

**Glenn E. Estess Sr.**  
**RI president**  
**Welcome address**

Friends, guests, and fellow members of the family of Rotary,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this tremendous event — the centennial convention of Rotary International.

We have come together here in Chicago to *Celebrate Rotary* and its first 100 years of service and fellowship. It is wonderful to see all of you here, having traveled from every corner of the world to make this celebration a truly joyous event.

I have been a Rotarian for 45 years, and the convention is always the highlight of the year. Our convention is something I look forward to all year long. Why? Because a Rotary convention is the biggest family reunion in the world. When it comes to family reunions, bigger is definitely better. I cannot tell you how pleased I am to be with all of you, tens of thousands strong, at the biggest Rotary convention in North American history.

We are here to celebrate a century of successes and phenomenal growth and work together to make Rotary's future even brighter than its past. In the days ahead, we will meet new friends and old ones. We will learn about Rotary's work around the world and celebrate together the many accomplishments of our first 100 years. We'll learn about the big projects, like PolioPlus. We'll learn about Rotary Fellowships and Foundation projects through our many booths and exhibits. And we'll learn about just a few of the thousands upon thousands of Rotary projects that are going on around the globe every single day.

One of the most wonderful things about Rotary is that it allows you to be part of something so much larger than yourself. One volunteer in one project can't change the world, it's true. But the power of Rotary is what happens when all of us work together. In just one year, Rotarians have worked over 25 million hours on over 180,000 projects in 168 countries. In addition, this year, clubs sponsored almost 8,000 Centennial Community Projects and 600 twin club projects. Working together, we have changed the world. How did we do it? One Rotary club and one Rotary project at a time.

Over the past year, Mary and I have made so many new friends through Rotary and seen so many wonderful projects around the world. We have been amazed by the variety, creativity, ambition, and effectiveness of these projects. It's one of the great strengths of Rotary that Rotarians live and work in communities all over the world. They know their communities, and they know their communities' needs. And they know how best to meet those needs. Rotarians never look at a problem, shrug their shoulders, and walk away. They give the problem a hard look, and then they roll up their sleeves and get to work.

Thirty years ago, the Rotary Club of Vapi, India, saw a need. They saw a need for health care in their community. And so they built a small clinic. Seven years later, the clinic had turned into a modern hospital, which today serves the people of South Gujarat with state-of-the-art services in general and specialty medicine.

But it didn't end there. The club saw a need for education in their community, and so they built three schools, serving over 3,000 students. These schools were such a success that their students

soon needed a place to obtain higher education, and so Rotarians in Vapi, India, rose to meet that need as well. They built colleges of arts, commerce, and sciences with graduate programs in pharmacy, nursing, and business management. Today, Vapi is a thriving educational center, and all of these institutions run without profit or loss. When I visited Vapi last year, I thought, This is Rotary. And this is why I am so proud to be a Rotarian.

That is a true Rotary story, a story of Rotarians seeing a need, rising to meet the challenge, and changing lives for the better. There are stories like these all over the Rotary world, day after day. And now, let's take a look at a few more of those wonderful Rotary stories that are unfolding throughout our world today. (*An audiovisual presentation on the president's emphases was shown.*)

We acknowledge and celebrate our 100th birthday this year, and in doing so it is also important for us to remember that while Rotary was the first service club organization, others saw the value in the concept and created their own organizations:

- Zonta International, which has been working to advance the status of women since 1919
- Lions Clubs International, which works to serve the needs of the blind and deaf and bring help where it is needed in many other ways
- Pilot International, which is working to improve the quality of life in communities around the world
- Sertoma International, which brings service to mankind
- Inner Wheel, which as an association of Rotary wives, sisters, and daughters promotes true friendship, personal service, and international understanding
- Kiwanis International, which has been serving the children of the world for nearly a century

We congratulate our fellow service organizations for their ongoing efforts and invite them to join us as we *Celebrate Rotary*. Thank you very much. Enjoy the convention.