

INCOMING RI PRESIDENT ANNOUNCES 2020-21 PRESIDENTIAL THEME

- JANUARY 21, 2020

Rotary International President-elect Holger Knaack is encouraging Rotarians to seize the many opportunities Rotary offers to enrich their lives and the communities they serve.

Knaack, a member of the Rotary Club of Herzogtum Lauenburg-Mölln, Germany, revealed the 2020-21 presidential theme, *Rotary Opens Opportunities*, to incoming district governors at the Rotary International Assembly in San Diego, California, USA, on 20 January.

Rotary isn't just a club for people to join, but rather "an invitation to endless opportunities," said Knaack, who becomes president on 1 July. He emphasized that Rotary creates pathways for members to improve their lives and the lives of those they help through service projects.

"We believe that our acts of service, big and small, create opportunities for people who need our help," Knaack said. He added that Rotary creates leadership opportunities and gives members the chance to travel the world to put their service ideas into action and make lifelong connections. "Everything we do opens another opportunity for someone, somewhere," said Knaack.

Changing for the future

Knaack also urged members to embrace change so Rotary can expand and thrive. Rather than setting a specific target for increasing the number of members, Knaack said he's asking clubs and districts to think about how to grow in a sustainable and organic way. He wants clubs to focus on keeping current members engaged and adding new members who are the right fit for their club.

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Holger Knaack

Rotary International President-elect

"We need to stop thinking of new members as people we can mark down as statistics and then forget about," Knaack said. "Every new member changes us a little bit. That person brings a new perspective, new experiences. We need to embrace this constant renewal. We will grow stronger as we learn from new members."

Knaack pointed to Rotary's Action Plan as a compass that can guide clubs as they evolve. He recommended that every club have a strategic plan meeting at least once a year. At that meeting, clubs should ask where they want to be in five years and how they can bring more value to their members.

Knaack also wants to see more women in leadership roles and see Rotaractors play an integral role in how new clubs are formed and run. He encouraged district leaders to create new club models and

rethink what it means to be in Rotary, and allow young people to be the architects of these new clubs.

“We have to be open to new approaches, and creating unique clubs for younger people is just part of the solution,” said Knaack. “Let Rotaractors decide what kind of Rotary experience works best for them. These young people are bright, energetic, and they get things done.”

In stressing the need for Rotary members to embrace change, Knaack noted that time won’t slow down for Rotary: “We will not let rapid change defeat us. We will capture this moment to grow Rotary, making it stronger, more adaptable, and even more aligned with our core values.”