

RI President-elect announces 2021-22 presidential theme

Watch the theme address : https://cdn2.webdamdb.com/md_YNCiUh3RVS95.mp4?1611936094



Incoming Rotary International President Shekhar Mehta urged members to become more involved in service projects, saying that caring for and serving others is the best way to live because it changes not only other people's lives, but also our own.

Mehta, a member of the Rotary Club of Calcutta-Mahanagar, West Bengal, India, revealed the 2021-22 presidential theme, *Serve to Change Lives*, to incoming district governors on 1 February during the Rotary International Assembly. The assembly, a yearly training event for district governors-elect, was originally set to take place in Orlando, Florida, USA, but was held virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mehta spoke about how participating in service projects through Rotary changed him as a person and made him empathize more with the needs of others. Soon after joining his club, he helped carry out projects that benefited rural communities in India.

Some of the poor conditions he saw in those communities strengthened his commitment to service. "I truly understood the plight of my brethren," he said.

Mehta participated in initiatives that brought artificial limbs to children, clean water and sanitation to homes, and better health care facilities to communities.

"Rotary kindled the spark within me to look beyond myself and embrace humanity," he said. "Service became a way of life for me and I, like many others, adopted the guiding philosophy that 'Service is the rent I pay for the space I occupy on this earth, and I want to be a good tenant of this earth.'"

Mehta encouraged district governors-elect to lead by example during their term and inspire Rotary and Rotaract members to participate in projects that have measurable and sustainable impacts. He's asking each club to conduct a Rotary Day of Service.

"At the end of your term as district governor, you should feel that because of your leadership, because of your inspiration to Rotarians and Rotaractors, the world has changed for the better because of the service done by them during the year," he said.

Focusing on diversity, membership

For the 2021-22 Rotary year, Mehta wants members to focus their efforts on empowering girls and ensuring their access to education, resources, services, and opportunities so that future generations of women leaders will have the tools they need to succeed. Mehta asked members to use Rotary's belief that diversity, equity, and inclusion is critical in all we do as a compass to guide this work.

"There are many issues that girls face in different parts of the world, and you as leaders will ensure that we try and mitigate the disadvantage of the girl that they may have," he said.

To be able to do more through service, Rotary needs to increase membership, Mehta said. Membership has hovered around 1.2 million for the past two decades. He challenged the incoming governors to be catalysts in their districts to help increase membership to 1.3 million by 1 July 2022. Mehta's Each One, Bring One initiative asks every member to bring one person to join Rotary within the next 17 months.

Increasing membership while also continuing our commitment to eradicating polio, fighting COVID-19, and serving our communities is an ambitious goal. "And that should excite you," Mehta said. "Rotarians love challenges."