

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

I count it a real privilege to become your President for the 2016 – 2017 Rotary year. It is a challenge that I have accepted because I am passionate about the way Rotary operates as an organisation for the benefit of our community.

It's 39 years since I joined the Rotary Club of Timaru. I had just returned from mission service for my church in the highlands of Papua New Guinea and wanted to become involved in a service organisation that cared for people. Rotary answered that need for me.

It was the International Year of the Child and, as fill-in Director of the International Committee (due to the sudden death of the serving Director while overseas), I was asked by the Club to provide a worthy project from my experience in Papua New Guinea.

Using some rather unique fundraising methods we provided finance to purchase for a highlands boarding school a rotovator, for use in their vegetable gardens. This was my introduction to Rotary.

39 years later I am still focused on working to alleviate the needs of those around me. The Rotary motto, "Service Above Self" is a very important part of my whole life experience.

When I look about me in this community and in the world in general, I cannot help but focus on human need. Rotary gives me one channel to do that along with my commitment to chaplaincy and my church.

After 39 years in seven Rotary Clubs, I have had the opportunity to work with a team that is committed to the same ideals.

John Germ, incoming President of Rotary International, joined Rotary the year before I did. He and I have the same mind when it comes to our Rotary focus. It isn't anything new. In fact his desire is to get back to the basics of the purpose for Rotary.

His motto for the year, "Rotary Serving Humanity", is my own personal motto for service, whether it be in Rotary, my church, chaplaincy or generally amongst the members of my local community.

My overall goal as your President is to encourage each of you to refresh or even open your vision for "Service Above Self."

When Paul Harris met with his three friends their focus became the needs of others. Whether in the area of community, youth or international need, they saw themselves putting aside their own personal interests while they allowed their minds, their time, their talents to be directed to others in practical service.

That's what has made our organisation unique. We echo Paul Harris' words in our own Rotary experience. He said, "He profits most who serves best" We need to look for ways to serve as best we can.

Rotary to me recognises the need to forget one's own needs for a time. Service is always positive when it places others before ourselves.

So, after 39 years I'm glad I am still able to be actively involved in an organisation that I personally owe a lot to. This Club very graciously carried me through years when finances were hard. I feel I am now able to return that goodwill and inspire each of you to embrace the ideals of Rotary.

So, what's ahead for this year? Ray has outlined what we have accomplished in the past 12 months. We need to continue with the projects that are ongoing.

We need also to expand our vision. There is a lot of need out there. I want to encourage each of you to be constantly on the watch for these needs. It is easy to rely only on the cash in hand to decide what we should do.

I am a firm believer in finding a project and then looking for ways to fund it. It is much more satisfying to have a specific goal in mind that inspires wanting to do something about it, than merely fundraising and then look for something to give the cash to.

I want you to remember that true service works firstly from the heart. Compassion isn't in the pocket, or even in the mind. It is a spontaneous reaction to the needs we allow ourselves to be exposed to. Let your community speak to that heart of its need. The wherewithal to meet a need is always there ready to be tapped into.

When it comes to our involvement with youth in our community, I support the traditional Rotary programmes and will do my best to be actively involved. I would like to see the Exchange programme between Australia and New Zealand pursued again.

As far as International programmes are concerned, try, if you can, to stop me from going to Koroipito next year to fulfil a promise made years ago to Peter Drysdale. Will you come, too? Todd Mountfort will keep us in touch with that programme.

The End Polio Now challenge for this year is on the top of my list. Are we all up to making this THE year? What an accomplishment for Rotary to do this.

When I speak of these projects I am relying on my incoming Directors to give a lead. I pledge my support wherever possible – moral support and encouragement if I can't offer hands-on involvement.

One of the important dimensions of my Presidency will be my involvement with the 4 other Rotary Clubs in our city. All five of us are here tonight, and we are pledged to work together in whatever ways we can, to make Rotary work for our community. We will meet each month to coordinate our ideas.

The Charity Auction is set for November. All five Clubs are involved. It is important that we have a combined effort to End Polio Now. There are other projects in the wind that would succeed more easily if we get together.

Probably the greatest need for Rotary is to really enhance its image. I am not going to spend time here discussing the status of Club membership, but I would encourage you all to be present when we discuss the issues and strategies at the Pig and Whistle on the evening of July 6. That's next Wednesday.

Plans are also being laid for a special media release outlining Rotary and its programmes. We need the publicity to encourage new members.

As your new President I have many ideas whirling through my head. But the important fact of leadership is that you can't do it alone. Our Directors are truly our leaders. I am here to encourage them, participate when I can, and do my best to inspire you all with the Rotary experience.

Check out your own. Is it satisfying? Do you enjoy being a Rotarian? If not then come and chat. Maybe we can discover new paths of service that will satisfy you.

So, here we are, together on the journey. I'm off! Come with me. Let's make this year count for our community out there and experience the personal satisfaction of service. Thanks for the privilege of serving you all.

Allen Foote,
President,
Rotary Club of Rotorua,
28 June, 2016