

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



AS SOMEONE WHO KNOWS firsthand the great leadership potential of Rotaractors, I always look forward to World Rotaract Week, which we are celebrating from 8 to 14 March. Rotaractors are the focus of all three of my presidential conferences this year, and I was proud when, two years ago, the Council on Legislation voted to elevate Rotaract by including Rotaract clubs as members of Rotary International. Before that, the Council had already made dual membership possible, and shortly after, the Board of Directors decided to do away with Rotaract's age limits.

But we are only just embarking on our journey together. Partnering effectively doesn't happen by itself. It requires both sides to be open and to understand the value of cross-generational alliances. Louie De Real, a dual member of Rotaract and Rotary, explains.

Joint virtual meetings have helped Rotaractors introduce Rotarians to new ideas and tools, pioneering unique ways for clubs to collaborate. In the case of pandemic and disaster response, Rotaract clubs used social media to coordinate efforts, drive information, and fundraise, while Rotary clubs used their networks and resources to amplify support, provide logistics, and bring the goods and services to communities.

Rotaractors' innovative virtual engagement and professional development activities inspired Rotarians to support and follow suit. The pandemic made Rotaract clubs realize that we can immediately connect and partner with Rotary clubs through virtual platforms. With constant collaboration, we realize that Rotary and Rotaract indeed complement each other — that we are part of a single organization with shared goals.

Both sides add value. Rotarians can be mentors and service partners to Rotaractors, while Rotaractors can demon-

strate to Rotarians that difficult jobs can be simplified and limitations can be surpassed through digital approaches. This synergy motivates Rotaractors to become future Rotarians: I joined Rotary because Rotarians gave me memorable membership experiences through inspirational moments of collaboration. I needed to be a Rotarian to inspire Rotaractors the same way, now and in the future.

That same synergy leads Rotarians to realize that while Rotaractors may have a different culture, we all share a common vision of uniting people to take action. Rotaract's unique ways of doing things serve as inspiration for innovation, helping Rotary increase its ability to adapt to future challenges. Rotarians and Rotaractors will build the future together, so let's start today.

I see no difference between a Rotary club and a Rotaract club, except perhaps for the average age!

Many Rotarians still view Rotaract as our youth organization, but I see it differently. For me, they are part of us, and they are like us. To be successful together, we need to have mutual respect — to see each other as equals. Let's see Rotaractors for who they really are: students and young leaders, but also successful managers and entrepreneurs who are capable of planning, organizing, and managing a Rotary institute — including breakout sessions in five languages — as they did in Berlin in 2014.

As we take this journey together, let's remember the strengths of Rotary and Rotaract. And, as Louie says, let's get started right away in building the future together. In doing so, we open endless opportunities for our organization.

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