



5510 DG Don LaBarge

Greetings to the Rotary E-Club of the Southwest:

Monday, November 3, 2008, President Beth Wexler, your board, and I had a very good assembly. We met at Mimi's Café, 21001 N. Tatum Blvd., Phoenix, Arizona, USA. We discussed several projects your club is working on but two impressed me the most.

The Project for World Peace for which Larry Levenson is chairman really turned my head. Imagine, if you will, being able to help former Rotary World Peace Scholars develop and successfully carry out a project because your club helped them.

Another outstanding plan was for membership development and mentoring new members by Joe Krueger. Right now, membership is *the* single most important item we as Rotarians must address. I'll discuss that more in detail below.

Because the average Rotarian doesn't realize what goes into the making of a District Governor (or other District leaders), I'd first like to start by telling you a little bit about my job. My wife, Chris, and I started our training three years ago at a week-long Zone Institute in Denver, Colorado. Twenty-eight District Governors and their spouses from two Zones (including us) were grouped together as The Class of 2008 - 2009. For two and a half years our class trained together not only in Colorado, but in Austin, Texas; San Diego, California; and Boise, Idaho. Each session ran almost a week. The meetings lasted from 7 in the morning until about 10 at night, if you want to count the cocktail hour. The grouping is done so we can get to know all the District Governors and their spouses who are in Districts close to the state of Arizona. This allows us to have fellowship, friends, and feedback with people we can relate to. Our class is a great group of people and we've actually all become friends. So it was in that group on the first day in Denver that all the District Governor Nominees began to wonder what color would be picked for the District Governor jacket, what color the tie would be, and what the R.I. theme for the year would be. As it turned out, the jacket is dark blue, the tie is salmon colored, and our theme is: Make Dreams Real. By the way, a theme I really like. I'm prejudiced, of course. In my opinion, Rotary as a group (Rotary International) does a better job training their leaders probably than any other civic organization.

One of my jobs as Governor is to tell you the message from our Rotary International

President, D.K. Lee. His first message is one of which you've already heard a lot about: polio. Twenty-five years ago, Rotary International announced that we were going to attempt as a group to eradicate polio in the world.. A lot of people said it couldn't be done. There had been only one disease that had been eradicated in the world and that was small pox. The year the announcement was made, polio was affecting an average of 375,000 people per annum. Chris and I just returned from training at a Zone Institute in Boise, ID, and for 2008 there are 1482 cases so far. They're predicting less than 1800 for the year. So we're getting very close. What's happened here, as you may know, is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has given Rotary International one hundred million U.S. dollars. Of course we say that so easily you'd think we were the government! It's the largest 501(c)3 to a 501(c)3 donation in the history of the world. Done on a handshake, by the way. No contract. The treasurer of Rotary opened up his computer one morning and there was a hundred million dollars put into the account. Usually when they do something like that they give it to you in installments. But this was given all in one lump sum. They gave it to Rotary because of our reputation as Rotarians and keepers of our money. We just got named the number one charity in the world for percent of our donations going to cause. My hat is off to the Salvation Army because they came in second. They do, after all, have to pay some of their people. Whereas we're volunteers who work for free. The Gates' Foundation has challenged us to match their donation by the end of three years. So far R.I. has spent 67 million of the Gates' money; and they've collected 27 million from Rotarians across the world. D.K. Lee is asking that each Rotary Club (32,000 in the world) consider donating \$1,000 each year for the next three years towards Gates' grant. R.I. is predicting that in the next four to five years we're going to be able to make the announcement that polio has been eradicated. He's asking that the newer Rotarians donate because the veteran Rotarians have already given eight hundred million dollars to this cause so far. He's also asking for the first time ever that Interact and Rotaract do some kind of fund-raiser to help contribute to the polio campaign. One of the reasons for that, says D.K. Lee, is because when the announcement is made, everyone in Rotary can feel that they helped in the eradication of this terrible disease. So I challenge your club to please come up with some kind of campaign this year to raise \$1,000 to donate to Polio Plus. We are very confident we're going to get there. D.K. Lee says so far we have prevented five million children alone from contracting polio. So we have a lot to be proud of as Rotarians.

