

General Secretary's Report to the Convention
Birmingham, England
June 2009

It is my pleasure to make this annual report to the Rotary International Convention, in keeping with the requirements of the RI Bylaws. I hope that the information provided here will enlighten Rotarians about the RI Secretariat's work in 2008-09 to support the program of RI President Dong Kurn Lee and the actions of the RI Board and The Rotary Foundation Trustees. If you have questions or comments about the report, send me an e-mail with the subject line "Report to Convention." For more detailed financial information, see the Treasurer's Report to the Convention at www.rotary.org/RIdocuments/en_pdf/c09_treasurers_report_en.pdf

Eradicating polio

The campaign to End Polio Now — Rotary's top priority — received another significant boost from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation this year. At the International Assembly, Bill Gates announced that his foundation was giving Rotary a grant of US\$255 million for polio eradication in addition to the \$100 million challenge grant received in 2007. Rotarians are being asked to meet Rotary's US\$200 Million Challenge at <http://www.rotary.org/EN/SERVICEANDFELLOWSHIP/POLIO/Pages/ridefault.aspx> to match a portion of the two grants.

Response to the challenge has been tremendous. As of 30 April, more than \$75 million in cash, District Designated Fund allocations, and pledges had been received. Rotaractors, Interactors, Rotary Fellowships, and individual Rotarians have all contributed to the effort. Rotarians have come up with many creative fundraising ideas, a number of which involve the general public and promote awareness of the need to eradicate this disease. For example, Rotarians in more than 200 cities and villages in Switzerland raised over \$669,000 by selling packets of sunflower seeds on National Day Against Child Paralysis. To learn more about progress toward meeting the challenge, subscribe to the End Polio Now newsletter at <http://www.rotary.org/en/ServiceAndFellowship/Polio/RotarysWork/Pages/PolioPlusNewsletter.aspx>

Although this has been a challenging year on the frontlines of polio eradication, we have seen some encouraging signs. As of 5 May, India had reported only 40 cases of polio as compared to 216 at the same time last year. We have also seen a decline in the number of type 1 polio cases in Kano, Nigeria, once the epicenter of the country's type 1 polio outbreak, thanks to renewed political commitment in Kano to polio eradication.

To educate visitors to RI World Headquarters about the continuing threat of polio and Rotary's commitment to eradicating the disease, RI created an exhibit for the lobby of One Rotary Center. The "End Polio Now" exhibit at http://www.rotary.org/en/MediaAndNews/News/Pages/081030_news_EPNexhibit.aspx, which includes video, photography, and artifacts, tells the compelling story of Rotarian involvement in this critical cause. Please take some time to view the exhibit if you visit World Headquarters.

Rotarian involvement was prominently featured in an Academy Award-nominated short documentary, *The Final Inch* at www.thefinalinch.org, which aired on HBO in April. This film chronicles the challenges that health organizations and governments face during the final stages of polio eradication and features Rotarians immunizing children during a National Immunization Day in India. A number of Rotary clubs have arranged screenings of the film at theaters in their communities.

Communicating with our members and the public

Enhancing Rotary's public image is another top priority. This year, the popular Public Relations Grants at

<http://www.rotary.org/en/Members/RunningAClub/InformingTheCommunity/Pages/PRGrants.aspx> program drew requests from 292 districts in 46 countries for the \$2 million allocated. The 276 districts whose applications were approved also contributed \$1.8 million and netted \$7.1 million in in-kind contributions, for a total value of \$10.9 million. The majority of districts that received the grants to promote Rotary and district projects reported an increase in interest from prospective members and in current member involvement.

Like many other large international organizations, RI is using technology to better communicate with members and, increasingly, to facilitate a more interactive dialogue. During 2008-09, RI established a presence on three major social networking sites — Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Rotary-International/7268844551>, LinkedIn, at <http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=858557> and Twitter at <http://twitter.com/rotary> — in addition to our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/user/RotaryInternational>. The growth and popularity of these sites, sometimes described as online versions of a Rotary club meeting, attest to their value to Rotarians. As of 31 May, the official RI Facebook page had 25,970 fans; our LinkedIn group had 4,432 members; and RI has more than 3,660 followers on Twitter. Our YouTube channel has attracted almost 56,800 views.

