



ROTARY INTERNATIONAL®

One Rotary Center
1560 Sherman Avenue
Evanston, IL 60201-3698 USA

“ In 2008-09, I will ask Rotarians everywhere to focus on the most precious resource of every community: our children. ”

2008

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL
PRESIDENT **D.K. LEE** **THEME**

09





A hallmark of Rotary service has always been Rotarians' commitment to doing what needs to be done. Every day, in tens of thousands of communities, we look around us to see how and where we can best help others.

The help we provide responds to many situations and takes many forms. On a club level, we might take books to a school, help a disabled person with errands, or volunteer in a jobs program. Together with other clubs, we are capable of projects with greater reach. And the participation of our entire network of clubs, along with the support of The Rotary Foundation, has allowed us to commit to our primary and most ambitious goal: the global eradication of polio.

When choosing our service projects, we do our best to work in ways that will have the most positive, and most lasting, impact. But to ensure a better world for many generations, we must begin by taking care of our youngest generation. This is why, in 2008-09, I will ask Rotarians everywhere to focus on the most precious resource of every community: our children.

Every child deserves the chance at a healthy life. Unfortunately, every day, some 30,000 children under the age of five die from preventable causes. When I first learned this statistic, I thought that surely there had been a mistake, and the number was an error. Unfortunately, it was not. Every day, around the world, children die needlessly of pneumonia, measles, and malaria. Thousands die every day from the lack of a most basic resource: clean water. And many more die

from a combination of factors, in which malnutrition and poverty play major roles.

I would like to see reducing the child mortality rate become a key goal of club and district service projects in the year ahead.

This is why the RI theme for 2008-09 is *Make Dreams Real*. Food and water, health care and schooling, the chance at a long and full life — this is the unrealized dream of too many children. In 2008-09, I ask you to *Make Dreams Real* for these children and their families, and to work with me toward the Rotary dream of a happier, healthier, and more peaceful world.

The great majority of childhood deaths occur in the developing world, and that is where the most work must be done. But every single Rotary club can also do its part to help keep the children in its own community safe and well. Even in the wealthiest countries, there are children without access to medical care. Every day, children die for want of simple technology such as smoke detectors, bicycle helmets, and car safety seats. And in every part of the world, children still face the threat of polio — and remain at risk until we keep our promise of making the world polio-free.

As a parent, I know how precious our children and grandchildren are to us. We love them, care for them, and protect them as well as we are able. As a Rotarian, I believe that we also have a responsibility to love, care for, and protect the children in our communities — and everywhere in the world.

For the last few years, RI's presidents have chosen to continue a consistent set of service emphases, focusing every year on projects in health and hunger, water, and literacy. There has been a good reason for this decision:

These are areas where true progress can be made with the wise use of Rotary resources. These are also areas where the need is tremendous, and the ability of Rotarians to help is great.

I plan to keep these three emphases but to ask the entire family of Rotary to make a special effort, in this Rotary year, to focus on projects that will make a difference in the lives of children. To this end, each one of these three emphases is inextricably linked with the others. Safe and available water immediately and drastically reduces a child's risk of death from waterborne illness — the cause of 6,000 deaths daily. Good nutrition is necessary for healthy growth and improves a child's resistance to disease. And the ability to read and write gives a child a better chance at raising the next generation in prosperity and health.

Rotary is a truly global network of volunteers. Our structure allows us to partner with clubs around the world, combining the skills and resources necessary to supply the right help in the right place at the right time. Our organization is uniquely able to tackle a goal as ambitious as a reduction in the child mortality rate — but only if we work together. If we take full advantage of our own resources, and those available to us through other clubs and our Rotary Foundation, then we will have the potential to make a real difference — and to *Make Dreams Real* for the world's children.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. K. Lee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "D".

Dong Kurn (D.K.) Lee
President, Rotary International, 2008-09