

The Power of Rotary

You and I belong to one of the most **powerful** organizations in the World. When we wear **this** symbol, we are telling the World that we are human beings who place “**Service Above Self**” and live with integrity in our daily lives. We need to truly understand that with the **power** we have through Rotary comes a kind of **potential** that carries **tremendous** responsibility.

We are powerful because we have **strength** in our numbers – **1.2m Rotarians** and growing. We operate in over **200 countries** and principalities in the world. We are structured and organized around 532 Districts and almost **33,000** clubs. We have a **network** of volunteer man and now **woman power** all over the world, enabling **us** to accomplish more than almost all other **volunteer** organizations. We **have made** a difference in the lives of countless individuals, **particularly children** as we have all but **eliminated** a most dreadful disease that affects mostly children. We have **immunized countless children** against other **preventable** childhood diseases, as well. A **conservative** estimate is that over the past ten years alone Rotary has directly affected the lives of **20 to 30 million** people. Then **consider** the ripple effect of **two billion** children having been immunized against polio. **Think about that** – we are 1.2 million **strong** out of a world population of 6 billion and **we have protected one-third** of the world’s population **against** childhood diseases. We have won the **respect** of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, **countless** governments throughout the world, and now, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. We rank along with the **Red Cross** in importance to the World, being the **only** other NGO to hold a seat at the United Nations. That, in itself, **attests** to the **powerful** organization to which you and I belong. However, I need to clarify what that means. Eighty percent of the UN’s work is Humanitarian and twenty percent is political. Rotary, of course, does not become involved in the political, but holds a seat on every panel discussing a humanitarian issue in which Rotary is involved. But hear this, on June 18, 2008 the Canadian government gave Rotary an unprecedented \$60m U.S. dollars to continue our fight against polio.

Twenty years ago, the World Health Assembly voted to eradicate polio. **Four** organizations have created the ideal **partnership** in this endeavor: World Health Organization, Center for Disease Control, UNICEF **and** Rotary International. Rotarians have contributed **tens of thousands** of volunteer hours to this effort. **The Rotary Foundation** has already contributed \$700m. 500m people are walking today who have been saved from polio. In 2007, **1313** children developed polio. We have a moral imperative to stop this from happening. Dr. Julie Gerberding, Director of the CDC has challenged you to give **\$1313** or donate **1313** minutes of your time to help raise **\$1313** or speak **1313** words to motivate others. We can reach the number **0!**

In the words of Margaret Mead, “Never **doubt** that a small group of thoughtful, **committed** people can change the world. Indeed, it is the **only** thing that ever has.” This brings me to the real “**power of Rotary.**”

In the words of our RI President, D. K. Lee, “the responsibility for **successful** service projects lies with each **individual** club.” “How **does** each club come up with successful service projects?” This is where the true “**power of Rotary begins.**” Not with the club itself, but **rather** with the dream of an **individual** Rotarian. In the words of PRIP Bill Boyd, **every** successful Rotary project began with the **dream** of an **individual** Rotarian. This is what enables this year’s

theme “**Make Dreams Real**” to be so appropriate to what we do in Rotary throughout the World. Rotary began with the **dream** of an individual, Paul Harris. The Four-Way Test was conceived by **Herbert Taylor** in 1932. The motto, “**Service, Not Self**” by Ben Collins was changed in 1987 by **RIP Charles Keller** to “**Service Above Self**.” And, indeed, Rotary’s **finest hour** began with the dream of **D7620 Rotarian, Dr. John Sever**, when The New Horizons Committee selected his proposal that Rotary should immunize **every child on earth** against vaccine preventable diseases by the end of the Century. His suggestion was modified slightly to “**immunize all of the world’s children against polio by the time of the 100th anniversary of Rotary International in the year 2005**.” The name would change to “PolioPlus” in support of a global health initiative to combat **additional** preventable diseases. This dream of an **individual** Rotarian has affirmed the **power** of a 1.2m service organization that puts “**Service Above Self!**”

But in order to “**Make Dreams Real**” an **individual** Rotarian must have a dream, supported by a **passion** for achieving that dream and a **club(s)** who will support the dream, as well as, a **District** who will support the dream. The **potential** for outstanding service lies with **every individual Rotarian** in this room. The Basra Prosthesis Project began with the **dream** of Linda Smythe, supported by her club and a 14 other clubs and agencies. **Thirty-four International** Projects sponsored by the Charlotte Hall club were a response to **Dr. Ila Shaw’s dream** of many health initiatives to aid impoverished humanity in India. A coveted 3-H Grant to combat River Blindness in Tanzania was the **dream** of a Rotarian – of the Bonds Meadow Club. These are all merely some of the examples of the **dreams** of District 7620 Rotarians. Every club in the District has the **potential** to create an outstanding project to **Make Dreams Real**. Rotarians need only realize how much **untapped potential** there is in District and how much more we could achieve if we all **focus** together on our common goal, “**Service Above Self.**”

