

Tanaka elected RI president for 2012-13

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Sakuji Tanaka delivered his acceptance remarks during the fourth plenary session.

Sakuji Tanaka, a member of the Rotary Club of Yashio, Saitama, Japan, was elected president of Rotary International for 2012-13 by delegates during the fourth plenary session at the 2011 RI Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA. [Watch a video highlight](#) from the plenary, which includes a clip of Tanaka's speech, or [download his speech](#).

"It is my honor to accept the nomination to serve as president of Rotary International," said Tanaka. "Since I joined Rotary, I have embraced every new challenge of Rotary service. To me, *challenge* is a very important word. It inspires us. It also helps us to be and to do our best. It allows us to bring out our fullest potential."

Tanaka encouraged Rotarians to help Rotary reach its potential by finishing the job of polio eradication and using the organization's strengths to enhance its ability to "do good in the world."

He said Rotarians share a responsibility to make Rotary clubs stronger by attracting quality members and ensuring that every club meeting is productive and meaningful. He also called upon clubs to make an action plan to bring in younger members.

"We need to stop talking about this. Instead, why don't we just do it!" he said.

Tanaka also took a moment to thank Rotarians for the outpouring of assistance after the earthquake and tsunami that struck his country in March. "People around the world, particularly Rotarians, offered help to rebuild the communities that were lost. Only with the knowledge that we are not alone, can we work together for the long healing process after such tragedy."

For 32 years, Tanaka was president of Tanaka Company Ltd., a wholesale firm that went public in 1995 and later merged with other leading wholesalers in Japan. Currently, he serves as vice president of the Yashio City Chamber of Commerce and adviser to Arata Co. Ltd., an animal feed and pet food wholesaler. He also chaired the National Household Papers Distribution Association of Japan for eight years. Tanaka studied business at Nihon Management Daigakuin and Tokyo Management Daigakuin.

A past trustee of The Rotary Foundation, Tanaka chaired the 2009 Birmingham Convention Committee. His other service to Rotary includes RI director, regional Rotary Foundation coordinator, district governor, and member of the Polio Eradication Advocacy Task Force, the Permanent Fund Committee for Japan, and the Future Vision Committee.

Tanaka established an endowed Rotary Peace Fellowship, and he and his wife, Kyoko, are Paul Harris Fellows, Benefactors of the Permanent Fund, and Major Donors.

He is a recipient of RI's Service Above Self Award and The Rotary Foundation's Distinguished Service Award.

The Rotarians who will serve as RI directors in 2012-14 were also elected: Ann-Britt Åsebol, of the Rotary Club of Falun-Kopparvågen, Sweden; John B. Boag, of the Rotary Club of Tamworth North, New South Wales, Australia; Jean-Marc Chateigner, of the Rotary Club of Cholet, Maine-et-Loire, France; Takeshi Matsumiya, of the Rotary Club of Chigasaki-Shonan, Kanagawa, Japan; Anne L. Matthews, of the Rotary Club of Columbia East, South Carolina, USA; Gideon Peiper, of the Rotary Club of Ramat Hasharon, Israel; Andy Smallwood, of the Rotary Club of Gulfway-Hobby Airport (Houston), Texas, USA; and Bryn Styles, of the Rotary Club of Barrie-Huron, Ontario, Canada.