendous tribute by the students, and we should be justly proud of their conclusion. Now the question for you is the following: Will Rotary continue to live up to the students' expectations in your districts? Yes, your districts can do it, if you exercise the needed leadership. And as a group, we will do it even better than before, if we are willing to continue bridging continents to embrace humanity and thereby make the world a better place!

Our Pride in Our Foundation

William B. "Bill" Boyd Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair-elect

There is a school at Ada in Nigeria called the Umuocham Girls Secondary School, and it had a problem. The school, with 2,400 pupils, had no water supply, yet was bound by a government requirement that its sanitation be water-based. Classes were rostered each day to bring water to school and when the water ran out, the school had to close.

The Rotary Foundation gave a grant to two Rotary clubs that has ensured that Umuocham and 21 other schools now have their own water supply. Their students now spend their time in school learning, not carrying water; the length of their school day is no longer determined by how much water is left to use.

In Nairobi, there is a slum called Mathare where 500,000 people struggle to survive. It is a slum far beyond the comprehension of most of us. In the slum is a school that exists through the support of Rotary. [My wife] Lorna and I visited it. It is not glamorous — really, a big corrugated-iron shed — and I wondered why we should be educating children in a country with over 50 percent unemployment. The answer is that if we can teach them to read and write, we give them a pathway to better health and the opportunity to find employment. We cannot guarantee a job, but we can give them a chance.

In Manila, Lorna and I watched a cataract surgery in an eye hospital that had been equipped by Rotary. Young doctors were being trained by the specialist and would eventually move out into country areas. An older lady was having a cataract removed, and after watching for a few minutes we moved on to see the rest of the hospital with all the machines identified by the Rotary wheel. As we were about to leave, the patient came out on the arm of the doctor with a bandage covering the eye that had been operated on. She took Lorna's arm and tears streamed from her other eye. "I thank God for Rotary," she told us, "for I am poor and was going blind and Rotary has given me back my sight." Lorna shed a few tears and I was close, and I felt so proud to be a Rotarian. But as we move into Future Vision, we are realizing that an unfocused Rotary Foundation will not build on opportunities like these: We need to expand those opportunities, so that we change the lives of the greatest number of people.

This is why we have agreed that we should have six areas of focus. They are broad and will allow us as Rotarians to do the projects we wish but with some common purpose and in such a way that benefits as many people as possible, to do bigger projects that touch more lives. They match some of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations, and they meet the RI Strategic Plan objective to focus and increase humanitarian service. Our areas of focus 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

These areas of focus overlap. Our Umuocham Girls Secondary School received a water supply, and this has led to better education. A UNESCO project showed that giving women just a primary school education decreases child mortality by between 5 percent and 10 per-

cent. The World Bank says that the more girls who go to secondary school in a country, the higher that country's per capita income growth. You can see the pattern. Address one major issue and you impact on others. The ripples roll on and on.

Too many statistics in a speech are hard to absorb, but they do help us understand the issues. Afghanistan is rated 169th in the International Monetary Fund economic ranking of 181 countries. Of every 1,000 babies born there, 257 die before the age of 5. The literacy rate is 28 percent. Of the appropriate age group, 28 percent of boys and 9 percent of girls go to secondary school. UNICEF says that in 2006, 22 percent of the population had improved drinking water and 30 percent improved sanitation. A poor economy, a high rate of child mortality, low literacy, inadequate water and sanitation.

If you come from a developed country, please don't feel smug. The National Institute for Literacy in the United States says that in the U.S., adults who cannot read are hospitalized at twice the rate of those with reading skills, 45 percent of those at the lowest literacy level live in poverty, and 60 percent of prison inmates are illiterate.

So how do we as Rotarians respond? Through Future Vision, we develop projects in the six areas of focus, and we look to get the best results from our resources. None of this is new, but we are looking to better target our efforts. It is our Foundation, our money, and we need to work out the best way to use it. The Rotary Foundation is an important tool in our service toolbox.

Each year, it is customary at the International Assembly for the chairman-elect of our Foundation to announce the Foundation goals for the coming year.

Our first goal remains the eradication of polio, and suddenly that goal seems much closer.

Another key goal involves increasing support of our Foundation. As Rotary leaders, we can help our fellow Rotarians to realize that this is *their* Foundation and that they should take ownership by supporting the Annual Programs Fund, the Permanent Fund, and the Rotary Peace Centers.

Continuing our progress on the Future Vision Plan is our final goal. If you are a pilot district, you are a driving force in ensuring our Future Vision is as good as it can be. If you are not a pilot district, then you should start preparing now to transition easily in 2013 by aligning service projects with the areas of focus. All of us should work to build those six areas of focus into the culture and thinking of every Rotary club.

To help meet our goals, we should seek opportunities to build partnerships between clubs and districts, our Rotary Foundation, and other organizations that can join us in our mission to advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through the improvement of health, the support of education, and the alleviation of poverty.

New Zealand is a country of 4.2 million people, smaller than many big cities around the world. We Rotarians in New Zealand decided that we would take up the dictionary project that has been so successful [with Rotary clubs] in the United States and RIBI [Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland]. Within the first three years of the project, we have imported 63,000 copies of a high-quality, 288-page, full-color dictionary, and we believe that we are making a significant impact in assisting children, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, to become fully literate. How does this project relate to The Rotary Foundation? Before we began our project, we built a partnership of Rotary clubs, some community trusts, and our Rotary Foundation through a District Simplified Grant. We have since received a second District Simplified Grant. Our project has extended beyond schools into places such as the Refugee Resettlement Centre, where every child is given a

dictionary, and a roading company that runs literacy classes for its workers. Each attendee gets a dictionary and, with it, a helping hand to a better life.

Lorna and I met a lady in Manila named Ynday Mijares. She had had polio as a child, but that was well behind her and life was good for Ynday with her own business, a happy family, and her life as a Rotarian. In the mid-1990s, she found it increasingly difficult to walk, and when her doctor checked he found that she had developed postpolio syndrome and would have to spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair. She said she went home and shut herself away in her bedroom, unable to accept what had happened to her. It just wasn't fair. She had done nothing to deserve this. She was unpleasant to her family and did not want to see her friends. Then, Ynday said, one day God sent her a candle, and it was in the shape of a Rotary wheel. She came out of her bedroom and made peace with her family. She became the charter president of the Rotary Club of Centennial Quezon City, has been an assistant governor three times, and has served on a number of district committees, all in her wheelchair. As you travel the world, you come to realize the power of that Rotary wheel.

Mother Teresa said: "The biggest disease today is not leprosy or tuberculosis but rather the feeling of being unwanted, uncared for, and deserted by everybody. The greatest evil is the lack of love and charity, the terrible indifference to our neighbor. At the hour of death, when we come to face God, we are going to be judged on love — not how much we have done but how much love we have put into our actions."

We Rotarians refuse to fall prey to that terrible indifference. Each of us came to Rotary because we want the ability to reach out, to show others that we care, to express our sincerity and our love.

You and I want many people — as many as possible — to know that someone who wears that Rotary wheel cares for them, cares enough to reach out and change their lives. We know that we can do this through our Rotary Foundation.

Together, we can. And together, we will.

The Rotary Foundation and Water

F. Ron Denham
RI/USAID Steering Committee Member

Let me tell you about Elizabeth.

Elizabeth has spent most of her life carrying water from a small river to her home in the Nakuru region of Kenya's Rift Valley. It's a trek of about 6 kilometers. Elizabeth supports a family of 10 (including her husband, whom she describes as a "drunkard"). She carries the water in a plastic jerrycan, slung over her back. It holds 20 liters of water. It weighs over 20 kilograms (approximately 50 pounds). Each trip takes about an hour. The math is simple: A minimum of 20 liters of water for each member of the family equals 200 liters a day. Every day she was spending about 10 hours on this backbreaking manual labor.

And the tragedy was that the water was neither safe nor clean. Her family got sick. The children missed school. At the end of the day, not surprisingly, she was exhausted. She didn't have the time or the energy to help her family or earn an income — a sad picture of poverty and ill health, directly attributable to the lack of safe water near her home.

Enter the Rotary Club of Nakuru. This club, under the dynamic leadership of successive presidents, recognized the need and the opportunity for a major humanitarian program. They heeded the words of Kofi Annan, former secretary-general of the United Nations, who said: "Access to safe water is a fundamental human need and therefore a basic human right."

The club carried out tests on the available groundwater. There was water, but it was polluted. And it contained too much fluoride; it would poison the people and destroy their bones. Assessment of the situation and an evaluation of alternatives pointed to rainwater harvesting as the most appropriate solution. The club held meetings with the villagers. Workshops helped them to understand the impact of polluted water on their lives and the benefits of safe water to their health and livelihood. The villagers understood the problem and formed their own committee. Each family contributed 1,000 Kenyan shillings (about US\$12) and was required to plant 100 trees to preserve the environment.

The Rotary club provided materials for each household to build a water storage tank of 10 cubic meters — large enough for a family to get through the 90-day dry season. The villages covered a large area, as much as 50 kilometers from the town of Nakuru. To supervise construction over such a wide area, the Rotary club formed 28 Rotary Community Corps. An RCC was responsible for training the villagers in building the tanks. More amazing, they created a microbank for the women — yes, the women — to manage the funds.

This program has transformed the people's lives. Freed from the drudgery of carrying water each and every day, Elizabeth borrowed 1,000 shillings from the bank and bought chickens. From the sale of eggs and meat, she saved enough money to buy two goats. This, in turn, she built into a thriving milk and meat business. Then she expanded. She bought some cabbage seedlings, sold the mature cabbage, and bought more seedlings. She now raises three crops of cabbages a year for an annual return of 30,000 shillings. Elizabeth says: "My son no longer gets sick. He is going to a better school." And her husband no longer drinks. He admires his wife; he helps look after the goats.

This transformation was made possible by the support of Rotary clubs in Canada and the Netherlands, complemented by a grant from the Canadian International Development Agency and, of course, a grant from The Rotary Foundation.

But this is just one of many successful Rotary water and sanitation projects. For example:

- Rotarians in Nairobi, with support from members of a Rotary club in Denver, USA, and The Rotary Foundation, guided a slum community to build a toilet block that includes showers and a baby-washing station. Rotarians enabled the community to form a committee and elect leaders. They trained the team in project management. They negotiated with the local authorities for access to the sewage system to dispose of the waste.
- In northern Ghana, the Rotary Club of Tamale, with support from The Rotary Foundation, the Carter Center, and Rotary clubs in New Hampshire, embarked on a program to eradicate Guinea worm disease. As a result of their efforts, this disfiguring disease is virtually eliminated.
- The community of Lopko in Benin got its water and sanitation system through the efforts of Rotarians from Cotonou, with support from The Rotary Foundation and the Rotary Club of Bitonto Terre dell'olio in Italy.
- The Rotary Club of Ashmore, Australia, helped Rotarians from the Charoen Nakorn club in Thailand install water filtration systems in 13 schools in the suburbs of Bangkok. Again, The Rotary Foundation provided the "glue" to bring these clubs together on a humanitarian mission.
- Rotarians in India's District 3150 brought peace to a community that had been in perpetual conflict over a shortage of water. Working with community leaders, they agreed to build an \$80,000 irrigation project to bring water to 300 acres of arable land. Over 100 families benefited. Because of Rotary intervention, and with support from The Rotary Foundation, peace now prevails.

But we still have a long way to go. Water is, as Kofi Annan has said, a basic human right. That right is reaffirmed in the Millennium Development Goals, which state "reduce by 50 percent the proportion of people without access to safe water and sanitation." And it was enshrined in a recent vote at the United Nations.

This is one of the world's biggest challenges. In Ethiopia, for example, only 74 percent of the population has access to safe water. In India, 580 million people lack adequate sanitation, and 141 million don't have safe water. Without safe water and sanitation, human progress is a fantasy.

Rotary's Future Vision, shifting our sights from short-term projects to longer-term large-scale activities, is the first step in having a truly significant impact on the humanitarian development that Rotarians strive for. The six areas of focus depend entirely on water and sanitation. Without it, nothing is possible.

It's elementary: Without safe water and sanitation, maternal and child health will remain a dream. Children will never get adequate education if the women and young girls spend countless hours hauling water. Economic activity will founder unless people have the time and energy to devote to it. And, increasingly, peace and harmony will be threatened unless everyone has access to this most basic of resources. A staggering 80 percent of the world's population does not have water security. How can we ever have peace without access to water?

District governors-elect, let Future Vision encourage you and your clubs to think and act bigger, better, and bolder. Provision of water is not an end in itself. It is the means to transform the social and economic base of a community. Don't think of a project as just digging a well, installing a filter, or building a toilet. Focus instead on the humanitarian outcomes — health, education and literacy, alleviation of hunger, economic well-being. And when you embark on a project, look to the Water and Sanitation Rotarian Action Group for guidance. There you will find how to ensure that your projects are truly sustainable, bringing

life-saving water and sanitation to the community for many years to come. You will learn how to build-in ongoing monitoring and evaluation. And if you commit to this Future Vision mindset, you will see that long-term success requires more than Rotary's traditional one-year commitment.

District governors-elect, you can play your part in helping the world to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for water and sanitation. Team up with your Rotary partners, at home and abroad; they are our unique resource. Host clubs in developing countries, you need partners in high-economy countries to get the resources you need — funding, expertise, and know-how — to make change happen. International partners, you need the host club — the Rotarians with "boots on the ground" — to ensure that you truly build on local culture and values. Together, you should look to The Rotary Foundation, which is the glue that holds our unique organization together, to leverage our partnerships and make them effective, ongoing, and sustainable.

And when all is said and done, our true measure of success will be the number of Elizabeths that we have helped and all the children of those Elizabeths, whose lives have been transformed by the simple fact of access to safe water and sanitation. This is the basic and inescapable reality of Rotary — the tremendous and, for many of us, humbling privilege of changing people's lives for the better.

My Experience with Polio

Jenny Horton
Rotarian

In Indian terminology, I consider myself a Rotarian polio wallah: a proud member of the Rotary Club of Kenmore, Australia, whose life is focused on a very special activity — polio eradication.

