



Dear fellow Rotarians,

As we enter a new century of service, I would like to reflect on what it means to be a Rotarian. Each of us joined a Rotary club for our own reasons: to contribute to the community, to support the many humanitarian and educational programs of The Rotary Foundation, to reach out to a particular individual or group in need. For me, Rotary is about giving from the heart.

Few organizations have survived the test of 100 years. I believe we have endured because of our commitment and willingness to take on humanitarian challenges that make a real difference. Rotarians often help others at great personal sacrifice, both in terms of time and financial contributions. These selfless acts of service are what define us as Rotarians.



Our centennial year is an ideal time to promote awareness of Rotary and bring in new members. August is Membership and Extension Month, an opportunity to introduce a friend or business colleague to Rotary. Just think of all the benefits gained through your membership in a Rotary club. In a sense, you have been accepted into a family — the family of Rotary. You have friends and contacts in virtually every corner of the world.

I literally grew up in a Rotary family. Five of my older brothers were Rotarians; three later became club presidents. It seemed inevitable that I would follow in their footsteps, but little did I know what path lay ahead. I had no ambition to rise within Rotary or be a district governor someday, much less RI president. That just shows that Rotary can lead any club member down an unexpected path, one that brings great joy and great fulfillment.

I first joined the Rotary Club of Jacksonville, Fla., USA, at the age of 33. As a young businessman who was new to the area, I found the club invaluable in helping me feel at home. Through Rotary, I have made lifelong friends both in my community and abroad.

This issue of *The Rotarian* is dedicated to educating new members about Rotary, as well as inspiring longtime members to take on new projects and challenges. By the end of our centennial year in June 2005, we hope to enhance our development programs, which will result in a substantial growth in membership. To accomplish this, I encourage each club to set a goal of a net membership gain of 3 percent (with a minimum net increase of two members per club) and charter at least one new club.

We must also focus on retention. In some parts of the world, we are losing about half of our new members within the first three years. In Brazil, Japan, Mexico, and the United States, overall membership has dropped due to various economic and social factors. The club and district family of Rotary committees are a key component in our effort to retain club members by including family members in fellowship and service projects.

I also believe that it is important to promote diversity in Rotary. I encourage members to bring in qualified women, younger people, and community members of varied ethnic and religious backgrounds. These groups are an untapped reservoir of potential members that will infuse new energy into our organization.

Today, take a moment and remember who invited you into a Rotary club. Let us Celebrate Rotary by sharing the gift of service with others. By promoting the spirit of Rotary, we will realize even greater achievements during our second century of service.

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

Glenn E. Estess Sr.  
President, Rotary International