



An Interview with RIPE Ian Riseley



Serious Fun – Rotary President 2017/18 Ian Riseley

Rotary International President-Elect Ian Riseley on attracting new members, building strong clubs and forming friendships that last.

If a young person asked you why he or she should join Rotary what, in order, would you say?

There are four elements. **The first one is friendship.** Rotary offers the opportunity to meet people in a semi-social environment and also achieve good things.

Second, being involved in a Rotary club means that you're encouraged – some would say forced – in a friendly environment to get experience speaking, running meetings, and motivating people, all that sort of thing. Your Rotarian colleagues are not going to fault you for a simple mistake. So you get practice, you improve, and you do it better.

The third is business development. We've shied away from this over a period of time, and I don't believe we should. Rotary is good for business. Why should we shy away from promoting this?

The fourth one, and by far the most important, is the chance to make a difference in the world. If someone asked me to eradicate polio, my ability to do this would be rather limited. But when you gather together with 1.2 million people of like mind and have people like Bill and Melinda Gates donate funds to help achieve this objective, the opportunity for success is far greater.

What's on your to-do list?

I have three words: ***planning, planning, and planning***. This is a planning time, and I'm pleased to have the opportunity to think about ways in which I want to do things differently. In particular, I'm looking for ideas on how Rotary can relate better to young people.

I want to get to know as many of the district governors-elect for 2017-18 as possible and establish lines of communication and understanding. I mean to tell them, "No pressure, but I'm relying on each and every one of you," and they can rely on me too.

What things are working well in Rotary and what things aren't?

Well, the service we do for humanity, I think we do particularly well. Can we do better? Of course we can. Can we be better organised? Probably. Can we have a better relationship with the community at large? Yes, we probably can, but the actual service work that Rotary does is second to none, it's wonderful.

We're not attracting enough new members and we're not retaining them.

Our demographic is ageing and that's not good. We're not reinventing our clubs, and that really needs to be at the forefront of our attention. Satellite clubs (a new type of affiliate club sponsored by a traditional club) provide an avenue to involve younger people who need more flexibility. Female Rotarians are making a real difference, and we need more of them. ***The best clubs are those that are close to their communities.***

Do you have any specific suggestions for clubs?

I think we are missing a significant opportunity by not having **more women** in our clubs. There are some clubs, I'm ashamed to say, that don't have any female members. We also need more women at the senior ranks of the Board of Directors.