

Rotary Foundation Keynote Address

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Birmingham, England

23 June 2009

I am happy to be here in Birmingham with so many dedicated Rotarians and to share with you some of the current activities of our Rotary Foundation.

Today, our Foundation faces many challenges. Like most other Foundations, we have seen investment losses during the current global economic recession. I can assure you, however, that the Trustees have been vigilant in minimizing those losses and protecting our assets as much as is possible in such volatile financial times. We are doing that to fulfill our stewardship obligation as Trustees. But as Rotarians, each one of us is also fiercely determined to keep our Foundation strong at a time when its efforts are most needed.

Over the past months, we have grown accustomed to hearing bad news about numbers — the number of points the stock market has lost, the number of dollars needed to bail out failing companies, the number of foreclosures on homes, and the number of workers who have lost their jobs. The numbers are grim, but even more disturbing are the stories behind those numbers. The millions of people who are going hungry in parts of the world where food prices are soaring. The many others who are living in shelters or on the streets because they have lost their homes. We are even seeing a resurgence of some infectious diseases, as countries are forced to slash their public health budgets. And, as in any crisis, it is the children who are suffering the most — from malnutrition, disease, and missed educational opportunities.

According to the World Bank, the crisis could push 53 million more people into poverty in 2009. These are the people who were already suffering when the economic downturn first started, and now their situation has become desperate. Never in its history has our Foundation been in such demand. Every grant project we support is making a difference in this time of enormous need.

So let me share with you now some very positive numbers. For example, 100,000. That's the number of people in the Dominican Republic who have access to clean water because Rotarians have provided almost 20,000 filtration units. Or 4,000, which is how many people in Uganda are benefiting from a multifaceted 3-H grant project that provided mosquito nets, agricultural supplies and livestock for a communal farm, vocational training and equipment, water systems, and educational materials. Or 9,000, which is the number of people living in the Kibera slums outside Nairobi who now have a water supply system and sanitation facilities, thanks to another 3-H grant. And 23 is the number of schools that Foundation grants helped Sri Lankan Rotarians rebuild after the devastating tsunami. Twelve thousand students attend these modern facilities.

We can't measure these gains quite as precisely as we can our investment losses, but their value is profound. And they are a shining testament to the enduring generosity of the family of Rotary, which has come together to help those who are most in need.

Another positive number that we heard this year is US\$255 million. That's the amount of a grant Rotary received from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for polio eradication. When you add in last year's \$100 million Gates Foundation grant and the \$200 million that Rotarians are raising to match these funds, you have \$555 million of new money to deliver our final blows against the poliovirus.

There are many stories behind those numbers as well. In my homeland of Nigeria, for example, eradication efforts have been hindered by families who oppose the immunizations. But Rotarians have labored to overcome that resistance — in one case going so far as to remove garbage from a local dump in exchange for parents agreeing to have their children immunized. Over and over again, Rotarians prove that they are willing to do whatever it takes to eradicate this devastating disease.

In polio-free countries, Rotarians are rising to the challenge to raise \$200 million in a number of creative ways. They are shaving their heads, dying their hair and their pinkies purple, and jumping into frigid waters — all for the cause of polio eradication. In Alaska, all 67 mushers in the 2009 Iditarod race wore bibs with the End Polio Now logo emblazoned across the bottom. Some five million people in 160 countries watched that race and saw our message. Many thousands of others saw the message as it lit up the side of famous landmark buildings, such as the Sydney Opera House, the African Trading Port in Cape Town, South Africa, the Colosseum in Rome, and the House of Commons in London.

We are broadcasting to the world that we must End Polio Now, and the world is listening. Already, in Rotary's \$200 Million Challenge we have reached \$90,757,451 — and 34 cents, because every penny counts. Rotarians, Rotaractors, Interactors, and others who have been drawn to our cause are committed to making sure that no child is ever again crippled by this preventable disease. And I can promise you that every penny of the challenge money will be directed toward polio eradication.

Rotary's \$200 Million Challenge is broad-based. We encourage Rotary clubs to find ways to reach out to the general public, both to bring in new contributions and to raise awareness of our efforts to End Polio Now. For example, here at this convention, you can make a £5 donation by simply texting POLIO to 82010 on your cell phone. By promoting this simple mechanism, we can reach out to our hosts here in Birmingham and in all of England.

Governments are also supporting our fight. Most recently, the British government committed \$150 million and the U.S. and German governments each committed about \$130 million. I think that we can thank strong advocacy on the part of Rotarians who have persuaded government leaders of the urgency of our mission. As Bill Gates said when he announced the latest grant from his foundation: "Rotary in particular has inspired my own personal commitment to get deeply involved in achieving eradication."

One lesson learned from our PolioPlus program is the value of partnerships. Without the technical knowledge of the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, we would not have made the remarkable progress we have in battling this disease.

And so we have formed another important new alliance this year with the United States Agency for International Development. The International H₂O Collaboration is a joint effort to implement water, sanitation, and hygiene projects in the developing world. The Rotary Foundation and USAID will share funding of \$2 million in each of the three focal countries. We'll begin launching projects during the coming Rotary year in the Dominican Republic, Ghana, and the Philippines. USAID in-country missions will work with local Rotarians to provide technical expertise and on-the-ground support. Working with such an experienced partner organization can only enhance our Foundation's public image, as well as its ability to address a critical world problem.

Another key number this year is 30,000. That's the number of Matching Grants that our Foundation has awarded since the program began in 1965. This milestone grant is supporting a project to help 20 children in India receive lifesaving surgeries to correct congenital heart defects.