My first contact with Rotary was as a Youth Exchange student to Oklahoma, USA, a quiet country girl exposed to a whole new world. Later, my husband was a Rotarian, and when he died through illness I became a Rotarian myself and quickly was the president of my club. I felt Youth Exchange gave me a huge debt to Rotary, but today that debt continues to rise as I serve in a different capacity.

Over the past 11 years, I have developed a deep passion for the fight against polio. And for what many of my friends tell me is too long, I have served the program full time for the past seven years, mostly in a voluntary capacity. This commitment has put me on the frontlines of polio eradication, serving in many countries. Today, I want to share a few of my experiences that constantly demonstrate the dedication of those involved and to tell you of some of the people I have met.

It was in the year 2000 when I first traveled to India to participate with the Rotarians in a polio campaign. There I was — on one hand, giving polio drops to children to prevent this crippling disease, and at the same time, seeing the disability of others that came from not being given these drops. I had never seen such cruel disfigurement. I saw children crawling on three limbs, children with legs that were useless and who were ostracized, and children who could not attend school because they had been forced to resort to begging for an income. Seeing those children and knowing this was preventable really tore my heart out. A deep desire was unleashed within me to play a more active role in the eradication of this awful disease. Thanks to the encouragement of Past District Governor P.V. Purushothaman, who recognized how deeply I felt, I was able to participate more widely. I had experiences like working at a caliper camp for polio sufferers, where I met a girl who, because of polio, could not wear shoes and needed to lock her knee with her hand in order to walk. She was fitted with a caliper and shoes, and I asked her what the best thing about this was. She said, “Madam, I can now carry my schoolbooks to school.” How does one respond to that? I met a father who had refused polio drops for his son Kamran, and as I sat with him, he shared his deep remorse and pain in making a decision that had led to Kamran contracting polio at four years of age and is now crippled for life and requires a wheelchair to move. Maybe it was not his fault, for he had been given the wrong information, but that did not reduce his pain. Kamran, now 14, told me he dreamed of being a pilot and says he cries at night so his parents cannot see his pain. Every time I went into the field on those early trips, I came home in tears; I just could not believe the suffering of children that could be so easily prevented. I was now consumed with the desire to give up my comfortable life in Australia and work at the frontline of polio eradication.

In Nigeria, I saw many persons afflicted by polio, especially begging at the sides of the road; this was a constant reminder to me why we are pursuing this goal. I remember one family who told me that polio had crippled three of their children, but they were so thankful that the younger children received drops and were not affected. I worked with a volunteer who had a polio-afflicted child on her back as she went door-to-door to deliver drops to kids. She showed the mothers her child’s flaccid leg when they balked at taking the precious polio drops. In my state of Bauchi, I saw the determination of the traditional leaders

to ensure that all the children in their areas were vaccinated by the teams. These men led the vaccinators through some very difficult terrain and personally visited any refusal cases to convince them to accept vaccine. Their wives held women's meetings to encourage the mothers to vaccinate. When I was in the villages, it was always my honor to be invited to vaccinate the newborn; often within minutes of a birth, I would get the call to bring vaccine to the baby, which I always enjoyed. In entering homes, we not only immunized the children but also looked at the basic sanitation and gave advice to the families.

The remoteness of communities in Ethiopia posed a problem with communication, so often after specimens were collected from a suspected polio case, someone would set off on foot toward the closest town to collect ice packs for transportation and delivery of the specimen to Addis Ababa for testing. I remember being in a very remote area and receiving a message on the vehicle two-way radio asking me to facilitate transportation of a specimen. This was in an area where the village leader used to walk six hours to bring vaccine to the 10 children in his community and, after vaccinating them, return the remaining vaccine — another six-hour walk! He cared enough to make that effort. I often wondered how many of us would be that committed.

In Botswana I did not see the effects of polio, as the country has high levels of routine immunization. But still they had a case that interestingly enough was linked back to the same area in which I was working in Nigeria. This child, we believe, got polio through using a toilet in a tourist area that was probably used earlier by an infected person who was unaware they were carrying the virus. Polio paralysis and death is only seen in a small number of infected cases. My time in Botswana was spent visiting remote areas in the Kalahari to support the health staff in actively looking for suspected polio cases and ensuring the highest levels of routine immunization.

A lot of our work in Karachi and throughout Pakistan was focused on the slum areas, where polio was more prevalent due to poor sanitation and water supply. It was not uncommon to see children playing in the sewage drains. I will never forget a little girl sitting outside her home playing with a spoon, with which she was drinking from the sewage drain. No wonder these children were constantly sick and more susceptible to virus. I had an encounter with a drain when, while trying to cross to the other side, my footing slipped and one leg went into the sludge. The staff quickly hosed me down, but I thought of those who live with this at their front door and in that respect I could not complain. Another day, following an immunization campaign in Islamabad, I was monitoring some houses when I met Amir, an Afghan boy crawling on all fours. We asked him if he had polio, and he said yes. We told him what we were doing, and his eyes welled with tears. He told us how he was meant to be the breadwinner for his family, of how he dreamed of marriage, but because he now had polio he was a burden on his family and they were constantly worried about who would care for him when they died. He wept openly as he thanked us for the work we were doing, and he asked that we not miss any child with drops.

Reaching each and every house with polio vaccine is not easy. Karachi has many six-to-eight-story high rises — most do not have elevators, and frequently the stairs are uneven and not lit. Polio teams climb these stairs all day searching for children. I have seen vaccinators fall down the stairs, only to wipe their clothes down and keep going. It is a tough job, and one that has seen the death of our colleagues. I remember specifically the day when one of our doctors and his driver were killed by a bomb and when others were kidnapped. For me, the sound of gunfire and explosions lighting the sky became the norm for a period. Security is a big issue in reaching many communities.

But I want to tell you about Menaz, who got polio as a child with both legs grossly affected. Menaz wanted to be a teacher and, despite all, managed to get her degree. She could not

get up the stairs easily, she could not sit on a chair like others, but she has the most incredible strength of spirit. She actively supported us with messages to families, using her disfigurement to encourage all to take polio drops.

When I return to Australia for breaks, I always join our Brisbane Post-Polio Support Group. These incredible people are a source of inspiration to me, sharing their stories of their time in iron lungs or long stays in isolation wards. They are always so positive and actively support PolioPlus. Great friends.

For the past year I have been serving the program in India, and it is nice not to see young polio-afflicted children in the streets. Here, I see an incredible determination to finish the job. I have seen vaccinators wading through waist-high water to bring vaccine. We have all walked through slippery mud to go house to house, spent hours in the sun, and worked in the rubbish dumps in order to reach every child. I see Rotary and partners standing together to work with the government to work toward our goal. Bihar has improved its routine immunization greatly as a result of PolioPlus, and there is focus on improving sanitation. I see strength in the partnership — in one area where I was working, tens of thousands of children were missed in a campaign, so Rotary stepped in. Rotarian Shub met with the secretary of health and the minister, which culminated in a meeting of partners with the state and district government to discuss the matters. The outcome was closer monitoring of the next campaign, resulting in optimal coverage. Only Rotary could have done that. I visited a hospital that, thanks to Rotary, is doing free reconstructive surgery on the legs of polio victims and was inspired by the goals of the kids, who want to be engineers, teachers, doctors, even politicians! Now they have hope.

We are seeing light at the end of the tunnel. This period is going to be the hardest, and do not ever underestimate your role. PolioPlus is the largest health initiative ever undertaken in the world, and from my extensive work in the field, I can promise you that each and every person and each and every rupee is important. We need the ongoing strength of each of you to carry the program to its conclusion.

Still today, I am in awe of Rotary, that a community service organization can undertake such a large program that will eradicate a disease from the world and is showing leadership in what can be done through partnerships that really have an impact on the lives of so many.

Mother Teresa said: "What I do you cannot do, but what you do I cannot do. The needs are great, and none of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things with great love, and together we can do something wonderful." This to me sums up PolioPlus.

I wish to leave you with some images of Meta, a young lady I met who reminds me why we must win this war on polio. Thank you.

How a Rotary Program Is Changing My Life

Vener Macaspac
2009-11 Rotary Peace Fellow
University of California, Berkeley

Today, I want to share with you how Rotary is changing my life through the Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution, an excellent program that offers individuals who are committed to achieving peace in the world the opportunity to pursue a master's degree in international studies, peace studies, and conflict resolution.

In 2009, I was selected as one of 60 Rotary Peace Fellows from an estimated 2,000 aspiring applicants all over the world. My professional background is in the field of social sciences and education, and my interest in multicultural education led me to venture into research on indigenous peoples' rights in the Philippines. While probing the plight of indigenous peoples, I trained myself in documentary filmmaking to capture their testimonials in film. These films were later used by the indigenous peoples in seeking redress over cases of the infringement of their rights. It is my passion for filmmaking on account of its effectiveness in promoting a quality of mind that upholds the highest human standards that, I believe, guaranteed me a position in this prestigious and highly competitive fellowship.

As a Rotary Peace Fellow, I benefit from the opportunity to learn and work with excellent professors from one of the world's best public universities. I am now in my final semester as a graduate student of Asian studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

Within a brief period of time, Rotary has changed my life in three incredible ways, which I call the three Cs. The first C is commitment.

Two years ago, when I was conducting interviews for a documentary film among the indigenous peoples in the Philippines as part of a shadow report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, an indigenous woman leader welcomed me to their village by suggesting to me to "just go home and buy myself a pair of pants."

She said life in the village is miserable: their agricultural produce does not last until the next harvest season; there is not enough food to feed their families; they do not have access to health services; their children have to hike up the mountains for hours to reach the nearest school if there even is one. Their rights to their ancestral land are disregarded in favor of mining and logging companies. Their leaders experience intimidation and persecution for defending their communities' rights to land and life. Lita, the woman leader, was firm in her advice for me to go back to the city where I grew up, as she thought that I would have a difficult time living in their village.

Lita's message never left my mind. It made me think about how willing I am to forego my own comfort and privilege in order to serve the less privileged and the marginalized. Her message was a challenge to my commitment to help people who need my support, and it profoundly moved me. It made me ask how I can contribute effectively in improving the human condition. How can I manifest my solidarity with people who suffer from social exclusion? How deep is my commitment to carry on with my responsibilities in achieving a just and lasting peace in the world?

The Rotary Peace Fellowship nurtures this commitment. Through the scholarly training that I receive as a peace fellow, I am able to enrich my understanding of the various roots of

conflict, exclusion, and poverty in the world. The analytical skills and the knowledge that I have acquired from graduate school so far help me sharpen my role as a socially engaged filmmaker.

I was able to put my knowledge into practice when I completed my applied field experience, or internship, with WITNESS, a leading international human rights organization based in New York City that uses film as an instrument for human rights advocacy. While working with WITNESS, I developed a training manual for community organizations on how to produce films on cases of forced eviction and land displacement.

Being a peace fellow also gives me the opportunity to learn from Rotarians worldwide. I am truly inspired by the professionalism, high ethical standards, and immeasurable passion of Rotarians in improving the lives of the less privileged. All these opportunities bolster my personal commitment to strive toward what Rotarians are known for: Service Above Self.

The second C is collaborative action.

In Berkeley, California, I live with six other international graduate students. But despite our cultural differences, we get along very well. The reason for this is that we are all Rotary Peace Fellows. Before coming to Berkeley, all of us have been working on addressing human rights and peace and conflict issues in different parts of the world. However, when we all first met and converged at the Rotary Peace Center at the University of California, Berkeley, in August 2009, we knew that we had finally come home.

Being a Rotary Peace Fellow is indeed a special opportunity to become a part of the unique global community of peace fellows. Given the difficult tasks of peace-building work in the world today, the fellowship is an effective way of gathering individuals like me to collaborate, coordinate, and strategize viable responses and solutions to the challenges of our time.

This opportunity enables me to initiate and plan with the peace fellows a film project that aims to promote the participation of the Cambodian immigrants in the United States to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, where Khmer Rouge leaders are on trial for their atrocities. I am hoping that through this collaborative endeavor, which we hope to implement on our final semester at UC Berkeley, we can contribute to achieving justice and reparations for the victims.

The third C is creativity.

Rotarians all over the world are known for their passion and ingenuity in coming up with various projects and solutions in addressing poverty and human suffering. In Northern California, I met Rotarians who are conducting kidney transplants and cleft lip and palate treatment in the Philippines annually. In Bali, Indonesia, I met Rotarians who are rebuilding school playgrounds that get flooded and swamped with mosquitoes during the rainy season. The endeavors of Rotarians all over the world serve as beaming inspirations for me to explore creative ways in addressing conflicts in our society and promoting multicultural understanding.

A noted literary theorist once said that "what is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more." I am responding to this challenge by creating a global multimedia-based peace center that will produce and utilize films as instruments for the redress of human rights violations, the promotion of multicultural understanding, and the implementation of concrete steps to peace-building.

As I am about to finish my graduate studies as a Rotary Peace Fellow, I am working on the initial stage of establishing the Integrated Peace Education Center, or IPEACE, a global

initiative that aims to facilitate multicultural education and understanding through the use of films. IPEACE will conduct participatory video training among marginalized or target groups and members of communities affected by conflicts, and produce online-based documentary films that present a critical interrogation of the root causes of conflicts and the ways to achieve peace from the local perspective.

With “Open Your Eyes” as its guiding mission, IPEACE aims to connect spectatorship with commitment and collective action by working in partnership with conflict-affected communities and international institutions and movements working on peace and conflict resolution. IPEACE will take a lead role in organizing dialogues and public forums in response to these films both locally and globally as a way of exploring comprehensive and lasting solutions to conflicts around the world.

My immediate goal for IPEACE is to raise funds and resources for developing online-based educational materials, facilitating multicultural understanding workshops, and conducting participatory video training in key conflict areas in the world. I will also develop a website to provide online access to films and videos that narrate the roots of conflict, the extent of human suffering, and the options for peace.

