



Dear fellow Rotarians,

Almost 100 years ago, a lonely young lawyer named Paul P. Harris decided to start a club with three of his friends. Although they represented different vocations, they all had one thing in common: they originally came from small towns. Living in the bustling city of Chicago, the four missed the warm, small-town hospitality and camaraderie of their youth. Harris wrote in *My Road to Rotary* in 1948, "To the members of the small group which came together in the big city of Chicago, Rotary was like an oasis in the desert."

In an attempt to recreate an atmosphere of caring, Harris formed a club that created a sense of family and community that would become the bedrock of Rotary. Since Rotary's beginning

with the original four founders, the organization has become a "world family" with members from all walks of life in 166 countries.

During this centennial year, I would like to continue the family of Rotary initiative introduced by 2003-04 RI President Jonathan Majiyagbe. The RI Board has designated December as Family Month, an ideal time to reach out to family members and involve them in Rotary. The Family of Rotary Task Force is providing information and support to Rotary clubs and districts in an effort to emphasize the first Object of Rotary: "to encourage and foster the development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service."

Rotary offers many ways to celebrate Family Month. Members can visit Rotarians who are ill, encourage spouses and children to participate in service projects and fellowship events, and invite qualified family members to join a Rotary club. We also should make a special effort to remember the families of deceased Rotarians, who may need our care and support.

It's important to integrate our own families into the family of Rotary. Rotary should be something that brings families together - not a force that pulls them apart. Rotary clubs and districts can offer diverse service and social activities that appeal to all members. This is critical if we want to attract younger members, who may have children and other demands on their time.

I am from the [U.S.] South, where family is the highest priority. All three of my children and eight grandchildren live within driving distance. I grew up in a Rotary family - five of my brothers were Rotarians; three served as club presidents. Our son is also a Rotarian.

When I moved to new cities early in my career, Rotary helped to open doors and make the transition easier. When I joined a local Rotary club, I was welcomed and felt a sense of belonging. I was able to meet top business leaders, who asked me to call them by their first names. We were instantly part of the community.

I have met many outstanding individuals during my 44 years as a Rotarian. For me, the best part of Rotary has always been the fellowship. Even when I visit clubs in other countries, I feel as though I'm among friends.

Paul Harris once said, "Friendship was the foundation rock on which Rotary was built and tolerance is the element which holds it together." Invite a relative, friend or business colleague to share in the joys of Rotary. During this centennial year, celebrate your membership in the largest family in the world.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Glenn E. Estess Sr." The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

Glenn E. Estess Sr.
President, Rotary International

