

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**W**E ALL KNOW Rotary's tremendous power to transform our communities and ourselves. However, in every community, people have been left out, and we have not made a strong enough effort to reach them.

The RI Board of Directors is taking action to make Rotary more welcoming and diverse. We formed a task force to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion to help clubs attract new members regardless of gender, race, religion, age, or other factors. This will help us speed up the change we all want and need. The selection of Jennifer E. Jones as Rotary president for 2022-23 — the first woman to lead our organization — is another step in this direction.

At the grassroots level, clubs drive inclusion and diversity. Alia Ali — who serves on the board of directors at the Big West Rotaract Multidistrict Information Organization and is a Rotary Youth Leadership Awards alumna and past president of the Rotaract Club of Surrey-Newton, British Columbia — offers her perspective.

*I still remember the relief I felt as a RYLA participant four years ago. I had finally found my people: people who cared as much as I did. All over the world, Rotary has the same heart. We serve our communities and take action where others feel paralyzed by the size and scope of a problem.*

*Let's continue that spirit, especially when the conversation is difficult. Racism, prejudice, and discrimination take on different forms but exist in every country, in every city, and in every person. How do we root it out?*

*As a diversity, equity, and inclusion consultant, I help organizations create a culture that empowers and attracts everyone using the power of empathy. When we feel with others as if they were ourselves, we cannot hold prejudice*

*in our hearts. When every child reminds you of your own child, when every woman or man reminds you of your mother or brother, you start seeing the world differently.*

*We can apply The Four-Way Test through the lens of empathy. Are we building goodwill and friendship with everyone in our area, including women? Are things fair and beneficial to people of all ages? Who has to make choices that you don't have to make?*

*I made a heartbreaking choice between Rotary and my religion when a Rotary convention was held during Ramadan. I wondered: When we ask if this is fair and beneficial to all concerned, did that not include me as a Muslim? Would the convention ever be held over Easter? Only by asking difficult questions can we begin the work of creating a more inclusive and diverse Rotary.*

*We already connect so many people across the world. Imagine the possibilities when we bring even more people along for the ride. That's the future of Rotary I want to see: one where we are unstoppable in our service, relentless in our kindness, and intentional in the change we want to see.*

Rotary has a big enough heart. If we open our door wider, we might find a lot of interesting people with new voices and new perspectives. We already have a variety of clubs offering different styles, cultures, and opportunities — and those who do not feel welcome in any particular club might be great candidates for new clubs created on different models. It's important that we make sure every new Rotary member is a good fit for their club. *Rotary Opens Opportunities* through diversity.

**HOLGER KNAACK**

President, Rotary International



**Alia Ali**  
Big West Rotaract  
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