Speaking of polio, District 5510 has been given the opportunity by District 5490's Governor, Charlie Tegarden, to invite 14 of our members to participate with his District in a Polio Immunization and Wheelchair Distribution Trip to Hermosillo, Mexico, from February 13 through February 15, 2009. Transportation is by bus and Governor Tegarden has given us 14 seats. I know there will be a lot more than 14 people who will want to go so the fairest way to handle the situation is a lottery. If you want to go, you need to get your name to Gary Whiting at [glw602bmw@wbhsi.com](mailto:glw602bmw@wbhsi.com) by December 31, 2008. Names will be drawn out of a hat and the first 14 Rotarians who are drawn will have the opportunity to go. Rotarians picked have the choice of staying with a Hermosillo family for free or paying the cost of staying in a hotel. It will cost around \$200.00 per Rotarian to participate (more if you choose to stay in a motel). In the storage compartment of the bus, we will be bringing a whole container of wheelchairs. A current, valid passport is a must!

The second message from D.K. Lee is about our theme, "Make Dreams Real". It's not

about making children happy by giving them playground equipment. R.I. President Lee says that 28,000 children die every single day from preventable causes. So he's asking you to please come up with a program to save the life of a child. Even if you can only save one child, that would mean a lot. A lot of times we think that it is in third-world countries where the children die. But here in Arizona you can hardly pick up a newspaper without reading about a child thrown in a trash can or some child killed in a domestic violence episode. Therefore, I challenge you, Beth Wexler, to lead your club in doing something this year that will save the life of a child. Please help Rotary Make Dreams Real.

The last thing I want to talk to you about is membership. Here are a few statistics. Rotary outside of the US is growing by leaps and bounds. In the US we've lost 32,000 Rotarians net in the last 5 years. We know a lot of clubs similar to us like Lions Club and Kiwanis Club are experiencing the same problems. A lot of studies have been done regarding this phenomenon; and what they came up with was that today's generation is the busiest generation we've ever had. Fax machines, e-mail, computers and cell phones were supposed to free up our time. But they've worked just the opposite. The people who left Rotary have told us that they went to the Rotary Club meeting and felt like they didn't do anything. They weren't able to use their talents. And that they were way too busy to eat lunch with nice people. In order to get people to join, we know that what really works is *asking*. You have to *ask* someone to join your club. If everyone in the club did that, you'd double the size of your membership! I'm also challenging you to make sure your newly inducted members bring a project back to the board in 60 days for approval. The more Rotarians know about Rotary and the more they get involved with a project of their choice, the longer they'll stay in Rotary.

A Rotary International Membership Seminar is being held in Mesa, Arizona, on January 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Just one of seven being held around the world. Our guest speakers will be R.I. President D.K. Lee, R.I. Director Philip Silvers, and P.R.I.P. Cliff Dochterman, to name only a few. Please sign up to attend this fabulous and informative conference. To register, go to [www.rotarymembership.org](http://www.rotarymembership.org). If you're interested in staying with a Rotarian rather than at a hotel, please get a hold of Bob Heslin at [bhes@wbhsi.net](mailto:bhes@wbhsi.net) or phone 480-883-1251. Bob is in charge of home hosting for the R.I. Membership Seminar.

A quick reminder to send your officers-elect to P.E.T.S. on March 6 - 7, 2009, at the Mesa Hilton Hotel. For more information, please go to [www.azrotarypets.org](http://www.azrotarypets.org).

And please don't forget to attend the District Conference at the Little America Hotel in Flagstaff, May 14- 17, 2009. This is your conference—a time to celebrate your year with fellow Rotarians. For more information you may go to [www.rotary5510.org](http://www.rotary5510.org) and click on Go For The Gold.

In closing I'd like to thank you for being volunteers. One of the biggest rewards I've had with this job is the opportunity to meet Rotarians from all over Arizona and the world. I'm absolutely amazed by the work that is done. Thank you and I hope you have a successful year.

--Don LaBarge, Governor

District 5510 2008 - 2009