

Joint Message from RI President & President Elect on COVID -19



Dear fellow Rotary members and friends,

The COVID-19 coronavirus is affecting every aspect of our lives in real time, and this puts Rotary members in an unfamiliar place.

As [#PeopleofAction](#), we are most comfortable when we are fully engaged in the world – moving freely, meeting openly, and offering helping hands. These are very difficult times for people who, like us, are at our best when we are learning, growing, and serving—together.

We are also leaders in our communities, and these times call for leadership. In many ways, this also is our time. We have proven abilities to reach out and collaborate to offer immediate help to people in need at a rapid pace. These are precisely the skills needed all over the world today. The global effort against COVID-19 depends on actions taken in every country. Rotary has the unique ability to help improve those efforts in every community and every country.

Using all the technology we have at our disposal, we as Rotarians can continue to reach out and collaborate on big projects with Rotary clubs, Rotaractors, and Interactors. There are a number of examples where Rotary clubs are helping health authorities communicate best practices or provide needed equipment or support that have been shared with our leaders around the world.

As Rotary’s president and president-elect, we have been thinking of these issues very seriously in regard to upcoming Rotary events. As you may be aware, we have made the difficult decision to cancel two Rotary Presidential Conferences honoring our relationship with the United Nations - one in Paris, another in Rome. In the near term, we recommend that Rotary districts and clubs cancel or postpone meetings or events following the advice of national and local health officials.

We know that clubs and districts are seizing the opportunity to become leaders in their communities and are making better use of technology in this time of need. For example, a Rotary e-club in Italy held a live online session about COVID-19 awareness, a Taiwan club worked with companies and a pharmacy association to donate 1,600 bottles of hand sanitizer to the city of Ji-Long, and Rotary clubs in Sri

Lanka helped upgrade software and hardware for the health promotion bureau to assist its social messaging.

We cannot know quite yet what path this virus will take. We know we can play a role to help “flatten the curve,” reducing the number of cases in the short term to allow our health systems to address this issue. If the collective global effort helps bring the situation under control, then we hope to re-embrace our core values at the 2020 Rotary Convention in Honolulu, Hawaii, USA. Our time together will have greater meaning and purpose than ever.

Please know that we are taking a close, continuing look at our plans for the convention in June to make sure all attendees’ safety will be protected. We are following the lead of the world’s most trusted sources, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), for their guidance. We want you to be able to make decisions about what is best for you and your families in terms of attending this year’s event.

In the meantime, this is an opportunity for us to demonstrate that Rotary Connects the World in innovative ways. We should be closely following the advice of the WHO and local health authorities. Again, this includes canceling Rotary club events and meetings in the short term to reduce unnecessary interactions that could cause infections. We can put a greater emphasis on the work we do in our communities by helping our less fortunate neighbors cope with the effects of isolation and fear, or by supporting our health authorities to address this situation.

We are dealing with this situation in real time. Please visit our COVID-19 response page at <http://on.rotary.org/covid-19> for ongoing updates.

This is an unprecedented challenge for nearly all of us. But it is also an opportunity for Rotary members to find new, meaningful ways to lead individuals and communities to connect and do good in the world.

We have never been prouder to be part of an organization that does so much to protect and strengthen our communities, at home and across the globe.

Kindest regards,

Mark Daniel Maloney

2019-2020, President, Rotary International

Holger Knaack

2020-21, President, Rotary International