



Addendum to E-News #17 21 March 2013

Dear Rotary Friends and Friends of Rotary

At this stage I should be ebullient, but tired. The exhausted part is right on after the Conference last weekend, the build-up and the follow up. "Relief" is a term that comes to mind. The Conference was terrific (if I say so myself): a great combination of all those who made it a success including the Conference Committee, Past RI President Bhichai, the Avenue of Service Chairs, entertainers, presenters, MC Chris Joscelyne and the DG (great speech on the Sunday!). My thank you messages will be delivered for months to come.

However, we had 400 to over 500 in attendance at different times over the weekend. Great crowd, but maybe 300 Rotarians (plus partners) out of a District membership of 1850+, or a bit over 15%. Of course not every regular Conference attendee goes to every Conference. But I wish that the other 75 odd per cent (had/took advantage/could afford/could spare the time/whatever reason) the opportunity to experience the best Rotary has to offer. I feel the benefits of attending a Conference to be enormous and add significantly to the experience of being a Rotarian.

Perhaps that's the nub of why we fail in Membership numbers: not in gaining new members, but in retaining those we invite to join our Clubs. For those who have experienced a District Conference, it would be hard to leave an organisation that showed the width and depth of programs that Rotary has to offer. It would be hard not to be impressed by those presenters and partners in Rotary who are willing to give their time to attend and

address the Conference. It would be hard not to want to be one of those really useful people laying bricks in the road to Peace.

We need to engage and involve our members in the joy of Rotary. I have attended the last few Rotary Leadership Institute Seminars and the consistent feedback (other than the excellence of the course) runs something along the lines, " I've been in Rotary 10 (or 15 or 20) years and I've learnt more about Rotary in the last three weeks than in all that time". What about all the members we've lost before they had reached that understanding?

I can be pleased that the Leadership Institute courses are filling up for the rest of the year: a real credit to PDGs Barry Philps and David Rands as well as many other presenters. However, it is clear we must involve our members early and regularly in the great feeling of doing good in the world. Whether it has been hosting Youth Exchange Students, running Red Shield Appeal days, or adjudicating kids in public speaking, I get a real buzz out of Rotary.

It might seem odd, but I also get a real buzz out of putting partners together to effect projects and helping with Insurance problems. Not exactly "Rotary moment" events, but utilizing my experience to advance projects. My work this year on Probus and Marketing has been all behind the scenes, but still very satisfying. We can all bring our capabilities to do good in the world.

To involve our members to the point where they would be crazy to leave, we need to work in a formulaic method. As with Membership recruitment, we need to be systematic in our processes and not leave anything to chance. Our Membership chairs and committees must play real and relevant roles in ensuring every Rotarian in every Club has the opportunity to experience what Rotary has to offer. It will be only with a depth of commitment by Rotarians that we will be able to stem the tide of reducing membership.

I wish DGE Graeme the best for his one day Conference at Chatswood Concourse in February next year. All the excuses about time, cost and distance can be forgotten and there should be a great attendance. I sincerely hope many of our District's Rotarians get to appreciate the best that Rotary has to offer. Then I will be really ebullient (look it up)!

Yours in Rotary

John Dodd

District Governor 2012-13



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