Rotary is changing my life in a very significant way, enabling me to facilitate change in other peoples’ lives. I am very grateful to my sponsor club and district, the Rotary Club of New Manila East and District 3780, and to my host club and district, the Rotary Club of Petaluma Sunrise and District 5130, for their confidence, support, and friendship. I am very grateful to The Rotary Foundation and its partner — the Rotary Peace Center at the University of California, Berkeley — for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shape, sharpen, and strategize my role as a peace worker. I represent today the 642 Rotary Peace Fellows worldwide who have been educated and trained through your magnificent program for which we are truly grateful.

This is the final year of the Rotary Peace Center at the University of California, Berkeley, and I am very much honored to be a part of the final cohort. This coming year, The Rotary Foundation Trustees may very well announce a new, additional partner university, and I am certain that it will become the new home of future Rotary Peace Fellows. I am very pleased to know that the Foundation’s Rotary Peace Centers Major Gifts Initiative is on track to securing US\$95 million by 2015 to permanently endow the program. I sincerely thank our major donors in the audience who have generously contributed to this fund, and I encourage all of you to continue to increase awareness about the ways to support the program financially. Until the program is permanently endowed, it is very important that Rotary districts continue to make District Designated Fund contributions annually to support the Rotary Peace Centers. Through your sustained donations and efforts, this program will surely continue to train peace fellows who will create a significant and positive impact on world peace and conflict resolution.

To achieve a just and lasting peace, we all need the three Cs: commitment, collective action, and creativity. I am very honored to say that through the Rotary Peace Fellowship, I have nurtured these values that enable me to become an active and lifelong partner of Rotary International in realizing its vision of enabling Rotarians to advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace.

Over the past two years, Rotary has changed my life and will no doubt change the lives of countless others in the years to come. Thank you very much, Rotary!

Future Vision: Foundation in a Time of Change

Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar
Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair

Around 2005, it became apparent that the Trustees would have no choice but to change the Foundation. The Matching Grants program had experienced astronomical growth, and the Foundation administration was no longer equipped to support it. Essentially, the Trustees had to decide whether to significantly increase staffing in Evanston, or whether it was time to take a look and see if this growing pain offered an opportunity. They chose the latter route, and an in-depth strategic planning process ensued. Two consulting firms — Grant Thornton and Jefferson Wells — examined The Rotary Foundation, and nearly 10,000 Rotarians answered a comprehensive questionnaire. Based on the results of this feedback, the Future Vision Committee and Foundation Trustees have worked very hard to come forward with the Future Vision Plan.

So let me fill you in on some of the basics.

Future Vision funds many popular activities through two grant models: district grants and global grants. District grants are incredibly flexible and fund both club and district activities using the District Designated Fund (DDF). Global grants are designed to fund larger humanitarian projects with sustainable, measurable outcomes, as well as scholarships and vocational training teams, in one or more of the six areas of focus.

Future Vision represents a philosophical shift in the way the Foundation funds Rotarians' activities. In the classic Foundation model, when planning, Rotarians are asked to pick their favorite activities, learn the rules of the program that supports them, and carry them out. Under Future Vision, the Foundation asks Rotarians to start their planning by identifying a pressing need and working with the community to determine the best activity or combination of activities through which to address it, and then carry them out. Of course, Rotarians have been identifying needs in the classic model all along, but now the Foundation is working in alignment with that process to better support it.

Future Vision also places a big emphasis on making activities sustainable. The idea is that the benefits of a particular activity will continue and that the community will have greater capacity to address future needs, even after the Rotary clubs have finished their work.

One hundred districts were selected for the Future Vision pilot, and they were specially trained here in San Diego last year. They began using the new grants model on 1 July. So how have they responded to this new plan? With some pretty exceptional projects.

The Rotary Club of Kpalimé, Togo, in District 9100 and the Rotary Club of Paris-Porte d'Orléans, France, in District 1660 have partnered to provide equipment and materials to a pediatric center and to establish a training program on public health and nutrition in Kpalimé. The sponsors have made the project sustainable by training staff members at the center and by charging a small fee for services, thereby ensuring that the center has the necessary funds to stay open.

Where scholarships and vocational training teams are concerned, Future Vision offers tremendous freedom. I would argue that Future Vision improves upon the current scholarships program significantly. Future Vision district grants fund scholars either locally or abroad at any level, for any length of time, either for a degree or certificate program or sim-

ply for a period of study. The current timeline for Ambassadorial Scholarships is lengthy — 18 months. Scholarships under Future Vision offer maximum flexibility and a significantly shortened timeline. Your district can keep an 18-month timeline if it works for you, but it certainly is no longer necessary.

Under global grants, clubs and districts may use their cash or DDF to receive a World Fund match for graduate-level students studying abroad under one of the six areas of focus. Districts can opt to fund the student for a single year or for an entire degree program, up to four years in length. To date, we have mostly seen applications for students to receive a flat grant of US\$30,000 — the global grants budget minimum — but this is not a requirement. Awards can be higher than that, thereby enabling talented individuals to complete needed graduate-level degree programs that will make a difference in the world.

For example, the Rotary Club of La Jolla Golden Triangle [in California, USA] has worked closely with the Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego to identify strong candidates within peace and conflict prevention/resolution for sponsorship. The result is two global grants, each for \$30,000, to sponsor a student from Quito, Ecuador, and another from Kampala, Uganda, for study.

At this point, I'd like to move on to Group Study Exchange (GSE) and vocational training teams. Vocational training teams are not GSE, although there can be some similarities. Goodwill exchanges, similar to GSE, are carried out under the auspices of district grants. Team travel to another country to implement a project, provide training, or receive training is carried out under the auspices of vocational training teams funded by global grants. The latter bear minimal resemblance to GSE.

So what has changed? The biggest changes are the fact that a goodwill exchange is no longer funded entirely by World Fund but instead relies on DDF through district grants, a funding model similar to that used currently in Ambassadorial Scholarships. Another change is that the Foundation no longer pairs districts for goodwill exchanges. The third change is really exciting. Under Future Vision, you are freed from program rules. Exchanges no longer have to be four to six weeks in length. They last as long as you want, be that two weeks or six months, and they cost exactly what they cost. If you can do a goodwill exchange through district grants for \$5,000, that's all it's going to cost.

If you are interested in global grants, we've seen some highly creative and effective proposals that bundle vocational training teams with projects and do not involve an exchange at all. For example, we had a team of heart specialists travel from District 6560 in Indiana [USA] to District 9200 [Uganda] to perform a series of heart surgeries on children while simultaneously training their Ugandan counterparts. The project is sustainable because now doctors in both countries are knowledgeable on the techniques needed to perform these surgeries.

These are impressive grants, and there are many others. The applications that the Foundation has received for both district grants and global grants are simply outstanding. And for the first time ever, the Foundation, with the assistance of the Rotarians, will be gathering data on the success of these grants and their impact on the beneficiaries. Over time, this information will be used to illustrate the impact that Rotarians, through The Rotary Foundation, are making in addressing world needs.

Feedback from the pilot districts will help us determine what works and what doesn't. Every time a Rotarian contacts the Future Vision staff, the Foundation records the inquiry. The data collected will help ensure that the Trustees have the most accurate information possible to determine what changes are needed.

So what sort of questions will the Trustees review when it is time to evaluate the plan?

Well, we know that some Rotarians are extremely concerned about the future of GSE, the loss of a World Fund match for smaller Matching Grant-sized projects, and the provision of spending plans for district grants. We'll have to look at whether those concerns are offset by the benefits of the new plan.

One governor-elect wrote me early last summer to say: "I get so tired, tired on this qualification process, which is a wonder of the highest level of bureaucracy. . . . I am trying to find out what is wrong, something is wrong — my signature on the memorandum of understanding was missing, it was long ago I signed it . . . something is missing in District Bank Account Information in spite of all the boxes being tagged. . . . In my childish mind, I thought we were to get extra help for this qualification." I shall not tell you what country he is from, as I do not want to offend anyone should there be Swedes in the audience. *(Swedish flag appears on the screen.)*

In the fall I met a governor who said to me: "I became so happy when I found out that our district had become a pilot. But with the complicated implementation of the plan, I wish we had not." Again, I would not wish to tell you which country he was from. *(Canadian flag appears on the screen.)*

These frustrations have now been settled and these districts are following along fine, but as you can understand, with change there is often some pain involved initially. The Foundation is closely tracking these concerns. The successes, as evidenced by the applications, are so impressive, but we want to ensure that everyone's experience is as positive as this Rotarian's, who shared with me his delight with the speed at which his district's first global grant scholarship was awarded. He said that "thanks to the online system, [he] was able to 'sign off' on the application even while traveling abroad."

So, what about the 432 other districts that are Doing Good in the World with the current programs and supporting the Foundation while we test this new model? Well, the time has come to get ready, and I have some tips on how to get started.

To begin, I would encourage you to consider the model on its own merits. Among the pilot districts, the ones that have struggled the most are those that have attempted to push the existing Foundation model into Future Vision. Their efforts have been met with frustration, and they have often missed out on some of the incredible new opportunities available through Future Vision.

Second, take a look at the timelines established in your district. They are different under Future Vision.

Go ahead and give qualification a try. It is genuinely helpful in pointing out the types of records your club or district should maintain related to grants and in outlining best practices for managing grants.

Finally, I would encourage you to educate yourself on the new model. There is a wealth of resources available on the website, including e-learning modules and a qualification tool kit. However, your best source of information initially may be *Future Vision Pilot News*, an e-newsletter available to anyone. You can subscribe on the website.

As you have understood, change comes with some frustrations, but also with some great opportunities. It can sometimes be challenging to talk about the Future Vision Plan. I almost expected people to fall asleep during this presentation. But I have only seen one person do so and that was not my fault — he was already sound asleep when I started.

Thank you very much!

Membership

John C. Smarge
RI Director

Rotary and the world around it is forever changing. Over the last 105 years, Rotary has aged and adapted to its new surroundings and taken on a new complexion, very different from when it was created. Neither Rotary nor the world is the same that they were in 1905, 1955, or even 2005. In such a changing environment, the questions today are: Has Rotary reached its prime? Is it at risk of dying?

Declining membership in our existing Rotary clubs and, more specifically, falling retention rates are problems we must address both locally and as a global organization. These membership trends are of concern to many Rotarians, as evidenced by the comments in magazines, newsletters, and blog posts. Let me read three comments in particular that I think represent our membership concerns. A Rotarian stated:

We take individuals into our clubs — good, new, potentially active members — and think that we are increasing our membership. But unless we motivate them, unless we engage them in challenging programs, it is inevitable that many of these members will just quietly drop out.

Another Rotarian comments:

The age level of Rotarians has crept up. Each year, on average, Rotary loses 10 percent of its membership. In order to offset these losses and strengthen our clubs, we need to bring in thousands of good, high-quality younger Rotarians so as to create a better age balance.

And lastly, a Rotarian writes:

Many people have entered Rotary in the past, not knowing the true meaning of the organization. As a result, many Rotary clubs have weakened themselves by the admission of new members who have not become educated as to Rotary.

I think you would agree that these Rotarians have captured the essence of the challenges that we face in Rotary *today*. I need to credit the authors of these timely commentaries. The first Rotarian, speaking about retention, was Past RI President Clem Renouf, addressing the 1978 convention in Tokyo. The second, with his thoughts on the need for younger Rotarians, was Past [RI] President James Conway at the Honolulu convention in 1969. And the last, concerning better educating our new members, was Past [RI] President Everett Hill, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1921, 16 years after the birth of Rotary.

After hearing the words of these three past Rotary International presidents, with their comments dating back some 90 years, it should be obvious that the concerns being voiced today are hardly new. However, it does not diminish our need to aggressively address them.

We have heard the statistics. Our worldwide membership numbers are stagnant. In those areas where we are increasing, we are doing so most often through the chartering of new clubs. We talk about attrition, yet we don't really consider its effects on our organization. On 30 June 2003, we had approximately 1.2 million members in 31,551 clubs. As of 30 June 2010, we had approximately 1.2 million members in 34,103 clubs. Since 2003, we have added 2,552 Rotary clubs yet only increased our overall membership by 226 members. Shocking? Even more disturbing is that in this seven-year period, we inducted into our Rotary clubs more than 1.1 million members.

It seems many of our clubs have become like old, rusted-out buckets. We pour members in and watch them gush out through the cracks. All the while, attrition is diluting the value of being a Rotarian, seriously damaging our public image, and undermining our clubs' effectiveness.

We have looked at recruiting and retention for years yet have not reversed the trends. We teach our club presidents recruiting techniques, challenge them with membership contests, and yet see no long-term results. Where is the innovation? Where is the tie-in to our strategic plan? In a changed world, has our century-old model become irrelevant? Perhaps we fail to realize that declining retention rates are not the cause but a symptom of something else.

What if we stop thinking of Rotary solely as a nonprofit service organization and begin to think of it as a business with members as our customers. Members join our clubs to receive benefits in exchange for their precious time and financial support. In the world of business, an unsatisfied customer leaves and takes his or her business elsewhere.

I think that we could say that within our clubs, we are faced with an identity crisis. Ask any Rotarian "What is Rotary?" and after the usual pause, you will get a wide variety of answers. This apparent lack of common focus highlights the core dilemma and represents a huge conundrum.

Consider our own members' perceptions of what we think we are. Are we the services we offer, such as PolioPlus? Or is Rotary defined by our human capital — the sum total of our members?

How about the views of our prospective members? How do they see our Rotary clubs? Do they see us as an out-of-touch, aging organization, or as a unique refuge from their busy lives? In reality, we are a weekly opportunity to establish, grow, and enjoy real friendships. We are an alternative to the otherwise waning relationships in an accelerating world of digital acquaintances! For young business people, Facebook and texting have become the norm. With maturity, it becomes clear that a life without relationships has less relevance. For these young people, discovering that Rotary is about friendships, enduring relationships, and striving to accomplish things together can be a novel and refreshing experience.

With no agreement on Rotary's identity, it appears we are adrift. Until we understand who we are and effectively communicate this to our target audience, we may never solve our membership problem. We can, however, take steps to solve this problem, and we can do it by focusing on branding.

