

## DEAR FELLOW ROTARIANS,

**T**his month marks 50 years since the first Rotaract club was chartered, in 1968. In this special Rotaract issue, you'll meet some impressive Rotaractors from around the world and see some of the incredible ways they are *Making a Difference*.

In the half-century since Rotaract began, the world has seen profound changes, and young people have felt the greatest impact of those changes: the rise of technology and the information economy, the spread of education, and the tremendous influence of the internet. When Rotaract was founded, it would have been almost unthinkable for a teen or 20-something to have been an entrepreneur or a CEO. Today, young people have an unprecedented capacity to achieve – and Rotary needs their ideas and enthusiasm as never before.

For many years, Rotary has done Rotaract a disservice by looking at our youth and young adult programs as mere precursors to Rotary membership, and not as valuable and productive programs in their own right. But Rotaractors are truly partners in Rotary service.

Today, an estimated quarter of a million Rotaractors serve in over 10,000 clubs, in nearly every country where Rotary clubs exist. The impact of their service is particularly impressive when contrasted with their resources. Rotaractors achieve an amazing amount with far less money at their disposal than the average Rotary club. Their energy and vision bring something wonderful to our Rotary family and to our communities, and we value that very much.

Yet only 27 percent of Rotary clubs sponsor a Rotaract club, a figure that has remained fairly stable over time. And far too few Rotaractors ultimately do move on to Rotary membership. As we celebrate this anniversary with Rotaract, I encourage all Rotary clubs to consider sponsoring a Rotaract club or to strengthen their ties with the clubs they already sponsor. Schedule regular joint meetings, run joint service projects, and reach out to Rotaractors – not only to ask if you can help, but to find out how you can work together. Know your Rotaract clubs and their members – and make sure that every Rotaractor knows that a Rotary club is waiting to welcome them.

For half a century, Rotaract has given young people a way to find the same connections with their communities, and the same value in service, that Rotarians find in Rotary. Rotaractors are connecting us to the Rotary of our future, while helping us build the Rotary of today.



**IAN H.S. RISELEY**  
President, Rotary International



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