

RI President-nominee's Acceptance Remarks

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It is my honor to accept the nomination to serve as president of Rotary International in the 2012-13 Rotary year.

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.

As your president in 2012-13, I would like to suggest that we shift our focus from *challenge* to *potential*. Let me share the reason why I am making this subtle but important shift of focus.

Now is the first time in 25 years that we are within reach of the finish line of Rotary's top priority: polio eradication. Success in polio eradication will offer Rotary International enormous potential to use our strengths. These are:

1. Our network of 34,000 Rotary clubs in more than 200 countries and regions
2. Our global partnership model
3. Our fundraising ability
4. Our public advocacy model, our stewardship model
5. Our organizational discipline to keep a high degree of focus on the goal

Combining our strengths enhances our ability to do good in the world. It is our responsibility, as individuals and as an organization, to ensure that our great potential is achieved. By doing so, we ensure that Rotary International and its Foundation will be more effective in providing service activities to our communities, and to the global community, in our second century of service.

One of the most important factors of our global success, as I mentioned earlier, is our network of 34,000 Rotary clubs in communities around the world. Because of our achievements in global polio eradication, Rotary has emerged onto the world stage as a major nongovernmental organization. What we must never forget is that it is through the strength of our clubs in every community that we have this important global impact. The strength and viability of our local clubs is the key factor that will determine the strength of Rotary in the international community.

It is our shared responsibility to make Rotary clubs stronger, and to focus more sharply on our humanitarian service activities. If we do so, we will be better recognized in our local communities and in the international community.

In order to keep our organization viable, we need quality members. For this, we must make sure that every club meeting is productive and meaningful to its members.

Every Rotary activity should be worthwhile and fulfilling to all members. One of the best ways to improve our clubs is to listen carefully to what club members are saying, and to take action to address their concerns to make the club better.

We need younger members, and we must share the work of club leadership with them. If we wish to have capable leaders tomorrow, we must recruit and train them today.

This is an action plan. This is not another president talking about the need for younger members. We need to stop talking about this. Instead, why don't we just do it!

And, of course, the greatest challenge that faces Rotary now is to complete our top priority of polio eradication. It is the single most important task, the single greatest responsibility we now have. Our decades of hard work, the confidence of our partners, and our reputation all depend on what we do in the months ahead. We must work harder than ever, and have no doubt that we will reach our goal. We will eradicate polio!

People join Rotary for many reasons. But, I am sure all of us here stay in Rotary because it makes us happy and makes our lives richer.

No one can exist alone. We are all connected in some way with others, and in helping one another. When disaster struck my country, Japan, in March, people around the world, particularly Rotarians, offered help to rebuild the communities lost. Only with the knowledge that we are not alone can we work together through the long healing process after such tragedy. I would like to use this opportunity to thank all of you for your help.

To me, Service Above Self is a way of life. It means always looking for ways to help. It means finding satisfaction in being useful to other people.

Many people have tried to find out what happiness is. What makes a person truly happy? Whenever this question is studied, the answers are the same. The people who are most happy are never the people with the most money. The people who are most happy are the people who are rich in a different way. They have good friends. They enjoy their work. They are grateful for what they have. And they help other people.

These are the things that we find through Rotary. Rotary connects us with our friends, makes us stronger in our work, and gives us a chance to help others. Rotary brings us together in Service Above Self, and shows us what true happiness is.

I look forward to serving you in the years ahead — to reaching for new challenges, to more fully achieving our potential, to sharing new joys, and to discovering what, we together, are able to achieve.

Thank you, my dear friends.