A brand is an expectation, a promise — a promise you make and keep in everything that you do. An effective brand separates the organization from its competitors. If a brand is strong and clear, the organization is healthy and competitive. If a brand is confusing or has no distinctive elements, the product or service is nothing more than just another commodity. If Rotary's brand were succinct and inspiring, our membership would become more vibrant. Pride to be a Rotarian would become even more contagious. Visiting prospective members would feel the energy. They would want to be a part of it. They would want to join the club. They would stay.

Though Rotary's worldwide brand must be the same, each of our 34,000 Rotary clubs should develop its own identity within that brand. And while we hold true to the same corporate mission and core values, each club should be free to enjoy their own style. Due to demographics, financial resources, and the specific community, vocational, or international services it provides, each club is unique.

Rather than seeking to recruit and retain members as an objective in itself, the key is understanding who we are. Once we recognize our unique club services and benefits, we can seek those men and women in our communities who share similar characteristics.

As a business, there are undeniably costs of being a member of a Rotary club: time, money, energy. There are benefits: networking, fellowship, personal and business growth. And, of course, all of us know one of the greatest benefits: the opportunity to serve others, both locally and around the world.

Recruits will not join, nor will they stay, unless benefits exceed costs. We can help the younger group discover how satisfying it is to replace Facebook with real-face time. We can watch as their expressions change when they experience the energy of a firm handshake and a friendly smile compared to an impersonal digital text or tweet.

To change the path we have traveled for decades is by no means easy. It starts with our clubs taking a good hard look at all components of their organization — keeping what works and discarding what doesn't. It might require doing away with archaic traditions or resurrecting a successful project from the past. Rotarians have always been resourceful. Today, we need to challenge each club to be realistic.

Future governors, you can reverse our worldwide membership freefall. This year can be the one we look back on and say, "*We finally got it.*"

Our Rotary clubs provide unparalleled community and vocational service. Our weekly meetings offer a respite, a comforting place for friends to remain connected. Our classification system and Object of Rotary provide a superior networking platform and first-class business and personal development opportunities. And thanks to those who have come before us, we can all proudly proclaim that Rotary is the single greatest humanitarian organization that this world has ever seen.

So the question is not "What is Rotary?" The question is "Who is Rotary?" We are Rotary! And you are our future.

Governors-elect, we know Rotary will live on. You can be the force to turn the tide and help make Rotary stronger and more relevant than ever. We *are* the organization of choice for business, professional, and community leaders throughout the world. Together, let's make Rotary the clear choice.

A New Approach to Rotary

Katie Ischkin

Rotarian and former Rotaractor

Good morning, everyone! My name is Katie Ischkin. I'm 27 and originally from Ontario, Canada, but now live in Minnesota, USA. I am very excited and so thankful to have been invited by Rotary International to speak at the 2011 International Assembly. Being here is truly humbling, and as a young Rotarian I feel I have been fortunate enough to experience so many amazing Rotary moments. These are the moments that reinforce my passion for Rotary and the network of amazing Rotarians such as yourselves putting Service Above Self.

I am a very proud, young, female Rotarian. I'm the product of Rotary programs and was fortunate enough to be backed by very supportive Rotarians when I decided I wanted to start a new Rotary club in Minnesota. When I decided to join Rotary, I started visiting clubs, as most prospective members do. Through my visits I met great people but I didn't feel that any of the clubs were the right fit for me. They didn't quite align with my needs as a young professional. This feeling about Rotary affects young professionals and prevents them from signing on the dotted line and becoming a member of a club. This is what I'm going to focus on today, how a new approach to Rotary can aid in the recruitment and retention of younger members and help current Rotarians see that the new generation of Rotarians is very nontraditional. I am passionate about this topic because I am just that — a young Rotarian breaking ground in Rotary in a nontraditional way.

Current Rotary statistics show that 2 percent of Rotary members worldwide are under the age of 30. Even more shocking, only 11 percent of our members worldwide are under the age of 40. And worldwide, 68 percent of our members are over the age of 50. That's not to say that members aged 50 plus are "old" — you're as old as you feel — but it is very difficult to appeal to a younger group of prospective members when the numbers say that our organization has been geared towards the more established, older professional.

I'm going to touch on three important points today that I believe are integral in moving toward a new outlook on membership and a new approach to the club structure: first, the importance of keeping the core but shifting surface-level elements; second, what a nontraditional structure looks like; and finally, expectations versus realities of the new generation of Rotarians. Some of the things I discuss may be more geared toward a North American cultural perspective, but I do believe that we need to focus on generating interest in young people for the future success of Rotary.

When I talk to clubs and districts about this topic, I find both people who are ready for something different and a new approach and those who fear change and the loss of what Rotary is really all about. I work as a change-management consultant, so I understand people's fear of change. Change is good because it allows for the entrance of something new and forces people to experience something that challenges what they know and are comfortable with. Not all change is successful, but we can't be afraid to try something new because we fear what may happen. This applies directly to the Rotary club structure in that a new approach to Rotary doesn't mean changing the core pieces of our organization or losing what we hold most dear. The history of our organization, the founders, The Four-Way Test, and more are the foundational elements that keep our Rotary structure sound and relevant. What does change are what I call surface-level elements — the pieces that individual clubs have the power to shift and redesign, such as meeting times and locations, program structures, club member involvement and committee formats, and the like. We are faced today with the need to grow not just for the sake of numbers but to create strong, young,

global leaders who are going to help continue the success of the Rotary organization and take responsibility for the success of our world and peace among our cultures.

I am the founder and current president of the Rotary Club of South Metro Minneapolis Evenings. Our club has definitely introduced a very nontraditional structure to our district and zone. There are many other Rotary clubs around the world that focus on a younger membership and even have specific fundraising and service goals. I can talk only to my experiences with my club and share what we do that works. First, it was obvious that there was a great need for an evening club in the city I lived in. At this point in my career life, when my boss and colleagues expect me to put my job responsibilities before anything else, it isn't possible for me to commit to attending Rotary meetings weekly, during the day or even before work. Although I do pride myself in my ability to balance and manage time, our evening structure has made it quite easy for our members to commit and also attend on a regular basis. Also, we don't serve meals at our meetings. This is usually quite shocking to many Rotary clubs that I talk to, as the meal sometimes can be the draw. But for many of our members, the extra expense of meals at each meeting is something they just can't incur.

Recruitment and retention is an important piece to our club (as it is with any club), and with a younger population of members we do have a higher rate of turnover, mainly because some of our members aren't quite settled on the city or the career that they hold. Again, we can't be afraid of accepting members who may leave. Turnover is natural and, again, very reflective of my generation's need to always look for the "What's next?" Therefore, our club finds it works well when we add in the element of competition for recruitment. We are currently running our second membership drive contest, which awards points to our members for bringing a guest [to a meeting or event] and having that guest join our club. Simple, yet very effective. Also, our club is focused on having a recruitment plan that promotes sustainability; therefore, we are launching what's called the RITE (Rotarians-In-Training Experience) program, which will invite recent graduates to participate in our club as a learning experience. Rotaract is a fantastic program — I know this having been involved for many years — but many Rotaractors express the concern that they don't feel prepared to make the transition into Rotary, because they believe they may not be old enough or established enough in their careers. This is an issue; therefore, a club-level program like ours will help educate young professionals about Rotary by having them attend club meetings, volunteer at our projects, and participate in committees so that when they decide to become a full-fledged Rotarian, there is no intimidating transition and they're ready to get involved at the club level immediately no matter their salary, job function, or age.

Technology plays an integral role beyond the website, Facebook, and Twitter accounts that we have. Our club has been piloting the use of Skype as a way for our members to attend meetings and even have speakers present when they can't physically be at our meeting. Technology can be a scary thing for many traditional Rotary clubs, as it's not always reliable and can be sometimes tedious, but having the option available allows our members who travel frequently for work to still be involved and participate in a meaningful way. I recently was the speaker at a Rotary club via Skype, and it was very successful, interactive, and engaging.

Finally, our club does not meet weekly. Yes, it is true. We don't have meetings once a week, but we still meet four times a month. Our new approach to meetings is geared to my generation's need for instant gratification; therefore, our club structure tries to hit our members' areas of interest for joining. We have regular program-type meetings every second week, our third meeting is a happy hour/networking meeting that rotates locations around the city, and our fourth meeting each month is a hands-on volunteering opportunity. Our members may not be able to write large checks for the Foundation each year, pay for meals each week, or donate their pocket change on a weekly basis, but they can and want to give back by giving their time and efforts. We are enforcing the importance of the human connection and how a few hours of filling food bank bags, handing out Christmas presents at

a soup kitchen, or even cheering on runners at a local marathon can create passion in our members, build strong relationships, and make them truly proud Rotarians.

All of the above seem very obvious and basic, and these are just a few of the many things our nontraditional club has done. As I experience day in and day out in my career working with large businesses, it is usually the basics that we miss and forget to revisit.

Finally, the hardest thing for many current and traditional Rotary clubs to understand is the true realities of the new generation of Rotarians and how it's important to comprehend and manage expectations with realities. I've spoken at many Rotary clubs, and I tend to get those people who don't truly understand the mindset of our generation of Rotarians or who base what they know off of stereotypes and biases. The new generation of Rotarian is always on the go and truly connected. At the end of an average day, I've sent 30 e-mails, 20 text messages, updated my Facebook status twice, made multiple phone calls, and been to the office, gym, meetings, and home. There's a lot of pressure on our generation to be involved in multiple endeavors and yet have a strong work-life balance, and sometimes we get caught up in managing expectations others have of us. A new approach to Rotary has to accept and understand that even though young professionals may be "on call" with their careers and juggling multiple responsibilities, that doesn't mean they aren't as dedicated and passionate about being a Rotarian as the next member. When you're trying to recruit younger members or even sponsor and start a new generations Rotary club, take time with your club and committee to outline what your expectations are and whether they will align with the younger generation you are trying to attract and work with. Not every Rotary club can quickly shift gears to attract younger members; it takes time and baby steps. List out what your club is capable of changing and whether it's realistic to incorporate younger membership. For many clubs, all it takes is opening up your minds and starting to think differently about the future of your club's membership.

My club has been successful. Chartered in June 2010, we have already grown to 25 members — recruiting 12 new members in a three-month period. We've officially signed up for our first Matching Grant and international service project and have already participated in more than 10 community service or hands-on volunteering projects. So when people question this new approach to Rotary, I don't get angry or upset, because to them it is the unknown. But I am quick to share our long list of successes and our base of new, passionate, young Rotarians who are going to continue the legacy of our great organization and put Service Above Self in all aspects of their lives. If we want Rotary to be a relevant and significant organization with my generation in the years to come, we need to seriously start focusing at the club level on how we bridge the gap and use new approaches to attract members like me, who no matter our time and monetary constraints believe that it's always possible to give back and make the world a better place.

Secretariat Support

Ed Futa
RI General Secretary

This is somewhat of a bittersweet occasion for me. Today is the last time I will address the International Assembly as general secretary of Rotary International. Ever since 2001, I have had the opportunity every year to tell the incoming class of district governors how the RI Secretariat can help them manage their districts. Typically, I tell these Rotary leaders about the highly professional staff we have at World Headquarters in Evanston and at each of our seven international offices, all of whom are working to help districts and clubs become even more effective.

My general message of district and club support has remained constant over the years, but the content has changed substantially. That's because the ways that the Secretariat provides service to Rotarians have been transformed by technology. At the time of my first assembly speech, few Rotarians were using e-mail. The idea of registering for the convention or contributing to the Foundation online or buying publications through a Rotary e-shop was very foreign to most Rotarians. Rotary's website was in its infancy, a far cry from today's 27,000-page site in nine languages.

Technology has allowed international organizations like Rotary to reach more members and to offer them more support. I think that our Leadership Education and Training program offers a perfect example of this. Obviously, Rotary can't bring members together from all over the world for training meetings like this one. But we now can provide e-learning modules that Rotarians can view online at their convenience. And we also can conduct webinars on a variety of topics that different groups of Rotarians find interesting. Recently, we've offered webinars for GETS training, as well as webinars on membership trends and designing better club websites.

Doing Rotary business online is becoming increasingly easier. Improvements are continually being made to Member Access. And all of our Future Vision pilot districts are applying for grants and carrying out other related business online. Our new e-shop powered by Amazon launched in July. It offers improved security for buyers and monthly promotional discounts on various publications and videos.

Offering communications electronically allows us to provide more timely information while saving the organization many thousands of dollars. *Rotary Leader* and other e-newsletters that address various topics are available only online, and now, North American Rotarians can elect to receive a digital version of *The Rotarian* magazine.

Social media is another technology phenomenon that Rotary is using to connect its far-flung membership. We've seen incredible increases in people following all our social networking sites. For example, last year at this time, I reported that Rotary's Facebook page had 36,000 followers. That number has skyrocketed this year to more than 95,000. Our LinkedIn site has a smaller following, but the discussions that take place are fascinating. It's all about Rotarians sharing ideas and best practices and a natural extension of what we do every week in our Rotary clubs.

In the 11 years that I've been addressing incoming governors, Rotary's mission to eradicate polio worldwide has always been a key message. Polio eradication was Rotary's first corporate project. Even more important, it marked the first time that Rotary International stepped

onto the world stage and became recognized as more than simply an effective and valued local service group.

A few months ago, I was invited to attend the UN's Private Sector Forum on the Millennium Development Goals. I was also asked to chair the roundtable discussion on maternal and child health. Some of the other participants at the table were CEOs of major pharmaceutical groups, the president of Sierra Leone, and high-level representatives from UNICEF and WHO. Why was I invited to participate in this important meeting and then asked to chair the discussion of such an illustrious group? The short answer is PolioPlus. Because of our leadership role in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, Rotary is now known internationally for its fundraising ability, advocacy skills, and unwavering commitment to a cause. Thanks to our global volunteer army of vaccinators, public awareness campaigners, and fundraisers, we've become a highly credible player in the field of international public health and development.

But we haven't yet finished the ambitious task that we carved out for ourselves 25 years ago. If we want to retain our hard-earned credibility, we cannot blink. If we do, the international community that now holds us in such high regard could lose faith in us and in our ability to keep our word. Rotary would lose out on opportunities to partner with some of the world's most effective and prestigious nongovernmental organizations, because they'll suspect that we may not stay the course.

