

It starts with an invitation

We've all taken our own path to become a member of Rotary. Some of you joined because your father was a Rotarian. Some of us signed up because an employer tapped us on the shoulder and asked us to attend a meeting. Others became members only after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling made it possible. Yet each of us entered through one mechanism — an invitation.

An invitation that unlocks our imaginations and allows us to know that everything and anything is possible. Each one of us has that same opportunity — the honor to extend an invitation.

It is awe-inspiring to imagine how we can look out across our communities and identify our future leaders. It's often tempting to attract people who are exactly like us. It's a special form of ingenuity to consider how people who are seemingly very different can, in fact, share our values and have some of those same talents, just waiting to be unleashed.

It's time for Rotary to take our next step in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) across our organization.

Embracing an experience where people feel included is more than just making our membership numbers more diverse. It's about making our meetings and events places where we can speak openly and honestly with each other, where our members feel welcome and safe. This means removing barriers for entry and opening doors for inclusion. Our values remain our strength — and our commitment to excellence requires

us to maintain high standards for our members as well.

I believe we are all determined to advance DEI across Rotary. This is rooted in the deepest traditions of our organization, and it will ensure that we remain vibrant and relevant for decades to come.

A few years ago, our Rotary Board set the ambitious goal of increasing the share of female members to 30 percent by 2023. We have less than a year to go, but I believe we can meet and exceed this target.

We need Rotary leaders to rise from every continent, culture, and creed. We need young members and young thinkers to take on larger roles and responsibilities. We need to listen to new Rotary members just as keenly, and with as much respect, as those with many years of membership.

During our recent convention in Houston, we heard from astronauts about their journeys into space. We reflected upon a time in the 1960s when U.S. President John F. Kennedy urged the world to dream, with his declaration that we would “go to the moon [and do] other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard.”

Fully committing Rotary to DEI and meeting our ambitious membership targets may seem as unlikely as a moon shot. But I know that when people of action are committed to a big goal, we make it worth every ounce of our energy.

JENNIFER JONES

President, Rotary International

