



## Mark Daniel Maloney

**President 2019-20**

I love to travel! I even enjoy the mundane process of getting from here to there. But last year, my wife, Gay, and I had one of those experiences that would strain the optimism of even the most cheerful traveler. We found ourselves with six hours to wait, at an airport where we were not scheduled to be, on a day we had not planned still to be traveling, having woken up that morning at a hotel unknown to us the night before. It was one of those days.

As we waited at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City, Gay and I took a walk to people watch. We went from one end of the terminal to the other and back, looking at every gate, every destination, every group of people waiting for their flights.

Each gate was its own island of humanity. When we walked down the center of the concourse, we were in New York, moving along with everyone in one river. But when you veered off into those seats, you left that current and landed on an island. You were already in Delhi or Paris or Tel Aviv.

As we started our walk, I thought: "All these different people, all these different countries, all in one place. This is like Rotary!" But as we walked past gate after gate, I realized something. It was not like Rotary at all. Because everyone in that river was heading for an island. And every island stayed an island. The people heading to Taipei might be talking to one another, but they were not talking to the people heading to Cairo or Lagos.

Contrast that with Rotary. Rotary allows us to connect with one another, in deep and meaningful ways, across our differences. It connects us with people we would never otherwise have met, who are more like us than we ever could have known. It connects us with our communities, to professional opportunities, and to the people who need our help. Connection is what makes the experience of Rotary so very different from walking along that concourse at JFK Airport. In Rotary, none of us is an island. All of us are in Rotary together, whoever we are, wherever we are from, whatever language we speak or traditions we follow. We are all connected to one another — part of our communities and members not only of our clubs, but also of the global community to which we all belong.

This connection is what lies at the heart of the Rotary experience. It is what brings us to Rotary. It is why we stay. Please join your fellow Rotarians on this journey as Rotary Connects the World.