That's why it's so critically important that each one of you make fulfilling our promise of a polio-free world one of your top priorities. We at the Secretariat can help you to promote the End Polio Now message in your communities. We have public service announcements that you can send to your local media. We can give you plenty of ideas for raising funds for Rotary's US\$200 Million Challenge. We have DVDs, posters, pins, and PowerPoint presentations to support your efforts. You can even find instructions on how to illuminate local landmarks with the End Polio Now message.

I know that many, maybe even most, of you come from countries where polio is a distant memory. But it may well be that *because of Rotary* your homelands are now polio-free. And now we have to finish the job for everyone. When you go back to your districts, take that message with you. Let's make all of our communities more aware of the reality of polio in our world today and the threat that it continues to pose to anyone, anywhere, who is not immunized.

In the history of the world, only one disease has been eradicated. That was smallpox in 1979. Now is our chance to make new history by eradicating polio and showing the world that Rotarians are people who keep their promises.

Sharing the Miracle of Visible Language

Glen W. Kinross
Past RI President

One of the miracles of civilization is the creation of visible language. Writing is visible language. Reading is the ability of deciphering writing. Together, they amount to the miracle of visible language.

Historically, the miracle of visible language took place in four separate geographic areas: in the ancient Middle East, in Egypt, in China, and in the civilizations of the Central American continent known as Mesoamerica that included the ancient Maya and Aztec cultures and countries of southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador. Through this miracle, prehistoric cultures emerged to civilization.

Thousands of years ago, the scribes of those four literate civilizations — most probably young people with inquisitive minds and eagerness to learn — became empowered with the gift of transforming words into writing, and then being able to read. Human civilization started with literacy.

Today, literacy is a human right. Unfortunately, this right is denied to too many members of the human family. The correlation between literacy and illiteracy is clear: Be literate and prosperous, or illiterate and poor. Being illiterate and poor is not acceptable in the year 2011.

Illiteracy is the greatest social challenge in today's world. Our quest of building a better world depends on lifting those now strangled by illiteracy, enabling them to fully participate in society.

Illiteracy is not new. It has been with us for millennia. In 1958, UNESCO's General Conference adopted a definition:

- (a) A literate person can read and write with understanding a short, simple statement on his or her everyday life.
- (b) An illiterate person cannot read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life.

The United Nations declared 1990 to be the International Literacy Year. Today, more than 20 years later, the battle continues. Illiteracy remains the plight of vast numbers of children, most of them girls, without access to free elementary education.

Though worldwide only 6 countries remain without compulsory education, 92 countries lack free public elementary education available to all children. Reality is, in too many lands the rich send their children to school, while the children of the poor stay at home. Most of them are girls.

The extent of world illiteracy is a story that will shock. Two billion illiterates worldwide is a staggering number. However, the number of illiterates by age group reveals even more the enormity of the problem:

- Some 678 million 15-year-olds or younger do not know how to read or write.
- 103 million people ages 15 to 24 cannot use the written word.
- A staggering 445 million between the ages of 25 to 64 are illiterate.
- 130 million aged 65 or more are without the gift of literacy.

It has long been known that literate mothers ensure that their children — boys or girls — are educated. Gender equality and equity are prerequisites to reduce illiteracy. Of the great number of children without access to education, more than 60 percent are girls. Women form the vast majority of the illiterate masses. Without access to education, these women and girls, mothers and daughters, can never look forward to a life of dignity and will never assume the role of being their family teacher.

It is as hard for me to imagine what it's like to be illiterate as it is to imagine what it's like to be without sight or without voice. Being illiterate means being in imprisonment. It is even harder for me to understand why so many have to endure illiteracy. In a world where knowledge and technology to provide for everyone abounds, 30 percent of the population remains uneducated. Education should be a human right. To leave unchallenged the plight of the illiterate and the innumerate is to condemn millions to the scrap heap.

I have said many times that if Rotary International had a continuing theme it should be "Educate, Educate, Educate." Education is the platform to prosperity. Prosperity enables peace. Peace will come through literacy. The ultimate goal of Rotary is peace.

We now live in the Information Age. Information is the new currency, and without the ability to process information — without the ability to read, write, and compute — no one has the dimmest hope of escaping poverty. The real division is no longer between the haves and the have nots — it is between the "knows and the know nots."

We live in a world of letters and numbers — a world that we take for granted because it is our world, a world we were ushered into from a tender age through comprehensive education. No matter what else we do, there can never be sustainable progress to lift people from poverty unless we teach them to read and write and do basic arithmetic. No one can even get a toehold on the lowest rung of the economic ladder without these functional skills.

We have been working effectively but remain on the fringe of solving this major world problem. Illiteracy cuts across borders, cultures, and class lines. In my country, education is compulsory and free, yet 15 percent to 20 percent of the adult population remain functionally illiterate. They do not have the reading, writing, and mathematical skills needed to successfully handle the demands of everyday life, including holding a job. Why is it so?

Without literacy and numeracy skills, not one of us could undertake this assembly's intensive training program. We take our skills for granted. But we should never forget it was through compulsory education that we learned to read, write, and work with numbers. These skills allowed us to improve our lives and to succeed in our chosen vocations. Yet the fact remains that so many other human beings are denied the opportunities afforded to us.

Communities everywhere need to address these basic functional skill deficiencies in homes, in schools, in the workplace and communities. Encourage your clubs to promote literacy and numeracy by working with community literacy agencies, by developing literacy projects with your counterparts in the 98 countries where education is either not compulsory or free, and by persuading all governments to provide free elementary education and upgrade their schools' teaching programs.

Polio and illiteracy provide a compelling comparison. At the start of our long journey toward polio eradication, there were 350,000 cases each year. Now each year, 170 million children are born with the expectation of living in a polio-free world, yet millions of those children will endure their lives crippled by illiteracy. Universal education is the best path to prosperity and peace.

The state of Kerala in India is located on the southwest tip of the country. It is very beautiful there. I was in the city of Cochin for a Rotary institute, and as I was being driven around, I soon noticed that signs of poverty and homelessness were absent. I asked my aide the reason for the absence of poverty. He replied, "The state of Kerala is 100 percent literate, and the population growth is zero." In that one example, there is a lesson for all of us.

My wife, Heather, taught adult literacy for many years, on a one-to-one basis. Her last student was Pauline, a lady of around 40 years of age, married with two children. When Heather met her for the first time, Pauline was illiterate and unable to help her children with their school homework. Pauline was not able to handle so many other chores of everyday living, such as shopping, that required reading and understanding numbers and money. Pauline advanced a long way in 12 months. Just before Christmas, she was able to write her first Christmas card. For her, visible literacy skills became a tool of personal empowerment.

The world is full of people like Pauline. They are the men, women, and children desperately in need of education, desperate to break free from the shackles of illiteracy. Only then will they enjoy self-esteem and a better living standard.

I encourage all of you to use the resources of The Rotary Foundation to further the cause of basic education and literacy, which is one of the six areas of focus in the Future Vision Plan and the RI Strategic Plan. There is so much more we can do in this area. The elimination of illiteracy is a pressing priority. Unless we solve the scourge of illiteracy, the rest of those things we do in the cause of peace will continue to be an uphill struggle.

By being instrumental in teaching someone to read and write through club or district or Rotary Foundation projects, you may well serve Rotary's goal of peace better than you will ever know. Teach the young scribes of tomorrow. Being Rotarians, we are all to accept the challenge of perpetuating the miracle of civilization.

Let us all pledge to share the gift of the written word. Spreading literacy around the planet amounts to a sacred duty — a duty to teach men, women, boys, and girls how to read and write, and to share with them the secrets of counting, adding and subtracting, multiplying and dividing.

Spread the miracle of visible language and then witness the New Generations achieve access to peace and prosperity, as we together build this new world by sharing the magic of the written word.

Leadership: Ignite the Fire

Rajendra K. Saboo
Past RI President

Are you ready to hold the torch to light the path ahead? I am putting this question to you. Now I want to challenge you. Why not be the torch yourself? You have the fire inside you, waiting to be ignited.

Fire is a most potent force. In the words of Nobel Laureate Tagore, fire can be the little lamp that stood up to the mighty setting sun's arrogant declaration — "Who is going to light the world when I am gone" — and humbly said, "Lord, give me a chance and I will do my best."

Fire can be the light of the lantern that Benjamin Franklin used to keep on in his patio throughout the night. When asked why was he wasting the fuel, he replied that the light was not for him but to light the path of the passersby.

Fire is the spark that ignites an engine. Fire is the force to launch a spaceship. Fire represents joyous celebrations. Yes, fire cooks our food, provides warmth, dispels darkness. And yet, fire uncontrolled can be terribly destructive.

Leadership, too, is a potent force, just like fire. You have the fire within you. You are the fire. Let me talk about priorities in Rotary leadership.

In the early morning of the day I took over as RI president, I received a fax at my condo that read: "Respected Dad, Mom, The clock starts now. Only 365 days to homecoming. Congratulations from a proud first family. Your children at home." Usha and I were overwhelmed receiving this message and realized the valuable role of family in my leadership success. More important, I realized then that my ultimate destination was not the presidency of Rotary International, but my homecoming after completing my job. My friends, I urge you, the first support you need is from your family. Make it a part of your joy and challenge. It will enhance your strength. Keep time for your family.

There is a story about a young man charged with theft, robbery, drug abuse, and other criminal acts, appearing before a judge. The judge, looking at the man, said, "Are you not the son of the judge who wrote the famous book on children's trust and rights? And if you are, are you not ashamed of yourself to be a criminal?" The young man replied, "Yes, sir, I am his son. I remember so distinctly, during those days of my childhood, whenever I wanted to have some time with Dad, he turned me away saying he was too busy writing his book on children's trust and rights. So here I am, as I have grown up, not knowing the trust or rights of a child. But, Mr. Judge, tell me who is guilty — I or my father?"

The first lesson in leadership is: Be an example of what you say. Make your life your message, live your values, walk your talk. Be a role model for your children, a hero for your people, Rotary's face in the community.

When Rotarians desirous of becoming district governors approach me for my advice and good wishes, I compliment them for their willingness to take up bigger responsibilities in Rotary. At the same time, I give them a caveat in the form of a hope that they would have the extraordinary ability to continue devoting time for the family and caring for the business, profession, or other vocational activities while fulfilling their Rotary duties. I tell them that service in Rotary would enrich life but to always remember family as priority No. 1 and vocation as priority No. 2.

It is true that as district governor you will be required to put in a substantial part of your time this year. Do find a balance. Rotary should be one of your priorities, but do not start thinking of Rotary as your career. I feel that Rotary has the greatest danger from “no time” Rotarians and “full time” Rotarians.

Leadership next calls on your vocational integrity and excellence.

You always have a choice of taking the path of right or wrong. The right way is to give, to share, to love. The wrong way is to grab, to exploit, to envy. You must always keep in mind that the choice you make, makes you. Thus, through the dignity of vocation and transparency of integrity, you seek purpose, satisfaction, and excellence in your vocation. People ask, is leadership an inborn quality or can it be acquired? I do not have the answer. But I know one thing: Leadership is a set of principles — dynamism, courage, creativity, and integrity — that flow from within. In different degrees these ingredients are embedded in us, but we need to locate them, unlock them. And then through introspection and nurturing, through dedicated and disciplined efforts, these seeds from within would sprout in the form of leadership: touching, caring, guiding, leading by example.

Gandhi was a timid young man. Abraham Lincoln was an ordinary lawyer. Mother Teresa was a simple nun. Their leadership burst into flame when they had a cause confronting them. They did not duck — they located the dormant power within, touched it with a spark, set the goal, and achieved the mission. Having found his inner strength, a good leader does not compete with others but competes with himself. It is this inner strength that made Sir Edmund Hillary, the first man to reach the summit of Mount Everest, observe: “It is not the mountain that we conquer. We conquer ourselves.”

One year’s governorship is a life-changing opportunity. Opportunity often knocks very softly, so please pay attention. Leadership will not end with your year; leadership of your own life will continue. Leaders become lifelong learners, and you have accepted the process in which you, as a student, must consider:

- Willingness to get out of your comfort zone
- Honest self-assessment of successes and failures
- Aggressively seeking information and ideas
- Becoming a world-class listener
- Sincere desire to view life with an open mind

Now, permit me to share briefly some experiences I have encountered that have been lessons to me and may not be found in leadership textbooks:

- **Flexibility.** I asked you to be strong, but the great ancient philosopher Lao Tzu adds a new dimension. He says (*paraphrasing*): I choose to be strong by being soft and flexible rather than inflexible, brittle and hard. Yes, friends, all things, including grass and trees, are soft and pliable in life, dry and brittle in death. The hard and stiff will be broken; the soft and supple will prevail.
- **Firmness.** Flexibility — yes, but there must be no compromise with values you cherish, the principles you live by, the ideals of the organization you have adopted. Have the courage to stand up and speak against evil. If you don’t, you will only be seen collaborating with it. Integrity, honesty, dignity, sincerity are not redefined. Please remember valuable is valuable, but values are invaluable.
- **Humor.** Sense of humor is part of leadership qualities. Humor is spice in human relationship. Handled correctly, humor is like grace — and shines on everybody. Humor connects people. Humor is not just jokes, and if so, the jokes have to be on oneself. A friend of mine has great sense of humor. I once asked him why he, an only child, did not have any siblings. Ready wit, he answered that he asked the

same question to his parents and got their immediate response: "We just did not feel it necessary to repeat a bad joke."

- **Take time.** The world today is speed obsessed. In elevators, we smack the Door Close button in the hope of saving some seconds. The latest I have heard is that people with advanced cases of "hurry sickness" punch in "88" seconds on the microwave instead of "90" because it is faster to tap the same digit twice. Please do not get me wrong. I am not asking you to slow down in your activities, but I am surely asking you to slow down and take time for your human interactions.

Please find space and time to communicate, to build empathy. Whenever possible, write personal letters or notes of greetings, thanks, appreciation, sympathy, affection — even if it is through the Internet. In the hustle and bustle of modern life, these tools are still very relevant for harnessing harmony and mending misunderstandings. Just imagine the effect to an employee in a large corporation who receives a letter written by the chairman that begins, "Dear Number 2040, we have a personal interest in you."

