



RI PRESIDENT'S WELCOME ADDRESS

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Wow, what an amazing crowd. Thank you so much for joining us at the 2019 Rotary International Convention in Hamburg.

I cannot fully express my gratitude to you for being with us this year, and also for making my and Esther's journey one of the greatest adventures of our lives. I will have more time on Wednesday to detail my incredible experiences as Rotary president.

But this morning, I want to give you a preview of the tremendous program that we've built for you. How many people here today are attending their first Rotary International Convention?

I will never forget my first convention. The Rotary Convention was taking place in Las Vegas, so I figured, why not have fun in Las Vegas?

What I experienced instead was life-changing. What I knew about Rotary before that convention was all about my club and district and the great work we did. But it did not prepare me for the stories of incredible service Rotary does every day around the world, and the impact we have on billions of lives.

That convention was the beginning of my dedication to our organization, and it is why I am here today. The words that I heard spoken at that convention were powerful, but it was the people I met — and the stories we shared — that really stuck with me. As Paul Harris once said, "Whatever Rotary may mean to us, to the world it will be known by the results it achieves."

Those results don't appear magically. They are the offspring of our continued commitment and our values. This year's convention "captures the moment" by celebrating Rotary's core values. Over the next four days, you will hear inspiring stories that underscore the Rotary ethos of diversity, leadership, fellowship, integrity, and service.

These are more than words for Rotarians. They are the guiding principles of our organization that define our culture and our actions.

We believe in diversity, because Rotary at its best unites the world, and therefore must

This is the text of the remarks as they were prepared. The spoken remarks may have differed slightly.

reflect every part of humanity. You cannot properly serve the world unless you can see and hear that world accurately. Diversity ensures that Rotary represents all voices and speaks in every language. That includes age, sexual orientation, gender, race, ethnicity, and abilities.

We must ensure that more women join Rotary and attain positions of leadership. That is why, this year, the Rotary International Board set a goal to increase the number of women in Rotary and in leadership positions to 30 percent by June 2023. We are committed to taking action to reach these goals, and I hope we can attain them sooner.

During the 2020-21 Rotary year, six women will serve on the Board for the first time ever. Six women! That represents 31 percent of the Board. And right now, we also have our first chairwoman of The Rotary Foundation [Brenda Cressey].

The second core value is leadership. And leadership is about more than attaining positions of responsibility. As leaders in humanitarian service and in volunteerism, we must continue to improve our skills and share our experience through mentoring. This past year, I have been inspired by the incredible leadership displayed by Rotaractors around the world. Rotaractors, are you out there? Hamburg, if you didn't know, is the true birthplace of the Beatles, a band that changed the face of popular music while they were all in their 20s.

Rotaractors are Rotary's rock stars. They inspire us with big dreams and even bigger actions. I call on all of the graying Rotary leaders, who have given so much to this organization through the years, to take heed of what Rotaractors say and do. They are Rotary's future.

People of diverse backgrounds leading and following people from different generations — that's what fellowship is all about. Through our service, we grow closer together and learn to use each other's skills more effectively.

By working together, we open up unlimited potential. It's our fellowship that transcends all boundaries and makes Rotary a force for peace worldwide.

Of course, if we want to be leaders and if we want to point the world to a brighter future, we must behave in ways that inspire trust and confidence. That's why integrity is one of our core values.

Integrity is about not tolerating bad behavior. We expect responsibility from our officers and friends, in both our means and ends. We apply high ethical standards, professionally and privately. In dealing with others, we are fair and respectful, and we use the resources entrusted to us consciously and responsibly.

Acting with honesty and integrity at all times builds trust — and allows us to get back to what we like most, the final core Rotary value of service.

Service to others is an integral part of our mission, whether it's through the plans and

actions of individual clubs, Rotary's six areas of focus, or the transformational support of The Rotary Foundation. And the service that most defines us and our global mission is the ongoing goal to rid the world of polio.

We've brought the world to the brink of polio eradication. Now, along with our global polio partners, we're launching a new strategy to take it over the finish line and deliver a polio-free world. Despite all of our impressive progress, the last steps to eradication have proven to be the most difficult.

This week, you will hear an informative, up-to-the-minute discussion of polio eradication efforts and the final-step strategies. This is hard but necessary work that includes reaching children amid insecurity and conflict, overcoming weak health systems that lead to unimmunized or under-immunized children, and dealing with numerous operation and management risks.

This strategy will succeed — but only if it is fully implemented with sufficient resources. Your service brought us this far, and we'll need you now more than ever to bring this great Rotary mission to a happy conclusion for all the world's children.

We're in the final mile of the marathon. The last mile is always the most challenging, but the finish line is in sight. This is no time to stop. We can, and must, fulfill our promise.

So that's a short preview of what you'll see in the days ahead. I know how memorable these conventions can be. But I also know that the power of Rotary is not here on stage. It is in you and your fellow Rotarians in your clubs, and the billions of people whose lives you touch through your service.

Now, let's capture this moment and the spirit of Hamburg, and bring all our core values back home with us.

Thank you so much for joining us.