

# President's message

Dear fellow Rotarians and members of the family of Rotary,

March is the month we celebrate Rotaract — and this has been quite a year for our young partners in service.

Last spring, the Council on Legislation elevated Rotaract in our constitution: Rotary International is now the association of both Rotary clubs and Rotaract clubs. Then in October, the Rotary Board of Directors eliminated the artificial Rotaract age limit and took other steps to break down barriers that were preventing Rotaract from growing in some parts of the world.

These steps were long overdue, because Rotaract is a vision of what Rotary must become. Not only do we need to open our doors to our young colleagues, but we also have to open our ears and minds to the Rotary experience they find most engaging. That is one of the best ways we will meaningfully grow Rotary.

When I say grow Rotary, I mean it in many ways. We need to grow our service and to grow the impact of our projects. Most importantly, however, we need to grow our membership, so that we can achieve more. Rotaractors provide this opportunity, not only because they can transition to Rotary at the time that is right for them, but also because they understand what it will take to attract others like them.

Business as usual will not work for us anymore. Bringing in more members to replace the ones we lose is not the answer. It is like pouring more water into a bucket full of holes. We need to address the root causes of member loss in many parts of the world: member engagement that is not what it should be, and our member demographic that skews steadily older.

It is time to make some fundamental changes. We already know what the barriers are to an engaged and diverse membership. It is time to act on what we know: creating new membership models, opening new paths to Rotary membership, and building new Rotary and Rotaract clubs where the existing clubs do not meet a current need.

New club models represent an opportunity to connect with a more diverse group of individuals — particularly those who are unable or unwilling to join our traditional clubs. While new club models have been emerging for some time, it is up to district governors to make them a reality. In January at the International Assembly, our incoming district governors took part in an exercise called Build Your Own Club Model. It was a wonderful experience that put them in the right frame of mind for the work ahead.

Ultimately, however, it will be up to Rotaractors and young Rotarians to create new club models that are most meaningful to the next generation. We may think we know what young people want from Rotary clubs in the future, but I am confident that what young people say will surprise us. It will be our job to support their innovation, for it will help us grow Rotary as *Rotary Connects the World*.



**MARK DANIEL MALONEY**  
*President, Rotary International*



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