- **You can be wrong.** From childhood it is ingrained in our minds not to admit a mistake and never to say, "I am sorry." On the other hand, to admit and apologize for a wrong or pain caused to another, even inadvertently, helps in rising in one's own and the other person's esteem.

A small incident recently further convinced me of this. After checking-in at the airport in Lagos, Nigeria, I was trying to locate the business-class lounge. I went to the receptionist with my query, and she started processing my card. There was one person ahead of me who got angry and told me so, obviously thinking I had jumped the line. In the same tone, I defended myself and told him that the girl on her own took my card. Thirty minutes later, reflecting on my own behavior, I realized that if I were in his position, I would have felt the same way as he did. I gathered courage and stepped up to him and said, "I apologize for my behavior." He was stunned and his spontaneous reaction was — he hugged me! He had not only forgiven me, he had made me feel good. He looked at my lapel pin and asked, "What is it?" I replied, "It is a Rotary pin," and he exclaimed, "Oh! You are a member of a Rotary club." I realized that my small act had enhanced Rotary's image to the other and my own image to me.

- **Ego buster.** You are going to be very successful, but I must warn you of a vicious circle. Success leads to arrogance and arrogance leads to failure, and where the failure will take you, I don't know — it may not necessarily be success. The cycle has to be interrupted at the very first stage, and it can only be done by a good dose of sincere humility. It is this virtue that will touch you with genuine greatness. It is this quality that will attract people to you and respect you.

When great Italian conductor Toscanini's orchestra burst into unending applause after it played a Beethoven symphony, Toscanini had to come on the stage again and declare, "It is not me, it is Beethoven." Height of humility. Yes, many of us come from humble origins, and invariably success, power, position, or money tend to get in our head. In the midst of all the wealth and fame that life may gift us, our feet must remain firmly grounded.

- **Change.** You have heard President-elect Kalyan emphasizing change, the change that you must bring about, change that would bring the progress. We all resist change and we say, "This is what has always been done, and the same I will continue to do." Change is essential to our evolution as an individual, as an institution. It is necessary for our survival. Ordinary leaders fight it; visionary leaders delight in it. Ordinary leaders imitate; visionary leaders innovate. Change is the factor that offers new opportunity, new horizon, new lead to progress.

What I have said, my friends, is my experience of the attributes of a leader, attributes that touch humanity, that lift the leader to new heights. These attributes have to come from within, where the dormant fire waits to be lit.

There is a town near my city that is largely inhabited by Muslims. Recently, after hearing rumors of desecration of the Holy Quran in the United States, an angry mob ransacked and almost destroyed the local church. A Muslim businessman, Amjad, could not stand this inhumanity. After sending the priest of the church in his car to safety, he began rebuilding the church. In a short time, he brought the priest and the community of minority Christians together for Mass at the repaired church. This businessman did so, even at danger to his own life, because he had courage, goodwill, harmony, and leadership at his heart.

Ladies and gentlemen, Amjad is a colleague of yours sitting amidst you today, and I recognize the governor-elect of District 3090, Amjad Ali Khan.

Like Amjad, you must have had your encounters, your experiences, your challenging moments that made you a true Rotarian rather than being a Rotary club member. You individually may not be able to embrace humanity as a whole or to determine the course of history. But each of you can, through purity and sincerity of thoughts and actions, embrace as many members of the human family as possible and bring about the change. In these hugs, embraces, actions, you will write the history of our Rotary's just-starting new decade.

Just as one lamp can light many lamps, please carry your spark to light the inner lamps of club leaders and Rotarians of your district with the message "What you do for yourself will get lost with you; what you do for others will endure beyond you."

In the words of George Bernard Shaw: "Life is no 'brief candle' to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment; and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

So my friends, are you ready to be a splendid torch — to burn as brightly as possible, not just for your year but to pass on the fire to the generations of Rotary to come?

Are you awakened? Are you inspired — ready to ignite the fire, ready to explore and achieve, ready not just for the launch but to last? Remember, your ultimate destination is to return home, completing your year, with Neil Armstrong's words as he stepped onto the moon echoing in the ears: "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."

Do these words say something to you? Your one, single year can be a leap for our institution, our Rotary. Go for it. Ignite the fire within you.

Public Image

Jennifer Jones
RI Training Leader

Two years ago this month, I completed one of the biggest challenges of my life. My husband, Nick, and I, along with two of your classmates, Michael and Shelly Duben, climbed nearly 20,000 feet to reach the top of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. It was part personal challenge and part Rotary fundraiser.

It took five days to reach the summit — the first day in lush forest, the second in thick brush, the third in low scrub. And the fourth day was like landing on the moon — craters and no sign of life. Now let me explain to you, climbing Kilimanjaro is not a technical climb like Everest. The battle with Kili is altitude, and for me it was a journey to the depths of positive thinking.

By the time we arrived at base camp above 15,000 feet, two of our team members were exhibiting signs of mild to medium altitude sickness. Should we really be doing this? The summit is attempted at midnight and takes somewhere between six to seven hours. It is done at this time because the temperature drops to -20 and it freezes the ground so that you can get better traction. Each group that attempts the climb is led by a team of guides, and this is a coveted job because of the precious tips they receive.

This is where the story becomes very personal. As we set out that night with only a miner's light leading the way, I was torn by whether to feel exhilarated by the opportunity or terrified by the fact that something could go wrong. It wouldn't be until we reached ground level that we would learn a guide from another team had died and a 22-year-old man from England was in cardiac arrest.

Our guides sang Christmas songs in Swahili, and the rhythm of their music helped to create a pace to our steps. *Polepole* in Swahili means "go slow"; it was the mantra of the climb. You see, the best way to ward off altitude sickness is to stay very well hydrated and to take time to adjust to each level by going very slowly — *polepole*. I must confess, I entered into this climb perhaps a little too lightly and without a full appreciation of the dangers. I suppose that I knew them, but I was excited by the adventure and most eager to reach the top of the African continent.

It seemed like we had been climbing forever when our guide shared that we were only a quarter of the way to the top. It was also at this point that our water, even though insulated, was frozen. It took everything in my being to stay focused and to put one foot in front of the other. Inside, I was questioning why I was on the side of this mountain, and I had to dig really deep to stay positive. I was ready to throw in the towel countless times, but to what end? There was no easy way out.

The last hour was the most difficult and required a lot of rock climbing. It was just as the sun was peeking above the horizon that we reached the top. The sky transitioned from a thick carpet of stars to an orange tapestry of color.

I tell this story because it's about climbing to great heights. And isn't Rotary a story that we should be shouting from the top of the mountain? Good public relations is about telling our story. I also see this climb as a metaphor for life and about how we frame the things that are important to us. What are the stories in your own clubs and districts that help to bring Rotary to life?

I want to talk with you today about the importance of public relations to our organization. It used to be that we were encouraged to do our good work quietly and not for recognition. It has really only been the past decade where telling our story has become one of our key strategic initiatives. What we have learned is that when we tell our story, like-minded people want to join with us. It's actually our greatest membership tool!

Our senior leadership has also heard this, and that is why enhancing our public image is such an important part of our strategic plan — a key to our success. As a global network of professional, business, and community volunteers, Rotary is a brand that unites the world. We simply have to climb the mountain and shout a little louder. Each one of you is an ambassador of our great message, and it begins daily by simply wearing your Rotary pin.

A few years ago, I participated in a Rotaplast mission (*Rota-* for Rotary, *plast* for plastic surgery). As a team of 25, we arrived in a small community to conduct a week of surgical procedures to repair cleft lip and palate [in children]. This was a real gift to the children in this community, where they are often discarded as useless or unwanted because of their deformity. In the simple matter of an hour — that a human life could be so dramatically altered!

On the second-to-last day of the mission, a young fisherman and his wife arrived asking for help for their 11-month-old baby. The schedule had been set, and there was truly no room for their child. They had traveled 14 hours by a broken-down bus, by car, and by foot, all to hear that we couldn't help them. And then, like a small miracle, things changed and a window of time became open. We waited in the post-op area with this young mom and dad, waiting for their little bundle to come back into their arms. There wasn't a dry eye in the room when they brought the infant out of the surgical suite. And standing next to them, the mother looked up with tears in her eyes and, through a translator, said: "I have always thought that my baby was beautiful. Now, everyone else can see what I see." What an extraordinary privilege to share in that intimate experience, to know that a few key tools and our willingness to volunteer our time and talents helped change a life.

I tell this particular story to share with you how important it is to paint a picture to reach others — to put a human face on the stories we tell. Because Rotary has made public relations a priority, there are many resources to help you tell your Rotary story. So when you go to your PR toolbox, what can you expect to find? There is a wealth of information just waiting to be shared about how to do this with great results.

The most effective tool created over the past five years is the series of Humanity in Motion public service announcements. These extraordinary ads can be used for print, Internet, radio, television, and billboards. They are easy to customize, and yet they provide a consistent look and feel that shows Rotary is the same no matter where you are located. Consistency and continuity are absolutely critical to our success. When we are all singing off of the same song sheet, we amplify our message. It enhances our brand.

One of our best resources is that of our human resources. Rotary International has identified Rotarians in every corner of the world who are public relations specialists. These members of the Rotary International Public Image Resource Group are trained to assist you and your district public relations chairs. They will provide guidance, support, valuable resources, and practical tips. If you have not already named a district public relations chair, I encourage you to return home and find the most qualified Rotarian for this job. That person is then charged with encouraging clubs to name their own public relations chair and training them so that they can reach out and tell our story. This is one of the primary reasons why Public Relations Grants were created. These grants are a perfect way to reach out to the media to be our partner in the most cost-effective way possible.

As we enter into the last stages of our fight against polio, it has given us many gifts beyond the possible eradication of this disease. It has taken us as an organization from our fledg-

ling teens and moved us into our adult years. We will not always be the focused on polio, so we need to learn from this experience. What has polio done for us, for our brand?

More than anything, it has taught us about the power of partnerships. We all know of our collaboration with the World Health Organization, the CDC, and UNICEF. But when the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation wanted to get into the polio eradication business, they came to Rotary as the trusted captains of this race. Bill Gates knew our story. He said, "The world would not be where it is without Rotary, and it won't get where it needs to go without Rotary" — a pretty powerful endorsement.

It has opened other doors and helped us to build important relationships with other celebrated figures who help us to draw attention to our message, all while protecting our valuable dollars. These positive endorsements are playing out through our "This Close" campaign with the likes of Jack Nicklaus, Queen Noor, [Archbishop Emeritus] Desmond Tutu, and Jackie Chan. I encourage you to think about someone in your area who can be added to this esteemed list and to regionalize these ads and make them meaningful in your own country.

So what else has polio taught us? It has challenged us to find interesting and unique ways to raise awareness. Around the world, we have seen the lighting of several iconic monuments, including the Pyramids in Egypt and the Colosseum in Rome. These are images that make us proud to be Rotarians, and they generate internal pride with our members when they see their good work being recognized. Rotary, a brand that brings the world together!

And what about the global phenomenon of social media, the hallmark of communication for today's younger members? Actually, the fastest growing population on Facebook is from ages 55 to 65, so it's a force that we all need to embrace.

A few years ago, we hosted an 18-year-old Youth Exchange student from Brazil named Leo. He arrived in late August and spent the first few months struggling to fit in and learn the language. It was Christmas Eve, and we were driving home from Midnight Mass. There was a light snow falling, and it felt like a magical evening. From the backseat, Leo said, "Nick, Jen — I want to tell you something. I love you." Nick said, "What do you want, Leo?" Leo said, "You don't understand, I have never told this to anyone, not even my parents. You have taught me this." We were deeply touched, and it was a moment for us to recognize the importance of service to the next generation.

As we start to unveil our fifth Avenue of Service — New Generations — we have to look for innovative ways to engage [young people] in Rotary. Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are just a few of the ways that we are able to spread our message quickly and effectively. As for Leo, we connect often by Facebook and it keeps him fresh in our hearts.

Our public relations lessons are ones that need to trickle down to the club and district levels, and there are some areas of the world that are doing an outstanding job with these efforts. For example, the 18 districts in France have joined together to harness their collective power to launch a major advertising campaign. They understand that by acting together, they can leverage even greater buying power. Their campaign included almost 6,000 billboards, messages on major radio stations, and magazine ads promoting Rotary beneficiaries like our peace fellows and youth programs. And by reaching out to the media to gain news coverage, they successfully raised awareness of what Rotary is and what Rotary does.

In Australia, eight districts representing 850 clubs worked together to develop "Rotary in Your Pocket" brochures including topics such as community, international projects, health, youth, and the environment. The significance is that it provided a unified national message.

I want to conclude today with one final concept. It is a compelling story from RI Director Ravi Ravindran about the importance of brand recognition. Following the tsunami in 2005, Rotarians in his home country responded. In Sri Lanka, nearly 60,000 people were killed and almost half the country was decimated. Along with his fellow Rotarians, they decided they needed to do something substantial — something big. They decided to build 25 high-quality schools to replace 25 that had been destroyed.

In three years, they had built 20 of these schools at a price tag of more than US\$12 million. Each time the ribbon was cut to open a new school, they placed a full-page ad in the local newspaper proclaiming “Rotarians Keep Their Promise.” And while advertisements are expensive, they found a partner in a local bank that was willing to pay for these ads. It was a public relations coup and one that paid even bigger dividends. You see, the tsunami attracted nongovernmental organizations from around the world, but only a handful of them ever delivered. Rotary stood head and shoulders above the rest, and our good name grew.

So when their frustrated government assembled a group of donors, it was Rotary that was asked to share the secret of their success. And share they did. Rotary taught them about how to develop and construct a large project on time and with an administrative expense of less than 3 percent.

Rotary is a strong brand in Sri Lanka and, as you heard, in France and Australia and many other corners of our globe. So how do we turn up the volume and become recognized for the great humanitarian service we provide? As I’ve said, we do it by sharing our story!

