

Priorities Announced by new RI General Secretary

For an important period of eleven years Ed Futa served as General Secretary of Rotary International and on July 1, 2011 John Hewko became Rotary's new General Secretary with a real depth of international development experience from living outside of the US, especially in Russia and Eastern Europe. For five years he worked in the Bush administration delivering foreign assistance to the world's poorest countries. He applied for the job of General Secretary after his Rotarian father sent him a clipping of the announcement of the open position. So we have been wondering what John's global experience with developing countries would bring to Rotary.



On September 11, 2011 John participated in an interactive webinar and summarized his priorities for Rotary as follows:

1. An essential priority is to finish with polio eradication, which means stopping the transmission of the virus in the remaining four endemic countries and then continuing the immunizations for three years when the WHO will certify that the disease has been eradicated. And John wants to insure that our role in this is fully appreciated and expects that the mechanisms for Polio Plus will be useful for other priorities. Implicit in this priority is the completion of our commitment to raise \$200 million to match the Gates challenge grant; we are at \$190 million now so we must continue with our support.
2. With 20% of the districts in Rotary half-way through the pilot test, John wants to insure that the remaining 80% of the districts are ready to implement our new grant making model, including 6920 which has to get ready during DGE Bob Grigger's year to operate under Future Vision from day one of DGN Gary Smith's year. Under Future Vision the amount of funds controlled by the district will increase from 20% of District Designated Funds (now used for District Simplified Grants) to 50% - with both more flexibility and more responsibility for us.

3. John sees Rotary as a global humanitarian organization and wants to demonstrate our significance “at home” in clubs around the world. He plans to create Rotary Club Central to gather data on the local good works of all clubs in terms of their volunteer effort and financial donations. This is a brand new idea that will put a number to the importance of our 34,000 Rotary Clubs.
4. Membership is, of course, our key resource and John wants to see us fully attend to our potential. He reminded us that 70% of Rotarians are now outside of the US (and that percentage continues to increase). He sees social media -Facebook and even Twitter - as tools to connect us globally and to respond to the opportunity for Rotary to benefit the younger generations. And the Board of RI met just this past week to consider a very major investment under the umbrella of “branding” which means communicating much more clearly as to who we are and what we do and why that is important – both internally and externally.
5. And John’s fifth priority comes from his career in developing countries and he wants Rotary, with its depth of knowledge and resources, to have a more significant role in the global development debate.

During the webinar John used term that echoes almost identical comments made by Ed Futa in a workshop I attended and this is - “One Rotary”. What John and Ed are asking is whether our two parallel organizations – Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation – are both required, just because they were created in response to the US Federal Income Tax Code. Those who see Rotary at the highest level suggest that we are complex enough with our annual one-year turnover of leadership from RI President to Club President without having two Boards of Directors and two entities that may not always be in synch.

I find all of this interesting and I hope you do also. Just last week new operational details were provided for access to information that will help us as we continue to support the Rotary Foundation. My guess is that we will see improvements also on the membership side in the support systems and information available as John’s internal priorities are implemented. As we learn more, we will keep you posted.



DG Gordon Matthews

With Windows Media Player 9 you can listen to John and the webinar at <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/342105152>

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