

Good morning.

Your conference is off to such a great start. I congratulate each of you.

Yesterday, during my speech to you, I offered a quote from author David Forward.

Today, I would like to start my speech to you with another quote from David Forward.

In the Preface to “A Century of Service: The Story of Rotary International: author David Forward writes in 200:.

The spirit of service is alive and well in the 21st century. Just look at Rotary International- a nonprofit organization of 1.2 million members in more than 165 countries dedicated to improving the human condition. In an increasingly complex and impersonal world, Rotarians remain committed to helping their communities – and the world beyond. Perhaps more than any other organization, Rotary is a testament to the power of the quiet heroes who work at the grassroots level to make a monumental difference, **one project at a time**. Collectively, Rotarians have created a force for good that changes lives through compassion. Over the past century, they have promoted international peace, created the world’s largest privately funded international scholarship program, and played a leading role in supporting the global health initiative to eradicate polio. Indeed, Rotarians have called the organization’s Polio Plus program their “gift to the children of the world.” As the torchbearers of service in the 21st century, Rotarians will continue to shape history and provide hope through their humanitarian efforts.

I know that each of you here loves the work of Rotary very much.

How did you get your start in Rotary?

I want to tell you about my start in Rotary, made possible by The Rotary Foundation.

In many of the speeches I have made on behalf of Rotary over the years, I often speak of the incredible value of “20 Minutes with a Rotarian”...literally, how much difference spending 20 minutes with a Rotarian can make in a person’s life. Because, you see, if was a Rotarian just like each of you, in north Missouri USA, who provided the encouragement to have me apply for a Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarship back in 1980. This was a time when I promise you I had more hair on my head! And, this was a scholarship I was blessed to obtain.

I spent nine months as a Graduate Student at the University of Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia. Count me among those who found that to be a life-changing experience provided from one of the projects and programs of the Rotary Foundation. **IT IS THE REASON I STAND BEFORE YOU RIGHT NOW.** THANK YOU to each and every one of you who makes an “Every Rotarian, Every Year” annual donation to the Rotary Foundation, and/or a bequest to the Endowment Fund of our Rotary Foundation...it is people like me who gain a world of benefit, who can feel the impact of the Rotary Foundation, **one project at a time**.

We need so many projects in our Rotary Clubs, because we know that this business of Rotary is a business that will never run out of customers who are in need of our help.

I believe that part of the reason each one of us gives, and keeps giving, to Rotary, is that we sometimes notice the opportunity it gives those we serve, to give back in return.

An interesting outlook on this was revealed to me in one of those email stories that goes around, that I'd like to share today.

Subject: Kindness and Opportunity

This is a true example of what human kindness is all about. Someone who teaches as a Middle School in Florida, USA forwarded the following letter. The letter was sent to the principal's office after the school had sponsored a luncheon for the elderly. An elderly lady received a new radio at the luncheon as a door prize, and was writing to say thank you.

Dear Safety Harbor Middle School:

God bless you for the beautiful radio I won at your recent senior citizens luncheon. I am 84 years old and live at the Safety Harbor Assisted Home for the Aged. All of my family has passed away. I am all alone now and it's nice to know that someone is thinking of me. God bless you for your kindness to an old forgotten lady.

My roommate is 95 and always had her own radio, but before I received one, she would never let me listen to hers, even when she was napping. The other day, her radio fell off the night stand and broke into a lot of pieces. It was awful and she was in tears.

She asked if she could listen to mine, and I told her – no way.

Thank you for that opportunity.

Sincerely,
Edna Walters

You see, you just never know the opportunity that your “giving” gives to others, do you?

Because I really enjoy the letter written by Edna Walters, and because I want to share one of my Rotary moments with you, I have decided to write a letter to each of you.

DEAR ROTARIANS AND GUESTS IN DISTRICT 4420

One day in August, out of 9,600 pairs of shoes that were loaded on the trailer by District 6040 Missouri Rotarians at the Holiday Inn in St. Joseph, Missouri, my friend Scott pulled out one particular pair of boots – light brown boots, they were. He said that I should take this pair of boots with me on our upcoming trip to St. Petersburg, Russia, when we would be delivering shoes to the orphans in that country.

He said that I should find the child for which this pair of boots would be the perfect fit.

So I did.

Four months later, in November, about five days into our Russia trip, a young boy, 11 years old, named Victor was my child at Orphanage #32. After spending a couple of hours with Victor, I came to realize he might indeed be the child for which this pair of boots would be the perfect fit. So I took a piece of paper off the bulletin board at the orphanage, and I traced Victor's footprint on that piece of paper. Then I ran out into the cold and the snow, to our bus, to get the pair of boots out of my backpack. I placed the pair of boots up against the traced footprint...and he was the perfect fit.

Victor, in St. Petersburg, Russia, got a new pair of shoes. When he put them on, he hugged me. And I hugged him.

Because of many experiences like this in Russia, I decided that I must go on another shoe delivery trip.

So I did.

Fourteen months later, in January, about three days into our Guatemala trip, a young boy, eight years old, was my child at the Xacapa orphanage. It was hot. It was dusty and dirty. So we decided that before we place the shoes on the children's feet, we would wash and clean their feet. And tickle their feet. We used the green surgical gloves to do so, and of course threw the green gloves away when we were through.

All the while I was with this young boy I tried through our interpreter to learn his name. You see, it added meaning to the experience to know the name of the child with whom you were engaged.

Five minutes, ten minutes went by. This young boy would never say his name. Our interpreter finally told me that perhaps he did not know his name. Oh, well. He loves his new shoes. When he put them on, he hugged me. And I hugged him.

About an hour later, as we were preparing to leave this Xacapa orphanage, I walked into a classroom where this young boy was sitting behind a desk...and this young boy was now wearing a name tag.

His name.....was Victor.

Two years, two trips, two countries....two Victors.

As we left the Xacapa orphanage that day, I turned one last time to wave to the orphans. Walking toward me, holding something in his hand, was Victor. I went to greet him.

He handed me this green surgical glove. From the trash.

To this day, I believe it as a gift from his soul to me, a motivated act, in return for the shoes, and the clothes, and time and care and love, we had brought to him.

To this day, this green glove is one of the greatest gifts I have ever received.

I hugged him. And he hugged me.

Sincerely,

Larry Lunsford

You see, you just never know the opportunity that your “giving” gives to others, do you?

To each of you, may I say it is my distinct privilege to serve as one of the 17 Directors of Rotary International around the world, and to serve as the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board next year under Gary Huang’s leadership.

Now, while my wife Jill and our children Trent and Cara will clearly tell you that I am not much of an artist, I admit today I have attempted to paint a picture for you of the work of your Rotary Foundation. I firmly believe it is as our Past Rotary International President Paulo V.C. Costa from your great country of Brazil stated:

“Rotary International’s masterpiece is The Rotary Foundation. It transforms our dreams into splendid realities...it is the most generous expression of Rotarian generosity – a generosity that not only brings benefits but also brings help and cooperation to solve the problems that affect mankind. The Rotary Foundation achieves the best that mankind can possibly achieve”.

Indeed, as Rotarians, we are the victors, the winners. Thanks for all you do through Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation, to change the world for the better, one project at a time.

Please be thinking about your next donation to the Rotary Foundation, and your next new project.

Because I hope today that you appreciate, in some way, my journey in Rotary is one where a receiver is a giver, and a giver is a receiver.

From Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholar to Rotary International Director.

But more importantly, I’m here to celebrate your journey in Rotary, and to encourage you to keep up the great work of Rotary.

Thank you.