

# Rotary Shares

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**RI President-elect**

Rotary is an amazing thing.

I've been a Rotarian for an awfully long time — 44 years now — and I've gotten kind of used to it, so every so often I have to stop and remind myself just how amazing Rotary is. And I think that that's a valuable exercise for all of us who've been in Rotary for a while.

What is Rotary? You've all been asked that question. What I say is that it's the oldest, most international service club with 1.2 million members, all of them out there in their communities, all over the world, doing their best to make them better. It's 32,000-plus clubs that meet every week to try and do just a little bit more to help others. And it's tens of thousands of projects going on every day, doing just about every kind of useful and creative work you could possibly imagine — and then some. It's all of us out there, doing our best to change the world.

That sounds pretty good. But it doesn't really say it. It doesn't really convey what Rotary is — what it means to all of us here, and what it means to me personally.

To me, Rotary is nothing short of magic. Rotary is what makes it possible for a chartered accountant from Canada to do a whole lot of things you wouldn't expect him to do. Rotary made it possible for me to travel up the Khyber Pass with armed guards to immunize Afghan refugee children against polio. Rotary made it possible for Joan and me to have good friends in countries we probably hadn't heard of 44 years ago. And Rotary made it possible for me to stand here in front of all of you today.

The magic of Rotary is that Rotary allows ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

Rotary allows people like you and me — people whose lives revolve around our families, our jobs, and our communities — to reach beyond our daily lives to do, and be, something more. It allows us to open our hearts to people we might never meet and to share the love that we have for our own communities with a community thousands of miles away. Because Rotary is about human beings' love for other human beings, whoever and wherever they may be. Rotary allows us to express that love and to share it.

We share it through our club service — because our clubs are the hands of Rotary. Without our clubs, there is no Rotary. And so we work to strengthen our clubs by recognizing our members, reaching out to members in need, and maintaining contact with the widows and widowers of past members. We work to make sure that our clubs are open, friendly, and welcoming to anyone who is qualified to join.

We share our love through vocational service — because through our work we are the voice of Rotary. We share our training, our expertise, our abilities, and our strengths. And we strive to assert the ethical values of Rotary in our every business transaction and our every professional decision.

We share our love through community service — because service to the community is at the heart of Rotary. We work to address the needs we see at home, because our homes are our first responsibility. And we do our best to make our presence in our communities known, so that people will say, “This is the good work that Rotary does.” And perhaps they, too, will join in it.

We share our love through international service — because each one of us, in our own country and region, serves as the eyes of Rotary. It is our job to know our own community, to see where we can help and how. We know that if there is a need that we cannot meet alone, then other Rotarians, around the world, can be called upon to help.

We share our love through focusing on youth — because youth is the future, not only for Rotary but for us all. Working to strengthen our programs for youth helps ensure that a new generation of responsible, ethical, and volunteer-minded people will be waiting to fill the seats in this room when those of us here today leave them. These young people are our link to the Rotary future that we ourselves will not see.

And we share our love for Rotary through focusing on membership. No matter how many our successes, unless we continue to gain new members — and keep the ones we have — Rotary will not survive.

But as President Bill has told us so often, if we want to *Lead the Way*, we must lead by example. And that is why I have asked each of you to bring in one new member before arriving at this assembly. And it’s why I’ve asked each of you to ask your club presidents to bring in one new member in their year in office. And it’s why all of us have to be sure to follow up on our efforts by staying in touch with those members, to make sure that they succeed in Rotary and bring in new members themselves.

I know it’s not always an easy thing to invite someone into Rotary. Too often, we hear no. And nobody likes to hear no. It’s easy to get discouraged. But you have to expect those no’s and know when to ask again — and when to move on to find a yes somewhere else.

That yes that you get, on the second or third or fourth try, is what Rotary needs from you most of all. It is the single most important thing you can do to ensure Rotary’s second century. Without new members, nothing else matters. Because however good our work, however valuable and vital, without new members it will take only a few decades for Rotary to disappear. Unfortunately, this is something that we are already seeing among many of the smaller service clubs.

As district governors-elect, you are about to take responsibility for districts with clubs that may be small or large, weak or strong, old or new. Your job is to take all of those clubs and make each one of them better. You must know your clubs, inspire your clubs, and encourage your clubs. It won’t always be easy. But as the saying goes, to achieve something worthwhile, you don’t ask for a light load. You ask for a strong back.

