



Dear fellow Rotarians,

**A**s you open this issue of *The Rotarian*, final preparations for the 2005 RI Convention in Chicago next month are already well underway. Those of you who have been to RI conventions in the past will understand when I say that there is no experience like it. For those of you who have yet to make your first convention journey, there will never be a better time than this summer.

The RI centennial convention will be the greatest celebration in Rotary's history. We already anticipate the largest attendance of any North American RI convention, and have planned several events new even for seasoned convention goers - including a centennial parade through downtown Chicago.

Of course, there will also be the inspiring presentations, exciting outings, and unmatched opportunities for fellowship you will always find at an RI convention. This annual meeting is always the best way to meet Rotarians from around the world, and many lasting friendships and club partnerships have had their beginnings at these wonderful events.

As a father of four and grandfather of eight who plans on bringing the entire family to the convention, I encourage you to consider making the trip a family affair. I look forward to bringing my grandchildren to the Field Museum, which Rotary has reserved for an entire evening. It is an amazing museum with collections showcasing the diversity of cultures and civilizations across time and distance. What better way is there to visit such a place than with Rotarians from all parts of the world?

Rotary crosses geographic and cultural barriers like no other organization, and the convention is a living demonstration of how international Rotary really is. As Host Organization Committee Chair Richard Galitz notes, "A Rotarian doesn't understand the true meaning of the 'International' on their Rotary pin until they attend an RI convention."

Since becoming president of Rotary International, I have been privileged to be a part of Rotarian gatherings in many parts of the Rotary world. No matter how many I attend, I am excited about each and every one - because every one is a unique window into a new community of Rotarians. At every Foundation dinner, Presidential Celebration, and club meeting, I have been welcomed into the lives of Rotarians and their families, learning about countries and cultures in a way no tourist ever could.

Your Rotary pin is a passport to a kind of travel that most people will never know - one that values people over places, homes over skylines. Through Rotary, you can voyage around the world just by visiting one convention - through the House of Friendship, the booths and exhibits, and simply the opportunity to chat with Rotarians from dozens of countries you might never have thought to visit. At the convention, they will come to you.

There won't be another Rotary Centennial for another hundred years, and we are privileged to be a part of Rotary in this landmark year. I look forward to seeing each of you as we Celebrate Rotary with service, fellowship, and good friends in Chicago this June.

