



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear fellow Rotarians,

For 60 years, choosing a theme has been the privilege, and sometimes the challenge, of each incoming president. Looking back on those past themes opens a small window into the thinking and the vision of each leader – how they saw Rotary, the place they saw for Rotary in the world, and what they hoped Rotary would achieve.

When my turn came to choose a theme, I did not hesitate. I knew immediately that our theme in 2017-18 would be *Rotary: Making a Difference*. For me, that small phrase describes not only what we do now, but what we aspire to do. We want to make a difference. We strive to help, to have an impact, to make the world a bit better.

Over the past two years, I have seen so many ways that Rotary is doing just that. In California, after the devastating wildfires last year, I saw Rotarians *Making a Difference* to those who had lost everything. In Guatemala, I saw the difference that simple wood stoves are making in the lives of women who had been cooking on open fires: They no longer breathe smoke when they cook, they spend less time gathering firewood, and they are using their stoves to start small businesses. In Israel, I visited a Rotary-supported hyperbaric center that is helping brain injury and stroke patients return to healthy, productive lives. In communities around the world, Rotarians are *Making a Difference* by resettling refugees, immunizing children, ensuring a safe blood supply, and helping young people learn and thrive.

All over the world, I have been a part of Rotarians' commitment to planting trees. As this issue of *The Rotarian* goes to press, we are still awaiting the final count of trees planted, but I am delighted to announce that we have already far surpassed our original goal of 1.2 million trees, one new tree per Rotarian. And, all over the world, Rotary is continuing its advocacy, fundraising, and support for polio eradication. Last year, wild poliovirus caused only 22 cases of paralysis in only two countries. I am confident that soon that number will be zero, and we will begin a new phase in the timeline of eradication: counting down at least three years from the last sign of wild virus to the certification of a polio-free world.

As Juliet and I return home to Australia, we will bring warm memories of the places we have visited, the friends we have made, and the service we have seen. Thank you, all of you, for the tremendous work you are doing, through *Rotary: Making a Difference*.

IAN H.S. RISELEY

President, Rotary International