



Dear fellow Rotarians,

It is with great anticipation and a renewed sense of commitment that we begin Rotary's centennial year. I feel privileged to serve as your president as we reach this historic milestone. The centennial provides a unique opportunity to raise public awareness of Rotary and its humanitarian mission.

The best way to honor Rotary's past is to perform even greater acts of service in the future. I urge clubs to support this year's four major emphases: health concerns, water management, literacy, and the family of Rotary. Each is critical to the well-being of the global community and offers many possibilities for Rotary service.



Every country has its own specific health issues — malaria, measles, preventable blindness, HIV/AIDS. Global health authorities report that 42 million people are now infected with HIV. The disease has reached epidemic proportions in Africa, where millions of families lack access to quality health care. Rotarians can take a leading role in stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS by participating in public-awareness and education campaigns.

In the United States and other developed countries, people often take clean water for granted. But in many parts of the developing world, safe water is a scarce luxury. At a meeting of the United Nations, I learned that more than one billion people do not have safe drinking water. As a result, some 6,000 people, mostly children, die every day from diseases associated with contaminated water. I have visited many outstanding Rotarian-supported water projects, including new wells and purification systems, that are saving countless lives.

We must also commit ourselves to improving literacy rates. More than two billion people cannot read or write, so they lack the most basic skills to qualify for meaningful employment. I have seen how children's lives in Bangladesh, Thailand, Turkey, and other countries have been dramatically improved by successful literacy programs, such as the concentrated learning encounter method pioneered by Rotarians.

We will continue to emphasize the family of Rotary. Rotary has always been a major presence in my family. Five of my older brothers were Rotarians, and three served as club presidents. It's important to include our spouses, children, and relatives in Rotary functions and projects, so that Rotary becomes a life-affirming experience for the entire family. We should also remember the other integral members of the Rotary family, including Rotary Foundation Scholars, Group Study Exchange team members, Rotaractors, Interactors, and Youth Exchange students.

During this centennial year, I encourage Rotarians to focus on these four emphases. We can draw inspiration from one of our most successful programs: PolioPlus. Thanks to Rotary and our polio eradication partners, some two billion children have been immunized against polio. As we enter our second century of service, I have never been more proud to be a Rotarian.

We have proven that dreams can become reality — and that one person can make a difference. Just look at our founder, Paul Harris. He could never have anticipated that his modest vision nearly 100 years ago would evolve into one of the world's most influential service organizations.

Let us Celebrate Rotary by taking on new challenges and goals as we continue to bring hope to millions of people in need around the world. This is Rotary's great legacy — and its great destiny. After all, who knows what can be accomplished in the next 100 years?

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Glenn E. Estess Sr." in a cursive style.

Glenn E. Estess Sr.  
President, Rotary International