

Q&A

*with Michael K McGovern, Vice President, RI
by RI Director Ashok Mahajan*

What is the health of Rotary worldwide?

Rotary is healthy. We are growing in many parts of the world and membership should be stable or grow in other areas with President Wilf Wilkinson's focus on membership. Rotary is respected worldwide as an organization of committed volunteers.

What are the major challenges Rotarians will have to face in the coming year?

The major challenge for Rotarians is to find qualified individuals ready to join Rotary. Of course, we also need to focus on our goal of eradicating polio.

Will we conquer Polio in the next three years?

The polio virus does not understand deadlines. There is great news in India and in other countries that the number of cases this year are half of what they were last year. Indian Rotarians should be proud of all that they have done to eradicate polio. Let us all hope that our work will soon see the accomplishment of our goal.

What can Rotary do to stop membership attrition? Why have we stopped growing?

Rotary is growing in many parts of the world. We need to grow in those areas where there have been declines. The inventor Thomas Edison said "there is no substitute for hard work". We know all the ideas to attract and retain members. We need to work our plans to accomplish our objectives. The world grows by 1.5 million persons each week. Rotary can also grow if we ask persons to join.

Energy and water may be our next target areas. Has Rotary armed itself with weapons to combat these problems?

The efforts of Rotarians brought 4 million individuals potable water last year. Rotary volunteers throughout the world work with other

Rotarians to bring positive results. Through e-mail communication and most importantly the hearts of our members, we have the weapons to work on our projects. The financial support of Rotarians in India to the Rotary Foundation also serves to



complete needed projects and serves as an inspiration to others. Rotarians everywhere are very impressed with the support of the Rotary Foundation from India.

Youth is our major hope for the future. Do you envisage any major thrust by Rotary to spread Rotary ideals in the youth?

Every club that I have ever visited undertakes programmes for the youth of their communities. These youth see the good of Rotary and experience seeing service being provided to others. The emphasis on the Family of Rotary also encourages our children and grandchildren to be exposed to

the ideals of Rotary. Imagine the good if every Rotarian sat down with ten children each year to explain the Four Way Test!

Does Rotary need any special emphasis on Membership retention? Have we failed in stopping the leakage of Rotarians who leave Rotary for avoidable reasons?

Membership retention starts with the initial process of recruitment. By clearly identifying individuals of character who are devoted to service, we can increase membership retention. We will always lose some members, and all clubs can reduce losses by having an emphasis on retention.

home communities. For Rotary to be strong, your next door neighbour needs to appreciate Rotary as much as the person in a country further away.

Is Rotary geared to promote ethics? In today's world of dwindling values can Rotary overcome the stiff challenge posed?

Rotary is geared to promote ethics, but it is an area where we need more focus. We have the tools to do so, but we have let this important aspect of Rotary receive little attention. When I finish as a director in June 2008, this is an area where I would like to spend some time beginning in my own club. It is not that my club is not ethical; it is that we should let the public know that this is a focus of our organisation.

Does Rotary have any plans to make "Rotary families" stronger and more effective?

President Wilf Wilkinson has continued the emphasis of the "Family of Rotary." Like everything else in Rotary, it can be more effective as an emphasis if it is embraced by clubs.

If more women are to join Rotary, has RI any plans to relax classification rules for the housewives ?

Rotary rules apply to both men and women. Members need to be individuals who are business, professional or community leaders. The 2007 Council on Legislation added "community leaders" as potential Rotarians. We should seek out the best leaders regardless of gender to join our Rotary clubs. In my country, many "housewives" once had other professional positions and we welcome them to join our clubs based on past service. My own club had a discussion last week at a club assembly with members pointing out that many individuals who do not hold positions currently in a business do much as community leaders. In most parts of the world, there are many qualified individuals we can ask to join Rotary. We need to ask more men and women to join Rotary.

Will the Rotary Foundation evolve new strategies to promote Peace?

The Rotary Foundation is currently undertaking a process called the "Future Vision Plan." This process will result in a plan that better focuses Rotary Foundation programmes in fostering world understanding and peace. The Rotary Peace Centres programme is an excellent example of Rotary promoting peace.

Will Rotary remain "relevant" two decades from now? Will we be active and strong at the end of our second century?

Rotary will always be relevant and strong as long as we stay committed to our ideals. Rotary does much good in the world and our service has spread significantly due to technology improvements and advances in communication and transportation. As much good as we do for other regions, we must all also focus on our

