



RI PRESIDENT-ELECT'S REMARKS

Stephanie A. Urchick
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Hello, family of Rotary!

I am so glad that you have embraced the call to make every Rotary club simply irresistible. But what does that mean exactly? What makes a club irresistible?

Here's a story about a club moving in the right direction: The Rotary Club of Holyoke in Massachusetts, USA, was forced to move its meeting place during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it took that setback and turned it into a strength.

The club started meeting in the community room at the local library, and now it caters in lunch from a nearby deli. Lunch costs \$10 per person, but it's optional. Folks can bring their own lunch if they want, and attending the meeting is free of charge for those who do not buy lunch. What a great way to work toward being "fair to all concerned." Since then, the Rotary Club of Holyoke has gained 13 new members.

Now, making one change doesn't mean a club can afford to stop focusing on the club experience. But making lunch more flexible in meetings did something important for Holyoke — it fostered a sense of inclusivity by acknowledging and adapting to different considerations, the first step toward belonging.

I cannot stress enough the importance of belonging. In fact, I would go so far as to say that belonging is *The Magic of Rotary*.

My challenge to you is to consider making changes to the experience that your club offers its members to help more people feel like they truly belong. Start by asking club members what they expect. Is the club providing the experience that meets their needs? Also, ask prospective members about their expectations and what they hope to gain out of Rotary membership.

After you receive feedback, you might find that some members don't feel like they fit in or that the club experience is not compelling to prospective members. Rotary's Action Plan can help. The Action Plan presents tools you can use to collect feedback, assess your club's strong points, identify areas to improve, and address challenges.

The world is constantly changing, and Rotary clubs can't afford to stand still. But the changes we make need to be consistent and strategic. They need to build on one another and work toward a greater vision. The Action Plan can help you build and work toward

that vision, giving you the continuity you need to create effective change within your club. Following the Action Plan and addressing suggestions from the community will go a long way to fostering the sense of belonging we want all Rotary members to feel in their existing or new clubs.

That's why expanding our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is so important. Anyone who has the heart and hands for service belongs in Rotary, and I hope you'll join me in opening your arms to future people of action even if — and in some cases, especially if — they don't look or act like the typical member of your club. With a focus on inclusivity and belonging, it's easier to be united in a common purpose. It's in those moments when we are committed to one another and focused on our goals that we are most effective.

Committing ourselves to each other's well-being is the first step to expanding our reach, allowing us to spread Positive Peace in these troubled times.

Peacebuilding is one of our top priorities, and one of the most effective ways we build peace is our Rotary Peace Fellowship — a product of The Rotary Foundation that was first announced here in Singapore 25 years ago. The program helps current and aspiring peace and development professionals learn how to prevent and how to end conflict. We offer the fellowships through our Rotary Peace Centers located at leading universities around the globe.

It's fitting that we return to Singapore 25 years after our peace fellowship program was first announced, and the progress we've made in that time is nothing short of magical. More than 1,800 peace fellows have graduated from Rotary Peace Centers and are working in more than 140 countries toward a better world.

And thanks to a US\$15.5 million gift from the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation, we can continue supporting peacebuilders in more regions with the next peace center in Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul.

Opening yet another peace center is a monumental achievement, and it is my great honor to invite you to celebrate at next year's Rotary presidential peace conference at the Istanbul peace center. The three-day conference, from February 20th to the 22nd, will highlight how our family of Rotary advocates for peace. The theme of the conference is Healing in a Divided World.

The conference will focus on Rotary's systematic peace efforts and provide opportunities to learn together. We will be joined by Rotary Peace Fellows, Positive Peace Activators, and Rotary's key partners in peace as we educate ourselves and the public on ways to take action to advance the cause of peace. Registration for the conference will open in July, so look for more information as it becomes available.

The Rotary presidential peace conference has great potential to improve our peacebuilding efforts but only if we have your support. The truth is, we're not going to bring peace to the world, end polio, or grow membership by waving a wand and saying

some funny words. It's up to you. You create the magic with every project completed, every dollar donated, and every new member inducted.

I urge you to grow *The Magic of Rotary* by adding new members to our family and providing wonderful experiences to those already involved. Unlock *The Magic of Rotary* by unlocking the power of women and girls. Advance *The Magic of Rotary* by fundraising to help change the world.

I love my Rotary family, and I can feel that love in this room. That's why I know that, together, we can make every club and district simply irresistible.

I will always cherish my memories of the last international convention in Singapore 25 years ago. I was district governor then, and I am truly honored to accept the position of Rotary International president now. This international convention is almost over. I encourage you to make the most of the time we have left together.

The briefest connections could result in lifelong friendships. The simplest lesson could change your entire Rotary career. Don't let these opportunities pass you by. And when we return home, let's build on the connections we have made here, come together as a family, and change the world by embracing and celebrating *The Magic of Rotary*.