

RI President Holger Knaack on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Statement



In 2019, Rotary International’s Board of Directors articulated a vision and commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion throughout Rotary by adopting our first-ever Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Statement.

This Statement is the foundation for creating an organizational culture that reflects today’s world. It enables us to fully deliver on the central tenets of our work: promoting respect, demanding ethical leadership, and creating more just, open, and welcoming communities for all people.

Earlier this month, the Board engaged the DEI experts at PwC, a multinational business consulting group. They will help us develop perspectives and practices for making DEI part of our shared experiences as Rotary members. The goal is to support all members and participants – particularly those from communities traditionally underrepresented in the organization – so that they see our clubs, programs and our leadership ranks as places where they are welcomed and encouraged to celebrate all aspects of their lived experiences.

As we begin this work, Rotary’s leadership is united in stating that Rotary does not tolerate speech or behavior that promotes bias, discrimination, prejudice, or hatred because of age, ethnicity, race, color, abilities, religion, socioeconomic status, culture, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. There is no place within Rotary for racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, classism, or ageism. We do not believe that this is a political stance and we do believe that we should openly discuss these issues within our organization.

Rotary’s diversity strengthens us. Diversity is one of our core values, and the tremendous breadth and variety of experiences, cultures, and perspectives that are represented in our organization are what make us unique.

Rotary is learning. We know that this journey will take time and lead to challenging conversations, deep self-reflection, and new opportunities for discovery and growth. We must all feel empowered to speak out respectfully and hold ourselves and each other accountable when our actions do not reflect Rotary’s ideals. Look for more opportunities to be a part of this shared journey. We want participation, input, and ideas from our members all over the globe as we strive to show what’s possible when we uphold our commitment to diversity and respect for all.

Holger Knaack,
President, 2020-21