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**District Governor 2009-2010**

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Rotary International has been focusing on improving literacy in the world for many years. One of the many reasons for this emphasis is to help improve the quality of life. Nearly a billion people in the world today are unable to read a book or sign their names and approximately two-thirds of them are women. Their being illiterate will continue to keep them in poverty and in poor health. It's hard to believe, but as the world population grows, so does the number of individuals that are not able to read or write. Included in this outstanding number are 73 million girls that will grow into adulthood without a basic education.

As literate adults in the US, it is hard for us to phantom such a degree of illiteracy. Let's take a look around...the US.

- One child in four grows up not knowing how to read.
- 43% of adults with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty compared to only 4% of those at the highest level
- 3 out of 4 food stamp recipients perform in the lowest 2 literacy levels
- 90% of welfare recipients are high school dropouts
- Low literary costs \$73 million per year in terms of direct health care costs.
- About three in five of America's prison inmates are illiterate.
- Approximately 50 percent of the nation's unemployed youth age 16-21 are functionally illiterate, with virtually no prospects of obtaining good jobs
- 21 million Americans can't read at all, 45 million are marginally illiterate and one-fifth of high school graduates can't read their diplomas.
- 46% of American adults cannot understand the label on their prescription medicine.
- 50 percent of American adults are unable to read an eighth grade level book.

As a Rotarian, take the initiative to lend a hand to those in need. Review the literacy initiative for District 6540 and ask your club leadership to start a tutoring program, adopt a needy school, start a buddy program etc. It only takes one person to start the effort. Are you that person?

When President John said, "*The future of Rotary is in Your Hands*", do you suppose he also meant that *the future of literacy is in your hands* as well?

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