I started out today by telling you about climbing a mountain. I want to end today by asking you to join me at the top to shout the greatest story of all — the story of Rotary. You believe this already, because you are here! You are here today with others who believe in the Rotary community and our humanitarian service. We all believe this, and what a difference telling our Rotary story will make in the world. It will be a climb you never forget!

Our Core Values and Vocational Service

Bhichai Rattakul
Past RI President

The saying “To see the rainbow we must endure the rain” is very true. You are here not to see the rainbow. Yet you cannot avoid enduring the rain and the storm in order to seek ways and means to fulfill your dreams.

During the last six days, we have put our hands, our heads, and our hearts together, enduring the rain and the storm to try to make Rotary, in the words of President Ray, bigger, better, and bolder. But as we look to the future, our task becomes even bigger and bolder with the call from our President-elect Kalyan Banerjee to *Reach Within to Embrace Humanity*. Today, we embrace this challenge and reaffirm our belief in the core values through which so much has been accomplished — the lives that have been saved, the hearts that have been touched, and the future that shines brightly for Rotary, tomorrow and beyond.

But, after all, what indeed is Rotary? What indeed are our core values? Our core values are what have kept Rotary strong even after more than a hundred years: service, fellowship, diversity, integrity, and leadership.

As I stand here and look out upon the hundreds of white faces, dark faces, and yellow faces, intermingled like the waters of a river, I see only one face: I see you, the core of the Rotary movement, who will shape the future of Rotary for years to come. You are the diversity that builds our service, in fellowship, with integrity and leadership.

Service is of course our first core value: Service Above Self. Today, we embrace the world in which we serve. I think today the world needs Rotary far more than when the four men first met on that freezing night so long ago, because today Rotary offers a unique and precious light of hope in an already dim world with an ever-darkening horizon.

There is no doubt that the needs now are greater and more diverse than ever before. And the need for Rotary fellowship is ever growing, as it is through fellowship that Rotarians conquer the world’s challenges together. The challenges we face in making the world more equitable, over the broad range of human needs, amount indeed to a steep mountain to climb.

But we embrace the Rotary core value of leadership. And what is leadership? Leadership is rallying together the resources, the energy, the drive of many people, to see the job done — so that when it is done, the people will say, we did it ourselves.

After 10 long years of untiring efforts, the Land Mine Removal project in Cambodia, initiated by the Rotary Club of Tokyo, which later on became the project of all 34 districts in Japan, came to a successful conclusion on 5 February last year. From the project’s launch in October 1999 until its completion, 28 villages covering an area of 1.2 million square meters were cleared of land mines, enabling 56,500 people to settle down safely.

Does this not confirm our conviction that we must marshal our forces and take action on more acute problems that arise? Does it not show us that our Rotary leadership is sorely needed, and a potent force for change?

At the height of the political conflicts among the many countries in that region, I myself went to the locations of those land mines in 1976. Under the escort of the Khmer Rouge soldiers, who knew exactly where the land mines were buried, I went into Cambodia on

a top-secret mission and without any arms escort for a dialogue with my counterpart, the then deputy prime minister and foreign minister of the Khmer Rouge, Ieng Sary, who is still very much alive today and standing on trial as a war criminal in Phnom Penh.

But I couldn't do much. No one could do anything at all while the political situation was still uncertain and Pol Pot, the top Khmer Rouge leader, was still in power. I had no idea then and never dreamed that the very subject I discussed with the Khmer Rouge leader so long ago would one day, after 35 years, be a topic I am speaking to you about now and become a project — a challenge — that would involve so many Rotary clubs and Rotarians around the world.

I am now thinking of one poor Thai farmer who lives in a small village near the Cambodian border. In the late 1980s, he lost one of his legs by stepping on a land mine while he was looking for food in the forest. He had a wife and a baby daughter to support. But after the accident, his wife could not overcome her fear about what the future might bring — she left and was never heard from again! He was left with no leg, no wife, and the huge responsibility of supporting a child. Having some knowledge in carpentry, he built himself a crude artificial leg and got whatever job he could. His awful leg constantly plagued him and gave him much pain. But it was better than no leg at all!

When the local Rotary clubs in the area heard about the plight of this man and his misfortune, they *reached within* themselves and became involved and, with the support of The Rotary Foundation and clubs around the world, provided him and other amputees with a high quality, properly fitting artificial limb. The new leg gave him new energy and new confidence. He got a better and steady job, and his daughter was able to go to school and graduated. A happy ending!

And it so happened that her graduation day was also his birthday, a triumphant day for both of them. They had struggled so hard together and come so far. To mark the occasion, the girl wanted to give her father a present. Being so poor, she had nothing but a picture of them when she was a little girl. But on the back of the picture, she wrote a note more precious to him than any expensive gift. She wrote: "Dad, we will now walk together."

The girl went on to become a nurse, to marry and have a child of her own. Now, she is able to support her father, and they do indeed walk together. My friends, because of the desire to serve that is within us, we also walk with this man and thousands of others like him.

Thoughtfulness of and helpfulness to others is indeed the noble ideal of Rotary. And we do not need to be wealthy, we do not need to be famous, to be able to achieve this ideal. We need only to reach within.

Years ago, when I first ran for public service in my country, my campaign duties included delivering speeches from the back of a truck. One night, very late, we were at a stop in a poor slum. We had quite a crowd there who were still waiting at that late hour to hear from us. I had to shout to be heard. At the conclusion of my speech, I was shaking hands with the people when a youngster gently pushed his way to the front of the crowd, calling to me, "Uncle, Uncle." He was holding a little paper cone filled with bits of sugar cane. He offered it to me, saying, "After so much talking, you must be very thirsty." I was indeed very thirsty!

Now, to think that child had so little, and yet he found an opportunity to serve. He had the means to soothe the scratchy throat of a tired politician, and he offered it, freely and gladly. This small act of thoughtfulness planted a seed in my heart that has grown over the years. I think of this boy and his simple gesture, and I am inspired to ask myself, "Can I be this thoughtful?"

How many of us who have chosen to be a part of this great service organization are as kind as this in our daily lives? How many of us remember to think of others first and to think of ourselves in terms of what we can do for others? Only *you* can tell!

My dear friends, Rotary certainly is not a spectacular organization because it works from man to man, and its achievements are not always recognized by contemporaries. But I think that Rotary has in its possession one of the most precious commodities, of which we have failed to see the uniqueness and which we have failed to utilize and practice. Yes, I am referring to Vocational Service, through which I sincerely believe that we as Rotarians can act best and contribute most, to improve not only ourselves but the society in which we live.

Indeed, Rotary can pride itself on how it has weathered the storms with distinction through many humanitarian and educational programs. And yet, it is important to recognize that although we have made significant progress in the many areas of human activity, many corrupt practices continue to prevail in our business and professional lives as they did at the beginning of the last century when Rotary was created.

Amorality, shady business, illegal profits, and legal and ethical infractions unfortunately are spreading rapidly across society in spite of being fought against and reproached. How can we divert this trend, or at least do something to prevent it from spreading out further in society and even in Rotary? Through our final core value, *integrity*.

Remind your clubs that professional relations are founded upon the individual; upon his or her understanding of the importance that he or she personally assumes as someone able to unleash useful action proven to benefit others; upon the honesty of his or her goals and the value that a person gives to ethics; upon the sanctity of the promised word and the manifestation of a cooperative and united attitude in relations among people.

Remind your clubs that in this contradictory world in which the majority of people are more concerned with *having* than with *being*, that this great challenge is entrusted upon Rotary and upon each one of us!

From what I have said, you will see what Rotary has been proposing throughout its existence: developing a person's potential and working with a sense of dignity and honesty in all useful occupations.

Perhaps the first difficulty in this challenge to surmount is to help the Rotarians in your district to clearly understand what vocational service means in Rotary. At least tell them that They Profit Most Who Serve Best is not simply a slogan. It is the most practical answer that we have to ennoble the behavior that the ideal of service dictates to us.

Vocational service is, without doubt, the foundation of all Rotary — an activity that can only be demonstrated through the example that each one of us can give through our behavior, and our conviction that is a guiding principle in one's life.

And with that conviction I have come to see that Rotary should address itself both in thought and in action, because unless the ideals we profess and exemplify can become flesh of our flesh, can become bone of our bone, can become life, can become action, and can become power, there is truly no hope for us!

Let me say without hesitation: Membership is the greatest asset of our organization, and this has been the work of Rotarians. Having said this, we must always keep in mind that the most important element is *qualified* members. The qualifications of a prospective member must be beyond any doubt. My fellow Rotarians, the fact that our membership is made up of such diverse professions and business classifications ensures us a many-sided approach to any given problem.

It was in the late 1960s that I had the privilege of visiting for the first time the old RI Secretariat on Ridge Avenue in Evanston, not far from the present headquarters. George R. Means was then the general secretary and a very, very efficient one. Everywhere in that building was the feeling of action — not just busy work but meaningful action — new plans, new hopes, and new possibilities for service. But nowhere was this feeling stronger than when I was admitted to the Paul Harris Room! This is the office that has been carefully reproduced to the point that every picture on the wall has been hung to within 1.6 millimeters of where it had been in Paul Harris's original office in downtown Chicago. Even then, in the quiet solitude of what almost seemed to be a chapel, I felt the great power of the Rotary ideal of service in action.

I was told that it would be permissible for me to pull out the chair and sit at Paul Harris's desk! I looked very hard at the desk. I looked very hard at the chair. I looked very hard on the wall behind the desk that says: "If a man has a thousand friends, he has not one to spare." My eye looked at this unique organization of members from so many lands, committed all to the ideal of answering the call to serve. I then thought of the many times in my own life when I had refused to answer that call. I thought of that little lad in the slum who had so little, yet he had the desire to serve a tired politician. I am thinking now of the Thai Rotarian Yongchai Surapantanakorn, who lost his life on his way home from an NID [National Immunization Day], saving the other passengers when their boat capsized. No, I could not sit in that chair!

My fellow Rotarians, in just a few hours from now, the final curtain of this International Assembly will descend, and like all good things they are limited in supply and parting is always a sad experience. Looking back to the 53 long years of my Rotary service, and now at 85, I am now at the end of my long Rotary journey. Without knowing how many years are left, I hope my health will permit me to continue to serve until it hurts! However that may be, and whatever may befall, I am sure that I shall never forget the emotions of this day or be able to express my gratitude to you and to those colleagues of mine who have all gone before me, with whom I have lived my life.

When you return home, you will have many stories to tell your friends. But whatever the story you may want to tell them, please tell them this: Here in San Diego, where we have spent this week together, there is a church with a statue of Jesus outside. Thirty years ago, the hands of that statue were broken off by vandals. Instead of repairing the statue and replacing the hands, the church decided to add a plaque. It bears the words, "I have no hands but yours."

My dear friends, you are the hands of Rotary in 2011-12. I now leave you, not knowing when our paths will cross again, but with all my heart I wish you a successful and rewarding year as you *Reach Within to Embrace Humanity!*

Closing Remarks

Ray Klingensmith
RI President

Garrison Keillor has a popular radio show in the USA, and I am one of his fans. He usually starts his weekly stories about his mythical hometown with the statement “Well, it has been a quiet week in Lake Wobegon.” I would like to paraphrase his line again this year by saying, “Well, it has been quite a week here in San Diego!” Yes, quite a week! Do you agree?

It has been a wonderful week with a model world in which Rotarians from 73 countries have worked in peace and harmony to make the world a better place. Indeed, it has been a magical place here at the Grand Hyatt this week, due to the spirit of Rotary. The spirit of fellowship and service that has spread around the world from the simple act of one man inviting three of his friends to meet with him to talk about a new idea. The idea of a service club that would be based on fellowship and friendship. What a simple idea, but what a powerful concept! We are the direct beneficiaries of that new idea proposed by Paul Harris in 1905, and there are millions of other people who have benefited as well through our service programs.

The Rotary spirit, and the magic we have experienced this week, has occurred due to one person’s new idea. And there have been several other new ideas adopted along the way, such as the Avenues of Service, The Rotary Foundation, the Standard Rotary Club Constitution, The Four-Way Test, and the office of district governor! Each of these hallmarks was conceived by an individual Rotarian and then supported by other Rotary leaders because they made good sense. They were simple concepts, but they have created the magic of Rotary!

Now it is your turn. What are your new ideas to improve your districts? One of the ways you can help your districts is to encourage your club presidents-elect to attend the Rotary convention in New Orleans. That is the reason you just enjoyed a presentation about the next convention in addition to the one you are about to see for the 2012 convention in Bangkok. Attendance by your club leaders at the New Orleans convention will help them to gain information and motivation about Rotary that is only available at an annual convention, and the participation by your club leaders will help your team to have a better year in 2011-12. That’s why we made a shift last year to promote both of the next two conventions at these assemblies, because both of them are vital to your success as a team.

President-elect Kalyan has asked us to *Reach Within to Embrace Humanity*, and each of us should think about the challenge of his [RI] theme. And the obvious first question is: How do we reach within ourselves to do something? How do we really reach our inner selves? I personally think it is through our ability to dream, because our dreams can be wonderfully big and bold without any fears of failure or rejection. Dreams are like tropical islands where the sun always shines and life is always good. And as we experience those magical moments, those are the times that we are reaching within ourselves!

Then the obvious second question is: How do we use our dreams to embrace humanity? One of the definitions of *embrace* is a physical hug to show affection, and another definition of *embrace*, which is more relevant here, is to love and cherish. As a result, if we love and cherish humanity, then it is clear that our quest must be to make the world a better place to live and work for all of mankind — a quest for which Rotary clubs are ideally suited!

So how do we transform our dreams into making the world a better place? Cardinal Suenens gave us the formula when he wisely said, “Blessed are those who dream dreams and who are willing to pay the price to make them come true.” What compelling logic. We must be

willing to convert our dreams into plans and then to implement our plans. Plan your work, and work your plan! That is standard Rotary procedure, and it all starts with dreaming big and thinking big. And we can do it, if we really want to embrace humanity.

President-elect Kalyan and Binota have challenged us to *Reach Within to Embrace Humanity*, and we know that we can do so through dreams, plans, and work. We also know that the work of Rotary is done through our 34,000 clubs around the world, and it is your role as district governors-elect to develop new ideas to help the clubs in your districts to dream, plan, and work to make the world a better place.