We are also making more use of technology in delivering our publications. *Rotary World* at <http://www.rotary.org/en/MediaAndNews/Newsletters/RotaryWorld/Pages/ridefault.aspx>, our primary vehicle for communicating with club and district leaders, will go digital beginning with the April 2010 issue. This change will allow us to reach more of our grassroots leadership with carefully targeted content. RI also offers a number of electronic newsletters at <http://www.rotary.org/en/MediaAndNews/Newsletters/MoreNewsletters/Pages/ridefault.aspx> on topics ranging from public relations to vocational service. Members can subscribe to any of these informative publications at www.rotary.org.

Our focus on digital publications doesn't mean that we have abandoned print. On the contrary, this year saw the launch of Global Outlook at <http://www.rotary.org/en/MediaAndNews/MorePublications/GlobalOutlook/Pages/ridefault.aspx>, a quarterly supplement from RI that appears in all of Rotary's official magazines. Each edition of this eight-page publication looks at a Rotary-related topic from an international perspective and features interviews, project stories, and resource lists. In July, we are launching *Rotary Canada*,

an eight-page quarterly featuring Rotary-related content specific to Canada that will be sent to all Canadian Rotarians along with *The Rotarian* magazine.

Our flagship magazine, *The Rotarian*, received the Society of National Association Publications' EXCEL Silver Award in General Excellence this year for its October, November, and December issues. This award recognizes the overall quality of our magazine, including content, design, and photography.

Supporting membership efforts

Recruiting and retaining active, enthusiastic members is key to every Rotary club's success. This year, President D.K. Lee held 12 membership conferences in locations around the world, four of which included a half-day session on child mortality issues. The conferences focused on identifying best practices for member recruitment and retention and adapting to changing social and professional environments.

RI offers a number of publications, DVDs, and other resources to help clubs in their membership efforts. In developing these tools, we conduct surveys to keep abreast of the demographics and interests of our members and focus groups of non-Rotarians to gauge their interest in volunteering and their awareness of Rotary. RI also continues to administer and monitor pilot projects on e-clubs and meeting frequency to determine what potential changes may positively influence membership.

Educating new members remains one of the most effective strategies for getting them involved in Rotary quickly. In 2008, the RI Board approved a plan to develop e-learning modules on a variety of Rotary topics. The first of these modules, a multimedia version of our popular *Rotary Basics* print publication, is launching at this convention. Other modules are being developed on various aspects of the Future Vision Plan and other topics. Another initiative, Your Voice, Your Solution at http://www.rotary.org/en/MediaAndNews/News/Pages/090504_news_yourvoice.aspx, a new monthly feature on RI's Web site, presents a common challenge to Rotary clubs and asks for Rotarians to offer advice. Rotarian responses are being used to create a list of best practices that will be featured in the Rotary E-Learning Center at <http://www.rotary.org/elearning>.

Despite the global economic recession, Rotary membership has remained stable. Clubs are using a variety of means to help members who are experiencing personal financial difficulties, including covering a portion of club dues, reducing meal requirements, and keeping in touch with members who have been forced to temporarily resign. Clubs are also realizing how much good they can do in their community during times of economic uncertainty.

Updating technology

Last month, RI completed the first phase of a major project to consolidate and update all data on our constituents. The new systems will centralize RI's disparate databases and provide a comprehensive view of our constituents' relationships to Rotary as members, donors, alumni, officers, and other key roles.

The new system offers built-in improvements in line with industry best practices that will ultimately facilitate reporting, enhance communication with members, and make it easier to

conduct Rotary business online. Other expected benefits include lower system maintenance costs and increased efficiency.

In the first phase of the project, data on members was corrected and updated, which included validating addresses and eliminating duplicate records. The project is scheduled to run in four more phases, ending in 2011-12. Corrected data on spouses, alumni, and other non-Rotarian constituents will be consolidated and added to the system in future phases.