I know that your backs are strong, or you wouldn’t be here today. You are the ones who value and cherish what Rotary is and what it does. You have the ability, the knowledge, and the commitment to bring Rotary into another year of success and growth, another year of building on 102 years of service and good work.

In the year to come, I plan to continue President Bill Boyd’s emphases of water, health and hunger, and literacy. These basic needs have been at the forefront of Rotary’s efforts for several years now, and I hope that that will continue — because with clean water, good health, and the ability to read and write, so many of the people who need help will find the ability to help themselves.

I also plan to continue his emphasis on the family of Rotary — because in caring for each other, we help assure that Rotary will be around to continue these good efforts for many years to come.

When you focus on meeting these needs, I ask you also to remember that just as the essence of Rotary is love, the essence of expressing love is kindness. I ask you to show that kindness in your dealings with each other, with your communities, and especially with those your work is aimed to help. Bringing someone hungry a meal only feeds his stomach; bringing him a meal and sitting with him, while you eat together, feeds his soul.

We are all proud of Rotary's great works — Polio Plus, the 3-H grants, the big projects that help so many. But just as important are the little things we do in our daily lives — the errand you run for a friend, the hour you spend helping a neighbor. Those little acts that Wordsworth called "That best portion of a good man's life, — / His little, nameless, unremembered acts / Of kindness and of love."

The love and kindness that inspire all of us in Rotary aren't anything belonging to reason or logic. They're not anything that can be expressed in terms of a formula or reflected on a balance sheet. But love and kindness is what makes Rotary possible. And what makes Rotary great is our expressing that love in our hearts through the work of our hands and our minds. As Rotarians, we don't just sit back and talk about loving other human beings. As Rotarians, we demonstrate that love, and we share that love, through helping each other.

That is why, in 2007-08, our theme will be *Rotary Shares*.

*Rotary Shares* because Rotarians care. *Rotary Shares* because Rotarians know the needs. *Rotary Shares* because Rotarians provide Service Above Self.

In choosing this theme, I thought about how much of Rotary is about sharing. We share our time, we share our talents, we share our money with others who need our help. We share our kindness and we share our love.

In Rotary, sharing doesn't mean giving away what you have to spare, what you don't need for yourself. Sharing means giving *of* yourself, selflessly, for the good of others.

In the coming year, I will ask you to focus on what each of you has to share with Rotary: your leadership, your skills, and your dedication to making your clubs and your district better and stronger.

And I will ask you to share Rotary with others by bringing in new members. Because Rotary will only be able to continue sharing if it continues to grow. I will ask you to remember the importance of a listening ear, a gentle word, a helping hand, and an open heart. And I will ask you to remember the words of Stephen Grellet, who wrote:

I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good things, therefore,  
that I can do, any kindness that I can show a fellow being, let me do it now.  
Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

My friends, the opportunities that lie before you in the year ahead will not come again. This year is your chance to be a district governor, to help your clubs, to guide them, to share your strengths and your love.

In the year ahead, a great deal will be asked of you. This will be your year, your chance, your opportunity to truly achieve. It won't always be easy. The path won't always be smooth. And that's why I ask each and every one of you to resolve today that this year, you will say yes to Rotary. Yes, I will share Rotary by bringing in new members. Yes, I will

remember to put Service Above Self in everything I do. Yes, I will demonstrate my love for Rotary to those in my district and in every one of my clubs.

I want the district governors of 2007-08 to be known as the class that says yes. And I'd like you all to start right now by standing up. Please stand up.

Now, I already started this as the year of saying yes by asking our training leaders if they would share Rotary with each of you. They responded by pumping their arms in the air three times and shouting, "Yes yes yes!" Let's see if you can match their enthusiasm and do a little better with the volume.

Do you love Rotary? (*Incoming governors answer, "Yes yes yes!"*) Oh, you can shout your love for Rotary louder than that. Do you love Rotary? (*Yes yes yes!*)

Will you serve Rotary? (*Yes yes yes!*)

Will you share Rotary? (*Yes yes yes!*)

Thank you! Please be seated.

And so, I ask you all, this year, to share Rotary freely and fully. Work hard, and work with love. And remember that everything you do in service to others is part of the magic of Rotary, the magic that lets ordinary people, like you and me, do absolutely amazing things.

Thank you.