

# Trustee Chair's Speech to the 2015 Rotary Convention



John Kenny  
São Paulo, Brazil  
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It is both a privilege and an honor to address you this morning as the chairman of the Trustees of The Rotary Foundation and to speak to you about the Foundation. *Our* Foundation. Rotary's charity. Indeed, Rotary's *only* charity.

Most of the great foundations in the world have been created by powerful and rich families, but our Foundation has been created by the giving and the goodwill of thousands of Rotarians, just like you. This is why we are proud to call it *our* Foundation.

And we should be proud of our Foundation, for each day millions of people are touched by the magic of Rotary, only made possible by the service and dedication of Rotarians throughout the world just like yourselves, who have seen the need and responded by supporting our charity.

Our Rotary Foundation is the engine that drives the Rotary machine. Many of the projects carried out by clubs and districts are Foundation-aided programs.

The future of Rotary and our Foundation will not be shaped at the headquarters in Evanston, but by each and every Rotary club and district working to assist those in their communities and communities in other lands whom they may never see but for whom they know there is great need.

At the start of this Rotary year I set five Foundation goals for the year. The first goal was to continue to work toward the elimination of polio. We have much to be proud of in our efforts to rid the world of this dreadful disease — Rotary members have contributed over \$1.3 billion, which has allowed Rotary and its partners to immunize over 2.5 billion children. The South East Asia region has been certified as polio-free, and there have been no new cases of polio reported from Nigeria since July of last year.

While we are this close, we are not yet there. Polio is still endemic in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nigeria.

In each country we face challenges based on fear and distrust. We cannot let up on our efforts, for children everywhere are still at risk until polio is gone. We cannot undo all the good work that has been done in the past. We can, we must, we will eradicate the poliovirus from the face of the earth.

The second goal was to support Rotary's own and only charity — The Rotary Foundation — through our continued giving. I am pleased to tell you that, thanks to your generous support, this year we could see the highest amount ever contributed to the Annual Fund.

Last year our Annual Fund reached almost \$117 million. This year, if our contributions continue at the normal June rate, we can top that figure to make it the highest ever. So please, when you return to your clubs and districts, ensure that your contributions are sent in before the 30th of June.

I am also pleased to tell you that this year, we reached a very important milestone in our contributions to the Endowment Fund of The Rotary Foundation. The Endowment Fund's gifts and commitments, thanks to the generosity of so many Rotarians, has now reached \$1 billion. The spendable earnings from the Endowment Fund will provide nearly \$13 million of direct financial support next Rotary year, more than double the amount five years ago.

Let us remember that when we give to our Foundation, we are not sending cash to Evanston. We are helping a blind man to see, a polio victim to walk, a child to grow to adulthood healthily, a student to become educated, and a family to have enough food to eat.

In my time as a past president of Rotary International and the current chairman of the Trustees of The Rotary Foundation, my wife, June, and I have been privileged to witness many acts of service carried out by Rotarians.

Let me give you just three of these many acts of service, in different parts of the world. In India we visited the Jaipur Foot Center, where artificial limbs were being fitted to allow the wearer to walk again unaided. These new artificial limbs are helping polio victims and others to work, to lead a normal life, to be self-sufficient.

In Hungary we visited a hospital where a young girl was recovering from a heart operation carried out by a Rotary volunteer and funded by a Rotary district in America, working with the Gift of Life program. I can still see the look on the face of the little girl's mother. Her family had been given the greatest gift — the gift of life to their daughter.

In Malawi we visited a remote village where a water pump had been installed, and we saw how this had improved life in the village beyond all recognition. The villagers now have clean water, preventing disease.

The children and women no longer have to walk for hours each day to carry water. At the village school, where June distributed pencils to the children — something that they had never possessed for themselves — they were anxious to show us the improvements in the school facilities, which had been carried out by Rotarians.

They are perhaps small examples to us, but life-changing to them.

The third goal was to ensure the progress of our new grants.

All new systems take time to become established, but it would appear that Rotarians are embracing the new concept of larger, sustainable projects.

Over 400 district grants and over 600 global grants have been awarded so far this year. The Trustees are conscious of obtaining the views of Rotarians and are seeking their observations on the new grants program so that they can be considered when a review is made in the 2015-16 Rotary year.

The fourth goal was to foster world understanding, goodwill, and peace by promoting and publicizing the Rotary Peace Centers program.

It is surely the wish in all our hearts that there is peace in our troubled world.

Our Rotary Foundation is endeavoring to advance this with the establishment of Rotary Peace Centers in various parts of the world. I have had the privilege of visiting five of the six centers and have been most impressed by the caliber of the students. Since the program began in 2002, 889 peace fellows have been engaged in 18 different countries in various capacities. Currently 79 fellows are earning their master's degree at the centers in England, Australia, the United States, Japan, and Sweden and 22 fellows are earning professional certificates at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand.

This year saw the largest application pool to date, with 312 endorsed applications from 85 countries. The 100 selected fellows represent 38 countries, and more than 50 percent of them reside in low-income countries. We should be encouraged to see that this imaginative program is expanding, for it is surely most pertinent in these troubled times.

The fifth and final goal was to emphasize that the future health of the Foundation is in all our hands.

The real work of Rotary is carried out by individual Rotarians in their clubs, for the club is the heart of Rotary.

In the words of Martin Luther King, "Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve." So let our hearts be large enough to support the programs of our Rotary Foundation. Let our hands be busy enough to carry out these programs, and let our minds be wise enough to support those programs with our giving.

Whether Rotary will thrive or whether it will falter, whether our service will mean much to many or little to few, whether Rotary is known with respect or seen as a relic of days gone by, all this is up to you.

If we truly intend to *Light Up Rotary*, if we truly wish to do justice to those who have come before us, if we truly intend to achieve everything of which we are capable, we will rely every day on the strength of our Foundation.

And the strength of the Foundation is in your hands.

Thank you.