Supporting The Rotary Foundation

The volatile investment markets have adversely affected all charitable institutions, including The Rotary Foundation. However, the continued generosity of Rotarians has allowed our Foundation to weather the financial instability better than many charities.

The number of Major Donors continues to rise, and in 2008-09, the Foundation inducted a record 24 new members into the Arch C. Klumph Society (AKS). These donors have made contributions of \$250,000 or more to Rotary's US\$200 Million Challenge, the Annual Programs Fund, the Permanent Fund, and the Rotary Centers Major Gifts Initiative.

This growth in new AKS members led to a gratifying problem: We ran out of wall space at World Headquarters for displaying donors' photographs. To ensure that we can properly recognize such generosity, we created an electronic kiosk that displays photographs and short biographies of all AKS members, along with brief information about Arch Klumph and The Rotary Foundation.

The number of Foundation Benefactors and Bequest Society members is also growing. As of 30 April, more than 40,500 Rotarians have made arrangements to give a total of \$366.5 million to The Rotary Foundation's programs via their wills, retirement plans, or other estate plans.

The current economic situation makes it even more crucial for Rotarians to support our Foundation and secure our future work to address human need and build international understanding. Every Rotarian, Every Year is more than a slogan; it has become a way of life for many thousands of Rotarians. I encourage anyone who has not yet made a contribution to the 2008-09 Annual Programs Fund at <http://www.rotary.org/en/Contribute/ContributeNow/OnlineContributionForm/Pages/ridefault.aspx> to do so before 30 June.

Planning for the future

For the past several years, both Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation have been engaged in long-range planning efforts. Such strategic thinking has helped the senior leadership to establish priorities that will guide their decision making and set a course for the organizations.

The Future Vision Committee further defined The Rotary Foundation's Future Vision Plan, and we are now preparing to train the approximately 100 districts that will participate in the three-year pilot in 2010-13. More than 275 districts applied to be part of the pilot. Selection was based on

several factors, including the size and location of the district, so that we have a representative group of districts to test the new grant-making model.

RI Bylaws require that the Strategic Planning Committee survey Rotarians and clubs every three years to review and make recommendations to the Board about the RI Strategic Plan. In July and August, we will survey a random sampling of about 5,000 Rotarians worldwide, soliciting feedback and ideas about the strategic direction and future of the organization. If you receive a survey, I encourage you to complete and submit it so that you have a voice in determining Rotary's future.

Forging new partnerships

One way to leverage resources is to work with other organizations that share Rotary's mission. This year, we formed an alliance with the United States Agency for International Development to implement water, sanitation, and hygiene projects in the developing world. The International H₂O Collaboration will develop its inaugural projects in 2009-10 in Ghana, the Philippines, and the Dominican Republic — countries where Rotary clubs and districts and USAID missions have the demonstrated ability to carry out effective water and sanitation projects. The Rotary Foundation and USAID will share the project funding, and both organizations will provide technical expertise and on-the-ground support.

RI also launched a collaborative relationship with the Dollywood Foundation's Imagination Library at http://www.rotary.org/en/MediaAndNews/News/Pages/090309_news_partonrotarypartner.aspx, an organization created by country music star Dolly Parton. Under the agreement, Rotary clubs in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States are encouraged to support the library, which provides a book each month to children from birth until age five. Local Rotary club participation could include promoting the program within the community, helping to identify and register the children, and paying for the books and mailings.

Keeping it green

At RI World Headquarters, we're trying to make our work environment more ecologically sound. The staff Green Committee is working with our building management to implement various "green" measures. One Rotary Center was recognized in 2008 by the Illinois Chapter of the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) for the installation of a new boiler plant. During the past heating season, the new boiler plant saved more than 2,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions — a reduction of 80 percent, equal to removing 332 passenger cars from the road each year or planting 412 acres of forest. In addition, the first season of operation generated approximately \$127,000 in cost savings. RI also received \$58,000 from electric utility Commonwealth Edison for a chiller project and sensor lighting program. Other measures taken include reducing the amount of paper used, eliminating Styrofoam cups, boosting recycling of glass, paper, and cans, and using green cleaning products.