

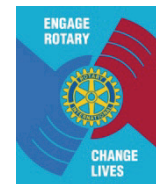
GOVERNOR'S MONTHLY LETTER

Rotary International District 3310 Berhad

October 2013



DG Chew Ghim Bok



My fellow Rotarians,

We are into the fourth month of our Rotary year together. I have visited more than half of the clubs in our district. It has been tough, but enjoyable.

I wish to thank my AGs for their hard work accompanying Phyllis and me, taking such good care of us. Special thanks also to all club presidents and members for making my official visits to their clubs such memorable occasions.

The one significant thing I noticed during my official visits to clubs was the spirit of cooperation and camaraderie displayed by Rotarians in most of the clubs. This selfless devotion was remarkable. Most everyone was more concerned about 'us' rather than 'me.'

This is how even small clubs are able to pull off meaningful and significant projects for the good of the community. When no one is overly concerned about who gets the credit so long as the project is a success, this, in essence, is what Rotary is all about. Good and effective club leadership fosters this kind of kindred spirit.

Recently, I was speaking to a group of Rotaractors. They told me that they see Rotarians as their role models. Rotarians therefore carry a heavy responsibility. It is a tall order. How we conduct ourselves unwittingly becomes an example to others. If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, desire more, and become more, you have succeeded as a leader.

Strong clubs foster innovations and flexibility. To strengthen your club you must motivate your members to generate and implement new ideas. The first step is to set goals for your club.

My question is: have you set goals for your club? You may not be surprised to learn that some clubs have yet to do so. Without goals you are sailing on a ship without a rudder. It is not too late, but you don't have much time left.

Rotary International encourages all districts worldwide to adopt strategic plans. I would go further to suggest that since our district straddles three countries, each geographical region (Johor/Melaka, Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore) should also evolve its own strategic plan but broadly in tandem with that of the district.

Take, for example, Singapore, where a number of clubs there are rationalizing their mid- and long-term goals.

For Rotary to do well in our district we must think and do things that will enhance our public image. We have done well in the past by establishing the Singapore Anti-Tuberculosis Association (SATA) and the Singapore Cancer Society, among others, but these institutions have become less relevant to many in our society today. Their impact is felt only among people who are their immediate beneficiaries. We must do more meaningful projects to keep up with

the evolving society we live in. While clubs can continue to engage their members in bread and butter activities, they must come together to carry out more significant long-term, iconic projects.

Of all the clubs I have visited thus far only a very few have a strategic plan. One of them is Rotary Club of Singapore West. Not only that, they even have an annual retreat to formulate their plan for each successive year. Well done!

Continuity is the buzzword. Gone are the days when each club's board of directors will only concentrate on their projects on hand for just one year. That was the short-sighted view perpetuated in the past. We must now work together for long-term, sustainable, and meaningful projects to benefit the community.

Good club leaders are able to keep all their members involved and well-informed. RI President Ron Burton, during his recent visit to Singapore, shared with those present at the inter-city meeting that in his early years as a new Rotarian, he had actually submitted a letter of resignation to his club. He wanted to resign because he saw little meaning in attending weekly meetings just to have lunch and listening to guest speakers once in a while. He did not have to join a Rotary club just to do that. Fortunately his club president then persuaded him that if he withdrew his resignation, he would be the Rotary Foundation chair the following year.

That was a momentous and life-changing experience for him. By getting involved in the various aspects of The Rotary Foundation and its programs, he developed a completely different perception of what Rotary was. He went on eventually to become president of Rotary International. The moral of the story: if Ron Burton had not been given a meaningful role to play in his early years as a Rotarian, he would not have become the president of Rotary International today.

I am sure many members in your club are just waiting to be given a chance to serve in a meaningful way. Why don't you get them involved? To have them work on even a small but significant project will certainly throw a different light on them and let them experience for themselves what it means truly to be a Rotarian. Most likely, they will not end up as president of Rotary International but I'm sure they will provide meaningful contributions in making the world a better place.

Keeping members informed is an important aspect in membership retention. Statistics have shown that many members resign within six months to a year after joining a Rotary club. These people simply have no idea what Rotary is all about. More importantly, they are not informed and not given opportunities to learn more about our great organization. What a shame!

The tragedy is this: many new and even older members do not participate in the multitude of programs that are available from Rotary International, The Rotary Foundation, and the district. We have various district seminars organized on a regular basis. Get your members to attend such seminars to gain more Rotary knowledge and information. Encourage your members also to attend the annual district conferences and district assemblies where they can get to meet Rotarians from other clubs, have fellowship with them, and from this experience expand their horizons gained from this wider perspective of Rotary.

I am happy to report that the recent District Membership Seminars we have organized at various locations in the district have attracted encouraging attendances. More of such seminars are in the pipeline. As I am writing this newsletter, our district will be conducting the District Vocational Service Seminars at four strategic locations in the district. This will happen in October, during Vocational Service Month. In November, we will be conducting the District Rotary Foundation Seminars, again at decentralized, strategic locations, during Rotary Foundation Month. Do encourage your members, old and new, and club leaders as well, to attend.

Another important responsibility of a club leader is to ensure continuity in leadership. You must take it upon yourself to groom future leaders in your club and also to help identify leaders who can serve beyond the club level. An effective succession plan is the hallmark of a successful Rotary club. A vibrant club needs new blood and fresh ideas. A club with the same group of people in its leadership year after year – or worse, having to recycle its club president – is on a slippery slope to possible ruin. It will stagnate and eventually fade away.

Ever since the first issue of this Governor's Monthly Letter (GML) in July, I have been receiving many encouraging comments through emails. If nothing else, it shows that some Rotarians are reading it. Of course, it is nice to receive favorable comments but I also welcome any constructive criticisms that you might have. Keep the emails coming!

Till next month, remember to **Engage Rotary, Change Lives**.

Chew Ghim Bok
Governor 2013-14

Forthcoming District Seminars:

October 2013 (Vocational Service Month) – **District Vocational Service Seminars**

- *5 October:* Kota Kinabalu – for Sabah and Labuan FT
- *12 October:* Kuching – for Sarawak and Brunei Darussalam
- *19 October:* Kulai – for Johor and Melaka
- *26 October:* Singapore

November 2013 (Rotary Foundation Month) – **District Rotary Foundation Seminars**

- *9 November:* Batu Pahat – for Johor and Melaka
- *16 November:* Kuching – Pan Borneo Meet
- *23 November:* Singapore
- *30 November:* Kota Kinabalu – for Sabah and Labuan FT
- *1 December:* Sandakan – for Sabah, especially Sandakan and Tawau