Over the past 44 years, the Foundation has awarded more than \$335 million for Matching Grants. More than 13 percent of that money was awarded during this Rotary year alone. Nevertheless, it was very painful for the Trustees to reduce the Matching Grants budget earlier this year in response to the current investment climate.

In some ways, the Matching Grants program has been a victim of its own success. During the first 35 years of operation, we awarded only 10,000 Matching Grants. The next 10,000 were awarded over four years, and less than five years later, we reached the 30,000 mark. This surge in demand made it increasingly challenging to administer the program. And such challenges inspired the Foundation Trustees to make what we can now see was a very fortuitous decision. They adopted the Future Vision Plan, which is designed, among other goals, to streamline our operations and contain costs. In a time of economic uncertainty, we can see that such strategic planning will put our Foundation in a much more viable position to weather volatile investment climates.

The Future Vision Plan offers a host of other benefits. By concentrating on six areas of focus, we can use our strengths to better advantage. And by undertaking larger, more sustainable projects, we can make an impact that is both significant and enduring. Just as Rotary is now recognized for its commitment to polio eradication, we will become a leading figure in the areas of water, literacy, health, peacemaking, and economic development.

One hundred districts have been selected to participate in the three-year Future Vision pilot. These districts will receive training during the coming year and begin the pilot in July 2010. You see behind me the list of those districts who have been chosen to participate in the pilot. We tried to select a representative group of districts in terms of geography, size, resources, and need, so that we can achieve reliable test results. In July 2013, all Rotary districts will follow the new grant structure. In the meantime, our pilot districts will be testing the new model and making adjustments. This will ensure that when the entire Rotary world moves to using the new grant structure, we will do so effectively and efficiently.

I want to thank all the clubs and districts that took the time to discuss the merits of the Future Vision Plan. I especially thank those of you who were successful, those that offered their

services and were not successful, and, yes, those districts that gave a very serious look at the process and decided, for whatever reasons, they would not apply for the pilot phase of our Future Vision Plan. Many countless hours of debate took place around the Rotary world to see how The Rotary Foundation could best serve all districts. We at the Trustees table salute you for your time and energy.

Some of the current Foundation programs will be phased out during the pilot, but two programs will remain unchanged. One, of course, is PolioPlus, which will continue until the world is certified polio-free. The other is the Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution. Any of you who attended the Rotary World Peace Symposium before the convention will undoubtedly recognize the enormous value of this program. In troubled times, the energy and enthusiasm of dedicated peacemakers can provide great inspiration to all Rotarians. Our Rotary Centers alumni are serving in trouble spots throughout the world, negotiating peace, defending human rights, and helping refugees cope with the damages of war. We can all take great pride in our Rotary Centers peace fellows and graduates. Their contribution to our world is already significant and, based on what we heard at the symposium, promises to be truly remarkable in the future.

Family of Rotary, on behalf of the Trustees, I thank you for your steadfast support of our Foundation, and I ask you to continue your generous and compassionate commitment. I think we can all agree that no matter how difficult these times may be for any of us, the people who are suffering most are those who already had the least. We cannot turn our backs on them now.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Rotarians struggled to help their communities survive. We have one great advantage that those early Rotarians lacked — and that is our Rotary Foundation, which offers us so many ways to better serve our community and the world. So let us pull together, as any good family does when times are hard, and show the world that Rotary is a force that can always be counted on to help those in need.

Let me share with you the story of two young people in our family of Rotary who have taken Rotary to heart to make the world a better place. I would like to introduce to you these two remarkable children, Anna Zanotti and Joshua Kim.

Anna is 10 years old. Her mother, Patrizia Zanotti, is a Rotarian, a member of the Rotary Club of Castiglione delle Stiviere e Alto Mantovano (Italy). Anna asked her mother what she did in Rotary, and her mother said she helped save children's lives by trying to stop them from catching a disease called polio. Anna was moved by this and the next day told her teacher at school about it. Anna's mother then visited the school and told the children in Anna's class about Rotary's battle against polio.

Anna designed her own collection boxes, one of which she is holding, and the children started saving. Each child saved about one euro a week towards polio eradication. They saw it as a way for children to save other children. Anna and her classmates do not look at it as "we have raised so many euros"; they look at it as "we have saved the lives so many children."

Halfway around the globe, 14-year-old Joshua Kim was doing much the same thing. Joshua lives in Northbrook, Illinois, USA. He is a student at Wood Oaks Junior High School in

Northbrook. His father, Tony Kim, is a businessman and a member of the Rotary Club of Chicagoland Korean-Northbrook.

Joshua is an extraordinary young person who cares about others and is willing to help underprivileged children in the community. At church, he has been involved in voluntary work to help the homeless. Joshua is greatly influenced by his philanthropic grandmother who spent her life trying to help people.

When Joshua learned that his father's Rotary club donated \$10,000 to The Rotary Foundation in January to support PolioPlus, he became interested in what Rotary does. He read a story about Rotary's polio eradication efforts in *The Rotarian* magazine. He became so impressed with Rotary's humanitarian mission to save children throughout the world from polio that he decided to donate his savings of more than \$1,200 to The Rotary Foundation to support its mission. He had been saving money earned from neighborhood jobs for nearly seven years.

Dear family of Rotary, here we have two shining examples of young people who are giving of themselves and inspiring others to give — not for themselves, but to help other children. This is truly Service Above Self. Please join me in thanking them.

There is no moratorium on humanitarian service in Rotary. We do not stop Doing Good in the World when it becomes more difficult. Instead, we work harder and do more. Dear family of Rotary, I know you are prepared to do whatever it takes to respond to today's troubles, to help those whose lives are a daily struggle for existence. As Rotarians, it is up to us to restore hope to their communities, and to create a world in which all people have the chance for a better life.