



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear fellow Rotarians,

The people who know me best — my family — know that my passion for Rotary is boundless. They also know that I don't expect them to get involved in Rotary the way I have. It's a choice that's up to them. But I must admit, I can't help smiling when I see them making the right choice.

At the end of the Toronto convention last year, my 12-year-old granddaughter turned to me and said, "I'm inspired to do something. What can I do?" Naturally, I did what any other Rotarian grandfather worth his salt would do: I asked her if there was an Interact club in her school. When she discovered there wasn't, she attempted to set one up. Unfortunately, her principal had other ideas, but we should not be deterred from helping Rotary youth programs whenever we can, because their value is beyond question.

Take Rotary Youth Leadership Awards as one example. It transforms young people into more confident, focused individuals with a better understanding of the world around them — changes I was pleased to see in my 16-year-old grandson after he participated.

My family is just the beginning. Everywhere I go, I meet people of all ages whose lives have been changed by our youth programs. They tell me how, five or 15 or 25 years ago, Rotary Youth Exchange taught them a new language or introduced them to a new culture. Their eyes light up when they talk about how New Generations Service Exchange helped them advance in their career, or about how membership in Rotaract first ignited their passion for giving back to the community.

Rotary's programs for young leaders extend our ideals of service, friendship, and leadership development beyond the doors of our clubs to hundreds of thousands of young people each year. And when we serve with and for those young people — as sponsors, project partners, and mentors — it brings out the best in us, and it brings out the best in Rotary.

May is Youth Service Month, and there are many ways your Rotary club can celebrate. Sponsor an Interact club or Rotaract club, and your Rotary club will give young people in your community the tools they need to take action, become leaders, and gain a global perspective. Team up with your local Rotaract club for a service project. Get to know the participants in Rotary's programs for young leaders and share their stories with your community. You'll find more ideas in this year's Rotary Citation brochure, located under the Awards section of the Member Center at my.rotary.org.

This month, let's *Be the Inspiration* to the young leaders in our communities by mentoring them, engaging them, and working side by side with them on meaningful projects. It's an investment in their future and in the world they will live in after we're gone. And it's work that will forever enrich their lives, and our own.

BARRY RASSIN

President, Rotary International