Next year, the United States will lose two Districts – one will merge with another District in Canada and one will merge with one in Mexico. Last year, District 7620 lost three clubs. In North America, Rotary’s very **survival** depends upon membership growth. An organization either grows or dies. This is especially true for clubs and a district. While District 7620 has been growing, some **individual** clubs have not and it is my **responsibility** as District Governor to help them grow. Rotary grows when we seek out **qualified**, committed members from all the sources we have at our fingertips to tap. This year, **my dream** is to sponsor a number of recruitment events throughout the district with multiple club’s participating. Our aim will be to **identify** quality individuals in our communities who would make good Rotarians. We will invite those individuals to an event where leadership **will inform** them about Rotary and give interested individuals an **opportunity to join** a Rotary club whose schedule and meeting venue meets their needs. The District will **fund** these events for the invitees. To reach my **dream, we will grow as a district by 270 or more members!**

We have a **top rated resource** to help us “**Make Dreams Real**” - **The Rotary Foundation**. Annual giving is the cornerstone of the Foundation’s funding efforts. Annual Giving has been **rising** world wide in recent years as more and more Rotarians **witness** the results of how our money is spent. Our Foundation is **top rated** amongst other non-profits because our administrative costs are low – we are a **fellowship of volunteers**. Annual Giving provides the **fuel** for our common projects. We are on the crest of eradicating polio everywhere. PolioPlus shall accomplish this within the next three – five years. This has been a **massive moral challenge** and we still need your support. This year I am asking you to “**Catch a Dream**” and meet our **promise** to the world to eradicate polio.

In the words of Robert Frost:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep.
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Who needs Rotary? There are millions of individuals who are waiting for the **potential** in all of us:

Where there are the hollow, sunken eyes of a starving child and the soft sob of a weeping mother. (**Hunger**)

Where there is an orphan who lost his mother to AIDS.

Where there are 26,000 children under the age of five who die every day from want for the things we can provide (**HEALTH - WATER**).

The 800,000,000 people around the world who can neither read nor write, 64% of them women and girls (**LITERACY**).

The tens of thousands of people around the world who will suffer from a natural disaster.

Business men and women who need to improve standards of conduct in their professions in all countries (**ETHICS**).

Millions of people who still live with conflict and turmoil every day of their lives, greatly shortened by violence (**PEACE**).

THESE ARE ALL ISSUES ROTARY CAN AND IS DOING SOMETHING ABOUT!

And what about our local communities?

Who needs Rotary in affluent **Maryland (ranks 7th in nation)** ?

A CHILD:

Is born into poverty every hour.

Dies before his first birthday every 14 hours.

Is abused or neglected every 31 minutes.

Is killed by gunfire every 4 days.

A MARYLAND CHILD NEEDS ROTARY!

MARYLAND IS:

41st among states in infant mortality rate.

AND:

20 % of preschoolers are not fully immunized.

67% of fourth graders read below grade level.

62% of fourth graders are working below grade level in math.

Someone in this room has the **potential** to fulfill a **dream** to do something about these horrific statistics.

WHO NEEDS ROTARY?

MARYLAND NEEDS ROTARY! We need to let Marylanders know what Rotary is doing in Maryland to improve these issues!

Peace is possible. Rotarians **all** share this goal around the world. Europe is **celebrating** 50 years of near peace. Imagine, if you will, a day of tranquility **brokered** by Rotarians, working

together as no one could have ever imagined. Our Peace Centers have graduated over **three hundred fellows** who will disperse to various regions of the world. Rotary **is powerful** because we can do so much with the **networks** we establish. Our strength lies in these **connections**, in being able to ask each other for help, in forming **partnerships** with other clubs, to give help when it is needed. This is why we can achieve great things on a large scale. The **power of Rotary** must be harnessed together to be effective. If every club or every district goes in its **own** direction, we would **lessen** our power.

From the words of John Lennon:

“You may say I’m a dreamer
But I’m not the only one
I hope someday you’ll join us
And the world will be as one”

WHO NEEDS ROTARY? You and I need Rotary. Because we **are** Rotarians, we care about humanity. We harness our collective power to **“Make Dreams Real!”**

The District would be nothing without the efforts of the individual clubs and their projects. But a club would be nothing without the talent, dedication, resources, commitment and energy that each club member brings to the collective group! **Ladies and gentlemen, you, as individual Rotarians are the POWER of Rotary.**

I end this official visit by saying

“I thank you for all the good you have done; I thank you for all the good you are doing; and, I thank you for all the good you will do in the future, because you are Rotarians who place Service Above Self!”

What about a child in the District of Columbia:

a child is abused or neglected every 3 hours

a child is born into poverty every 4 hours

a child dies before his first birthday every 5 days

a child is killed by gunfire every 2 weeks and,

DC ranks 47th among states in the % of babies born to mothers who received prenatal care

50th among states in % of babies born with low birth weight

51st among states in the % of children who are poor (33.9%) (worst state in the country)

(from the Children’s Defense Fund)