

RI President's Closing Remarks

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Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." In this Rotary year, I have asked all of you to share in my beautiful dream, a dream of a world where every child has the chance at a safe and healthy life, a world where every child has the chance to play, to grow, and to learn, free of hunger, disease, and want. In this Rotary year, every one of you has joined me in dreaming this dream. And you have joined me in helping to make this Rotary dream real.

All around the world, in more ways than I ever imagined, you have taken this challenge to heart. You have studied the issues behind child mortality, and you have learned what it will take to make a real difference. And in your clubs, in your districts, you have made this dream your own.

At the beginning of this year, I made a promise to Rotarians that I would visit as many Rotarians, in as many Rotary countries, as I could in my year. I did this because I wanted to meet as many of you as possible, to see your work and to tell you thank you, thank you for making dreams real.

This year, in 61 countries, I saw you *Make Dreams Real* in so many ways. I saw biosand filters and bore wells bringing families clean water and better health. I saw Rotarians in schools and libraries, helping children learn to read and write. I saw school feeding programs that led to better attendance, better performance, and better health for so many children. I saw children whose lives had been saved by basic medical care. And I saw children who will never get polio, because they are now protected by the polio vaccine. I saw all of this because of you.

Everywhere we went, Young and I were greeted with enthusiasm and hospitality. When we were tired from traveling, you gave us energy and strength. Every time we saw a new project, we were reminded again why we were there, and why we are so proud of all Rotarians.

The work you are doing is so important, because there are so many needy and unfortunate people in the world. I thought I knew this before, but now I have seen it for myself. Which is why I tell my own children and grandchildren: Save your food, save your water, save your energy, do not waste anything. Because there are so many people who have nothing, who need whatever help you can give them. The world needs our help. It needs our work. It needs Rotarians.

At the beginning of this Rotary year, I hoped that this would be a year of great growth in membership. The growth we have seen has been very modest. However, in a year such as this one, I find that to be an encouraging message about Rotary. Despite the economic turmoil we are all experiencing, our members are not leaving. You are staying in your clubs and doing what needs to be done, because you understand that at times like these, the world needs Rotarians more than ever before.

The world needs your service. And it needs the example you set. A Rotarian shows that good business and good ethics go hand in hand. You can be honest and generous and successful in your business. When we help others, we make the world better for everyone. That is the lesson that a Rotarian teaches, when that Rotarian lives by The Four-Way Test.

I was very lucky to grow up in a Rotary family. My father was a Rotarian, and I always saw The Four-Way Test in his office. I saw his Rotary friends, and I heard about the work they did together. I saw that these were people who had earned the respect of others — for their success and for how they had achieved it. They were my role models.

I knew that I wanted to be a Rotarian. And when I joined a club, my father welcomed me. But he wanted to be sure that I kept my attention on the family business. He was glad to see me in Rotary but reminded me that I did not need to seek any Rotary office, or to do more than serve my own community through my own club. I hope that if he were here today, he would forgive me for not following that advice.

In Rotary, so much is possible. There is so much we can do. There is so much we can be. There are so many people to help, and so many ways to do it. How is it possible to slow down, or stop, when there are so many needs?

At the beginning of this convention, I told you about a trip I took to Africa, a trip that changed me forever. And since that trip, I have returned to Africa many times. I have seen the work that Rotarians are doing there. I have seen how by working together we are saving so many more lives than we could ever hope to do alone. Together with my fellow Rotarians in Korea, and with the help of the Korean government, I was able to do much more for the children of Africa than I was able to do alone on that day in the bush.

In Tumbi, in the coastal region of Tanzania, a new mother and child health complex is now being built on the grounds of the Tumbi Hospital, with 70 beds and modern equipment. It will serve the greatest needs of the children in the area, providing delivery rooms, intensive care units, and treatment and diagnostic facilities to reduce mortality for children and their mothers. Every day, 42 children die in this one small region. With this new hospital, we hope that this number will be greatly reduced.

I am proud of the Rotarians and our partners who have come together to make this project a reality. And I am proud of the Rotarians, all over the world, who have come together on projects large and small to *Make Dreams Real*. I am proud of PolioPlus and of our progress in Rotary's US\$200 Million Challenge, with more than \$90 million raised to date. And I am proud of the new members you have brought in and those you have helped to retain.

I am proud of the work you have done in this Rotary year. And I am, and will always be, so proud and so grateful to have had the chance to lead you in this Rotary year. This year, you have helped to *Make Dreams Real*, and I ask you all to continue this work in the years ahead, because now *The Future of Rotary Is in Your Hands*.