The club leaders are ready to follow your lead if you are willing to serve as a friend, counselor, and cheerleader in helping them to achieve their goals. Remember that their club goals are more important than your personal objectives, and that the best way to lead Rotarians is by setting a good example. We can do it because service, fellowship, integrity, diversity, and leadership are our core values, which I prefer to call our Rotary DNA. Those traits are what distinguish us from other organizations. There is no doubt that we can help our club leaders to *Reach Within to Embrace Humanity* and to make the world a better place, because we have been doing it for more than 100 years, and we do it better than anyone else in the world!

Thank you, Kalyan and Binota, for giving me this time to talk with your team. Good luck to all of you!

Closing Remarks

Kalyan Banerjee RI President-elect

Five days ago, each of us entered these halls with great expectations. Searching for peace in the world was our goal. Our love, respect, and friendship for one another were the foundation of our beliefs. We were seeking ways and means to build on that foundation through service for mankind to achieve our goal of peace.

During our days here, we have spoken in many languages. Some of these may have been impossible to understand by others. But the spoken word matters little when the languages of friendship, of courtesy, of warmth and care seem to permeate everywhere. The mutual respect and confidence of one another has truly compensated for the absence of understanding the spoken word. And as I kept meeting with so many of you on so many occasions, I often thought of the motto of the United States of America on its seal, *E Pluribus Unum*, which means "Out of many, one." And that's just what we seem to be — many lands, many languages, many people but one purpose.

We're all leaving from here tomorrow. But tonight, I would like to ask you:

- Will you be leaving here fully aware of your role and responsibilities?
- Are you confident to communicate and motivate the Rotarians of your district to *Reach Within to Embrace Humanity*?
- Are you ready to carry out our program for the coming year?
- Have you understood the significance of your leadership role as district governor?
- Are you ready to lead your district to the most memorable year of your and their lives?

All of us tonight, over 1,300 Rotarians and spouses, representing more than 200 Rotary countries and regions, have traveled here from all over the globe. The collective Rotary experience here tonight possibly exceeds 100 centuries, and that is certainly impressive. But the length of involvement each one brings here tonight matters far less than the depth of the commitment and the courage we bring to our role as leaders during the coming year. From what I have seen from all of you, I believe we shall leave here tonight fully aware that we share a common dream, within each one of us, so that we can love our families, work in our neighborhood, serve our nations, and embrace the world, striving for peace and a better life for all. To pursue that dream needs all our inner strength, our courage, our commitment, and the spirit of championing change. District governors of 2011-12, we will be the change makers for a better tomorrow.

As Rotarians, serving others is what we love doing most. We try to reach those in need and do all we can. But as leaders, each one of you today is on your mark to rise to the peaks of your talents, to serve and to lead others. Now is the time to be fully ready, because your year will start soon and before you realize, it will be over as well. Spring is short and summer will soon be gone. Tagore, India's Nobel Laureate poet, lamented in one of his songs: "The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day. I have spent my days in stringing and unstringing my instrument." I am sure you'll not let that happen with you. You have only one year to make your dreams come true. Serve your clubs with commitment, with care, and always with the courage of your convictions, and work to make the world happier when we are done than when we began.

Indeed, 2011-12 will be the year of the individual Rotarian, the year when we recognize and applaud all that they do for Rotary and for the lives of others whom they do not know

and have not met. They are the ones who keep Rotary on the move in 34,000 clubs in 200 countries and geographical areas. They are our assets, and it will be our responsibility to ensure we take care of our assets. And so, as you go around to the clubs and meet as many individual Rotarians you can, please tell them that the time they give and the work they do make Rotary what it is today. Please tell each one of them that their work is important for their clubs and their communities. And just as the mighty ocean is composed of countless drops of water, tell them too that each act of individual service helps us embrace humanity as a whole, for a more peaceful world. That is why, in 2011-12, we shall recognize leaders and clubs and districts who carry the service of Rotary forward through all stages of [the Presidential] Citation and Changemaker awards, culminating with the visit of the top doers and achievers at the Bangkok convention in May 2012.

You did just have a glimpse of the promises of our convention at Bangkok. Let me tell you, this is going to be an event every Rotarian will hate to miss. I promise you that! So, come yourselves! Bring all with you! It will be an affair to remember.

During this International Assembly, you have had some outstanding addresses and participated in some great discussions. All were equally important to carry Rotary forward. Past [RI] President Raja Saboo shone as brilliantly as ever with his presentation on leadership. Indeed, leadership is why we have all been here for five days. To me, leadership is all about other people: helping them achieve *their* aspirations and alleviating *their* difficulties so that they can take flight in freedom without fear. Using a favorite analogy, I have often said that as leaders, we are like caring gardeners who tend their flower beds with love and care and firmness, all at the same time enabling the seed of talent and capability to germinate and grow to bear great flowers and fruits while preventing the weeds of selfishness or indifference from taking root.

Again, for me, the one aspect of Rotary that is unique is our Avenue of Vocational Service. I know you had a memorable presentation on this from Past [RI] President Bhichai [Rattakul]. And I mention it again because I feel very strongly about vocational service, what it means to each of us in our own lives in terms of integrity, sincerity, and honesty.

An architect friend of mine had spent his career designing homes and building them for a major housing company to sell in Mumbai, where I come from. Incredibly, construction costs there are among the highest in the world. My friend went to his boss one day after 35 years of service and said he wanted to retire to spend more time with his family. He would miss his fat paychecks but would manage to get by. His boss was sorry to see him go but asked him to design and build just one more house as a personal favor. It would take about four to six months, as they often do in India, and though my friend agreed, his heart was not in his work. As a result, the design was inferior, the materials used were poor, and the workmanship was shoddy. When the house was done, the boss came to inspect the place. "This is your home," he said to my friend. "This is the company's gift to you for your years of hard work," and then he handed him the keys.

Well, what a surprise! And what a shock! If my friend had only known that he was building his own house, he would have done it so differently. Now he would spend his life in a home he had not cared to build properly!

And so it is with many of us. We sometimes build our lives in a distracted way, reacting instead of acting, willing to put up with less than the best. Then, with a shock, we look at what we have created with a lack of commitment and integrity and find that we have to live in a home that we could have built better. That is what vocational service does for us. Almost unnoticed, it helps us live our lives as role models. Quite simply, that's what makes Rotary unique.

Let me remind you of the two other priorities for our year: continuing to do those things we are doing well and which must be done, and changing those things that need to be changed, starting with ourselves when needed.

This evening, my dear fellow Rotary leaders, let us recognize too our greatest assets — our spouses and partners, whom we have with us tonight. I can tell you that mine is not only my helping hands but also my tender companion, my guide, the person who always pushes me forward when the going is good and always holds my hands when things look tough. At all times, I may add, she's also quite a handful. But it's our partner who helps us as a companion, softening some of the sharper corners, providing the tranquility when needed and inspiration to meet the challenges when we face them. Go on, hold their hands. You will make a great team. At the same time, it will mean much to Rotary.

It's been said that the most glorious moments of your life are not the so-called days of success but those days that you feel within you the response to rise to a challenge and the promise of future accomplishments.

You would have found out by now that I am a bit of a storyteller. As we come to the close of this very special evening, please permit one final story, from the days of the Second World War.

Wanda Bulik was 18 when a conductor approached her on a train in Poland during the height of the war. He asked her to take care of an abandoned three-year-old Jewish boy found traveling alone. Without hesitation, the young lady, not Jewish herself, convinced a young police officer who was in love with her to pose with her as the boy's parents and devoted the next four years to sheltering him. This was a time when occupiers had overrun Poland and were rounding up Jews to send them to the concentration camps. Anybody harboring a Jew ran terrible risks themselves.

This young lady was an apparently ordinary person herself who reached out to one individual and embraced him, even at personal risk. Indeed, I suppose, she embraced all humanity because she dared to get involved for what she thought was right.

It was one Mother Teresa, a small, frail lady from Albania, who came to Kolkata, India, to give new hope to thousands of the stricken and downtrodden. It was one doctor Albert Schweitzer from Germany who spent his life caring for hundreds of people in the darkest corners in Africa. And it was just one Greg Mortenson from America who worked for educating children in schools, at the risk of his life, in the toughest and roughest mountains in Afghanistan to give them new hope of a better future.

In this indifferent world, we tend to avoid getting involved. Rotary teaches us to get involved when it comes to humanity, and you are the leaders who know what that means. After all, humanity is your business. Enjoy your involvement. It will become the key factor to Rotary embracing the world.

Every single thing you have experienced, every moment of the journey you have come through so far was all to prepare you for this moment right now. Imagine the power you have within you, not in terms of authority but the power to do good. Look at the change that you can bring, and consider the destiny you can create.

Remember, each human being is created, backed by a set of supporting genes coded within. Expressed in scientific terms, it is the DNA of your personality. Every organization too has a DNA. Rotary has its own DNA made up of its objective, mission, and vision. If your DNA matches with the DNA of Rotary, you find it is natural to accept the philosophy, the ideals of Rotary and dedicate yourself to it. We do it because that is where you feel you will find the best in life with a deep sense of satisfaction.

As you reach within yourself, you will find the presence of a small voice that cannot be heard by outside ears, the presence of a small light that cannot be seen by outside eyes. To hear that voice your heart is the ear, and to see that light your mind is the eye. These are no ordinary voice or light, small as they may be; they encompass the infinite power that will manifest through the heart and the mind, and your body will feel the awakening of a new magnetism, a new spirit, new energy — indeed, a new way of looking at life.

You may ask how does one touch or embrace humanity? It is so large, so varied, so diverse, so spread out. Humanity is composed of each human being, and your embracing one person or a cause that helps one person will have the ripple effect to spread to the entire society, embracing all humanity.

That creativity is within you. It is part of your nature, and you have to let nature take its own course, let your creativity reach the heights never touched before. You can do that when you reach within, listening to the little voice and following the even smaller light, when no pulls and pressures of the world can deflect you. This will become a part of your personality as you spend this year of leadership, which will give you every opportunity to rediscover yourself, reveal to you your inner strength, and lift you up as you follow your life's journey.

Your mind is the motivator of action that distinguishes a human life from any other living being. Please remember that your heart is the home of compassion, motivator of emotions, just as physiologically it is the center of life.

And when I speak of passion and emotions, I can't resist sharing with you just one final quote from Mother Teresa, who said:

At the end of our lives, we'll be judged not by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, or how many great things we have done. We will be judged by "I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was naked and you clothed me, I was homeless and you took me in."

In India, when we meet another person, we greet him or her by folding our hands like this, and saying *namaskaram*, which in the ancient language of Sanskrit means "I greet the divine in you." There is divinity in each one of us. Touch it, contact it, communicate with it. The divinity will manifest itself. The inner self will no more be thinking of just "self" but will be ready to embrace all humanity.

It will be Binota's and my privilege to work with you, to share this great adventure in service through Rotary. You will be in our thoughts and in our hearts always.

As you return home, I pray you travel safely. Let us think of the peace and understanding that we must bring to this world of ours. Let us think that there is a latent goodness everywhere that needs to be touched by our inspiration. Let us *Reach Within to Embrace Humanity*.

Rotary: Life-Changing Experience

Binota Banerjee Spouse of RI President-elect

I welcome all of you in this college of Rotary knowledge, spouse opening plenary session. Some of you have been Rotary spouses for a very long time, some for a few years. We hope to make this meeting a source of inspiration for you. At the assembly, the important thing is not the diversity of languages, not the nationalities, not the customs. The important thing is the spirit of unity, the sense of goodwill, and the sincere desire to come together as one. A friendly smile, an outstretched hand, or a show of affection brings hearts together and opens the doors to friendship. That makes the impossible possible.

I remember when I came to a meeting like this, many years back, when my husband Kalyan was governor-elect. I learned so much from all my friends, and now my experience tells me that every person in this room has something important to share. I am sure we all will learn from each other and together we will share a time that will never come again!

When Kalyan was governor, I traveled with him to all the clubs of our district. In India, they put the first lady of the district on the dais so the other people can see her. One day I was a little preoccupied and somebody from the audience sent me a piece of paper. On it was written "Binota, smile." I read it and immediately smiled. You know, it was many years back but still is good advice. So since then, I am smiling and I want all of you smile this year, next year, and all the years to come. Keep smiling and, as the song says, the world will smile with you!

When Kalyan was governor, if for any reason I thought I couldn't go to a meeting, the club president used to send Kalyan a letter that read "If Binota cannot come, then it is not your official visit"! It shows the importance that Rotarians in my country give to a spouse's presence.

As Kalyan said, "The support and service provided by spouses through Rotary is a demonstration of talent, intelligence, capacity for work, and an incredible wealth of love."

Rotarians value your role because it is as unique as you are. Rotary needs you to make big dreams come true. So thank you in advance for the efforts. I am sure you will do your best to support the next generation of Rotary leaders. More than one hundred years of Rotary history have proved that spouses have the potential to make a difference and, for that, I pray God to bless you today and every day to come.

And now, let me introduce the man I know, with whom I have shared 42 years of my life: my husband, Kalyan. We met each other in a hospital when I was working as a nurse and he was there as a patient. He came there for a check-up for two days, and instead he stayed 49 days. We fell in love and since then we have been together. We have built a strong family, and Rotary has blessed us with friends everywhere.

We have one son and one daughter, both married. Our son lives in Australia and our daughter lives in Toronto, Canada. We have four grandchildren — one girl and three boys — and they are beautiful and very precious to us.

He is a family man, a hard worker, a caring father, a dedicated Rotarian. He has determination and perseverance, and I am sure he will give his very best to Rotary by leading Rotarians in the way he usually does — by example.

Kalyan is my husband, but he is also my companion, my friend, my love, and my soul. We have supported each other along the way, and I invite you to join me next year to support our spouses with the best of ourselves because they have an important mission to fulfill — to *Reach Within to Embrace Humanity*.

Ladies and gentlemen, with great emotion, gratitude, and love, let me introduce the president of Rotary International for the year 2011-12, my dear husband, Kalyan Banerjee.



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